

# OBAFEMI AWOLowo

THE END OF AN ERA?

Edited by

Olasopa O. Oyelaran  
Toyin Falola  
Mokwugo Okoye  
Adewale Thompson

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**OBAFEMI AWOLowo: THE END OF AN ERA?**



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## **THE END OF AN ERA?**

Selected Papers from the National Conference  
on "Obafemi Awolowo, the end of an era?"  
held at the Obafemi Awolowo University,  
Ile-Ife from 4th to 8th October, 1987.

Edited by

**Olasope O. Oyelaran**  
**Toyin Falola**  
**Mokwugo Okoye**  
**Adewale Thompson**



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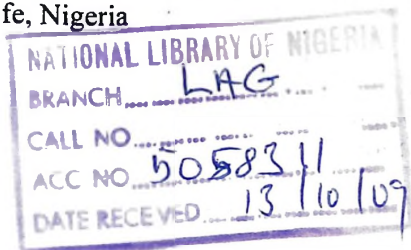
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## Preface

The conference from which this book emanated was held from 4th to 8th October, 1987, in the Conference Centre of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The conference could not have been called at a more opportune time, given its theme, "Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era?" The Board of Directors of the University of Ife Press Limited did not have to consult the Ifa oracle before deciding to organize a conference on this theme on behalf of the University itself. But the Board is gratified that events which occurred virtually on the eve of the first day of the conference not only underscored the timeliness of this conference, but also gave it a greater urgency. These events include the ban imposed by the Federal Military Government on various categories of persons, excluding them from participating in politics at least during the transition period leading to 1992. This did not only underscore the timeliness of this kind of conference, but also gave a greater urgency and pertinence to this particular one.

Several reasons could easily be imputed to us for organizing the conference, each of which in fact turns out to be only a happy coincidence. They do neither, singly nor collectively, constitute our real reason for calling the conference. These 'non-reasons' include, first, the fact that the

Press is wholly owned by the Obafemi Awolowo University whose name it is bound to bear. Secondly, we could easily justify convening the conference on the premise that the University and, therefore, the Press is located in Ile-Ife, the heartland of the "Wild Wild West", governed with distinction by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his team. Thirdly, in case anyone is still not satisfied, we could again take umbrage under the historical fact that for all of the Chancellors of the University, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo served the longest. And he has the distinction to have served throughout the institution's formative years. Not only that, his contributions in every facet of the nation's life earned him a berth among the distinguished Honorary Graduates of the University.

We could indeed, very easily add to the foregoing as a fifth reason and with pride, that the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, as Chancellor, nurtured the institution to the point where the Federal Government took it over in 1975, after which the University has continued to struggle to preserve the excellence already achieved in all spheres. This excellence continues to attract to the University the envy of all.

One additional reason which we certainly cannot give is to claim that when the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo passed on May 1987, he died as the last of the old brigades. Indeed, not only are a larger number of his contemporaries and fellow activists still alive, not a few of them have been speaking up in the last few months since his death. Nevertheless, it is fair to expect that most of those still alive would consider it foolhardy for any of their member to enter the political fray after 1992. For this last reason, if for no other, the passing away of Chief Obafemi Awolowo may be seen to mark the end of an era. He remained publicly in politics to his last breath.

The real justification for arrogating to ourselves the privilege of calling the conference out of which this book emanates lies in the major objective of the University of Ife Press Limited which is "to disseminate intellectual information beneficial to the Nigerian society, and to do so with scant regard to profitability".

In pursuit of this objective, therefore, the Press decided to invite scholars and other informed individuals from various walks of the Nigerian society to undertake a systematic assessment of the last fifty years of Nigeria's experience as a Nation. From our vantage point, this period englobes the pre-emergent years and the most active and productive parts of the lives of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his contemporaries.

Nor do we make any apologies for taking Chief Obafemi Awolowo as a reference point. His name became a household property during the period. Perhaps, more than any other activist of his time, he succeeded in making the entire country his constituency. Again, more than any of his contemporaries, he left to posterity volumes of his words and thoughts in addition to deeds attributable to him. Both the deeds attributable to him and his published works alone touch every aspects of our reality as a nation. Indeed, some will argue that the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo at various times in his career put together teams of men — in the non-sexist acceptation of that term — whose deeds, even after they have parted ways with Chief Obafemi Awolowo, have shaped our realities and may have set this Nation on a course from which we may have to strain every sinew of our constitution to deviate even for our own salvation.

Writing this preface some six months after the conference which generated the various chapters of this book, we at the University of Ife Press Limited are all the more persuaded of the urgency to make the content a public property. We are so persuaded because we hope that we have in this volume documents which will set the lower limits below which the next generations of Nigerian leaders will be expected *not* to descend. Furthermore, if the task succeeds, mythmakers, mythographers, chroniclers, historians, sycophants and denigrators of the period under review will have to contend with information and judgements which are now being put on record through this publication.

There remains, perhaps, one regrettable lacuna in the

reckoning of the period presented in this collection. That is, the absence of a systematic<sup>6</sup> assessment of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's proposal that Nigeria could have been effectively organized into political units as a Federal Republic only on linguistic basis.

This preface is certainly not the place to assess this proposal for the sake of posterity. One can only surmise that, perhaps more than in any other discipline which informs each of the chapters in this volume, linguistics and ancillary disciplines have generated, in the last two-and-a-half decades, a body of information which might have dissuaded Chief Obafemi Awolowo himself, had he lived, but may most certainly have dissuaded his mentors of the linguistic principle, who have survived him, from further re-espousing or from assessing that political wisdom for Nigeria. That missing aspect as well as others which may be no less significant remain open to unrestricted analysis and commentary. Some of these "others" belong to the scores of exciting papers presented during the conference which, unfortunately, reasons of scale and economy have constrained not to include in this volume. But their painful omission by no means diminish our satisfaction to commend to posterity this volume with its assessment of the last fifty years of Nigeria's national life before Awo's death.

It is necessary to state here that it is not inevitable that the assessment contained in this volume be carried out looking over Awo's shoulders. Doing so, however, most certainly provides a point of view about which, given the life and death of Jeremiah Oyeniyi Obafemi Awolowo, nobody can be truly neutral.

The conference "Obafemi Awolowo: the end of an era?" which generated this book succeeded beyond the widest imagination of the University of Ife Press Limited who organized it on behalf of the Obafemi Awolowo University. One measure of its success is that not one of its sessions counted less than sixty-five active and animated participants, many of whom came from outside the University, for four

full days of two sessions per day, excluding the opening and the final plenary sessions also fully subscribed.

The success of the conference and the realisation of the publication of this book soon after the conference, despite the economic strait-jacket in which individuals and institutions in this country have found themselves, are due to many who have pledged and given generously to this cause. These include the family of late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Michael Ajasin, Chief A.A. Owoade, Chief Olu Adebajo, Chief S.O. Gbadamosi, Chief M.A. Omisade, Chief Bisi Onabanjo, Ven. Archdeacon E.O. Alayande, Chief C.O. Adebayo, Justice Ighodalo, and Chief Bola Ige as individuals; and International Breweries Limited (Ilesa), Chief G.O.K. Ajayi & Co, University of Ife Bookshop Limited, Odusote Bookshop Limited, Ibrahim Aruna & Co., and Codat Publications as corporate bodies.

Bosude Printers Limited Oke-Ado, Ibadan, deserves a separate mention. They undertook to defray the critical part of the cost of the first print run of this book.

We thank you all severally and collectively. We hope that the career of this volume will be a gratifying reminder of the choice you have made to promote our objective both in holding the conference and in publishing this selection.

The editors accept responsibility for whatever infelicities this publication contains.

It is not possible to single out any of the participants in the conference for recognition. We are proud to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of those invited to present papers and who did so with the awareness that no financial remuneration was involved. We wish to assure those whose contributions are included in this volume that their inclusion is not meant as a reward, just as the non-inclusion of others must not be construed as a sanction in any sense. It deserves saying it that the quality of most of the chapters bears tangible evidence of the contribution of the invaluable exchanges which characterized the deliberations throughout the conference.

Within the University, we wish to acknowledge the personal encouragement of the Vice-Chancellor of Obafemi Awolowo University, Professor Wande Abimbola, and his commitment to the University Press at all times. We recognise the University's financial support to the conference through its Financial Support Sub-Committee. We thank the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Adeniji Adaralegbe for his personal presence at the conference.

Finally, a special mention must be made of a few colleagues. First, indefatigable Dr. Toyin Falola, who distinguished himself in all spheres beyond the call of duty. His enthusiasm from the first mention of the idea of the conference refused to succumb to an unmentionable barrage of dampers up to the realisation of this publication. I hope that he will not be embarrassed if I sum it up by saying no more than that, without his total involvement, neither the conference nor this publication would have been possible.

Dr. Femi Taiwo, Dr. D.O. Akindele and Dr. Tunde Lawuyi responded totally to Toyin Falola's draft. They gave without stint and at the most critical moment to ensure the success of the conference.

Mr. Akin Fatokun and Mrs. Adenike Osadolor, General Manager and Publishing Manager of the University of Ife Press Limited respectively accepted the added responsibility of running all the errands for both the conference and the publication. Together with Toyin Falola, they kept going even when the various duties of the sub-committees of the Press Editorial Committee serving as the conference organizing committee fell on their lap. They both motivated the various cadres of the staff of the University of Ife Press Limited whose unstinting dedication in spite of the long additional grind they had to bear enabled the conference to fulfil its promise to the audience of this book.

Olasope O. Oyelaran, Chairman, Board of Directors,  
University of Ife Press Limited.

April, 1988.

## **Note**

The change of the name of the University to "Obafemi Awolowo University" received legal backing only in March 1988 through the University of Ife (transitional provisions) (amendment) Decree reportedly released on Thursday 31st March 1988. This explains why the name of the Press remains "University of Ife Press Limited" instead of "Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited" (AVPL) which the Board of Directors approved in July 1987, soon after the announcement of the University's change of name through the mass media.



# 1

## **Introduction: Awolowo as a Charismatic Leader**

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AKIN L. MABOGUNJE

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I feel highly honoured to have been invited to give the key note address at this remarkable national conference to appraise the life of late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and evaluate the nature and durability on his influence on and contributions to our national life. Coming so soon after his death and after the renaming of the University of Ife to honour this national hero, one cannot but share with the staff and students of the university their exhilarating excitement of having come into a good heritage. I want, therefore, on this occasion to congratulate the university on their cognominal association with a leader who was great in his life time but is likely to be even greater in future as succeeding generations of Nigerians come to appreciate better the enormity of his contributions to our emergent nation.

I note that the topic of this National Conference is "Obafemi Awolowo: the End of an Era?" I believe that the most critical elements in that topic is the question mark at its end. To my understanding, the challenge before this Conference is to determine in what sense can the death of Chief Awolowo be construed as the end of an era and in what sense it is not. This double-faced nature of the topic presents rather special difficulties to a guest speaker giving the keynote address since I am left to essay a guess as to how the mind of the Conference organisers is working. In the event, I chose

to re-phrase the topic my own way and do ask whether death can indeed be construed as the end of charisma, at least in this case. I have therefore chosen for this keynote address the title "The Charismatic Leader and the Emergent Nation". In what follows therefore, my main aim is indeed to put before this audience for consideration the question whether Chief Obafemi Awolowo was just a charismatic leader or something much more? If he was just a charismatic leader, what do we expect to follow now that his charisma has been removed from the scene? If he was more than a charismatic leader, in what respects can this extra-charismatic qualities be established? Either way, where has the death of Chief Obafemi Awolowo left Nigeria as an emergent nation-state? All these are questions which I have no doubt would be examined in detail at this Conference. All I want to do in this keynote address is to highlight a few issues which I hope will help in giving some direction to the deliberations of this Conference.

#### WHAT IS CHARISMA?

As a first step, I think it is important to ask ourselves the question: What is charisma? In answering this question, I like to begin with an illustration which must be very green in the memory of most of those in this audience. In 1974, the country was rocked by an announcement from Dodan Barracks by the then Head of State, Major-General Yakubu Gowon, an announcement whose implications threatened the very foundation of the nation. It was the results of the National Census held in November 1973 which was claimed to have given the northern states of the country a population of 52 million as against 28 million for the southern states. The country was agog with the disruptive consequences of this announcement and different groups were agitated as to what this portends for the future. It was in this circumstance that later that year, at the Convocation of this same University, Chief Awolowo, as Chancellor, spoke authoritatively as to

the non-acceptability of those results by the nation at large. From that point on, the credibility of the government was seriously dented. It was therefore no surprise that one of the very first acts of the military coup d'état that displaced the administration of Major-General Yakubu Gowon the following year was to nullify the results of that census. The obvious question is: by what legitimate power could a private individual such as Chief Awolowo was at the time make a pronouncement which was sufficiently compelling that those in government felt a need to respond to it?

In discussing the nature of political power, Max Weber argues that this can be understood only within the context of legitimacy, the basis of leadership or factors underlying the recognition and acceptance of the right of an individual or group of individuals to rule a polity. According to him, all power is based on legitimate authority, by which is meant an authority whose exercise is based on principles generally recognized in a given society. Weber also noted that there are three ways by which an authority can obtain legitimacy or the recognition of its rights to govern.

The first of these is through tradition. Legitimacy based on tradition depends in one sense on force of habit. It is generally rooted in an ancestral past and is often shrouded in some form of mysticism. This is the type of legitimate authority exercised by our "natural" rulers and traditional chiefs in the country even today.

The second type of legitimate authority is what Weber called the legal-rational. This is the type of legitimacy derived from the provisions of a constitution or of laws currently in effect.

The third type of legitimate authority is that based on the charisma of an individual. Charismatic authority is based on an almost religious respect for, or faith in a leader to whom exceptional qualities are attributed. These qualities may be thought to be of divine origin, as in the case of religious prophet or they may simply be the product of extraordinary personal talents in an individual. The application of the term

...in such manifestations derives from the vocabulary of early Christianity where it referred to a "gift of Grace" granted to a leader who is the prime mover of the political system. In consequence of his "personal grace" the charismatic leader is obeyed not by virtue of tradition or statute because of his charm, his prestige, his influence, his personal magnetism and his power to sway the crowd. In short, he is obeyed because the people believe in him.

From this interpretation, there can be no doubt that although Obafemi Awolowo was a Chief many times over and although he had been the Premier of a Region, serving for some years just in that position, the real basis of his legitimate authority in Nigeria was his charisma. In a sense, this is what President Esho was referring to when in his last congratulatory birthday message he stated that "Chief Awolowo had been the main issue of Nigerian politics for the last four decades". It was a "gift of Grace" in which individuals throughout the country reacted positively to his presence.

The question may therefore be asked: how did Awolowo's charisma come to be manifested? How did it emerge? What circumstances were to precipitate it into the national stage? Little is known about Chief Awolowo's life history, it may be said that he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth. Indeed, the death of his father when he was only seven years old was regarded as his more severe and promising future was a frightening and dispiriting nightmare. There were times when the worst, for instance, he found himself during the struggle being forced out of four primary schools in succession at a time because of his inability to pay his school fees. The nightmare was to continue until he was thirty-two years of age at which point he reached the very nadir of destitution when his business failed and he was declared bankrupt. All his belongings including his house at Ikenna, his only car and his library were auctioned. From that point on, how

ever, his fortune changed. Things began to go well for him and, in a sense his life became a relatively success story right to the very end.

How far the harshness of these early years, especially the difficulties of having the requisite financial support to get a good education were important factor in the obsessive pre-occupation of Chief Awolowo with free education is an issue which historians will have to resolve. Certainly, situations which forced him at such an early age to learn to rely almost solely on his own inner resources must be considered as critical elements in the development of his initiative, self-confidence and the ability to confront difficult situations ahead. This, of course, explains the variety of occupations he had dabbled into before he finally settled down to the career of a legal practitioner. According to his autobiography, between the ages of 17 and 35, he had been a teacher, a shorthand typist, a clerk, a reporter-in-training, a money-lender, a transporter and a produce-buyer. By the time he undertook the last two of these occupations, his leadership qualities and organisational abilities were starting to manifest themselves. He was noted as having been the founder of the Ibadan branch of both the Nigerian Motor Transport Union and the Nigerian Produce Traders' Association, serving as National Assistant Secretary-General of the former and Secretary of the Ibadan Branch of the latter.

But it was the political mobilisation and organisation of the Nigerian populace that by the age of 25 these activities were becoming the dominating interest of his life. He had joined the staff of the *Daily Times* in 1934 as a trainee-reporter and threw himself avidly into the social life of colonial Ibadan. His ability as an adept organiser and participator in public debates and lectures was soon recognised and by 1936 he was elected Secretary of the Ibadan branch of the Nigerian Youth Movement. This was, at the time, the nascent nationalist organisation under whose auspices much of the discussion about throwing over the colonial yoke took place.

Chief Awolowo's departure from the shores of Nigeria on October 1, 1944 could be said to mark the end of a major chapter in his life. Instead of the uncertainties and vagaries of fortune that had characterised the first 35 years of his life, there was to be noticed, a certain determinacy and directional certitude about his ambition and aspirations. By October 3, 1946, he had passed his law examinations and on November 18, 1946, he was called to the Bar as a member of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple. Within a year of that event, he had published the first of the books which were to set down for posterity, his vision of the political future of Nigeria and of the ways and means of securing such a future. That book, titled *Path To Nigerian Freedom* and published in 1947 still has a certain freshness and relevance forty years after publication as the issue of State creation remains a crucial item on the political agenda of Nigeria.

But it was the fact that the book served as a clarion-call to Nigerians, announcing the arrival of a new leader on the political scene, that for many years after, gave it national salience and helped increasingly to focus the nation's attention on the actions and activities of Obafemi Awolowo. And events, from that point on, like a succession of waves, carried him forward on their crest. Following on the example of the Ibo State Union, which, after being launched in 1942, had been used as a veritable agency for training large number of Ibo youths through scholarships to numerous overseas Universities especially in the United States, Awolowo while still a law student in Britain had in 1945 co-founded the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. On returning to Nigeria in 1947, it was necessary to transform the *Egbe* into a mass movement to shake off the complacency of the Yoruba and mobilise them for the great events that were then so potently lurking in the shadows of time. Again, Awolowo's leadership qualities and organizational ability had a challenging task with which to cope. He managed to persuade all Yoruba Obas and traditional chiefs to sink their differences and rally under this new banner. He

succeeded in attracting to the cause the growing wealthy Yoruba middle class in Lagos and elsewhere and in firing the imagination of the masses of the Yoruba about a more glorious future within the emergent Nigerian nation. Thus, by June 1948 when the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* was launched in Ile-Ife with the Ooni of Ife, Sir Adesoji Aderemi as the Grand Patron and all the Obas of Yorubaland as Patrons, it was like the dawn of a new era.

While Sir Adeyemo Alakija was elected the Chairman of the *Egbe*, Chief Obafemi Awolowo became its General Secretary. The *Egbe* launched a massive campaign for support and fund, a task which took Awolowo to all parts of the country. Soon, the *Egbe* had raised enough resources to award scholarships to deserving Yoruba sons and daughters to study not only in Britain but also in the newly opened University College, Ibadan.

Political events in Nigeria then began to move at a fast tempo. Consequent upon the difficulties encountered with the operations of the Richards Constitution of 1947, a new constitutional arrangement, known as the MacPherson Constitution was by the late 1940s in the process of being adopted for the country. This was designed to give wider political powers to Nigerians but not necessarily to usher in an era of self-determination. It was at this juncture that Chief Obafemi Awolowo realised that he could use the platform of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* to launch a new political party with more decisive protocol and programmes of action in contradiction to the existing political movement – the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons – led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Action Group, as the party came to be known, was formally launched on March 21, 1951 and was to be the political vehicle whereby Chief Awolowo was to emerge as a charismatic leader in the country.

This is not the place to go into the details of the achievements of that party when it secured power to rule the Western Region of the country. The Action Group within its first term in office had recorded such tremendous political

deeds that it had become the pace-setter for governments in this part of the world. The free primary education scheme launched in 1955, the expansion of secondary schools, the programme of massive overseas scholarship for deserving youths, the free health services for children under the age of 18, the construction of general hospitals, one in each division of the Region, the tarring of roads, the establishment of farm settlements, the creation of a major industrial estate at Ikeja, and the development of housing estates — all these were of revolutionary dimensions at the time. But it was the championing of the call for national independence at the Federal level which was to put a totally radical stamp on the Action Group Party in those years.

Through all of this, Chief Obafemi Awolowo stood out as a towering leader who instils confidence and discipline among his peers and evokes very strong feelings of adulation among his party members. In the literature on how charismatic leaders emerge, the situation seemed almost tailor-made for him. According to Lancine Sylla, "the hope of a saviour or a hero capable of putting an end to colonial domination and the need for a great teacher to restore a shattered cultural identity and establish a new political order, created a situation that fairly demanded the emergence of a charismatic leader".<sup>1</sup> Clearly, together with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Chief Obafemi Awolowo came to be seen as the pre-eminent heroes of our national independence from Britain.

If he had done no more than this, Chief Awolowo would still have been revered as one of the greatest Nigerians of this century. But the post-colonial environment cast him in a number of other roles whose outcome was to project him to an eminence larger than life. As leader of the Federal Opposition, he came to be known for his informed, diligent, researched and nationalistic posture on many issues which did not always go well with the government of the day. When his party leadership was undermined and he himself had to face probes, litigation and eventual imprisonment, the cou-

age and fortitude with which he spoke out in defence of himself has remained a classic of political behaviour in the face of trying odds. When he was released from prison by General Yakubu Gowon in those dark days of national disintegration and made Vice-Chairman of the National Executive Council and the Federal Commissioner for Finance, his deft husbandry of our national resources which made it possible for the country to prosecute a thirty-month bloody civil war without having to borrow a penny (before the era of the oil boom) attest to an uncanny ability to lead a people through the most daunting of circumstances. It is no wonder that each time the country ran into difficult waters, there were always those whose cry was to give Chief Obafemi Awolowo a chance to again put things right. This was no doubt the basis for the national outpouring of feelings on the occasion of his death when Nigerians from all walks of life, all parts of the country and all shades of the political spectrum gave free vent to their assessment of our national loss. It was as if in death Nigerians took full measure of the charisma of the best President they never had.

#### HOW LASTING IS CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY?

The real question before this national conference, however, is how lasting is the effect of the charismatic authority wielded by Chief Obafemi Awolowo over the best part of four decades? Is death, in fact, the end of his Charisma? What is the relation of a charismatic leader to the emergence of a rationally organized state? It has been argued that since charismatic power depends on the exceptional qualities of an individual, sooner or later, its legitimacy will be called into question. This is particularly so when the time comes to find a successor for the charismatic figure. From this point of view, it is no wonder that the media have been having a field day speculating on who would or who should succeed Chief Awolowo?

Against this background, one can appreciate Max Weber's

view that charismatic power is in essence ephemeral and transitory; that it only sets the stage for the emergence either of a traditional form of authority, by establishing a new tradition, or for a legal-rational form of authority, by institutionalising procedures for the transfer of power. He also noted that before either of these possibilities is realized, however, most charismatic leaders or their successors try to capitalize on the leader's legendary prestige in order, as he called it, to "routinize" his charisma.

Weber went into considerable detail in discussing the different ways by which charisma may be routinized. These are usually attempts at prolonging the period of the impact of charismatic rule and include such methods as staging annual festivals, establishing public holidays, creating new political rituals, involving, for instance, outdoor speeches, meetings, ceremonial state visits, international conferences and so on with an appropriate mixture of ethnic colour, stirring ideology and appeal to ancestral roots. Sylla, indeed, observed that in Africa, it is more common for the leader to emphasize the symbolic, emotional and utopian rather than the rational, institutional and practical aspects of politics.<sup>1</sup> The result is that for most of Africa the consequences of attempts at routinizing the charisma of a leader have invariably been unfortunate, leading in many instances to economic and political inefficiency, the development of one party rule, excessive personalization of power, authoritarianism, slowing of political development as well as coups d'etat and military dictatorships.

It is necessary to consider this aspect of popular responses to charisma especially in Africa in order to properly position the present conference. Indeed, it may be asked: what is the purpose of the Conference? Is it simply to prolong the impact of the charisma of Chief Obafemi Awolowo? Is it an attempt to "routinize" his charisma? Or is it an effort to see beyond the Charisma to those concrete values and virtues which Chief Awolowo stood for? Is the Conference a deliberate and determined striving to begin the challenging

task of correctly assessing the nature of the legacy which Chief Awolowo bequeathed to the Nigerian nation?

#### HOW TRANSIENT IS CHIEF AWOLOWO'S CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

These are questions to which in this keynote address I cannot essay an answer nor would it be proper for me to do so even if I could. But I believe they are important questions which this Conference must assess. And judging by what I have seen of its programme, I have no doubt that they will be confronted.

In considering these questions, however, one is struck by the myriads of other questions which they provoke. For instance, if, as is obvious, Chief Awolowo was possessed of tremendous charismatic authority, what did he try to use this authority to achieve? What, in fact, was his vision for this nation and especially for its socio-economic development? It has been claimed that the most critical geopolitical imperative for most of the ethnically and religiously plural emergent nations in post-colonial Africa is that as state they should rationalize their political behaviour. Rationalisation entailed the social mobilization of the population towards a common political culture. This is predicated on a commitment to the rule of law, to justice and to the strenuous and continuous striving to improve the socio-economic conditions under which the vast majority of the population live. This is why national development itself is said to involve rationalization not only of political behaviour but also of the economic, technological and cultural aspects of the social system. Each is intimately associated with all the others. To what extent then can Chief Awolowo be said to have been striving towards the rationalization of the Nigeria State?

It has, of course, been argued that rationalization cannot run its course until the importance of charismatic and traditional form of power has waned. In other words, charimatic form of power tends to militate against the emergency of democracy, that is the broadening of popular participation in political institutions, which contribute immensely to the

rationalization of the State. Indeed, it has been claimed that in the developed countries, nation-states and multi-party parliamentary democracy became stable only after the development of specific forms of social stratification and economic and cultural change and only after it had become impossible for older charismatic and traditional forms of authority to survive or at any rate to flourish as they once did.

Yet, if charisma and democracy are mutually exclusive it becomes an issue of considerable analytical interest to re-assess the life of a charismatic leader who spent most of his life fighting for the enthronement of democratic norms and practices in our national body politic.

As Chief Awolowo himself puts it:

"the sooner we terminate the existing human deprivations and the state of widespread fear and latent instability, and allow the people to choose their rulers in a free and fair election, in short, the sooner we restore to the people their inherent civil rights and liberties, the better for the material progress and spiritual well-being of all the peoples of Africa, and for the enhancement of Africa's self-respect as a civilised Continent in the Comity of nations".<sup>1</sup>

If rationalization is of immediate import for the growth and development of the Nigerian State and it can be shown that it constitutes an integral part of Chief Awolowo's vision for the country, a consequential question is clearly how much of this vision was realised in his life time? Certainly, he tried to show how to run a government and achieve purposeful and astounding results; how to run a political party and ensure the growth of a disciplined and informed organisation where the leadership subscribe to accepted codes of conduct and the followership insures public accountability; how to mobilise the masses and fire their imagination with challenging but achievable development. Most importantly he tried to show that with a commitment to use the mental and material resources available in this country, we can rapidly

transform the circumstances under which the majority of Nigerians continue to live.

Yet, not even the most ardent of Chief Awolowo's admirers would deny that despite his gargantuan efforts, much of his vision is still far from being realized. And yet again no one will controvert that the very future of Nigeria, its potential greatness, depends almost on the realization of this vision. How then, it may be asked, did Chief Awolowo try to ensure not only that the brightness and clarity of his vision do not become dim but also that it remains realizable even after his lifetime? One of the most unique legacies of Chief Awolowo is his indefatigable capacity to put his thoughts on paper. In a daily routine that is exceptionally taxing in terms of the challenges of exigent problems presented to him by individuals, family members, political associates and the national situation itself, Chief Awolowo always found time to go into seclusion to put his thoughts into writing. This was the sense in which he came to be reconciled to his imprisonment in the 1960s and to bemoan the news of his being released by claiming that it had denied him the opportunity to quickly complete the book on which he was then working.

At the time of his death Chief Awolowo had written ten books. Four of these were concerned with his own life history and political experience. But the remaining six had to do with his vision for Nigeria and for Africa as a whole. These include apart from his earlier *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947), *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966), *The People's Republic* (1968), *The Strategies and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria* (1970), *The Problems of Africa* (1976) and *Awo on the Nigerian Civil War* (1981). Apart from these six books, there is the three-volume collection of his selected speeches titled: *The Voice of Reason, The Voice of Courage and The Voice of Wisdom*.

Clearly, anyone who has read all or most of these books will find in them many ideas concerning the future of this country which have stood the test of time. There are, of

course, a number of his views which would appear to have been overtaken by events. But there are innumerable others which we are still to apprehend as a nation and to work strenuously towards bringing to rapid fruition and realization. Since, I believe, this is one of the primary reasons for holding this Conference, you will permit me not to have to preempt your deliberations on these issues and not to intrude too early into the measured pace of your programme.

#### CONCLUSION

Nonetheless, in bringing this keynote address to a conclusion, it will be opportune to extrapolate one of Chief Awolowo's ideas on the most recent development in the political history of our country. This development is the banning of all political leaders of the First and Second Republic from seeking to hold or holding any public office in the country at least over the next ten-year period. In a broadcast speech of 23 September, the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Babangida, gave the reasons for this decision of the Armed Forces Ruling Council in the following terms. To quote him:

When the Military overthrew the last Civilian Government in December, 1983, it did so because that Government had ruined the economy of the country, generated national dissension and instability and had engaged in massive rigging of elections with the attendant violence and insecurity of lives and property. That situation was virtually the same as what obtained early in 1966 when the Military entered the political arena for the first time.... Indeed, the Military had taken over the reins of Government from civilian politicians in December 1983 on account of their failure to foster national unity, conduct free and fair elections, eliminate graft and corruption from public life, and manage national resources in the overall interest of the Nation

If these four issues constitute the major failings of the political class, perhaps the most deleterious of them is graft and corruption in public life. On this issue, Chief Awolowo, after noting the often tendentious and biased

character of most post-mortem probes of public officers, their wastefulness of resources and general futility, had declared that if he became President of the country, he would not waste his time instituting public probes. Instead, he would draw a very heavy and permanent curtain on the putrescent failings of the past and of his predecessors but would ensure that from then onward there is established a vigilant agency of government whose responsibility will not be to wait until an administration has been thrown out before engaging in a probe. Rather, the task of such an agency would be to have all those in public life, whether political leaders, bureaucrats or even private individuals closely connected with government, under continuous surveillance so as to discourage acts of graft and corruption and ensure that such leaders and personalities abide by the code of conduct which they had sworn to uphold.

The present situation in the country, described by one of the newspapers as "The March to a New Era" seemed to my mind to require that we apply to it this approach of eternal vigilance. Now that we are about to enthrone a completely new generation of leaders, it is important that before they become too powerful for us to deal with, we create for them an environment, a moral climate which would, to a large extent, restrain the temptations of office and make for a more rational political behaviour. This is beyond constitution writing. It lies more in the conventions of governance of the type Chief Awolowo tried to establish through the party machinery. In short, the issue is how to prevent successive generations of political leaders from dragging the country down again and again into the throes of corrupt and indifferent rule rather than for us periodically to enjoy the vicarious but transient pleasure of seeing an insignificant number of these leaders being tried and punished whilst the majority of them who have looted the nation's treasury and undermined its moral integrity escape to enjoy their loot and flaunt it in our face.

To my mind, graft and corruption is at the very heart

of the difficulty of institutionalising rational political behaviour in this country and ensuring the emergence of a true nation-state. It has been claimed that many countries in Africa are states without a nation. If Nigeria must emerge as a nation-state, then we must face squarely all those determinations that would facilitate such an eventuality. We must throw up leaders who would see their supreme responsibility as one of striving to give all Nigerians, not just some Nigerians, opportunities for self-development; who would ensure for all of us the basis for social and economic well-being; and who would guarantee for all citizens social justice and a sense of belonging. It is not only when leaders make away with government funds that they are corrupt. Each time they subvert our national unity and compromise matters of moral integrity; each time their acts fall short of the requirements of social justice, then their behaviour is irrational and corrupt and not in the best interest of the country. Eternal vigilance is thus the only approach to ensuring the future of an emergent Nigerian nation.

This and other approaches to our national problem as seen by Chief Obafemi Awolowo are what this Conference is meant to deliberate upon. If, at the end, this body were to find that many of Chief Awolowo's ideas still have resounding relevance to our nation today, it would have been able to answer unequivocally the question posed by the title of the Conference as to whether with the death of Chief Obafemi Awolowo we have witnessed the end of an era. On the other hand, the Conference may discover, borrowing from the inimitable words of Sir Winston Churchill, that what we have witnessed is not so much "the end; it is not even the beginning of the end; it is perhaps the end of the beginning of an era in which, building on the legacy of his thoughts, ideas and philosophy, we may help realise in this country the vision of a united, strong and prosperous nation which Chief Obafemi Awolowo strove untiringly to bring to reality in the great struggles of his life.

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# **Part one**

## **Historical Background**

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## The Context: The Political Economy of Colonial Nigeria

TOYIN FALOLA AND A. G. ADEBAYO

Individuals and small groups who belong to particular classes can, and do, act for their classes. But this does not mean that every individual action is a class action. And although an individual's action may be significant, it should hardly be seen as the result of his or her unique genius or essence. It should rather be understood as one of the possible options which the prevailing social relations of the time allow.

—Eme Ekwewke, 1986

The debate over the question which comes first — society or the individual — may well have been resolved philosophically. We do not propose to re-open it. Rather, we seek in this paper to advance the argument that society and the individual are inseparable: 'they are necessary and complementary to each other, not opposites'. This is based on the strong conviction that the 'life' (the travails, accomplishments and greatness) of the individual is as important as the 'time' (i.e. the historic stage of development of the nation, the prevailing social relations of production; the evolution of the state; the changing nature and structure of the state; the emergence of and alliances among classes; indeed, the whole gamut of society and its institutions). Thus, we have chosen to examine the political economy of Nigeria in the period spanning the lifetime of Chief Obafemi Awolowo with the purpose of finding out how he came to be what he was, h

reactions to changing political and economic fortunes of the Nigerian State and Society, his initiatives in, and contributions to, the development of modern Nigeria, as well as the ways in which the changing political and economic situation in the country determined, shaped and altered his ambitions, chances and accomplishment.

Political economy is no longer the little understood, awe inspiring mode of explanation it used to be in Nigerian academic circles and public discussions. This is attested to by the number and quality of works already available on the subject. This is a fortunate development. For, in writing this paper, we have relied heavily on, and benefited immensely from, the existing body of writings some of which are seminal works on the various aspects of Nigeria's historical development.

There are two main sections in this paper. The first examines the colonial setting and emphasises the nature, character and functions of the colonial state. The second analyses the politics of decolonisation, and addresses such issues as the class character of the nationalist movement, the employment of ethnicity by the petit bourgeoisie and the preparations of the country for the flag independence.

#### THE COLONIAL SETTING

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was born in 1909 at a time when the British were engaged in activities to consolidate their hold on the country and create a colonial, 'modern' Nigeria. It is very necessary to begin with an examination of the country's colonial history in order to understand the socio-economic and political setting within which Awolowo (and others in his time and class) grew up. We begin with the evolution of modern Nigeria, follow it up with the features

of the colonial state, examine the colonial economy, colonial infrastructure of exploitation, and close it with colonial educational policies and the emergence of the petit bourgeoisie to which Chief Awolowo belonged.

### *The Evolution and Features of the Colonial State*

Modern Nigeria arose from three distinctive groups of British activities. The process towards the creation of the Southern Western part started in 1842 with the British conquest of Lagos<sup>1</sup>. This was followed in 1861 by the formal cession of the island and its organisation as a Crown Colony. From here, the British area of influence and jurisdiction gradually extended into the hinterland in the northward and eastward directions. By the close of the 19th century, the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos had been created which fairly encompassed the whole of Yorubaland and Benin in the north and east of Lagos respectively.<sup>2</sup> To be more specific, by a series of treaties to end the Yoruba wars, the British became masters in virtually all parts of Yorubaland in 1893. Earlier in 1892, the 'Ijebu Campaign' had made them masters of what later became the Ijebu Province. The empire of Benin was physically conquered in 1897 by the British Consul-General Lagos, Beecroft. This group of British activities was both commercial and imperial, and control was effected through the guise of ensuring free trade, peace to end the wars, and other things.

Another group of British activities started around the same time, and ended in the creation of Eastern Nigeria. Trading posts had earlier been established around the mouth of the Niger and adjacent creeks and rivers. These trading posts were originally used for the trade in slaves. But with the abolition of the trade and the introduction of legitimate trade, the posts continued to be used in the export of palm produce and other goods. The men who operated this commerce signed treaties with the indigenous 'merchant chiefs' and the British produced these treaties at the Berlin Conference.

rence to claim the area as the Oil Rivers Protectorate.<sup>3</sup> In 1900, with the addition of a slice of territory originally administered by the Royal Niger Company (RNC), the area became known as the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Obviously, this was the creation of British merchantile and commercial capitalist interest.

The third part of Nigeria, the North, was created separately through the commercial and imperial activities of the Royal Niger Company (RNC).<sup>4</sup> This process began with the commercial activities of many British companies trading on the River Niger which later amalgamated under Sir George Goldie to secure a royal charter. The RNC then acquired political power to administer the trading areas. By 1900, when the company's charter was revoked, it had created an administration around the Niger-Benue confluence. In addition, it had laid claim to the rest of Northern Nigeria. It was this administrative area and the adjoining places under RNC influence that the British Government took over in 1900 and renamed the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria with Sir Frederick Lugard as the first High Commissioner. Lugard was still to make war with the North. By 1906, this task was completed and a British administration had succeeded the caliphate rule in Northern Nigeria.

There were other landmarks in the evolution of modern Nigeria: in 1906, the two separate protectorates in the South were merged to form the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria; and in 1914, Lugard accomplished the task of amalgamating the northern and southern protectorates. A central administration was established, and the Northern and Southern Protectorates were allowed to exist under Lieutenant Governors. The Protectorates were broken into provinces over which Residents were posted. At the District and Divisional levels were British officials who were responsible directly to the Residents. The colonial state was thus established.

Various studies have been carried out on the operation of the colonial state in Nigeria. In brief, the colonial administrative policy, coercive as it was, was assumed to be domina-

ted by the so-called policy of indirect rule, said to have been developed by Lugard early in the period of his high commissionership of Northern Nigeria.<sup>5</sup>

Impressed by the autocratic authority of the Fulani *Emirs*, and bothered by financial and personnel problems in his administration, Lugard decided (like many other colonialists) to execute his programmes through the *Emirs*. This policy, regarded in the literature as 'indirect rule',<sup>6</sup> was extended to the South after amalgamation. The crises and protests that came in the wake of the introduction of this Northern element to the south have been examined by many writers.<sup>7</sup> We should state here that in operation 'indirect rule' was very economical for the British: less money was spent on the administration while a huge profit was made. The acceptance by the *Obas*, *Emirs*, *Obis* and (warrant) chiefs of positions of authority in the colonial state further helped the state to acquire some legitimacy among the local population and to maintain some stability at minimum cost.

There were certain features of the colonial state, five of which will be examined here. One was the close affinity between the state and the commercial interests. As we have pointed out, the process of colonial acquisition involved the big commercial houses whose representatives on the local scene in Nigeria signed treaties, obtained charters and constituted the nucleus of imperialism in the country. The colonial state that eventually emerged became 'the servant of imperialism'.<sup>8</sup> Among the interests that the colonial state protected and advanced were those of the merchantile and industrial fractions of the British bourgeoisie. The colonial state in Nigeria created the best opportunities for these companies to exploit the agricultural and mineral resources of the country at minimum cost.

Monetisation of the economy was another feature of the colonial state. This was to lead further to the integration of the country into the western capitalist system. There were many ways by which this monetisation was achieved. Firstly, the colonial state paid cash for services rendered to it by the

indigenous groups. Secondly, a mass of peasants were press-ganged into working for the state or its agencies in the infamous 'public works'. Although the pay was poor, it was made in cash. Thirdly, the mines were encouraged to employ Nigerian tributors, and these were paid very low cash wages. At the point that the British coins were becoming acceptable to the people, the colonial state slapped the tax on them. Tax was to be paid in cash; and, in addition to the customs duties on goods imported by the monopoly firms, the colonial state demanded direct tax. There were protests against taxation, especially in the South.<sup>9</sup> But these were quickly put down by the police, and the economy became clearly monetised.

Another feature of the colonial state was its deliberate policy of regionalisation in the political and economic administration of the country. This subject will be given fuller attention later in this paper. Suffice it is to say here that the Northern and the Southern parts of the country were kept practically isolated from each other until the end of World War II. Moreover, a constitutional revision in 1939 separated the West from the East in the administration of Southern Nigeria. Each of these separate 'groups of provinces' had a secretariat and a Chief Commissioner. Right from 1914, therefore, the only bond of unity that existed was the person of Lugard and successive Governors. Much earlier than many of his contemporaries, Chief Awolowo had perceived the implication of this regional bias of British administrative practice, and had given thoughts to ways of improving the regional system.<sup>10</sup> Awolowo's suggestion was that in delineating regional boundaries, the major ethnic groups should form the new regions. Thus instead of the artificial boundaries which generally partitioned some ethnic groups (or nationalities), the country should have ten regions formed along ethnic lines. Although Chief Awolowo had been criticised for this proposal, his conceptualisation that federalism should be the eventual course of Nigeria's political development has stood the test of time. He noted as early as

1947 that 'a federal Constitution is the only thing suitable for Nigeria'.<sup>11</sup> )

The fourth feature of the colonial state was its discrimination against the educated elites – the members of the petty bourgeoisie. Up till the 1940's the highly qualified among them were not deeply involved in the political and economic administration of the country. The most favoured groups were the 'natural' rulers who had been integrated into the administration as Native Authorities, some of who had begun to enjoy their new positions at the expense of their subjects. As in politics, the educated elites were discriminated against in business and professions. Those of them who were professionals and who managed to secure appointments under the colonial government were placed below British officials who might not even have the same qualification and experience. In business, various laws were made by the colonial state to create a monopoly for the British firms and prevent Nigerians from engaging in certain forms of businesses. As will soon be seen, this discrimination incited the educated elites against the colonial state and occasioned the dismantling of the system. The Colonial State thus produced its own antithesis.

A fifth feature of the state consisted in the concern for, and the system of, the maintenance of public law and order. *Pax Britannica* was imposed by the employment of the imperial army (the West African Frontier Force and the Lagos Constabulary). The police and the army that had been engaged in the process of conquest were later given the task of maintaining order in the colonial state. Studies have been carried out to show that the colonial police was an integral part of the British administration of Nigeria, and was not employed primarily for purposes of crime prevention and detection as in the Anglo-Saxon tradition.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the police was used in repressive and suppressive duties like arrest of demonstrators or protesters, detention of recalcitrant chiefs, suppression of subtle protests like the brewing of 'illicit' gin or violent protests like the anti-tax riots,

repression of labour movements, and so on

### *The Colonial Economy*

Having discussed the emergence of the colonial state, it is essential now to address one of the main functions of the state – the economic exploitation of the human and material resources of the colony. One salient and repetitive feature of the economy under colonial rule was its agricultural base. Colonial agriculture followed a regional pattern in the occurrence of its major commodities. This is both an accident and a design of the British rule. Thus, while the spectre of monoculture was avoided at the 'national' level, a single crop dominated the economy of each group of provinces.

Cocoa had been introduced to Nigeria earlier in the 19th century. By 1925, it had become Western Nigeria's major export crop, supplemented by rubber and palm produce. The latter was the major export commodity of Eastern Nigeria since the era of 'legitimate trade'. But it received a boost with the establishment of colonial rule, and Eastern Nigeria was leading in the production of palm oil and kernels. Groundnut was produced in the North, and there was no record of its export from Western and Eastern Nigeria in the period under review. Groundnut was supplemented in the North with raw cotton and beniseed. This regional division of labour<sup>13</sup> for satisfying the metropole was to become concretised by the regional constitution of 1945. Perhaps the origin of federalism in Nigeria owed to this economic rather than the purely political reasons often alluded to in the literature.

For the inhabitants of the various territories in Nigeria, this division of labour was a real thing. It meant that someone born and raised in the Western Region directly or indirectly participated in the growing of cocoa, palm oil or rubber.

He either was a farmer cultivating the crops, a merchant middleman marketing them, a transporter or head-ports conveying them to the railway stations, a staff of the Nigerian Railway Corporation shifting the goods to the coast, etc. It is not surprising, therefore, that Awolowo participated in the regional economy both as a transporter and as a licensed buying agent purchasing cocoa and selling it to the monopoly companies for export.

By and large, no massive structural reorganisation or technological innovations were made in the agricultural practice by the colonial state. The simple hoe and cutlass remained the main tools, and the operators were the same peasant farmers. Although fertilisers and improved seed varieties were introduced every now and then, the forces of production were not improved. The colonial state seemed unruffled by this situation, as the existing system of agriculture in Nigeria proved adequate in supplying the export market. Here, the monetisation of the economy played a role. Rather than grow food crops, the peasants concentrated on the cultivation of cash crops for the purposes of earning enough cash to pay tax, buy heavily taxed imported manufactured goods, and purchase food as well. This effect was repeated in all parts of Nigeria as one of the salient features of the colonial agriculture.

In the export of these commodities, the colonial state relied on the big British and European monopoly firms such as the UAC, John Holt, PZ, CFAO, UTC. These were the trading companies involved in the import-export trade generally in West Africa. In order to keep out any indigenous businessman from this lucrative trade, the companies formed the Association of West African Merchants (AWAM) It was AWAM which, for example, in 1937 formed the 'Cocoa Pool' in order to monopolise cocoa buying and export trade in Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>14</sup> The colonial state did all its business through these firms on the pretext that the indigenous ones were too small and inexperienced to handle the transactions. The connection between state and capital

continued to be close and cordial even when independence was granted in 1960. Thus, all that the indigenous businessmen could do was to act as middlemen between the peasants and the monopoly companies – more like retailers.

As in export trade, so was it in the banking, insurance and other financial institutions. The colonial state had accounts only with British banks, especially the British Bank for West Africa whose directors comprised former colonial officers.<sup>15</sup> These banks discriminated against Nigerian entrepreneurs on various excuses. Credits were not extended to them on the pretext that they had no securities. And when efforts were made to establish indigenous banks, which would extend credits to Nigerians at moderate rates of interest, the state colluded with the foreign banks to kill them (the indigenous banks).

The discrimination against indigenous businessmen was also evident in the service sector of the colonial economy. Transportation, especially motor transportation, seemed to be the one area left open for Nigerian operators. But even here, the colonial state made sure that motor transporters did not compete with the railway. As a motor transporter himself, Chief Awolowo recorded that the colonial state amended the traffic regulations so that lorries plying certain areas regarded as railway priority should pay double the licence fee imposed on other lorries.<sup>16</sup>

In short, the colonial economy existed mainly to benefit the colonisers and their agencies. As has been argued in a recent work,<sup>17</sup> the colonial state existed for the exploitation of Nigeria, rather than her development. Thus, the major impact of the colonial economy was the exploitation of the people, both the petit bourgeoisie and the masses of Nigeria. Members of the petit bourgeoisie were left hopeless, both in politics and in business, and it is not surprising that they led the movement for the independence of Nigeria.

Colonial economy in Nigeria was able to achieve the desired

goals of the colonial state for the exploitation of the country through certain infrastructures which were then regarded as indices of development. These infrastructures were of two types: those that facilitated the mobility of goods and persons in Nigeria (transport and communication facilities) and those that ensured the success of the British enterprise in the country (educational and other social facilities).

### *Colonial Infrastructure of Exploitation*

Between 1900 and 1945, the colonial state utilised part of the profits from the colonial enterprise in Nigeria, and raised further loans on the British Financial Markets, to develop the infrastructures of exploitation in the colonial Areas which were affected by this development were the railways, inland waterways, ports facilities, air strips and communication facilities. All these were to aid the mobility of goods and persons, so that cash crops and minerals could be evacuated from the hinterland, shipped to the European markets, and manufactured goods could be imported into and distributed in, the country.

The railway line was the first major transport facility that the British made efforts to build. A recent study of the railway has developed the thesis that the whole project was an integral part of the British 'robber economy' in colonial Nigeria.<sup>18</sup> The railway coming from Lagos passed through Ibadan in the year 1900, and reached Jebba in 1902. An imperial grant was secured for the line from Baro to Kano, and in 1912 the southern and the northern railways were amalgamated. Shortly afterwards a bridge over the Niger at Jebba was constructed, and the Lagos - Kano route was through. This 'western' line was to assist in the exploitation and haulage of such agricultural and mineral goods as cocoa, palm oil, cotton groundnuts, tin and columbite. With the discovery of coal at Enugu, the construction of the 'Eastern' line was started in 1909; and the Enugu-Port Harcourt railway line was completed in 1916. This was extended

Kaduna in 1926. It is thus clear that the construction of the lines was based purely on economic considerations.

Motor vehicles were introduced to service the railway lines. Road development in Nigeria gained momentum from the first decade of the century.<sup>18</sup> The construction of the Ibadan-Oyo road started in 1905, and by 1914 the various Native Authorities had embarked on construction works of 'Trunk B' roads. The Lagos (Central) Government constructed 'Trunk A' roads totalling 2,950 miles in 1926. These roads ran inland from the railway stations. They were designed to convey cash crops and imported goods to and from the railway lines. They were also to convey labour to and from the mines and agricultural farms. Although vast areas were yet to be linked by these roads, the major centres necessary for colonial commerce and administration were opened up.

In addition to railways and roads, the colonial state encouraged the development of inland water ways for transportation purposes. The state broke the monopoly of the Royal Niger Company (RNC) over river transportation in 1903. Thereafter, the development and use of inland water ways increased. Between 1911 and 1930, the state sponsored dredging works on the Koko canal, the rivers Niger and Imo, and the Okitipupa-Agbabu channel. These were for the purposes of transporting palm products and timber from these various locations to the coastal ports. Ferry services were also encouraged on these channels, and the Marine Department in Lagos opened its Lagos-Apapa ferry service in 1925.

The railways, roads and inland waterways were connected to overseas transportation by the construction of coastal ports where large ships would berth and shift the various products to Britain and other overseas markets. In 1926 the Apapa and Port-Harcourt wharves were completed. These made it possible for larger ships to berth. Although air flights were recorded in Nigeria in the period, especially by the British Air Force, air transportation was not seriously

encouraged by the British before World War II.

Ocean shipping was monopolised by a number of private British companies under the West African Shipping Ring. As a result of the demands of World War I, shipping in 1914-1918 was carried out by the British imperial government. The Ring took over after the war, and was reconstituted in 1924. By 1939 six Euro-American oligopoly firms dominated the scene under the leadership of the Elder Dempster Lines Ltd. These companies were involved in the lucrative business of transporting goods from the coasts of Nigeria to the coasts of Britain and other Euro-American ports.

Post Offices, telephone and telegraphic services were extended. The number of post offices increased from 13 in 1913 to 113 in 1945. The Lagos-Ibadan trunk line was completed in 1929, and by 1945 there were 59 telephone exchanges linking the main trade and administrative centres in Nigeria. The telegraph played a significant role in the British conquest of Nigeria. It continued to be of invaluable assistance to the colonial state in the tasks of administration and exploitation.

#### THE POLITICS OF DECOLONISATION

Studies have shown that the petit bourgeoisie, the class whose emergence we will address in the next sections, led the movement for the decolonisation of Nigeria, nay of Africa.<sup>2,3</sup> It has been shown that the struggle against the colonial state was begun by the working class, hijacked by the petit bourgeoisie, and in the final analysis, waged by an alliance of all classes under the leadership of the petit bourgeoisie. In this section, it is intended to demonstrate that the struggle for the political emancipation of Nigeria was a class struggle (i.e. the struggle by the Nigerian petit bourgeoisie against the monopolistic and the oppressive rule of the 'metropolitan' bourgeoisie), and to show that what often looks like ethnic or 'sectional' politics was actually part and parcel

of the struggle for access to state power among members of the petit-bourgeoisie. Looking at these issues, Gavin Williams and Terisa Turner have come to the conclusion that politics in Nigeria revolved around three elements: the allocation of scarce resources, the determination of public policy, and the relations and conflicts among classes.<sup>24</sup> By examining the politics of decolonisation along these lines, we are likely, more than in existing empiricist works, to present more accurate account of the contributions of the Nigerian political leaders, indeed Chief Gbafemi Awolowo, to the country's political and economic history.

### *Colonial Education and the Emergence of the Petit Bourgeoisie*

According to Claude Ake, education was 'the single most important factor contributing to the creation of a petit bourgeoisie' in the Nigerian colonial setting. British attitude to education in Nigeria was generally ambiguous. On the one hand, the colonial state wanted to avoid investment in education, for it might make the 'natives' less submissive to European rule, conscious of the exploitation and domination inherent in colonial rule, and more assertive in his demand for independence. On the other hand, the objective needs of the colonial state necessitated the education of some Nigerian 'natives'.

In the first place, the British colonial masters needed manpower in order to administer the colony. That there was a massive manpower shortage is accounted for by the fact that in Northern Nigeria there was one British administrator to 100,000 Nigerians, and in the South the corresponding ratio was 1: 70,000. There was thus need to train Nigerians as 'native officials' to assist the British administrators. Moreover, there was the growing requirement of the colonial state for technical and supervisory staff. Foremen were needed in the railways for its construction and maintenance works, skilled workers were needed in the public works departments, accounts agricultural extension

services, health and sanitation departments of the central and provincial administrations. 'Natives' had to be trained to occupy these posts, as it would have been costly and inconvenient to employ expatriates for the jobs.

In the second place, it was being considered by the colonial state that even the task of administration and exploitation would be made simpler if the populace was skilled, tutored and literate. Explaining this point further, Claude Ake stated that the British reasoned that 'you cannot fully exploit without educating. The untutored and unskilled is a tool of very limited use; more is got out of him, when he is tutored and skilled'.<sup>41</sup> Thus, colonial education in Nigeria could be said to aim at the realisation of two basic objectives: to increase semi-skilled labour and to create the most favourable political and cultural atmosphere for the maintenance of the colonial system.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the content of colonial educational programme was designed to introduce some minimal skills in reading, writing, western thought and 'accepting the coloniser's ideology'. As the 'ideological apparatus' of the colonial state,<sup>22</sup> the programme emphasised the superiority of the western culture, the virtues of submission and obedience and the necessity of collaborating with the colonial system. Moral instructions in schools were said to include 'anecdotes illustrative of the value of kindness and honesty', biography of good men such as Livingstone and Gordon, lessons in patriotism, essays on duties to the state, respect for authority, values of good government, citizen and so on.

There was no strong commitment to education by the state. Encouragement of education was limited to granting aid to the mission schools. This had a contradiction of its own: the missionary groups were interested in training 'natives' for evangelical works, while the state needed literate Nigerians with some skill. Moreover, the foreign commercial capitalist group needed semi-skilled staff for their marketing and industrial operations. As the colonial state had no

intention in this period of granting independence to Nigerians, the colonial administration gave no impetus to liberalising education and making it available to the masses of the people. Moreover, higher education was not on the agenda until the 1930's and 1940's when the Yaba Higher College and the University College, Ibadan were established respectively.

This general lack of commitment on the part of the colonial state to a benevolent education for Nigerians was responsible for the disarticulation in the colonial educational policy in the country. There was a marked discrepancy in the treatment of the North and South. The actual conduct of education in Southern Nigeria was almost entirely in the hands of Christian missions. Parishioners in the South made financial contributions to those schools - they erected the buildings, employed and paid the staff. In keeping with Lugard's pledge to the Emirs, however, christian schools were excluded from the predominantly Muslim areas of the North. In lieu of mission schools, the Northern Administration sponsored a very modest educational programme of its own, tailored carefully to the narrow needs of the Native Administration.

In spite of the disarticulation, colonial educational policy resulted in the creation of the cream of Nigerian elites - the petit bourgeoisie. The people who passed out of the schools and colleges were immediately in a very special position. 'They had some opportunity for upward social mobility, and they acquired a fresh status by virtue of their new proximity to the coloniser's world. The new status and their new skills placed them in a position of becoming leaders and, by the same token, of accumulating some wealth'.

The petit bourgeoisie in colonial Nigeria was not a homogeneous class. Rather, it comprised four groups: fairly distinct, although the lines separating them are sometimes blurred. First, there was the group of precolonial overlords, variously referred to in the literature as feudal chiefs, traditional rulers, or natural rulers. When colonialism was to

be imposed, some of these rulers were heroes in the resistance movements. But hardly had the conquests been accomplished than they turned into active collaborators with the colonial state. The ranks of this group were swelled by the artificial creation by the British of 'warrant' chiefs where no such hereditary rulers existed before colonialism. The British encouraged the education of children of these rulers, especially in the North, so that they would be equipped with what their fathers lacked. This is another contradiction in colonial education, for in Southern Nigeria it was often the sons of the poor and commoner families that benefited from the colonial educational facilities. The British courted the natural rulers, and made them the most favoured group of petit bourgeois elements.

The second group was what Bade Onimode referred to as the 'coastal aristocrats', businessmen in Lagos, Calabar, Brass, Bonny, and other places who acted as middlemen between the British firms and the commodity producers in the hinterland. This group of merchants, bankers, real estate speculators and transporters was largely literate and politically active. However, their chances for expansion were blocked by the colonial restrictions to trade and commerce and they were therefore one of the most disgruntled elements in colonial Nigeria. It is not surprising that they were the early supporters of the movement first to press the colonial state for change, and later to demand the dismantling of the colonial state entirely.

Closely associated with this group of petit-bourgeoisie was the third group - the professionals. Lawyers, doctors, engineers, journalists, etc. were often in their various private practices. They made money as professionals, and sometimes also as businessmen. However, as successful traders round their chances of expansion stifled by the monopolistic practices of colonial firms, so did these highly educated professionals find their chances for advancement hampered by the restrictions imposed by the colonial state. Like the 'coastal aristocrats' therefore, the professionals along the coast and

the hinterland imbibed the nationalist ideology and spirit. It was this group that Awolowo belonged to both as a journalist and as a transporter in the 1930's.

The fourth group of petit bourgeoisie was the salariat, the 'minor colonial functionaries' such as clerks in the public and private sectors, soldiers, policemen and health inspectors. Usually, they were grouped below the British officials; and generally they occupied the lowest rungs of the ladder in the colonial state. However, these men were able to amass wealth by intimidating the people, terrorising offenders among the rural and urban poor, and obtaining bribes at the slightest opportunity.

The petit bourgeoisie in Nigeria in the first few decades of the century fought the colonial state for the chance to compete for rewards on merit and achievement. The state and colonial firms denied them these. Among the crucial issues which the petit bourgeois class fought for under the umbrella of the Nigerian Youth Movement in the 1930's were the status of the Yaba Higher College and the 'cocoa pool'. When it was clear that the colonial state was not going to accede to their general and specific demands they came to the conclusion that their goals would be realised if they themselves controlled state power.

### *The Class Character of Decolonisation Politics*

By 1945, members of the petit-bourgeoisie were already matured politically and economically. Those of them in the South had already organised successive agitations against certain colonial policies, and they had by the end of World War II, begun to look at state power with unprecedented appetite. The question then arose - who should control the state? Although an open discussion of the question was avoided, it was clear that a choice had to be made among the three major classes in colonial society: the proletariat, the peasantry and the petit-bourgeoisie.

About the earliest, and still the most lucid answer to this

question came from Awolowo. In his view, the choice was for the petit-bourgeoisie to which he belonged. However, not all fractions of this class was qualified to inherit the mantle of state power from the metropolitan bourgeoisie. Only the educated elite was qualified 'by natural rights' to assume the position of leadership. According to him:

It must be realised now and for all time that this articulate minority (the educated elite) are destined to rule the country. It is their heritage. It is they who must be trained in the art of government so as to enable them to take over complete control of the affairs of their country. Their regime may be delayed, but it cannot be precluded. . . . The educated minority in each ethnical group are the people who are qualified by natural rights to lead their fellow nationals into higher political development.<sup>25</sup>

Awolowo was speaking for members of his class. Indeed, he recognised that this class was, and will continue to be, a minority. Yet, he maintained that the will of this articulate and politically conscious minority was the will of the people, for 'the most accurate index to change in any administrative group. . . . is the demand of the articulate few in that group'.<sup>26</sup> That Awolowo was speaking for his class is further proved by the fact that he was not controverted by any member of his class. Dr. Azikiwe has even corroborated the thesis further by expressing unreserved faith in the ability of the educated elite, the 'mentally emancipated' and 'politically resurgent' elite, to assume leadership.<sup>27</sup>

For Awolowo and members of his class, the possibility of the workers and peasants succeeding to state power was out of the question. The sole preoccupation of the masses was the search for the necessities of life, so said Awolowo. He continued further to argue that:

It is a matter of indifference to them (the masses) how they are governed or who governs them as long as they are not disturbed

in their normal economic pursuits and social recreations. They bestir themselves politically only when they are severely oppressed. Even in such event they invariably ascribe the cause of the oppression to the evil nature of the individual Chiefs.

Having thus ruled out the possibility of a rule by the masses, the members of the petit-bourgeois class further decide not to make any structural change in the ownership and operation of capital and labour in the colonial economy. In this way, they killed two birds with one stone: they allayed the fears of the metropolitan bourgeoisie on the security of their investments after independence, and won for themselves the support of the colonial state and other servants of imperialism in their struggle against the working class. Needless to say, the petit-bourgeoisie favoured a 'peaceful and orderly' transition to self-rule, as against a violent and sharp break with imperialism, even when the former also meant that independence will be delayed and incomplete. The speed and coldness with which Dr. Azikiwe disclaimed the Zikist Movement,<sup>29</sup> and the liberal and conservative fashion of the constitutions attest to this refusal of the petit-bourgeoisie to commit what has been termed 'class suicide'.<sup>30</sup>

In short, the leaders clearly showed their preference for the capitalist mode of production and social relations. The petit-bourgeois elements in the North did not hide their reluctance to allow even the most minimum change in their aristocratic, emirate system as adapted by the colonial state. In the South, where the Anglo-Saxon tradition of law and democracy had been imbibed, and where the educated elite had been exposed to various political theories and systems, the preference was also for liberal ideals of democracy, multi-party rule and freedom. Thus, even in one little bit, the petit-bourgeoisie did not threaten the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie and imperialism other than that the former be substituted as rulers.

The process by which the petit-bourgeoisie took over the

leadership of the nationalist movement has been examined. What needs to be said is why they continued to receive the followership and support of the proletariat and the peasantry. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the masses were still by comparison with the petit-bourgeois elements, largely un-educated, that is, in the Western sense. Secondly, these leaders explained their incessant intra-class conflicts not in relation to scarce resources but as ethnic and religious struggles, and these were matters in which they could confuse and count on the masses' support. Indeed, the formation of the dominant political parties owed much to the excitation of ethnic and religious sentiments among the masses; and elections were fought for and won by these parties through the same method. Thirdly, as the petit bourgeoisie became increasingly involved in the political and economic administration of the country, it began to use political patronage to win (or buy?) over remnants of mass discontent. Government 'development' loans, agricultural loans and subsidies, grants, distribution of social amenities, expansion of educational and health facilities, even to the point of making them free, were examples of the ways by which the petit bourgeoisie kept the other classes loyal to the state which it headed.

This last point will be examined further in this paper especially as a measure of the contribution of Chief Awolowo to the provision of social amenities and the extension of education to the masses of Western Regional people. Before that, let us first address the role of the petit-bourgeois class in the constitutional history of Nigeria in the period under review.

*Decolonisation within Neo-Colonial Framework: The Petit-Bourgeoisie and Nigeria's Constitutional Development*

The effort in this sub-section is not to belabour the already over-flogged subject of constitutional development of Nigeria. Rather, it is to show that through the peaceful

constitutional process the British were able to entrench their neo-colonial rule over Nigeria. This is to advance further the central thesis in this section that decolonisation was a class struggle that resulted in the rulership of the petit bourgeoisie which had been indoctrinated by, and was in close alliance with, agents of imperialism.

Studies have shown that the British favoured a decolonisation programme by which the colonies, even after independence, would continue to depend on Britain.<sup>31</sup> It has also been shown that in Nigeria this programme began with the Richards Constitution. Apologists of this constitutional instrument have hailed it as marking the 'beginning of a new era'.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, the Constitution created semi-legislative bodies in each of the three regions (North, West and East) and a central Legislative Council which would include northern members for the first time. 'The heart of this constitution', explain Sklar and Whitaker, Jr., 'was its contemplation of a link between newly created parliamentary institutions and previously existing native authority councils'. This plan was effected by the provision that the members of the Regional Houses would be 'elected' from the Native Administrations (NAA), while the regional legislatures were to choose from among their members representatives to the central Legislative Council.<sup>33</sup>

The only powerful petit bourgeois challenge to these constitutional provisions was given by the NCNC. It criticised the election procedure as undemocratic, the triregional structure as artificial, and the emphasis on NAA as anachronistic and incapable of propelling the society towards self-rule. It even raised funds to finance its delegation to Britain to present to the Secretary of State the demand by the people of Nigeria for a revision of the Constitution.

Other members of the petit bourgeois class, especially the Northern fraction, were intent on trying the system. Chief Awolowo was also of the same view.<sup>34</sup> But the colonisers soon initiated moves to review the constitution, partly in response to the pressure mounted by the NCNC.

It is here that the colonial state made one concession to the members of the petit-bourgeoisie, a concession they were to utilise fully in the following years: that of allowing them to participate fully in the discussion, and fairly in the determination, of the constitutional future of Nigeria. The British officials moved into the background and continued to serve as referees, making sure that the discussion and decisions were favourable to the central goal of enshrining neo-colonial relations: and the Nigerian political elite was acquiescent so long as the colonial masters continued to work towards the transfer of power to it. It was under this congruency of desires that the political elite worked assiduously with the British to ensure the transition to neo-colonialism in Nigeria.

Consequently, starting from 1948, conferences on constitutional reforms were held in the villages, provinces and regions culminating in the General Conference held in Ibadan in 1950.<sup>35</sup> The outcome was a quasi-federal constitution called the Macpherson Constitution which retained many of the objectionable provisions of the Richards Constitution. Nevertheless, it advanced the involvement of the political elite in the administration of the country by providing for a council of ministers in each of the Regions and at the Centre. As is now generally known, the constitution broke down in 1953 over the question of the timing of Nigeria's independence. Fresh constitutional talks were held in London and Lagos in 1953 and 1954,<sup>36</sup> and the outcome was a 'truly', 'genuinely' federal constitution. Although further constitutional conferences were held and amendments were made in 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1963, the federal structure and other major provisions of the 1953-54 Constitution were largely retained.

Having said that, it is essential to return to the theme of demonstrating that the Nigerian petit bourgeoisie was an active collaborator with the British in achieving independence 'on a platter of gold', by which is implied the acquiescence to British feelings and interests in the

matter. It is not by accident that there was no markedly divergent position between the Nigeria elite and the British on the political and economic future of Nigeria. Three examples of such congruent positions will be examined here:

Firstly, and for whatever it was worth, both the British and the Nigerian elite made Nigeria a federal state. To be sure, some sections of the petit-bourgeoisie had advocated the political reorganisation of the country along federal lines. Awolowo was one of these. By 1953, he had succeeded in persuading Azikiwe and the NCNC to accept the federal principle. This was to the extent that an NCNC -- Action Group joint plan of action was drawn up shortly before the 1953 London Constitutional Conference, demanding a federal constitution.<sup>37</sup> At the same conference, the Northern elite in the NPC demanded a confederal arrangement in which 'there shall be no central legislative body and no central executive or policy making body for the whole of Nigeria', and in place of the existing House of Representatives and the Council of Ministers, 'there shall be a central organisation called a Central Agency', which shall have very little power.<sup>38</sup> The acceptance of the federal principle by the Northern elites was not without British persuasions. Even the Sardauna admitted that much by stating that 'the British officials merely tried to assist the North in bringing democratic principles into their existing institutions'.<sup>39</sup>

A federal system was favourable to the overall British decolonisation policy because it would ensure the continuation of the coloniser's divide and rule method, thus ensuring the preoccupation of the post-colonial state with politics and instability while the former colonisers would continue to reap maximum tax-free benefit from their investments.

Secondly, Nigeria was to have the parliamentary, Westminster style of government. The point at issue here is not the shortcomings of the parliamentary system which became apparent in its operation in Nigeria. Rather, the

issue is that both the Nigerian petit-bourgeoisie and the British umpires decided to graft parliamentary democracy on the various traditional systems of administration virtually without adapting the former. For the Nigerian political elite group, parliamentary democracy ensured the widening of their access to state power: there would be Legislators, Ministers, Premiers, Prime Minister, Governors, and others, all exalted positions of power and wealth. For the British, the adoption of their parliamentary system pointed to a moral victory - the civilizing mission had succeeded - and under one pretext or another they could interfere in the running of the state. The most eloquent demonstration of British direct and open intervention may be in persuading Yakubu Gowon and the Northern military elite to jettison northern secession in July 1966. But prior to that time the British had remained 'the best friends' of the ruling class and had teleguided the political development of the country. It is not by accident that Nigerian elites not only imbibed the anti-communist ideals of western capitalism but also became active collaborator with the British before and after independence in purging the state of communist elements and containing the spread of communist literature.

Thirdly, the petit-bourgeoisie and the British entrenched regionalism in Nigeria's political and economic life. That the regions were unequal in land and population sizes was clear to all parties. There were moves to create more states in the Northern Region; but these were resisted by the Northern elites and their British defenders. In the final analysis, Nigeria moved to independence with a lopsided regional structure - one region as big as the other two combined. The implications of this are not far-fetched: regional power was not balanced and the fear of the Southern elite about Northern domination was not allayed. Regionalism moved from a mere geographical matter to become one of the dominant issues in Nigerian politics. It is not by accident that the 'Big Three', Awolowo, the Sardauna and Azikiwe, became heads of their respective

regional governments. The regions were centres where the action was. By the revenue allocation system adopted, the wealth of each Region was to be expended in the Region. The leaders thus decided to preside over the expenditure of regional revenue which was being supplemented by proceeds from the operations of the Marketing Boards. Regionalism is a subject which will be addressed further when the formation of political parties and the conduct of elections are discussed. Suffice it to say here that in the decade of decolonisation politics (and ever since), it mattered in which Region one was born or resident: different regional governments operated different tax laws, educational policies, development plans, etc. All these worked according to the British divide and rule policy – they were able to prolong their rule over Nigeria because the Northern Region was not yet ready to assume the responsibilities that self-rule demanded.

This may well be the appropriate place to outline the various fiscal and economic measures designed to complete Nigeria's transition to neo-colonialism. Fortunately, Segun Osoba has done justice to the subject.<sup>46</sup> According to him, 'these measures were of a ramified and comprehensive nature, ranging from tax laws, spurious bilateral contractual agreements between Britain and Nigeria, to the inauguration of an orientation to economic development and welfare planning calculated to reinforce Britain's domination of the Nigerian economy'.<sup>41</sup> Citing example from the operation of British shipping magnates in Nigeria, Osoba vividly shows how these companies made huge profits from the country without paying a penny as tax. In addition, he shows how the Nigerian ministers rose to defend the British economic interests against those of the country. From the debates in the House of Representatives in 1957–59, it was clear that Britain had made all necessary preparations so that her shipping companies and airlines would continue to monopolise Nigeria's international ocean and air transportation. Also, in the exploitation of the vast petroleum

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resources of Nigeria, the British made sure that only her companies would have access. By the Petroleum Ordinance of 1959, only British companies or their affiliates would mine petroleum in Nigeria. This Ordinance has worked so effectively that even today, in spite of the presence of other companies and in spite of the establishment of the NNPC, the Shell-BP that pioneered the development of the Nigerian oil industry has continued to dominate that industry. Above all, the British succeeded in convincing (or is it brain washing?) the Nigerian petit-bourgeoisie that 'the development of Nigeria was bound to depend, not mainly on indigenous Nigerian enterprise or resources, but on the initiative and beneficence of the British and other foreign philanthropists'. This 'ideology' of development planning was to further make doubly sure that Nigeria remained not only in the British 'orbit' but also that the patron-client relations between Britain and Nigeria continued. Development planning since independence has not deviated much from this central ideology.

Other means by which the British imposed the neo-colonial status on Nigeria included the legal, military and civil service systems bequeathed to the country on independence. What now needs to be examined is the pattern of political competition among the members of the petit-bourgeoisie.

#### *Access to the State: Political Parties, Elections and Ethnicity*

The object here is not to give an encyclopaedist detail about the formation of political parties and the conduct of elections in colonial Nigeria. These subjects have been sufficiently addressed in the literature.<sup>43</sup> Besides, these subjects will come up for discussion recurrently in this collection. The intention here is to analyse the origins of political competition in Nigeria, and to examine how electioneering campaigns were financed. Moreover, we intend to re-visit the debate on ethnicity, especially the

charge that Awolowo was the father of ethnic politics in Nigeria.

Perhaps we should state right from the beginning that political parties emerged in the Western capitalist tradition in 1951 to contest elections and present candidates for legislative positions available in the colonial state. The Richards Constitution, either because there were no parties in the North (other than the NCNC in the South) or simply in order to avoid the emergence of parties, had in 1946 relied on indirect election and nominations from the N.A.A. However, by the provisions of the Macpherson Constitution, elections into the various legislative houses no longer depended on the N.A.A. and political parties had to be organised even in the North to contest the elections. This was the condition under which the Action Group and the NPC emerged. Therefore, political parties in Nigeria, unlike in other democracies, emerged to contest power rather than issues. This basic fact was to determine the eventual course of the country's political competition and development.

As has been shown in the literature, the Action Group and the NPC were clearly ethnically and regionally based:<sup>44</sup> in the course of time the NCNC was also reduced drastically to a regional party. Thus, three political parties *contested power, each of them dominant* in its respective Region. Only in the Western Region was the NCNC opposition able to win a significant *minority* of the seats in the Regional House. In fact, the case of the Western Region was unique in Nigeria in the sense that the NCNC 'opposition' in 1954 also won a majority of the seats in the Federal House of Representatives

In addition to these three political parties, there were several smaller parties in each of the regions. The most prominent among them were the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) Borno Youth Movement (BYM) and the Kano Peoples Party (KPP) in the North. In the West, there was the Midwest Democratic Front (DF), and in the East the

United Nigeria Independence Party (UNIP). These parties being small, found it expedient to ally with other minority parties *within* the Region which may necessarily mean a majority party in another Region. This worked well for the regionally-based parties, for without too much trouble to themselves, they were able to gain access to the government of the rival region. Thus, the NCNC was in alliance with NEPU, the Action Group with UNIP and UMBC, and the NPC with MDF.

All these parties were led by members of the petty-bourgeoisie in each of the three Regions. According to R.L. Sklar, 'the nationalistic elites' which created the parties belonged mainly to the intellectual and professional groups. In the NPC, 62 per cent of the 74-member National Executive Committee were clerical employees of the NAA, while 26 per cent were businessmen. In the Action Group, 30 per cent of the 66-member Federal Executive Council were professionals, 18 per cent were educators, and 21 per cent businessman. In the NCNC, 27 per cent of the 71-member National Executive Committee were professionals, 20 per cent educators and 28 per cent businessmen.<sup>4 5</sup> This clearly shows that although men and women from the classes could be members, the leadership of the parties was restricted to the educated elite.

The working class, which was a powerful interest group prior to 1950, became emasculated by the political parties. Although there were powerful unions like the Nigerian Railway Workers Union and the Union of Posts and Telegraphic Workers, political organisation on class lines proved unworkable. Many of the unions had joined the NCNC in the 1940's before the latter was reduced to a regional party. Initially, therefore, the parties and the unions were closely aligned in the struggle to negate colonial rule. But as the parties increasingly gained control over the machinery of government, they began to see these unions and other interest groups as oppositional groups whose activities had to be curtailed or suppressed. The result was that the

labour unions were eliminated as centres of counter-vailing forces. The parties, especially the three major, regional parties, were therefore in clear monopoly over state power.

While it was easy for the educated elites (the party leaders) to eliminate the working class as a source of alternate government, they found it difficult to dislodge the traditional rulers from power. This was due to three main reasons. Firstly, the traditional rulers were also members of the petit-bourgeoisie, and they felt that the British should return power to them from whom that power was seized in the age of 'pacification'. Secondly, the chiefs were still powerful at the NAA level where they continued to predominate as chairmen of local government councils. Thirdly, the British decided to keep them in power, and what the British wished in the decolonisation decade was hardly controverted by the educated elites: they just found ways of living with it. The colonial regime went so far as to design a place for the chiefs in the regional administration by creating the Houses of Chiefs for the North and the West. Willy-nilly, the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs was inaugurated in 1959. Although the *chiefs, emirs, obas* and *obis* were not members of the parties, they had their political 'sympathies' and 'support'. For instance, all Northern *Emirs* and *chiefs* supported the government party openly, and exercised enormous influence at all arms of regional administration. In the West, only one of the 54 members of the House of Chiefs in 1958 was not a supporter of the Action Group party.<sup>46</sup> The traditional rulers were, therefore, pressure group extraordinaire on parties.

What were the sources of finance for the political parties especially in funding the election campaigns? Perhaps it should be stated that party finance in Nigeria (and elsewhere) was a closely guarded subject. As is revealed by R.L. Sklar, party finance was an exclusively executive matter in the NPC, and 'it was not discussed at plenary sessions of the annual conventions.'<sup>47</sup> From the little that is known, there

were certain revenue sources common to all the parties. There were the enrollment, affiliation and subscription fees, annual dues; receipts from the sale of party emblems, literature, constitutions, almanacs, flags, handkerchiefs, and other items; levies on the salaries of parliamentarians and all those who receive the patronage of the government formed by the party, donations from wealthy members and supporters, and donations collected from public lectures, symposia and other social events organised by the party. Although these sources were similar, the rates charged on, and incomes derived from them varied from party to party.

For instance, enrollment fee in the NPC was 2s. 6d. (25k) while subscription was 1s. (10k) per month.<sup>48</sup> As for the NCNC, affiliation fee payable by member—unions was 21 shillings (₦2.10) while individual members obtained membership cards at 1s. (10k).<sup>49</sup> Party constitutions were selling at 2s. (20k) per copy. The enrollment fee in the Action Group was 1s. (10k) and the monthly subscription was 1s. (10k).<sup>50</sup> The NPC charged a levy of 5 per cent on the salaries of all members of the Federal and Regional legislative houses, parliamentary secretaries and ministers. Similar levies were made by the Action Group and the NCNC, but the rate charged was 10 per cent. (although the latter resolved to increase its own charge in 1951 to 25 percent, this was not implemented). Returns from these levies were undoubtedly significant, as salaries received by these leaders in 1958 were: ministers £3,000; premiers and prime minister £4,000; parliamentary secretaries and chief whips £1,500; and ordinary legislators £800. Donations from wealthy members and supporters were also substantial, but they were irregular.<sup>51</sup>

By far the greatest source of party finance, which was common to all parties and was held in close secrecy, was government funds which were cleverly and neatly siphoned into the party. We will resist the temptation to discuss the Coker Commission of Inquiry here:<sup>52</sup> indeed, a whole paper is required on the subject. Suffice it to say here that the Coker Commission Report showed that some Action

Group members formed the NIPC through which funds were made available to the party. The NIPC itself obtained its funds from several Western regional government sources, including the WNDC and the Marketing Board. Examples of similar practices abound in other political parties.

A source of party finance peculiar to the two 'southern' parties – the Action Group and the NCNC – was loans from the 'nationalistic' banks. The Action Group took loans from the National Bank, a Western Regional Government banker, founded by persons who were either members or supporters of the Action Group.<sup>53</sup> The NCNC took loans from the African Continental Bank, owned by Azikiwe, and which also served as the Eastern Regional Government banker.<sup>54</sup>

To run the party and finance elections required a lot of money even in the 1950's. Items of expenditure at election times included transportation, propaganda materials, remuneration of party agents, goodwill expenditures in the form of 'gifts' (properly bribes) to key natural rulers and influential members of the electorate, and publicity. On the last bit, the parties had their newspapers. In the case of the NCNC, the party used the *West African Pilot* owned by Dr. Azikiwe. Publicity became even cheaper as soon as the party took over the control of state apparatuses, including the Ministry of Information and the Redifusion network. Party expenditure on election varied from Region to Region; and even in the same Region, it varied from constituency to constituency. For instance, in the East, it was estimated that £300 would be enough per candidate to run the campaign in his constituency. However, candidates from the riverine constituencies were allotted £400 because the cost of transportation in those areas was high.<sup>55</sup> In addition, party expenditure was high in areas where the opposition party was strong. This was the case of the NPC in the Kano Province where NEPU opposition was large and militant. This also partly accounted for the high cost of financing electioneering campaigns in the West, because the NCNC was as strong as the Action

Group. Prior to 1959, expenditure by the parties on elections was generally low. However, the elections of 1959 stretched the resources of each of the political parties. Even in the North, the NPC felt threatened and its central organisation had to supply each provincial organisation a party van and assume greater role in directing and financing the campaign. The Action Group was rated to have spent the highest in the 1959 election, estimated at £1 million.<sup>56</sup>

All told, it would seem that most candidates finance their own electioneering campaigns when party resources proved insufficient. Indeed, there were 'independent candidates' who were members of no political parties. By their position in the class structure, these candidates could raise the funds from their private resources. Those who could not sought financial assistance from their friends, relations or ethnic unions or 'progressive societies'. Those who did not possess these 'went into debt in the hope of recouping the losses by means of their future emoluments'.<sup>57</sup> Here is one of the most enduring causes for corruption as a means of property accumulation by the petit bourgeoisie, and as a pernicious source of election rigging. The candidate who went into debt in the course of his election might need to dip his fingers into government coffers to pay his creditors, employ all dubious means to cover up the corruption, find the plums of office too delicious to leave, finance the next campaign on a grander scale with money stolen from government coffers, either go into debt again or rig the election just to return to power. . . and so forth cyclically. We save our words on private accumulation among the petit bourgeoisie till the next section.

In addition to money, the political parties used other tools to attain and remain in power. This is where we consider the role of ethnicity in Nigerian politics and economy. In this consideration, we move away from looking at 'tribalism' or 'ethnicity' as an 'explanatory tool' or 'denominator' for understanding Nigerian political competition and crises.

rather, we side with those who see ethnicity as a tool in the hands of the elite to further their private economic and political interest.<sup>59</sup> Ethnicity was employed by the different regional factions of the emergent petit-bourgeoisie in their struggle to gain access to, and retain control over the colonial and post-colonial state.

Studies have shown that, from the earliest beginning, members of the petit-bourgeoisie had found it easy to invoke ethnic support for their intra-class competition for dominance. Ethnicity was said to have broken up the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1941; and that date is held as the end of unified leadership in Nigeria. The furrows deepened by the elections of 1951, and the scene in the Western Regional Houses of Assembly where some men believed to have become members of the NCNC, crossed the carpet to the side of the Action Group just so that Dr. Azikiwe (Igbo) would not head the regional government in Yorubaland. An impartial explanation of what happened in the Western House on that fateful day (7th January 1952) is still needed.<sup>60</sup> But from this date on, 'the die was cast for leadership competition in southern Nigeria', and that competition was drawn along ethnic lines<sup>61</sup>

Either as a preparation for, or in response to this competition, the emergent elite in Nigeria organised their ethnic groups into unions with political undertones. The most notable of these unions were the Igbo State Union, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and *Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa*. There is no doubt that Awolowo used the *Egbe* as a launching pad into politics proper, and as the nucleus of the Action Group. It is also clear that in the North the JMA simply metamorphosed into the NPC retaining virtually the same members. The Igbo State Union also 'grew to become virtually synonymous with the NCNC, and at one time Dr. Azikiwe was leader of both'.<sup>62</sup> Elections were organised, campaigned for and held, but one could predict the results in the North and the East. Results in the West could not be easily predicted until 1957. This was because the NCNC and the Action Group had

comparable strength.

Once the NPC, Action Group and NCNC had won power in the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions respectively they clung to it tenaciously using the same tools that originally ensured their electoral success — ethnicity, religious appeals, violence and money. These tools were now supplemented with the instruments of coercion and intimidation in the colonial state: the police, sanitary inspectors and native courts. It is not by accident that the NPC and Action Group demanded the regionalisation of the police (they already had unlimited control over the Native Authority Police Forces at the 1957 constitutional conference. But for the split in the Action Group, each of the regionally and ethnically based political parties could be said to dominate power in the Regions until the military took over in 1966. And, without any qualifications, the federal state remained a coalition of the NPC and NCNC until 1966.

While still discussing this phenomenon of struggle for access to state, we should examine the issue of subregional separatism, often regarded as the movement for the creation of more states. This issue has often been misconstrued as an aspect of ethnic politics. It is related to ethnicity only in the sense that the demands were made by minority ethnic groups in each of the Regions. Otherwise, it was essentially a struggle to extend the centres of state and wealth.

As the movement for Nigeria's independence gathered storm, leaders of the minority ethnic groups began to realise increasingly that their ambitions would be submerged in the will of their counterparts from the majority ethnic groups. They thus advocated the creation of more states over which they would preside. Eme Ekwewke has shown very convincingly that the demands for separate states were linked directly with the competition for access to state power by members of the governing class. He argues thus;

since those in power at the Regions (who were, invariably, from the majority ethnic groups) has no intention of

losing it, those out of power were obliged to seek the creation of alternative power centres.<sup>63</sup>

Elites from the majority ethnic groups in the south had advocated the reorganisation of Nigeria into a larger number of smaller states based on the criteria of 'cultural and linguistic affinities' as argued by Dr. Azikiwe, or ethnic homogeneity as suggested by Awolowo. Leaders of the NPC were of a different view: they supported the retention of the tri-regional structure and the suppression of minority views to the majority will.

In the North, subregional separatism became a fact of political significance among the minority groups in the lower north, referred to in the literature as the Middle Belt. Most of these ethnic groups were predominantly non-Muslim, and they favoured small-scale, highly decentralised and democratic forms of political organisation. The gradual devolution of power to the Muslim, aristocratic Hausa-Fulani elements must have stimulated in these largely Christian elites of the Middle Belt the political movement for separation from the proper North. These were factors leading to the organisation in 1949 of the Northern Nigerian Non-Muslim League, which was changed in 1950 to the Middle Zone League, and later to the United Middle Belt Congress.

In the Western Region, subregional separation found expression in the Benin and Delta provinces. The overwhelming desire of this movement was the creation of a separate state out of Western Nigeria. In the Eastern Region, the earliest and most powerful separatist agitation was from the leaders of the Southern Cameroons, a United Nations Trust Territory. Their demands were granted in 1954. This probably awakened in other non-Igbo leaders of the Region the movement for the creation of new states in their own areas. Thus, the Calabar - Ogoja - Rivers state movement emerged.

What needs be said about these strands of subregional separatism is that the movements were not ethnic *per se*, they were elitist and only couched their propaganda in ethnic

terms. Even the leaders of the majority ethnic groups recognised this, and they exploited the movements for political ends. Those in power in each Region supported the state creation demand in *other* Regions while suppressing similar protests within their own Region. Thus, the Action Group supported the COR and Middle Belt state movements, NCNC supported the Mid-West and Middle Belt movements while the NPC from 1960 supported the Mid-West movement. The Action Group actually acquiesced in the creation of the Mid-Western Region. The party sponsored a debate in the Regional House in 1956 which agreed to create the state. Also state creation was part of its campaign strategy in 1959. However, the measures were cautious and half-hearted, and the Party would want states to be created in other Regions as well. Thus, sub-regional agitation for state creation did not succeed until 1962 when the Mid-West was created, and in 1967 when more states were added.

*'Rewarding the Electorate': the Petit-Bourgeoisie and Regional Administration*

Although internal self-government was granted to the Regions in 1957 (the North had to wait until 1959) active involvement of the petit bourgeoisie in the administration of the Regions dated back to 1951. From that date, and especially from 1955, the leaders of the ethnically based political parties began to work strenuously in order to fulfil their electoral promises. For the avoidance of doubt, these electoral promises were a mixed bag of different and somewhat contradictory rewards for different classes of the electorate. The promises were made to attract the votes, and they had to be fulfilled in order to disarm the opposition and keep the electorate favourably disposed for future elections.

First, the petit-bourgeoisie rewarded itself as soon as it acquired power. This was by placing regional (and, of course, national) wealth at the disposal of its members in and outside of government circles for investment in their private enterprises.

prises. Public funds, it has been said, provided investment and loan capital for members of the emergent elite.<sup>64</sup> According to R.L. Sklar, between 1951 and 1957 the Western Regional Tenders Board awarded building contracts exceeding £5 million each to twelve Nigerian firms, all owned by Action Group members or supporters.<sup>65</sup> This example was typical. The period 1955–1960 witnessed in all the Regions a proliferation in government bureaucracies, public corporations, financial institutions, opportunities for contract jobs, and the likes.

Regional and marketing board funds were at the bottom of these rewarding exercises. It is noteworthy that no new taxes were imposed in order to raise revenue to meet expenditure on these ostensibly 'economic development' programmes. The conduit pipes through which regional funds were placed at the disposal of members of the bourgeoisie were the loans boards, development, housing and finance corporations, banks, and others. To facilitate this rewarding process, the marketing board was regionalised in 1954, and customs and excise taxes collected by the Federal Government were distributed according to derivation, i.e., according to the proportion of regional contributions to the funds.

The system of patronage referred to above was a benefit enjoyed *only* by members of the petit-bourgeoisie. We should add, however, that the 'rewards' were not indiscriminately made. All those who would enjoy regional government patronage had to be members (with party cards) or supporters (with large donations) of the ruling party. It is therefore not by accident that in the North, the Northern Amalgamated Merchants' Union, and the Northern Contractors Union, among others, were closely connected with the NPC. Also in the East, the Eastern Nigeria Civil Engineers, Building Contractors of Enugu and the Union of Niger African Traders were supporters of the NCNC.<sup>66</sup> In the West, the Action Group was backed by the Federation of Civil Engineering Building Contractors of Yaba, the African Contractors' Union, the Nigerian Produce Buyers Union, and the Nigerian

Motor Transport Union.<sup>67</sup> These groups and their members were rewarded through contract awards, and so on; and were paid in funds derived from taxing and exploiting the working class and the peasantry.

The creation of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie was part of the reward system. It was said that in 1945 there were only 75 permanent local senior civil servants in Nigeria.<sup>68</sup> This figure increased to 245 in 1946, but was still unsatisfactory. The colonial state succumbed to nationalist pressure, and in 1948 set up a Commission to ascertain ways of increasing the indigenous representation in the administration. Dr. Azikiwe was a member of this Commission, and it recommended the appointment of Nigerians to senior Civil Service posts as fast as suitable candidates came forward.<sup>69</sup> To obtain the required qualifications, more scholarships and training courses were recommended. By 1954,<sup>70</sup> such trainees had become involved in the on-going process of scramble for senior posts at the Regional and Federal levels. By 1960, the Western Region had been able to 'Nigerianise' all key posts, including all the nine permanent secretaries.<sup>71</sup> The pace of Nigerianisation in the East was slower, but it was accelerating. In the North, the story was different: suitable, qualified Northerners could not be found. However, Nigerianisation in the North went on with an anti-Southern spirit, and by 1958 a total of 2,148 Southerners had been dismissed from their jobs in the Northern public service. By and large, a crop of powerful bureaucrats joined the petit-bourgeois class – their own rewards went *pari passu*.

We now turn to the system of rewarding other classes of the electorate – the workers and the peasants. The only benefit that accrued to the working class and which had a class character was wage review; and this was often forced on the government through labour's militant action. Other benefits such as roads, water supply, electricity, creation of jobs, free education, expansion of health facilities, and others were not enjoyed exclusively (not even essentially) by the working class and the peasantry. For instance, road building was an essential ingredient for mobility during

electioneering campaigns, housing units were constructed in the cities for the senior civil servants – the new recruits into the bourgeoisie, hospitals were located hundreds of miles from the rural peasants, who could not even afford the costs when they were near, and similar problems.

We emphasize, also, that this category of rewards was not made indiscriminately. During campaigns, electric poles, and wires, water pipes and taps, bricks and iron sheets, etc. would be brandished in constituencies as signs of the good things to come. They were withdrawn as soon as the elections were over, generally never to be brought back unless the candidate concerned had enough clout. Usually, areas where the opposition party was strong was neglected, unless there was a grand design to canvass for votes.

By far the most publicised of the rewards, especially in the South, was the free primary education scheme. First conceived by the Action Group leaders, it became the most costly and politicised policy of regional governments. The ideas were first mooted by Awolowo. As he explained in his autobiography, he was motivated by the perception that the Western Region was lagging behind the East educationally. He claimed that primary school attendance rates were 65 per cent in the East and 35 per cent in the West and that while there were 105 secondary schools in the East, the West had only 25.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps Awolowo exaggerated,<sup>73</sup> but the Action Group predicated its educational programme on the aim of closing the gap between the West and the East.

Plans began to be made in 1953 with the imposition of an education and health levy of 15 shillings (£1.50) per tax payer. Dr. Azikiwe, then NCNC Opposition Leader in the Western House, opposed the levy arguing that it was too high. His opposition was interpreted in ethnic terms he was accused of seeking to draw the West further back. The Action Group went ahead with the levy. The NCNC made the levy a political issue and won a resounding victory at the polls in the Federal elections of 1954.

What the Action Group lost in 1954, it gained in 1955: the Free Primary Education programme took off that year, and the political effects were immediate in the 1955 regional election where the Action Group performed better than the previous year. The long term effects were in making education more liberal, creating a literate electorate, and widening the membership of the middle class, prospective candidates to the petit-bourgeois class. The argument that it lowered the standard of education is not examined here.

Confronted with those political effects, and with the threat of the West closing the educational gap with the East the NCNC government in Eastern Nigeria was spurred into introducing its own free primary education. The result was disastrous. This was partly due to the fact that the programme was hastily put up, unlike the West which started planning in 1953. It was also due to the condition of Eastern Nigerian finances since 1955 when the revenue allocation system favoured the East least. Another cause of the failure of the programme was the cessation in 1954 of the educational grant-in-aid on which the programme was predicated in the first place. As a way out, the Regional Government passed a large bulk of the financing to the Local Governments. But the latter's capability to generate revenue was constrained by corruption and inefficiency in tax administration. The Regional Government then introduced the local rates and the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax schemes to replace the income tax – so as to generate funds for the programme. In essence, in both Regions where welfarist programmes were inaugurated, they had to be sustained by taxing the masses more heavily. The brunt of social programmes was borne by the lower classes.

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## Awolowo's Background, 1906-1934

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RINA OKONKWO

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Obafemi Oyeriyi Jeremiah Awolowo was born on March 1909 in Ikenne, an Ijebu Remo town in Western Nigeria presently part of Ogun State, Nigeria. Ikenne is a small town whose population was estimated at 14,000 to 15,000 in 1894.<sup>1</sup> As Awolowo observed, "You will not find it on most maps of Nigeria"<sup>2</sup>. It is located between Ijebu Ode and Shagamu. Today Ikenne is famous as the home of the Awolowo library and the Mayflower School, founded by Tai Solarin. Ikenne is a farming town. It is also famous for livestock. It was once jokingly said that there are more goats than men in Ikenne.

David Shopolu Awolowo, Obafemi Awolowo's father, was a farmer who loved to grow yam tuber and as well as a lumber merchant. As one of the first Christians in the town who became converted in 1896, he was literate in Yoruba. David's father, Obafemi's grandfather, was a member of the *Iwarefa*, the inner circle of the *Osugbo*, the ruling body of the town. Thus, Obafemi was born into a reputable family of modest wealth.

Obafemi Awolowo was a "welcome child", "a circumstance conducive to natural good nature and a tendency to optimism".<sup>3</sup> He was the second child of his parents, but the first child died after five months. A long gap between children at that time increased his treasured status in the

family. His sister, Victoria Olufunmilayo, was born in 1915 and Bolajoko was born in 1919.

Obafemi's paternal grandmother, Asefule, lived with the family throughout Obafemi's childhood. Obafemi was so dear to her that she called him "her father". She prevented her son from punishing the boy too harshly.<sup>4</sup>

Obafemi began school at the age of five years at St. Saviour's Anglican School, Ikenne. After three years, he transferred to Wesleyan School, Ikenne. He received every encouragement from his father in his pursuit of education. His father paid his fees promptly and bought all necessary books before the beginning of term. He even bought him chalk, then the exclusive preserve of teachers. His father engaged a tutor to improve his son's mastery of the school subjects.<sup>5</sup>

Obafemi enjoyed success at school and hoped to fulfill his father's ambition that he should become a "man of consequence". His father also encouraged his son in wrestling, and the young man pleased his father by defeating a well-known older opponent. Obafemi remembered that his father and grandmother urged him to be "very tough, fearless and defiant as a boy"<sup>6</sup>

By the time he was eleven years old, Obafemi had developed a strong character. He was filled with self-confidence, gained from a supportive family and success in school and wrestling. When adversity came, he was already equipped to triumph over it.

In 1919, Obafemi's happy home began to crumble when his father married another wife. His beloved grandmother moved to Abeokuta after a quarrel between her and the new wife. Then on 8 April, 1920, David Shopolu Awolowo died of small pox. This event radically altered the household. Obafemi's mother moved back to her parent's home and later re-married. In accordance with Ijebu custom, it was the brothers and not the wife and the children who inherited the wealth of the deceased. Thus, Obafemi became destitute. He withdrew from school because there was no

money to pay his fees. Despite the fact that his father had left sufficient property to have enabled his son to complete his remaining two years of primary school, none of the brothers was willing to assume this responsibility.

On 20 April, 1921, Obafemi left Ikenne to seek his fortune in Abeokuta, which was second to Lagos in importance. The move to Abeokuta marked a turning point in his life which opened a new world to him. He was impressed by the number of cars, the good roads, the street lights and pipe borne water. In Abeokuta, he first learned about Herbert Macaulay and came under his spell. Through Macaulay's reputation as "the champion and defender of native rights and liberties", Awolowo became interested in nationalist politics.<sup>7</sup>

The next six years were full of difficulty for the boy who was just twelve years old. As he described the period in his autobiography, "I fended for myself"<sup>8</sup>. Hardship only sharpened Awolowo's determination and ambition. Obafemi's purpose in travelling to Abeokuta was to further his schooling. The only way he could do this was to work to earn enough money to pay his own school fees. Obafemi's first jobs were as a houseboy. In return for doing housework, he would receive food, lodging and school fees. Obafemi's defiant attitude to authority prevented him from succeeding as a houseboy. In one home, when the mistress took a stick to beat him, he grabbed a stick to strike back.<sup>9</sup> Obafemi's grandmother later retrieved his belongings for him.

A brief visit to Ikenne at the end of 1923 reinforced Obafemi's drive to complete his schooling. He was embarrassed to discover that many of his former classmates had already finished school. He vowed not to return again until he had achieved his goal.

Obafemi lived with his grandmother in Abeokuta and worked fetching firewood from a near-by forest to earn his school fees. He attended the salvation Army School but later changed to Wesleyan School in Imo. He li-

happily with Mr. Mould, a blind letter writer who gave accommodation and meals to several young men who then assisted him in his letter writing business. Obafemi earned money by fetching water and successfully completed standard V in June 1926.

The Headmaster of Wesleyan School, Imo, Mr. Keleko, recognized Obafemi's ability and offered him a teaching position in the school. Mr. Keleko encouraged Obafemi to study for the entrance exam. to Wesley College, Ibadan, a four-year teacher training institution. Obafemi had already decided that he wanted to be a lawyer,<sup>10</sup> but he saw the college as a way to further his education. He succeeded in passing the exam. and entered Wesley College in January, 1927.

Admission to Wesley College was a great achievement. Obafemi returned to Ikenne in December, 1926 to visit his friends. They were impressed with his success. Obafemi was proud that he had fulfilled his father's dream that he (Obafemi) would attend a secondary school.

Despite these high expectations, Obafemi spent only one year at Wesley College and left. He could not tolerate the strict system of discipline of older pupils over younger ones. It was Obafemi's unwillingness to obey high authority, his spirit of rebellion, which prevented him from continuing the course.

The final year students were the big noises in the place. They monopolised all the important offices in the college and constituted a powerful and authoritarian hierarchy. I abhorred removal of latrine and urinal pails, digging and tending of night soil trenching grounds, and being capriciously ordered about by a fellow-student.<sup>11</sup>

Obafemi led the opposition of first year students to the "fagging" system. He was brought before the College Court, which consisted of final year students, charged with the following offences:

1. Refusal to fag for any final year students.
2. Refusal to salute senior students whenever he passed them.
3. Rudeness in addressing senior students.

Obafemi refused to plead before the court because the judges were not impartial. His accusers were also judges. Obafemi succeeded in immobilizing the court for 1927.<sup>12</sup>

The last term of 1927, the seniors attempted to bring Obafemi down to his knees, but failed. This year Wesley College might be considered an apprenticeship in the leadership of the oppressed. Obafemi's defiance of the senior boys, his intolerance of injustice, was later accorded a wider field in the independence movement.

Obafemi left Wesley College because of the rigid discipline and manual labour. Also, the prospects for a certified teacher were not attractive. The salary was low, promotions few, and the payment of salaries was irregular. Teachers appeared to him to be a race of "meek and going people, extremely obsequious in the presence of the white man"<sup>13</sup> Obafemi decided to become a short-hand typist.

For the next two years, January 1928 to sometimes 1930, Obafemi served as a teacher at Wesleyan (now Methodist) School, Ogbé, Abeokuta. He had to work one year to meet the conditions of the bond he had signed to enter Wesley College. Obafemi moved up in Abeokuta society and began associating with a group of young men. They all vowed never to dine or associate with white people. Awolowo observed this personal demonstration of opposition to colonial rule until 1953.<sup>14</sup>

Awolowo began to read widely and develop more sophistication. The two books which influenced his personal philosophy were, *The Human Machine*, a collection of essays about practical psychology and another book, *Up to you*. As the title suggests, the latter book encouraged

self-improvement.<sup>15</sup>

Obafemi embarked on a serious programme of home study. He took correspondence course in English, Commercial knowledge, Book-keeping, Business Methods and Shorthand. In June 1929, he went to Lagos to learn Touching-typing. His former mentor, Mr. Mould, the blind letter-writer, bought a second-hand typewriter and Obafemi got practice typing letters. By the end of 1929 Obafemi could type forty words per minute and could take one hundred to one hundred and twenty words per minute in shorthand.<sup>16</sup>

Awolowo secured a job as a shorthand typist with a German firm in Lagos. His salary was almost three times a teacher's pay. The job was short-lived and Obafemi was unemployed for nineteen months. He could have gone back to teaching, but he vowed that he would never take a job below that of his classmates in Wesley College. He rejected the civil service because it was "dominated by white men and African 'yes men.'" "With my attitude of mind I felt sure that I was not the type to make progress as a civil servant"<sup>17</sup>. Unable to find a job, Obafemi gave evening lessons for those preparing for the preliminary Cambridge and Junior preceptors' exams.

Awolowo used his time to read and learn Latin. He was fascinated by the essays of Robert Ingersoll and read Thomas Huxley's *Evolution of the Species*, and Thomas Paine's, *Age of Reason*. He became an agnostic, but eventually returned to Christianity.

In April 1932, Awolowo began work as College Clerk at Wesley College, Ibadan. During his two and a half year stay, he did not attend chapel services. The principal was very tolerant of his iconoclasm. On one occasion, the vice-principal Mr. Hodges reprimanded Obafemi for his failure to say thank you when the former handed him a draft to type. Obafemi replied that it might be an English custom to say "thank you", but according to Yoruba custom, one would only say "thank you" when receiving a

gift. Obafemi was fined for rudeness and did not greet Hodges for months. The principal intervened to restore normal relations between the two.

While working as College Clerk, Obafemi prepared the London matriculation examination to qualify him to study law in England. He also took correspondence courses in journalism. He planned to work to earn enough money to go to England for legal studies.

In assessing Awolowo's first twenty five years, I cannot help but wonder how different his life would have been if his father had lived longer. Perhaps Obafemi would have entered the Church Missionary Society Grammar School (CMSGS) in Lagos as his father had planned. Would Obafemi have developed his remarkable independent spirit and rebellious attitude to authority? Would he have possessed such strong determination to succeed? Adversity and absence of both a father and a supportive family stimulated the young man to self-reliance, hard work, self-discipline and non-conformity, if Awolowo's father had been alive would Obafemi have dared to challenge Christianity? Would he have eventually clashed with his father?

To a unique degree, particularly in Africa, Obafemi Awolowo was free to make his own decisions, to try out new ideas and to chart his own course. He could take risks and suffer the consequences. Thus, he gained the necessary courage to become a strong leader. He had the background to become a future fighter for Nigerian independence.

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## A Decade of Consolidation: The Journalist, Businessman, Politician and Lawyer, 1934-1960

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O. A. AKINYEYE

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For the educated Nigerians in general and Chief Obafemi Awolowo in particular, the period between 1934 and 1945 was a trying one. It marked the era of complete domination of Nigerian economy and society by the British colonial masters and also coincided with the global economic recession following the transient post first world war economic boom, and the excruciating and pervasive war-time economic measures during the second world war.

These two phenomena led to the marginalisation of Nigerians in their own country and bred great nationalist agitations against the colonial government. Nigerians in spite of their educational qualifications were largely excluded from the top cadre of the civil service<sup>1</sup> and the few ones who were appointed did not enjoy the same remuneration with their European counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

In the private sector, the colonial government acquiesced to the high total control of the Nigerian economy by European (especially British) nationals. Both the import and export sections of the economy were dominated by British and European firm notably the UAC. The UAC alone in fact accounted for more than 40% of the import-export business of Nigeria in 1930 and as much as 34% as late as 1949.<sup>3</sup> The UAC and five other established European firms constituted themselves into the Association of West

• African Merchants (AWAM) through which Nigeria's import-export economy was dominated for the entire period covered by this chapter. Even as late as 1949, AWAM handled 66% and 70% of Nigeria's import and export trades respectively.<sup>4</sup>

These European firms ever went to the extent of engaging in extensive retail and semi wholesale trading that should have been left to Nigerian entrepreneurs who lacked the capital to go into the bigtime import and export business.<sup>5</sup> Government acquiescence to expatriate control of the economy reached a climax during the second world war when ostensibly due to wartime exigencies an official monopoly was established over the purchase, export and marketing of all West African agricultural produce. This was done through the agency of the West African Produce Control Board which in turn designated large established British firms as its buying agents.<sup>6</sup> The banking sector was exclusively European-controlled and denied credit facilities to Africans.

In politics, Nigerians were no less marginalised for the entire period covered by this chapter indeed until the Macpherson constitution of 1951, Nigerians had practically no effective say in the running of the affairs of their country. They were almost entirely excluded from the executive council – the two African members of the council, Rhodes and Alakija were – Sierra-leonean and Brazillian respectively. The constitutional development of the country has attracted serious scholarship from highly competent quarters.<sup>7</sup> Suffice it to note that Nigerians performed no meaningful roles in the legislature.

The above unwholesome situation bred great nationalist agitations against the British colonial government. At the fore-front of this nationalism were the educated elites who directly felt the pinch of colonial domination more than any other group in Nigeria. This group of Nigerians were resolved to fortify themselves and wrest political control from the British. This resolution manifested itself in the

dramatic increase in the number of Nigerians in institutions of higher learning both at home and abroad, and the clamour for increase in educational opportunities in the 1930s.

Those who did not have the opportunity struggled against the face of overwhelming odds to have higher educational opportunities. The struggles of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to establish himself for the period under study, typified the feelings of the Nigerian elites of the period.

With few opportunities in the merchantile houses, inadequate prospects in the government service and limited chances in the legislature, the determination to wrest control from the British becomes understandable. For Chief Awolowo and the educated elites and nationalists of similar minds, this noble goal did not make a career in the civil service attractive. This was not only as Chief Awolowo himself said because of its dominance by the whites,<sup>8</sup> but also because of the fact that as civil servants, there was a limit to which nationalists of Awo's frame of mind could criticise the colonial establishment if they were not to run foul of the law. Furthermore, the trade Unions that could have served as a rallying point for the agitation against colonial domination were, because of the nature of their composition, too conservative, complacent and pro establishment. Added to this constraint, in the Civil Service was Chief Awolowo's firm belief in self reliance which had been of great significance to his early successes before the period under study.<sup>10</sup>

The nationalist therefore had to be self-employed for them to be free to agitate against the British Colonial government. This fact dawned on Chief Awolowo as he decided to be on his own and build himself up. The year 1934 which begins this chapter was therefore doubly significant for Chief Awolowo. It marked the beginning of his journey towards self development and self-reliance, as well as the beginning of another era in nationalist struggles in Nigeria with the formation of the Lagos Youth Movement and later Nigerian Youth Movement — by pseudo radical int

lectuals of that time.

Self reliance for Chief Awolowo meant self employment. This could only be possible in either of two ways. He either had to go to business or acquire a profession. The constraints to indigenous entrepreneurship has already been noted. To belong to the profession, there was the need to acquire the skill in the profession of one's choice. This in the case of law and medicine which were the two prominent professions during the period of our study which entailed a period of overseas studentship. This in turn required a solid financial base. Chief Obafemi Awolowo opted for the law profession.

Exactly why Chief Awolowo decided to choose the law profession is not known.<sup>11</sup> Some reasonable guesses can, however, be made. In the first place, the educational opportunities to which the Chief had been exposed before this time were due to his limited family background and neither such that exposed him to the sciences a thorough knowledge of which is required for the medical profession. Furthermore, even though the chief was industrious and successfully struggled against barriers to his educational pursuits, such struggles can mostly be successful in the humanities and social sciences where there are no needs for laboratory experiences as required in the sciences. Moreover, the law as a profession was better exposed to most educated Nigerians of the time than medicine. While the people could and did dispense with the services of the doctors except on very rare and serious cases by using traditional medicine, lawyers were more popular with the people in business circles, politics, and even the professions. Lawyers were dominant in public life in Lagos with which a politically ambitious Yoruba of Awo's stamp could not but be intimately acquainted with.<sup>12</sup> Lastly the law as a profession fitted well into the scheme of Awo's things in a fundamental way in which medicine did not. While both professions afforded their practitioners the opportunity of earning an independent living, the law had the additional

advantage of touching on sensitive parts of the colonial administration.<sup>13</sup>

Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not merely go into the law profession, however, it did neither mean that the law was the area of least resistance for anybody with intelligence. Apart from the financial implications of legal studies overseas which has been noted, there was also the fact that the profession was very enigmatic to the colonial government and was to use the words of the author in the history of the legal profession in Nigeria circumscribed until a year before the beginning of our period. For reasons enumerated by this historians, the British Colonial administration proceeded to make the practice of the legal profession very trying in Nigeria. The judicial system of the country was reorganised in 1914. There were to be the supreme court, the provincial courts and the native courts. The jurisdiction of the supreme courts was initially restricted to Lagos and gradually extended to other parts of the country. Provincial courts were in fact organised to frustrate the professional prospects of indigenous lawyers. It was based on the common law and such native laws that were not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.<sup>14</sup> No legal practitioners were to appear before the courts. The avenues of appeal from Native Courts to the supreme court before 1914 was blocked by this reform. The overall effect of this on both the law as a profession and lawyers, was that the advocacy aspect of the profession was seriously restricted, and moreover at that stage of the country's economic development, soliciting could not be expected to thrive much. It is difficult to establish presently whether Chief Awolowo was aware of this barrier to the legal profession before 1933 or even the judicial reforms of that year. However, having decided on the profession AWO then set about raising enough fund to acquire the necessary skills. His subsequent endeavours in journalism and business were a means to acquire this end when Chief Obafemi Awolowo resigned his appointment to opt for

journalism. For an adventurer in search of quick money for a life ambition, Awo's choice of journalism as a profession sounds a little puzzling. This is because journalism and journalists of the thirties, and a better part of the forties were hardly wealthy or financially stable in the society. This was due to a number of reasons. In the first place, majority of the newspapers operated only in Lagos and other few urban centres. Moreover, even in these few urban centres, their readership was limited. The newspapers therefore made very little money from sales and had very little working capital. Furthermore, because of their nationalistic tones, the newspapers did not enjoy uncaningful government patronage which would have augmented their meagre financial resources!<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact so precarious was the financial situation of the press including Nigeria, that majority of newspapers established between 1880 and 1937 either went out of operations or became more irregular in circulation within the first five years of their existence.<sup>16</sup> This financial predicament of the newspaper industry in Nigeria had its effect on journalists who inspite of their doggedness and commitment were still usually penurious. They could not hold their own with the men of other professions or even with the paid civil servants in the Nigerian society.<sup>17</sup> One then wonders why Awo who was apparently aware of the plight of men of the pen profession should have decided to take to journalism to raise money.

Awo's choice of journalism would appear to have been influenced by two main reasons. Firstly, journalism would appear to be the only profession outside law and medicine where African enterprises was not blocked.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Awo nursed the hope of making more than his monthly salary of three pounds in Wesley College, while he could still enjoy the freedom which the dictate of his job denied him.<sup>19</sup>

Chief Awolowo's hopes were, however, frustrated later. He started his career as journalist in 1934 by joining the *Nigerian Daily Times* as trainee reporter for three months

and was then sent to Ibadan as a resident correspondent on a salary of two pounds a month. In addition, he was to draw a stipend of two pence per inch per column for each of his report published.<sup>20</sup> The salary as can be seen was lower than that of Wesley College. Even though an enterprising correspondent could considerably augment his earnings by getting numerous reports published, it would appear that Chief Awolowo did not make much money through this medium. This was not because he was indolent but rather due to the constraints of getting their reports published and improper recording on the part of clerk at the head office. There was also the problem of the personal predilection of the editorial staff. This was because a news item that did not suit the personal taste of the editor of the paper under this arrangement was written off as not being newsworthy.

Awo's freelancing with other papers did not fare any better. To start with, there were few newspapers that were in fairly regular business and circulation in Nigeria. The articles sent by Awo to most of them were seldom accepted. Those sent overseas to use the subject's words, came back with the same solemn regularity as I had despatched them. Because of these constraints, Awo came to realise that journalism for him was for the satisfaction of his literary instinct rather than the fulfilment of his financial quest. Awo therefore decided to be writing more for the interest of the art than the hope for monetary reward. His literary instinct found expression in the *Daily Telegraph*, and *Daily Service*, which was the official organ of the Nigerian Youth Movement of which Awolowo was a founder member. Awo's writings at this stage were almost gratuitous and he continued his freelancing well into his student days in the United Kingdom where he earned some respect and recognition in 1944 with the publication of his work up on the government's white paper on the marketing of Cocoa in 1944.<sup>23</sup>

Having known that enough money could not be raised

from journalism, Chief Obafemi Awolowo next decided to try his luck in business. This choice however, was not without its own obstacles. There was the ever present problem of having initial capital with which to start business. There was also the uncertainty in the business world where fortune fluctuated with the economy. All the same, Awo's cleverness brought to his notice the vacuum created by the absence of banking facilities for Nigerian indigenes. Even though he did not have enough money for any real banking business, Awo nevertheless went into small scale money lending. He went into partnership with a friend who contributed thirty pounds while Awo added his own share of sixty pounds.<sup>24</sup> How Chief Awolowo raised his own share of sixty pounds is not explained. It is however certain that he could not have saved such amount during the brief period of eight months in journalism on a salary of two pounds a month. How much Awo realised from this business is not known; it would however appear that, in spite of his claim of a good business in money lending, the profit realised was not substantial. To start with, the business was on a very small scale: in addition the calibre of Awo's clients made the business highly risky. He loaned money to civil servants who never appeared able to live within their means. Such a calibre of clients could hardly have been able to liquidate their debt in which case Awo stood the risk of not only not making any profit but also forfeiting his money. This reason as opposed to usury seems a more plausible one for Awo's decision to quit the money lending business. Other business ventures of Awo were produce buying and transports.

For these ventures, Awo entered into a cooperative agreement with some friends and acquaintances. He was able to raise a sum of six hundred and fifty pounds with which he started transport and produce buying businesses. Official policies by the government as will be shown later there were as we still have today fraudulent drivers

and greedy traffic policemen who constituted a menace to the success of these business ventures.<sup>25</sup> The produce buying fared better a little for a while. But before the merchantile firms which bought agricultural products on behalf of government manipulated the prices of those commodities to the disadvantage of the indigenous buyers. The competition between these firms had earlier on given some room to the African buyers for high bargaining. However, by 1937, these firms agreed to offer identical prices for cocoa at the same time. Chief Awolowo who dealt in cocoa for sometime enjoyed the benefit of the rivalry between the firms until the 1937 agreement. As a matter of fact, Chief Awolowo made enough money to embark on his legal studies. However, the hope of getting more money prevented the Chief from abandoning his business and going to the United Kingdom. All along, there were predictions of a more booming business session in the 1938-39 trading season. However, the hope for a greater business boom in 1938 was not to be realised as there was a big slump in the cocoa market.

Far from making more profits, Awo suffered a painful twist in his fortune. He not only lost everything but also became indebted. Awo was not to recover from the indebtedness in spite of his epic struggle between 1938 and 1940 to make good his losses. In the process, most of his valuable assets were auctioned and became lost forever, while some were later retrieved. His business partners also had to share in Awo's business misadventure as they forfeited their shares in spite of threats to sue Awo. The issue of the justice of Awo's claim not to be liable for the misfortune of his partners is of course difficult to determine. This is because of the dearth of evidence about the terms of the article of association of the partners in the Progressive Economic Corporation. Nevertheless, Awo had hitherto singlehandedly run the affairs of the corporation and this gives the impression that partners merely advanced Awo their different shares on the understanding that some

interests would be paid to them. The fact that the supposed partners threatened Awo with court action after the failure of the corporation shows that they never saw themselves as entering into a partnership. Unfortunately, the subject did not disclose the identity of these supposed partners who could have clarified the issue. It is however instructive to note that later in life when he became more comfortable, Chief Awolowo deemed it necessary to identify his partners<sup>27</sup>. One therefore finds it difficult not to conclude that Awo's supported partners were in fact his creditors. The fact that they could not press their cases for the recovery of their money legally when challenged to do so would not appear to detract from the strength of this conclusion. As the Chief noted, most members of the corporation were his friends (twenty six out of thirty) and among the Yoruba it was difficult to reconcile with an old friend after a court case between both. Hence the saying that one does not leave the court room and still be friends is an authentic statement. The members of the Progressive Economic Corporation would appear to have allowed social relations to take precedence over legal rights. The failure of the Progressive Economic Corporation seems to show the risk which creditors faced in their efforts to support friends and indigenous entrepreneurs. It also seem to justify the apprehensions of foreign financial institutions in not affording indigenous business credit facilities.

With the demise of the Progressive Economic Corporation, Awo decided to seek support from a well to do individual whose identity is not disclosed. Here unlike the Progressive Economic Corporation, the Economic sense of the individual concerned outweighed his sense of social obligation and charity. It is indeed gratifying to note that Chief Awolowo did not take offence at the rejection of his request by the businessman. This is because even though Awo thought that he was asking for a loan, one cannot but feel that he was in fact asking for a grant. The terms

of seeking the loan were so unfavourable to the grant that only a philanthropist of the highest order without much sense of business could have granted the loan. The said businessman was to grant a loan of one thousand four hundred pounds free of interest for twelve years without any security. Moreover, the said amount was to be paid back instalmentally. A businessman who mindful of the profit on such an amount, not to talk of other conditions, would think twice before accepting the length of time. The fellow as could be expected refused and Awo had to fall back on his industry with his dogged spirit which had stood him in very good stead in his early years. It was at this stage that fortune turned the better part of its face to Awo. He got a contract to supply the unity based in Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Kaduna with yam flour. With the profit realised from this contract and little loans from friends, Awo calculated that with strict economy he could manage to pay for his two years overseas studies. Thus on 14th August 1944, the Chief travelled and after two years of hardwork and sacrifice, he passed his examinations and was called to the Bar in 1946.

Though Awo's struggle for the period covered by this chapter centre around his efforts to become a lawyer, Awo owes his fame today not to his dexterity in the legal profession, but rather to his political career. Ironically, politics appears to be a vocation for which Awo did not consciously prepare. Nevertheless, Awo could be seen as undergoing political training and preparation for our period. His political career began in 1934 with the dawn of a new era in nationalist agitation in Nigeria. Lagos and indeed Nigerian political scene was dominated in the twenties by Herbert Macaulay and his Nigerian Democratic Party.

In spite of his undisputable patriotism, Herbert Macaulay was at best a liberal when it came to nationalist agitations. Moreover, he centred his activities on Lagos and

though he was not indifferent to affairs in other parts of the country, he however regarded such as secondary.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Macaulay was conservative in his approach to nationalism in Nigeria as he was proud to be a British subject and maintained unswerving loyalty to his majesty the Emperor.<sup>29</sup> Apart from this, Macaulay was said to have dictatorial tendencies. These made the young enlightened Nigerians of the time to think of challenging the style of his leadership. Awo came into Nigerian politics at this auspicious moment. His temperament made him to detest the colonial establishment and provoked a strong determination in him for self reliance. This desire which led to Awo's resignation of his appointment in 1934, coincided with the formation of the Lagos and later Nigerian Youth Movement. The history of the Nigerian Youth Movement has been sufficiently and ably dealt with in existing works.<sup>30</sup> It is therefore enough to note that the movement which consisted of almost all the young intellectuals of the period had Awo as a founding member.<sup>31</sup> The Nigerian Youth Movement aimed at developing a united nation out of the diverse elements found in Nigeria. autonomy for the nation within the frame work of the British Empire as well as mass compulsory and free education among others. Unlike the NNDP of Macaulay, the NYM was national in the scope of its activities and although the membership of the movement was almost exclusively southern for a greater part of our period it had branches all over the nation. Awo was the chairman of the Ibadan branch.

The Nigerian Youth Movement afforded Awo the first outlet for his boundless political energies and brought him into the mainstream of Nigerian politics. As a founding member, Awo actively participated in the activities of the movement and became intimated with the complexity of Nigeria's later political life at that time.

While details of Chief Awolowo's personal involvement

in other activities of the movement is not known to the present writer, about four of them deserve some special comments. This is because they might confuse any discerning but detractive critic of Awo. The confusion might arise as to where to draw the line between Awo the ambitious youngman mobilising all resources at his disposal to achieve his ultimate goal of becoming a lawyer. This confusion might further be compounded by the fact that while Chief Awolowo admitted in his autobiography that his excursion into journalism and the business world was to raise enough money to enable him pursue his legal studies abroad he is silent on the issue of whether the same consideration influenced his political career for the period. The involvement of Awo in these activities on the surface seems to lead to the conclusion that even in politics for the period, Awo was self-seeking. These activities were the organisation of the Cocoa-hold-up of 1937/38 buying season, the organisation of the strike by Motor Transport Union in 1937, the palm oil agitation in 1940 and the presentation of a memorandum to the visiting secretary of state for colonies in 1943. The Cocoa-hold-up was organised by the movement against the Cocoa-pool earlier mentioned. The transport business was one of Awo's specialities in the thirties. The government promulgated a law to impose a double licence fee on lorries plying routes where railways procured its traffic to discourage competition with the railways on these routes, which the government held responsible for the losses of the railways. Awo under the umbrella of the Movement succeeded in organising an effective strike by the Motor Transport Union against this regulation and got it repealed.

Similarly in 1940, the government imposed a ban on the exportation of palm kernel from the Western Province ostensibly because the British government had no need for palm kernels imported from Nigeria and that the Western provinces had other commodities to export. Awo again successfully organised a mass protest by farmers of the pr

vinces which led to a lifting of the ban under the umbrella of NYM.

Lastly in 1943, Awo was a secretary of the Movement's committee which presented a petition to Colonel Stanley asking among other things standard of living of workers, free education at home and scholarship for students to go abroad for further studies.<sup>33</sup>

A detractor of Awo no doubt could argue and with seeming justification that Awo in politics as in business was furthering his personal ends and not fighting a nationalist course. However, a dispassionate and objective analysis of the situation will show that in spite of whatever might have been Awo's personal interest, nationalism as opposed to selfishness motivated his deeds as mentioned above. While it is true that as a produce buyer Awo stood to gain from an increase in the price of cocoa if the cocoa pool was broken and the palm kernel exportation prohibition on Western provinces lifted, Awo was definitely not the only Nigerian who stood to benefit from the abolition of this repressive colonial measures. Thus, his interest in acting in the manner in which he acted through the NYM happened to have coincided with that of several others of his country-men who would otherwise have remained inarticulate to form a pressure group to agitate against the measures. Awo in belonging to the NYM was therefore lucky to be among those championing a natural course.

Moreover, in spite of the outcome of the agitation, Awo's business misfortune was not averted. While it may be argued that through reality got better of Awo's dreams in agitating against the repressive colonial measures, there were other Nigerians who benefited from the success of the agitations in spite of Awo's continued business misfortune after the slump.

Similarly though Awo was a transporter and a student struggling to raise enough funds for overseas studentship as a result of which he stood to gain directly from abolition of the double licence regulation and the award of scholar-

ships, he was no less a nationalist by spearheading the agitations. The double licence regulation was directed not at Awo who was a bird of passage in the transport business but several others before him. The regulation was another manifestation of British colonial efforts at frustrating indigenous enterprises in Nigeria. A fight against such a measure by anybody no matter whatever might have been his personal motives was economic nationalism. That Awo did not organise the agitation earlier than he did was due to being an outsider to the transport business, he was probably not aware of the regulation. The request for scholarship in like manner would have benefited other Nigerians who were in Awo's shoes if granted. Lastly, it remains to be proved that Awo did not participate in other activities of the movement where he did not have any vested interest. The Movement stimulated the organisation of trade unions and demanded for a national minimum wage for daily paid workers. It also sought for a categorical statement about the fate of Nigeria when it was rumoured that the British intended to hand-over the country to Germany as part of their appeasement policy. Awo like all leading members of the Movement was at the forefront of the agitation. Awo certainly was not a wage earner and would not have been the only one to be affected by a transfer of Nigeria to Germany.

The Nigerian Youth Movement could be regarded as a political training ground for Awo until its demise in 1944. It availed him the opportunity of mixing with fellow Nigerian nationalists from substantial parts of the country and to learn the predilection of the diverse groups in the southern part of the country at least. The scope of the activities of the movement which was national in outlook exposed Awo to problems from various parts of the country and he belonged to the people who thought about solutions to these national problems. Moreover, his membership of the executive of the movement afforded him the experience he needed in party organisation which were to be of imm

nse value in later years.

In particular, the coming of Dr. Azikiwe to the NYM in 1937 intimated Awo with the ethnic politics that was to be a feature of later years in Nigerian politics. Before Zik's arrival in Nigerian public life, the nationalist leaders were by sheer accident of history overwhelmingly Yoruba. On his arrival in 1937 with his doctrine of New Africa, Zik unleashed the venom in his pen on these earlier nationalists to the great displeasure of Awo and other nationalist leaders.<sup>34</sup> The achievements of these earlier nationalists was either outrightly ignored or given a passing notice at best by Zik and his press while their failings were blown out of proportion. Conversely, Ibos misdeeds were either glossed over or explained away, while their achievements were amplified and lauded to the high heavens. This provoked great anger and counter reaction on the part of Awo. Furthermore, Zik failed to identify with the yearnings of the NYM which wanted the civil service and judiciary Nigerianised probably because there were few if any Ibos who would have benefited from such a scheme. As a matter of fact when Adetokunbo Ademola was appointed the first Nigerian magistrate, Zik wrote to condemn the appointment contrary to nationalists mood of the time. On the other hand, when Mr. Louis Mbanefo was called to the Bar in 1937, Zik was said to have written an editorial eulogising the incident as the beginning of the Ibos emergence as a master race.

This experience in the NYM was no doubt instrumental to Chief Awolowo's biases for his own ethnic group in his political career of later years. Moreover, the experience at the NYM could be seen as the foundation of the political acrimony discernible between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in later years. Awo as can be impliedly seen in his autobiography felt provoked by what he saw as the anti-Yorubaism of Nnamdi Azikiwe. This ethnic bitterness was mostly responsible for the demise of the NYM by 1943, and Awo's Pan Yoruba outlook which led to his

active involvement in the foundation of the *Egbe Oduduwa*, a Yoruba cultural organisation in 1945.

The decade between 1934 and 1945 was as could be seen from the above discussion one of trials and preparation for Chief Awo in journalism, business, politics and the legal profession. Awo at the beginning of our period resolved to become self-reliant and this he sought to achieve by acquiring a profession, the legal profession. His excursion into journalism and business was strongly motivated by the desire to overcome and typify the constraints under which people of his group had to struggle in order to fulfil this ambition in spite of all obstacles. Awo kept pushing other than sitting aside, dreaming and sighing and waiting for the tide. Like people of his calibre in life's struggle who daily march forward he did press on at last with his call to the Bar in 1946.

In spite of his ambition, Awo was not indifferent to the predicament of his fatherland as he found time to get actively involved in nationalist struggles and thereby acquired political experience that were to stand him in a good stead in subsequent years. The decade could therefore be described as one of preparation and self-consolidation for a later brilliant career.

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## Awolowo and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, 1945-1948

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S.O. ARIFALO

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This paper attempts to examine the role of Obafemi Awolowo in the emergence of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (the society for the descendants of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba). The paper is divided into three main parts. The first part discusses Awolowo's thoughts and ideas on Yoruba unity and federalism in Nigeria. The second part deals with the formation of the *Egbe* in London while the third part deals with the emergence of the *Egbe* in Nigeria.

The *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* was founded in London by Awolowo and some other Yoruba students in 1945.<sup>1</sup> Before Awolowo left for the U.K., he was the Secretary of the Ibadan branch of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), an organisation that dominated the Nigerian political scene between 1938 and 1941. During that period the Movement strove very hard to extend political awakening and national consciousness farther afield than the earlier political organisations in Nigeria. Awolowo wrote the following about the Movement:

By its intrepid and enlightened leadership, it emboldened agitators in the country, regardless of where they lived, to speak their minds and damn the consequences. It provided a unique

platform for the unification of all the diverse ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria, a forum where all conscientious and right thinking Nigerian patriots and nationalists could unfold their ideas and display their talents for the common good.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of internal wranglings in the Movement, collapsed in 1941<sup>3</sup>. The collapse of the Movement arrested the trend of the pan-Nigerian orientation which had developed among Nigerian political leaders. From the collapse certain crucial points must be noted. It became clear that the hope that the Movement would emerge as a powerful instrument in the Nigerian national struggle had been smashed. It was a death blow to the movement towards the attainment of a single nationalism in Nigeria. Azikiwe left the Movement with a bang. Since he emerged on the Nigerian political scene at a time when the Igbo had little or no voice in Nigerian politics and he had demonstrated his fiery ardour, many Igboes tended to idealise him as a messiah and when he left the Movement they followed suit. A large number of its adherents became dispirited and frustrated. For example, H. O. Davies, known as "the Dynamo" of the Movement, decamped and accepted an appointment under the government of which he had always been a critic.<sup>4</sup> Awolowo, who was one of the greatest protagonists of the Movement to which he had pinned his political hopes and which he had credited with the genesis of political awakening of the country, was greatly disappointed. He expressed his deep frustration in the following words: "I saw no future for the Movement. But if the Movement became moribund or extinct, what followed? It was a baleful thought"<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps, as a result of this situation, Awolowo concluded that the realities of the country did not support his original position on the ideal of a single nationalism in Nigeria. This might have led him to two significant issues. The first was the development of his political

ideas on a federal system of government in Nigeria whereby each ethnic group would be allowed to develop socially, politically and economically along its own lines. For him, this was most crucial to the building of a lasting national unity in the country. Secondly, and directly arising from the first, he decided to form an organisation that would weld together the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria. But before discussing the formation of the organisation, we have to digress a little.

In 1945 Awolowo wrote an influential book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, which was later published in 1947.<sup>6</sup> His thesis in the book is that "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression".<sup>7</sup> He argued that because of the differences in languages, social organisation, religion and potential abilities between the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, it was wrong to describe them as tribes. He insisted on calling them nations. He stated that each of the groups was a nation by itself with many tribes and clans. According to him the incompatibilities between the various ethnic groups slowed down progress in certain sections in the country and thereby caused frustration among the more ambitious groups. He contended that the Yoruba had suffered feelings of frustration for years and wrote:

Under a system which aims at getting all the people in the country to the goal of autonomy at the same hour and minute, the Yoruba have been compelled to mark time on their highest level, while the other sections hasten to catch up with them.<sup>8</sup>

He believed that every ethnic group in the country should be allowed to solve its own problems according to its tradition and ideals. He was of the view that a federal constitution was the only thing suitable for Nigeria. He suggested that steps should be taken immediately to develop the various ethnic groups in the country along that line.<sup>9</sup>

Here, one would like to make a few remarks about the

over-emphasis which Awolowo placed on the apparent diversities among the various Nigerian ethnic groups. It is a well known fact that the entity now called Nigeria is a British creation. In a sense, all human groupings and associations are artificial since they are man-made. As Okoi Arikpo rightly points out "nations are made not born"<sup>10</sup>. One can hardly think of any nation that did not begin as a geographical expression. In pre-colonial times the various ethnic groups in Nigeria did not live in self-sufficient islands. Apart from the various legends of origin, the various ethnic groups in Nigeria co-existed and peacefully engaged in inter-ethnic commerce and did mutual cultural borrowings"<sup>11</sup>. Linguistic studies have also revealed that most of the languages spoken in Nigeria belong to the same family of languages<sup>12</sup> and had been separated only about 6,000 years ago.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the perception of ethnic differences based on language differences in Nigeria becomes much more illusory than Nigerians and non Nigerians had hitherto believed that perception.

Awolowo, however, took the first step to translate his ideas into practical politics by forming the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* in London in 1945. In his autobiography, Awolowo gave certain reasons which prompted the formation of the *Egbe* at the time it was formed. He stated that the Yoruba were then indulging in mutual recrimination and condemnation, that the younger generation of the Yoruba people thought that the Yoruba were inferior to the pushful Igbo and that whatever might have been the glorious past of the Yoruba had become effete and decadent. He was then going to do all that lay in his power to see that the Yoruba were not reduced into a state of impotence. He wrote:

I decided, therefore to do all in my power to infuse solidarity into the disjointed tribes that constitute the Yoruba ethnic group, to raise their morale, to rehabilitate their self-respect

and to imbue them with the confidence that they are an important factor in the forging of the federal unity of Nigeria.<sup>14</sup>

Awolowo's observations and resolves as noted above bring us to two important issues. The first was the threat to the supreme position which the Yoruba had hitherto occupied in the social, economic and political life of the country and the desire by the Yoruba to enhance their national or cultural identity. The second was the search for unity among the Yoruba. Concerning the pre-eminent position occupied by the Yoruba in Nigeria public life before 1945. Kanu Offonyi has this say:

There is no doubt that the first Nigerian teachers, clerks, lawyers, doctors, engineers and ministers of religion were all Yorubas. While Ibos and Ibibios, and other tribes have only recently been welcoming home their first overseas trained lawyers and Doctors a good number of Yoruba families have produced two or three generations of such professional men.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly, before 1945 the Yoruba were economically, socially and politically pace-makers in Nigeria. This was because they had a much earlier contact with the Western world than most of the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. They also had an earlier access to Western Education. By 1900 a crop of Yoruba doctors and lawyers were already practising in Lagos. The story is different among the other ethnic groups in the country. For instance, the first Igbo doctor, Francis Ibiom, later Governor of Eastern Nigeria, did not return to Nigeria until 1935 and the first Igbo lawyer, Louis Mbanefo, who was to become the Chief Judge of Eastern Region, did not qualify until 1937.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the Yoruba not only controlled an overwhelming majority of the higher posts in the colonial civil service but almost had a complete monopoly of the professional, political and business activities of the country. The Yoruba were then either envied or admired.

Many ethnic groups who discovered that the civil service and other white-collar jobs were out of their reach, had

developed a consciousness that their lot could be improved in other areas. They were propelled into action by a determination to work hard and catch up with the Yoruba. Their most important instruments were ethnic unions, popularly known as "the Progressive" Unions. The most important of these unions were: the Ibibio State Union (1928), the Urhobo Progressive Union (1931), the Ibo Union (1936) and the Tiv Progressive Union (1938).<sup>17</sup> Some of these Unions developed comprehensive and ambitious programmes, which included the establishment of secondary schools and financing university education of some of their members. Perhaps, the most dynamic of the Unions was the Ibo Union which became the Ibo Federal Union in 1944. It composed a "national anthem" which was often sung at the end of its meetings. It also promoted an Igbo day, an annual holiday in honour of Igbo achievements.<sup>18</sup>

After Azikiwe's arrival in Nigeria he had inspired all persons of Igbo origin with his scholastic career and achievement in the United States of America and hundreds of Igbo young men had found their way into the United States of America through the collective efforts of the various branches of the Ibo Union. In less than a decade the American-trained Igbo had started to challenge the hitherto undisputed predominant position of the Yoruba educated elite in the social, economic and political life of the country. The phenomenal educational progress of the Igbo must have had a devastating effect on the morale of the Yoruba educated elite who appeared to be resting on their oars and taking things for granted.<sup>19</sup> They began to feel that the collective prestige of their group and their national identity were being seriously challenged or threatened. It therefore became necessary to found a pan-Yoruba organisation which would boost the morale of the Yoruba and enhance their prestige.

Added to "the Igbo challenge" was the desire for unity among the Yoruba. In their long history, the Yoruba shared a common belief that Oduduwa was their progenitor and they regarded Ile-Ife as their "Garden of Eden" Fundamen-

tal similarities were observable in their social, economic religious and traditional institutions. But they were hardly united politically. The Ekiti, the Ondo, the Ijebu and the Ijesa, to mention a few of the Yoruba groups, saw themselves as distinct "tribes". However, the concept of Yoruba unity and nationalism was not new. As early as 1908 a member of the Legislative Council spoke to the effect that the boundary of Nigeria should be redrawn so as to have all the Yoruba together as a group. Between 1911 and 1912, E. O. Morel constantly argued in favour of an official policy creating a united Yoruba state.<sup>20</sup> Apart from these early suggestions, many "Progressive Unions" emerged between 1918 and 1943. The most important ones were the Egba Society, the Union of Ijebu youngmen, the Egbado Union, the Ekiti National Union, Ife Union and the Offa Descendants Union.<sup>21</sup> These associations operated as distinct groups and were inherently non-political, except that there were occasions when they sent petitions to the government on local issues, or when, under the cloak of literary debates, they criticised government measures. They did not federate like the Igbo Unions. The nearest thing to a pan-Yoruba organisation was the Yoruba Literary Society, which was born in 1942. Its aim was limited to the awakening and fostering among the Yoruba language and the sponsoring of publications of works in Yoruba.<sup>22</sup> The society was short-lived and not set out to perform such functions as were performed by the Ibo Federal Union. In spite of these efforts, the formation of a pan-Yoruba organisation before 1945 did not go beyond the realm of pious dreams and passionate rhetorics. The emergence of the *Egbe* then was the first positive assertion of Yoruba nationalism in this century.

#### THE EGBE OMO ODUDUWA IN LONDON

Awolowo left Nigeria for the U.K. to study law on August 14, 1944. In 1945 he took steps to actualise his ideas about

Yoruba unity and nationalism by forming the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* in collaboration with other Yoruba students in London. In his writings and pronouncements he had provided the philosophical and intellectual frame work within which the *Egbe* was to operate. The constitution of the *Egbe* in London was actually drafted by him with the assistance of another member of the Society.<sup>23</sup>

In the preamble to its constitution, the *Egbe* stated as follows:

The present division of Nigeria into three regions calls for the development of each region according to its tradition and culture. It affords an opportunity for rapid advancement without sacrificing valuable institution and for organising a strong, efficient and modernised state with its own individuality within the Federal State of Nigeria.<sup>24</sup>

The *Egbe* would study the political problems of Yorubaland:

Combat the disintegrating forces of tribalism, stamp out discrimination within the group and against minorities, and generally infuse the idea of a single nationality throughout the region.<sup>25</sup>

The *Egbe* would dedicate itself to social, economic and political welfare of Yorubaland. It would explore the means of introducing mass education and would foster the study of Yoruba language, culture and history. The *Egbe* also resolved to eradicate "the cankerworm of superstition and ignorance," to encourage the spread of the knowledge of medical relief and encourage the provision of medical facilities in Yorubaland.

The *Egbe's* method of approach would be by studying the problems affecting Yorubaland in particular and Nigeria in general, through research, public lectures, seminars and symposia. The results and conclusions arising from its findings would then be disseminated among the people through the publication of magazines, booklets and other publications in English and Yoruba languages.

The *Egbe* would encourage the immediate establishment of its branch in Yorubaland provided the home founders would give an undertaking that the first three years would be devoted to the strengthening of the organisation financially and the studying of local problems, while abstaining from direct political activities.

Among the original founders<sup>26</sup> of the *Egbe* were: Obafemi Awolowo himself, who was made Secretary, Dr. Oni Akerele, a medical practitioner who became President of the *Egbe*, A. B. Oyediran, (later Secretary for Nigerian Students Affairs in the Nigerian High Commission Office in London and Chief of the Nigerian Liaison Office in Washington D.C.), Abiodun Akerele (later Lawyer and Balogun of Oyo), J.O. Ajibola<sup>27</sup> (later a barrister and Grade 'B' Customary Court President); S. O. Awokoya, (later an educationist, Minister of Education in the Western Region, Principal, Federal School of Science, Scientific Secretary to the UNESCO and lastly Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife); Saburi Biobaku (later Secretary to the Executive Council of the Western Region, Director of the Yoruba History Research Scheme, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Ife, Vice-Chancellor, University of Lagos and later Director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan). This very impressive list clearly represented the cream of Yoruba students in London at that time and some of them were destined to play leading roles in the public affairs of Yorubaland in particular and that of Nigeria in general.

The society was named *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, which was an appropriate title for an association designed to foster the idea of a single nationalism among the Yoruba. The name, which was said to have been suggested by Biobaku, an eminent Yoruba historian,<sup>28</sup> has a cultural and symbolic meaning for the Yoruba people. The choice of that name could also be seen as an effort to give expression to the yearnings of the Yoruba to find again their ancient greatness.

Immediately after the inauguration of the *Egbe* in London,

Awolowo made determined efforts to explain its aims and objectives to the members of the Ibo Federal Union which had been in existence two years before.<sup>29</sup> An abortive joint meeting of the *Egbe* and that of the London Branch of the Ibo Federal Union was arranged. This move was made in order to avoid any misunderstanding between the two organisations and to demonstrate that the *Egbe* was simply the Yoruba counterpart of the Ibo Federal Union.

Copies of the Constitution of the *Egbe* were dispatched to the Oba, chiefs and leading personalities in Yorubaland urging them to form a similar organisation in Nigeria. Apart from Oba Adesoji Aderemi, the then Ooni of Ife and three unidentified persons, who gave a reply, there was no response from any other quarter.<sup>30</sup> In fact, while Awolowo was still in London nothing was done to form a branch of the *Egbe* in Nigeria.

In London the *Egbe* was basically a students' organisation and operated like other students' organisations there. It held regular meetings, organised seminars, study groups and symposia to discuss not only some aspects of Yoruba culture but also Nigerian economic, social and political problems.<sup>31</sup> It also arranged receptions in honour of Yoruba dignitaries visiting the United Kingdom and those of its members returning to Nigeria at the completion of their studies. When Awolowo returned to Nigeria in 1946, the society was about to die a natural death but was revived by S. L. Akintola, Ayo Ogunseye, A.M.A. Akinloye, S. O. Agunbiade-Bamise, Ayodele Okusaga and Dr. Akerele, its first president. When the *Egbe* re-emerged in Nigeria in 1947, the one in London simply became a branch and remained very active for a number of years.

Awolowo returned to Nigeria in 1946 as a qualified lawyer. He established a very successful legal practice in Ibadan. He began in earnest to advocate the formation of the *Egbe* in Nigeria. In this, he did not achieve immediate success. As he himself put it: "The people listened to me either with concealed indifference or undisguised bore-

dom.<sup>32</sup> It would appear that many Yoruba leaders were apathetic to his call at that time because they were supporters of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), a party which had captured the imagination of many Nigerian politicians and the dying NYM. In fact some leaders of NYM were still making strenuous efforts to resuscitate it.<sup>33</sup> In these circumstances Yoruba leaders were wary to form or join a new organisation. Many of them were fervent believers in the pan-Nigerian and anti-colonial idealism of the period. But Awolowo was not discouraged. He kept the ideas and the ideals of the *Egbe* alive until it was reactivated in Lagos in 1947 and formally inaugurated in Ile-Ife in 1948. When the *Egbe* re-emerged in Lagos; it was under a different leadership and different circumstances. To these circumstances we should now direct our mind.

#### THE EGBE IN NIGERIA

##### (i) *The NCNC Factor*

In March 1945 Governor Arthur Richards (later Lord Milverton) presented to the Nigerian Legislative Council, the proposals for the belated revision of the 1923 constitution.<sup>34</sup> The new constitution, according to the Governor, was designed "to promote the Unity of Nigeria, to provide adequately within that unity for the diverse elements which make up the country and to secure greater participation by Africans in the discussion of their own affairs." For the first time the Northerners would participate in the Legislative Council. The scope and membership of Legislative Council would be widened by making use of the Native Authorities. Regional Houses of Assembly would be established for the North, the East and the West. The Legislative Council would legislate for the whole country and Nigerian affairs would be debated by Nigerians.

The Richards Constitution was criticised on every side by Nigerian political leaders on the ground that it had been forced on the people without any prior consultation.<sup>35</sup> The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, which had been formed in 1944 at the wake of the King's College crisis in Lagos, condemned the unofficial majorities in the Councils as fakes, since they did not consist of directly elected representatives of the people.<sup>36</sup> The party stated that no progress had been made since the elective principle had been introduced 23 years before. It also rejected the all-European Executive Council and pointed out that there were capable Nigerians who could serve on it.

Other issues which really aroused the fury of Nigerian political leaders were what they described as the "Obnoxious Ordinances".<sup>37</sup> These were a number of ordinances which were introduced along with the new constitution. They vested in the British Crown rights over all minerals and lands appropriated by the Government of Nigeria for public purposes. The ordinances also vested the Government with power to appoint and depose traditional rulers. These ordinances impinged upon those rights which the political leaders declared to be inalienable. Azikiwe, and the NCNC were able to raise a huge alarm to the effect that the people's land and traditional rulers were being threatened by the colonial government.

The criticisms of the new constitutional proposals were articulated at a time when there was social unrest caused by the first country-wide general strike of the trade unions in 1945.<sup>38</sup> Even though the new constitution was in no way responsible for the strike the two issues became associated because, Azikiwe, who was perhaps the greatest critic of the constitution, also supported the strikers, through his newspapers. In spite of the fact that Azikiwe made sure that he was not directly linked with the activities of the strikers, it was generally believed that he engineered and inspired the strike. On July 8, 1945, the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Comet* were banned for publishing statements and

opinions, among other things, according to the government, "injurious to the tranquillity of certain sections of the community in Nigeria".<sup>40</sup>

The Government, which at first opposed the demands of the workers, later changed its mind and began to pay them cost-of-living allowances. After the strike, Azikiwe came to be seen as a triumphant champion of the Nigerian workers against the colonial government.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, to capitalise on Azikiwe's enhanced popularity from the strike the NCNC decided to embark on a wide tour to explain its objections to the new constitution and the offending bills and "to obtain the mandate of the chiefs and people of Nigeria and the Cameroons in sustaining their objections to these measures".<sup>42</sup> The tour was also being undertaken to raise the necessary funds which would enable the NCNC to send a deputation to London to protest against the new constitution.

The tour which began from Lagos on April 22, 1946, was led by Herbert Macaulay, President of the NCNC.<sup>43</sup> Other members of the delegation were Azikiwe, Abu Bakr Olorun Nimbe, M. A. O. Imoudu and Oyeshile Omoge. The group went to the North first. In Kano, the tour had to be interrupted because of the death of the veteran nationalist, Herbert Macaulay. After his funeral in Lagos, the tour went ahead as planned with Azikiwe leading. The party achieved its greatest success in the Eastern Provinces, where the Igbo had formed the backbone of the NCNC. According to Azikiwe the East contributed £9,000 of the £13,000 collected during the tour.<sup>44</sup>

With the money collected the NCNC was able to send a delegation led by Azikiwe to London. The delegation was made up of persons from every part of the country.<sup>45</sup> The delegation met the Labour Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech Jones on August 13, 1947.<sup>46</sup> In addition to demanding a revision of the Richards Constitution, the party submitted a memorandum containing thirty grievances for which it was seeking redress. These included immediate

establishment, of representative political institutions in the country, the transfer of political power to a responsible Nigerian government by stages over a period of fifteen years and a more dynamic scholarship scheme to train as rapidly as possible the Nigerian experts required for the administration. In spite of the modesty of the demands, they were rejected by Author Creech Jones. He made it clear to the delegation that the new constitution should be given a fair trial and that there was no question of the constitution being amended until experience had shown in what ways it needed amendments. He said that the government would do all in its power to assist the political, economic and social progress of Nigeria and strongly urged the party to co-operate in the great task.

The firm reply of Author Creech Jones to the NCNC London Delegation was generally regarded as contemptuous and the whole exercise as a dismal failure. The delegates had to face a barrage of criticisms both in the United Kingdom<sup>47</sup> and Nigeria. Before the party arrived in Nigeria tension was rising high, particularly in Lagos and Enugu. In Enugu a day of mourning was observed to mark the failure of the mission. However, when the delegation returned to Lagos on October 8, 1947 the Pilot reported that it was received by "a mammoth crowd of 100,000."<sup>48</sup>

Disappointed and disillusioned over their apparent failure the delegates began to quarrel among themselves about the finances of the trip. The degree of unity achieved by the delegate in London began to vanish with delegates from different ethnic groups demonstrating personal animosity against one another. In this way they played into the hands of their adversaries – the Yoruba in the NYM, who then used *the Daily Service* to harry the N.C.N.C. delegate by demanding an accounting of the £13,000 collected for the London trip.<sup>49</sup> Azikiwe reacted with fury by attacking Yoruba leaders. This was construed by Yoruba political leaders as a denunciation of the entire ethnic group. Many Yoruba began to desert the rank and file of the NCNC.

Some of them seized the opportunity to challenge Azikiwe's political leadership. Thus, Azikiwe began to rob himself of the success which would have enabled him to consolidate his position as a national leader. As Babatunde Williams puts it:

By this act of carelessness and tactlessness Zik who had been given a golden key of Nigerian national unity threw it into a bottomless pit. <sup>50</sup>

All was not well with the N.C.N.C. itself. Suffering from internal conflict and ethnic rivalries, it began to decline in popularity and effectiveness. The party has not succeeded in securing a broad popular following outside Lagos and the Eastern provinces. The N.C.N.C. was not a political party in the strict sense of the word, but an amalgam of trade unions social clubs, debating societies and other associations which had very little in common except the declared common objective of the unity of the country and of opposition to colonial rule. The N.C.N.C. had failed to build up a solid foundation of local branches in the towns and villages of Nigeria.<sup>51</sup> It lacked an effective party machine and the concentration of power in the hands of Azikiwe made it difficult for its policy to be subjected to constant democratic influences and review.

In an attempt to recover from its stupor and put its house in order, the N.C.N.C. held its first Annual Assembly in Kaduna in April 1948. Azikiwe was elected President for a three-year term and given the power to appoint the members of his executive committee. Consequent upon the quarrel among the leaders of the party, three prominent Yoruba members of its executive committee were expelled. These were Magnus Williams (Vice-President), Adeleke Adedoyin (Secretary) and A. Olorun-Nimbe (Treasurer). The exit of these Yoruba Leaders from the party created the impression that it was being organised as an Igbo party.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1948 and 1951 the N.C.N.C. was in the doldrums. During this period the aims and objectives of the party were kept alive only in the person and activities of Azikiwe and on

the pages of his newspapers. There was a drastic decline in the enthusiasm for the pan-Nigerian anti-colonial struggle which had been raging in the country a decade before. One of the most significant consequences of the N.C.N.C. internal conflict and the mass exodus of Yoruba from the party was a clear Igbo-Yoruba split. Many Yoruba leaders became apprehensive of Igbo domination and denounced Igbo leaders as self-centred, power-hungry and vain. They thought that if the N.C.N.C.'s plan of unitary government for Nigeria should materialise, it would certainly mean Igbo hegemony, Igbo reign and Igbo domination of Nigeria economic and political life.<sup>53</sup> With this mutual distrust between the Igbo and the Yoruba, the latter was yearning for an organisation that would adequately give expression to their political views and aspirations. Thus, the N.C.N.C. crisis and its consequences provided the conducive atmosphere for the formation of the *Egbe* in Lagos in 1947.

(ii) *The Inauguration of the Egbe*

The inaugural meeting of the *Egbe* was held on Friday, November 28, 1947 at the Tom Jones Hall, Lagos.<sup>54</sup> In attendance were many leading Yoruba Lagosians among whom were Dr. K. A. Abayomi, Dr. Akinola Maja, Chief Bajulaye of Lagos, Madam Bintu Balogun, the *Iya Egbe* of Alakoro, who claimed to represent four unions, Sir Adeyemo Alakija who presided, D. A. Durotoye, a schoolmaster and representative of the Ekiti National Association and Chief Fagbenro Beyioku, the *Awise* of Lagos. From this attendance, the meeting looked very much like an all-Lagos affair. There is no evidence to show that any of the participants was a member of the *Egbe* in London. This is not to deny the possibility of some of them buying the concept from Awolowo, who continued to be relentless and ardent apostle of Yoruba Unity since he returned to Nigeria from the U.K.. Some of them must also have been the recipients of the letters written by Awolowo to eminent persons in

Nigeria when the *Egbe* was established in London in 1945. The aims and objectives of the new organisation were similar to those of the one established in London but with slight modifications. The leaders of the new body stated that it would encourage the pursuit of secondary and university education among Yoruba youths, recognise and maintain the monarchical and other traditional institutions of Yorubaland, and plan for their total enlightenment and democratisation. The new organisation was also to strive seriously to co-operate with other ethnical organisations in matters of mutual interest to all Nigerians in order to attain unity in the federation.<sup>55</sup>

When Awolowo learnt about the emergence of the *Egbe* in Lagos he was exceedingly happy, for, his cherished dream had become a reality. He quickly "sent a telegram of felicitations" to its leaders.<sup>56</sup> He thought that the formation of the *Egbe* in Lagos at that time was the result of "the telepathic nature of the mind of man" and the foresight of serious thinking patriots.<sup>57</sup> Awolowo also took immediate steps to inaugurate a branch of the *Egbe* in Ibadan. Not only that the Ibadan branch became the leading branch of the *Egbe*, Ibadan itself became the headquarters of the organisation. Awolowo began to play a leadership role in the organisation.

Between November 1947 when the *Egbe* was formed in Lagos and June 1948 when it was formally inaugurated in Ile-Ife vigorous efforts were made to propagate its aims and objectives<sup>58</sup> and to form branches all over the country. Leaders of the *Egbe* constantly issued detailed statements explaining its aims and aspirations. In his own statement, which was one of the most important, Awolowo explained that three major factors necessitated the formation of the *Egbe*,<sup>59</sup> namely, practical politics, constitutional and cultural factors. In his own opinion, one of the major causes of the failure of earlier political movements was the use the English language as a medium of expression in their meetings. This was so because only an insignificant minority of the members

of such movements could express themselves with confidence and intelligently in English. The artisans, the petty-traders and peasants were for reasons of language alone unable to join their fellow citizens in their deliberations. It was therefore only reasonable that political movements should be organised on linguistic bases, Awolowo contended. It would be absurd and insulting to invite the Igbo and the Hausa to a meeting in which the language spoken was Yoruba.

Awolowo went further to say that the Yoruba were still far from being united. In Ijebu province the people in Ijebu-Ode Division were finding it difficult to work with Remo people as brothers. In Ibadan non-Oyo people were being described as "native foreigners." In Ijebu-Ode people from Oyo and Ilesa were spurned while in Lagos the Ila were objects of ridicule. There was no love lost between the *Oba* and their educated subjects. Awolowo then argued that these various problems could only be solved by the coming together of all the Yoruba.

Lastly, according to Awolowo, a process of national degeneration was fast setting in among the Yoruba. Sons were persistently failing to attain the heights reached and kept by their fathers. Daughters made jest of the high standard of morality which used to be the hallmark of Yoruba womanhood in the olden days. It was also being increasingly realised by the Yoruba that their language, political and social institutions and precious heritage were being neglected. He saw these things as matters of exclusive concern to the Yoruba and must be dealt with by them on grounds of patriotism, sentiment and national pride.

One significant development before the formal inauguration of the *Egbe* in Ile-Ife was the first general meeting of the *Egbe* which was held in Lagos on May 18, 1948.<sup>60</sup> Many leading Yorubas in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria were present. An endowment fund of £6,000 was launched for the purpose of furthering the aims of the *Egbe*. The protem President of the *Egbe*, Sir Adeyemo Alakija donated £500. There was an enthusiastic response to the endowment fund,

for about £3,000 was collected on the spot. Thereafter donations began to pour in. It was apparent that the *Egbe* was becoming a country-wide organisation. Letters of moral and financial support came from important Obas such as the Ooni of Ife, *Oba* Adesoji Aderemi, the *Oba* of Benin, Akenzua II, the *Oloṣoṣo* of *Oṣoṣo*, the Ewi of Ado-Ekiti, the Olu of Itshekiriland (later Olu of Warri) and the Owa of Ilesha.

Shortly after this meeting very elaborate preparations were made for the formal inauguration of the *Egbe* in Ile-Ife. It was significant that the *Egbe* was to be inaugurated in Ile-Ife and not in Lagos, Ibadan or in any other Yoruba city. Ife occupied and still occupies a unique position in Yorubaland. The Yoruba looked upon it as the sacred spot from where their ruling classes and most of the people had migrated to their present habitats. The king of Ife was also regarded as the father of the race as well as the spiritual leader. In addition to this, Awolowo must have greatly influenced the decision for the formal inauguration of the *Egbe* in Ile-Ife. Way back in 1939 he had described Ile-Ife as "the Garden of Eden of the Yorubas".<sup>61</sup> For years he held to this position. He later said:

It is not generally known that Ife is more than the cradle of the Yoruba people. It is from here in Ile-Ife, so our worthy Legend goes, that the solid earth first arose from the midst of the all-parvading ocean, and was then spread by one of our gods, to all the other parts of the world, to form the six continents of Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America.<sup>62</sup>

The leaders of the *Egbe* thought that if the *Egbe* was to be an authentic Yoruba cultural organisation to be acceptable and meaningful to the generality of the Yoruba people, it had to be deeply associated with their holy and venerated city.

Between June 4 and June 6, 1948, the inaugural ceremonies of the *Egbe* took place in Ile-Ife<sup>63</sup> amidst pomp and pageantry, with trumpets blasting, drums resounding and enthusiastic cheering crowds. Hundreds of participants from 95 towns

attended. It was virtually a pilgrimage to the Mecca of the Yoruba people. During the ceremonies the draft constitution of *Egbe* was fully debated and unanimously adopted. The Constitution was a mere elaboration of the one prepared by Awolowo in London in 1945. The contents of the constitution will be examined in due course.

The Election of officers of the *Egbe* took place. Sir Adeyemo Alakija, a renowned lawyer, a member of the Nigerian Legislative Council between 1933 and 1941 and a member of the Nigerian Executive Council from 1941, was elected President. Other inaugural officers of the *Egbe* were: Vice-Presidents: Yekini Ojikutu (Lagos), S. A. Akinfenwa (Ibadan), I. O. Ransome-Kuti (Abeokuta), Alhaji Soye (Ijebu Ode), Prince Duro Adefarakan (Ife), Chief Otun Akinyede (Ondo), S. O. Gbadamosi (Ikorodu), Dr. Akinola Maja (Lagos); Treasurer Dr. K. A. Abayomi (Lagos); General Secretary: Obafemi Awolowo (Ijebu Remo); Legal Advisers: Bode Thomas (Oyo) and H.O. Davies (Oyo). In addition 44 unofficial members of the *Egbe's* executive were elected.

Before the inaugural ceremonies ended, it was announced that £5,813 had been collected as part of the endowment fund the target of which had been increased to £60,000. The award of ten University scholarships was announced immediately. This was a clear evidence of determination on the part of the *Egbe* and high premium it placed on education.

The formal inauguration of the *Egbe* in Ile-Ife was planned in a grand manner by Yoruba leaders to display their strong attachment to their ethnic cause. Judging by the number of participants, the number of the various Yoruba towns represented and enthusiasm displayed, it could be said that the conference did give the growth of Yoruba nationalism a mighty thrust forward.

The aims and objectives of the *Egbe*<sup>6 5</sup> as contained in its constitution are here set out in details since, they are

necessary for our clear understanding of what the *Egbe* stood for:

(A) *Yorubaland*

- (i) To study fully its educational problems; to plan for the improvement of educational facilities both in content and in extent and to encourage in both the content and extent in every way possible especially by means of scholarship awards by the Society, the pursuit of secondary and university education by Yoruba boys and girls, to explore the means of introducing and as soon as possible to introduce or cause to be introduced mass and compulsory education among the people of Yorubaland and to foster the study of Yoruba Language, culture and history
- (ii) To combat the disintegrating forces of tribalism, to stamp out discrimination among the Yoruba, *interse* and against minorities. To unite the various clans and tribes in Yorubaland and generally create and actively foster the idea of a single nationalism throughout Yorubaland.
- (iii) To recognise and maintain the monarchical and other similar institutions of Yorubaland, to plan for their complete enlightenment and democratisation, to acknowledge the leadership of Yoruba *Obas* and to establish a firm basis of entire co-operation between the Yoruba people and their *Obas* in the political and social affairs of Yorubaland.
- (iv) To study fully its political problems, to plan for the rapid development of its political institutions and to accelerate the emergence of a virile modernised and efficient Yoruba state with its own individuality

within the Federal State of Nigeria.

- (v) To study its economic resources, to ascertain its economic potentialities, and advise as to the wisest utilisation of its wealth, so as to ensure abundance and prosperity for its people.
- (vi) To promote the social welfare of Yorubaland, combat the evils of superstition and ignorance, spread the knowledge of medical relief and stimulate the provision of hospitals, maternity homes and such like amenities.

(B) *Nigeria*

- (i) To cooperate in the fullest manner with the other regions to see that the aims and objects set out in (A) in so far as they are applicable to such regions are achieved throughout the whole country.
- (ii) To encourage and aid in every way possible the creation and continuance of associations similar to the society, among the other ethnical groups in Nigeria.
- (iii) To strive earnestly to co-operate with existing ethnical and regional associations and such as may exist hereafter, in matters of common interest to all Nigerians, so as thereby to attain unity in federation.

Here, it is just pertinent to make some comments and observations on these formidable aim and objectives of the *Egbe*. First, they were not significantly different from those of the *Egbe* drafted by Awolowo in London in 1945. In fact, they could be described as mere elaborations of the London edition.

Second, it is significant that education had been given the pride of place in the constitution. The present writer

was told by Chief I. O. Delano, the Administrative Secretary of the *Egbe*, that before the formation of the *Egbe* some Yoruba leaders had sent a delegation to discuss the causes of the falling standard of education in Yorubaland with the Director of Education, Western Provinces. The Director identified lack of qualified teachers as one of the major causes.<sup>66</sup> Hence, when the *Egbe* came into being, education was made one of its top priorities.

Third, it was Yoruba nationalism and Yoruba national consciousness that had to be developed. The leaders of the *Egbe* were not concerned with immediate self-government for Nigeria. Awolowo had argued that in one way or another immediate self-government would lead to confusion and inefficiency and the entire structure of society would collapse. He advocated, instead, a process whereby each of the three main ethnic groups – the Yoruba, the Igbo and the Hausa should progress gradually towards self-government at the pace set by the political leadership in each group.<sup>67</sup> Although this position looks conservative, it was what eventually happened in Nigeria.

Fourth, the *Egbe* was concerned with how to establish its legitimacy in Yorubaland. In order to realise this objective easily, it planned to recognise and maintain monarchical and similar institutions in Yorubaland. Hitherto, there was no love lost between the traditional rulers and the educated elite. The *Egbe* did not only want to cultivate the friendship of the traditional rulers it also wanted to counter the Igbo leaders and the N.C.N.C. who were suspected of planning to abolish the chieftaincy institutions if they came into power in Nigeria.<sup>68</sup> If the *Egbe* hoped to succeed it had to entice the *Oba* and chiefs who were still being held in high esteem by the masses of the Yoruba people, Awolowo, the intellectual leader, political theorist and strategist of the *Egbe* had changed his earlier position on the *Oba*. He had earlier stated that in other parts of the world people had discovered that the machinery of government worked much more smoothly and swiftly without

kings or "paramount rulers" than working with them.<sup>69</sup> With the birth of the *Egbe* he asserted that the *Oba* and chiefs were the most apparent instruments ready at hand as the most effective means of organising the masses for rapid political advancement.<sup>70</sup> For him, this was a matter of practical politics.

Lastly, the *Egbe* anticipated that its emergence might be misconstrued by other ethnic groups in the country. For this reason, it promised to encourage and co-operate with other ethnic organisations in the country. In spite of this pledge the *Egbe* and its leadership were viciously attacked by the Igbo and the N.C.N.C. who thought that the *Egbe* had been formed to halt the advance of Azikiwe's efforts to political leadership in Nigeria.

As we have noted above, Awolowo was elected General Secretary of the *Egbe* in Ife in 1948. He held that post from then until 1954 when he became the Premier of the then Western Region. Under his indefatigable leadership and iron discipline the *Egbe* weathered the storm of its teething problems and grew from strength to strength. By 1951 the *Egbe* had a membership of 10,000 with 90 branches throughout Nigeria. Of these, there were 70 in the West, 10 in the East and 10 in the North.<sup>71</sup>

In pursuance of its objectives the *Egbe* began to promote the study of Yoruba language, history and culture. The *Egbe* embarked on a scholarship scheme for which an endowment fund of £100,000 was launched. By 1949 the *Egbe* had awarded 17 University scholarships and 21 secondary school scholarships.<sup>72</sup>

Leaders of the *Egbe* worked very hard for peace and harmony in Yorubaland by mediating in disputes between traditional rulers and their people and in disputes between communities. In the process of doing these, the *Egbe* had evolved into an effective medium of co-operation between the rising educated *elite* and the *Oba* and *chiefs* in Yorubaland. Indeed, between 1948 and 1951 the *Egbe* provided a rallying focus for Yoruba leaders to speak with a united

voice on important national issues of the day instead of babel. Awolowo summed up this achievement in the following words:

The *Egbe* had succeeded in bringing within its fold, Yoruba people of different shades of political ideas. The radical, the liberal and the conservative work side by side without friction. The *Egbe* has succeeded in bridging the one time widening gulf between the *Obas* and their people.<sup>73</sup>

In addition the *Egbe* engaged in limited political activities. It presented two memoranda – one to the Conference on the Review of the Richards Constitution in 1949<sup>74</sup> and the other to the Hicks – Phillipson Commission on Revenue Allocation in Nigeria in 1950.<sup>75</sup> It also fought successfully for the merging of Lagos with the Western Region in 1951 and unsuccessfully for the re-adjustment of the boundary between the North and the West.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper an attempt has been made to trace the circumstances leading to the founding of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* both in the U. K. and Nigeria – the collapse of the N.Y.M. (a formidable and influential pan-Nigerian organisation), the crisis within the N.C.N.C. and the general feeling among the Yoruba leaders that the ethnic identity of their people and their supreme position in Nigerian public affairs were being threatened or challenged. It has been stated that the objective of the *Egbe* were to unite the various groups in Yorubaland in general, to create and foster the idea of a single nationalism in Yorubaland and encourage the study of Yoruba language, history and culture. Although the *Egbe* was advertised as a cultural organisation, its definition of culture was flexible enough to embrace some political activities.

While the *Egbe* was assiduously pursuing its objectives it incurred the wrath of the Igbo and the leaders of the N.C.N.C. who attempted to strangle the *Egbe* in its infancy. They had erroneously believed that the *Egbe* had been set up against their political interest in Nigeria. The *Egbe* should be seen as a movement of profound sentiment with specific political, cultural and historical content which were derived from political condition in Nigeria. In short, it was not just a mere abstract expression of human desire.

Because this was misunderstood, the period between 1947 and 1948 was dominated by intense hostilities between the Yoruba and Igbo leaders. Consequent upon this development some writers and commentators have accused Awolowo and the *Egbe* of introducing "tribalism" into Nigeria and thereby impeded the march towards independence. For instance, Babatunde Williams, one of such writers has argued that the founding of the *Egbe* "established a trend of tribal nationalism into Nigeria" and that this was inimical to Nigerian nationalism which promised freedom from British Colonial rule which had been nurtured by the N.C.N.C.<sup>76</sup> Williams's position on this issue is certainly challengeable.

In the first place, it is not accurate to say that it was the *Egbe* that began ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. Certainly, Williams was well aware of the existence of such ethnic organisation such as the Ibibio Welfare Union, the Urhobo Brotherhood Society and the Ibo Union and their roles in Nigerian politics. The events that followed the N.Y.M. crisis of 1941 clearly showed that ethnicity was gradually becoming a critical factor in Nigerian politics.

In the second place, it was the treatment meted out to certain Yoruba leaders in the N.C.N.C. and what was regarded as aggressiveness of the Igbo which created distrust of the Igbo intentions and heightened the clamour by the Yoruba for their own organisation.

In the third place, the activities of the *Egbe* might have aroused ethnic awareness in other parts of the country,

but whether this development retarded Nigeria's march towards independence or worked against national unity is debatable. The *Egbe* had argued that the first practical step towards the building of a federal state in Nigeria was the unification of the important ethnic groups in the country. It asserted that "coherence of parts is by no means incompatible with the unity of the whole."<sup>77</sup> The British Government did not fix any target date for Nigeria's independence until the late fifties. The granting of independence by European colonial powers to their colonies depended on, among other things, what G. O. Olusanya has described as "the complexities of international politics."<sup>78</sup> The colonies did not get their independence merely for the asking. Ethnic loyalty and pride in one's traditions and culture do not necessarily spell the doom of the progress towards national unity in a country any more than being a good family man necessarily prevents one from being a good citizen. Cultural nationalism could be seen as the first step in the development of the anti-colonial movement which demanded self-rule. Wiifred Cartey is expressing the same view when he writes.

To validate one's heritage to explore one's culture, to examine thoroughly those institutions which have persisted through centuries is perhaps the first step in a people's search for independence.<sup>79</sup>

The solidarity and unity achieved by the *Egbe* among the Yoruba did not deter Awolowo and other Yoruba leaders from contributing effectively to the nationalist struggle for independence. The leaders of the *Egbe* firmly believed that if the Yoruba were united it would be easier for them to join hands with the leaders of other ethnic groups in the country to fight for independence. Given the size and complexities of Nigeria, Awolowo and the other leaders of the *Egbe* were the first group of people to present federalism as the most realistic and critical

proposition for national integration and independence in Nigeria.

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## Mirror of an Identity: Reflections on "Awo", His Contemporaries, His Time

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O. LAWUYI

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"Awo" is the autobiographical account of the life history and life course of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The autobiographical account joins many on the African leaders.<sup>1</sup> The stimulus to give meaning to life comes usually after holding important public offices, and the autobiographies reflect not only the more superficial concerns of a particular historical epoch but also the authors' more fundamental attitudes and evaluations of their societies. The writings touch on popular sentiments and emotions and on themes which constitute some of the cultural dimensions of the authors' ideologies and worldviews. The appeal in the writings is in the fact that the authors command attention as agents and vanguard of change. Quite predictably then, the auto-biographies enter into public consciousness as stories of achievements not only informative but evocative as well.

Specifically, Awo's autobiography like any other raises two fundamental issues: the self perception of the author and the public perception of the same self. Beyond what the author says he is, and what he says he can do, are also what others think of him. When there is discrepancy between these views, the positive value of the others' viewpoint is that it serves to bring into light what the author

had hidden about the self.<sup>2</sup> While others' views and opinions may not necessarily be objective and correct, the effort at a comprehensive discussion of the author's own conception of human nature, society and interactional processes, must nevertheless go beyond the psychological and biographical foundations laid in his autobiography. The autobiography is quite naturally self centred. But then, the author cannot observe himself; rather he can only construct a self to observe.<sup>3</sup>

In Awolowo's case, we shall be studying the self construction from the perspective of the role of image-making in a society undergoing social change. Accordingly, the first part of this paper will focus the culturally and situationally determined thematization of Awo's self development. It is an exploration into the early stages of his life, a time he was growing up and the society intervenes between his capability and vision. This part would be based on the analysis of events in the autobiography of the Chief. The second part of the paper will focus people's perception and opinion of the person of the Chief. It is an exploration into the "mature" aspect of his life; a time he has public attention as a political leader. The autobiography does not contain all the information we need on this matter, especially of those who disagree strongly with Awolowo on social problems and their solutions. Hence we have to rely on publications other than the autobiography. In the last part of the essay, we shall propose a theory to explain the discrepancy between what Awo thinks of himself and what others think of him. It is an attempt to link individual and society together in a cultural framework.

## I

Here, in this first part of our discussion we deal with textual analysis of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's autobiography. The attempt is to gain insight into his self development and character from the interactional patterns, policy

statements, and ambitions, enunciated in the text. This requires insight into the perennially puzzling yet fundamental relationships between individual and group, society and culture, text and experience. This analysis, we must hasten to add, is subjective. The Chief has never been met at close range for any interview or discussion on any of the vital issues we would raise. We have attended some of his political rallies though. At such meetings, the Chief enthused courage and hope in ideological framework of socialism. He talked about free education and health. He appeared to identify with the aspirations of those who legitimately seek a transformation in their life styles and in social inequality. This posture is also discernible in the Chief's autobiography. But there are other events and issues as well.

In the autobiographical espose on Awolowo's life course there are three inter-related parts: the early childhood (chapters 1-4); the training years (chapters 5-11); and the political involvements (chapters 12-16). Issues and ideas in these parts overlap but it seems safe to suggest that the first part describes Awo's self potentials and socio-economic roots; the second part takes the process by which Awo makes a decision and looks at the constraints upon the behaviour of the decision maker; the last part deals with impact of policy decisions on socio-economic development. These parts, their impacts and their limitations are worth close scrutiny.

In the first part of the autobiography is the story of the Chief's rise from poverty. The life course began in Ikenne, the rural village in Ogun State which in early 1900s was witnessing rapid social change. The old and new values relate in trying circumstances, each trying to seek dominance. There was conflict between those who wanted change, those who were Christians or were educated, and those who preferred the traditional value system. People were, at different times, fugitives respectively from the angry pagan community and from the British punitive expeditions which were sometimes despatched to protect the small Christian community

and to restore colonial authority.

The rural populace of Ikenne could feel the impact of the colonial structure from occasional presence of White administrators and from the consequences of colonial policies. They could recognize the status distinction between the ruler and the ruled because the undisputable authority had to be carried around in a hammock by the natives. The policies of this new authority led to the restructuring of the old socio-economic order. With his coming, achieved criteria replaced the ascriptive ones. And though some natives did not like the new situation, others quickly adapted. Reactions to colonialism varied, yet, whatever their reactions, the people of Ikenne and the nation at large found themselves rationally compelled to reject certain time-honoured traditions relating not only to religion but also to socialization process in language and professionalism.

Western education for instance became a must. Awo's father joined several others in insisting that the son must be educated in Western values. The father had himself parted with traditions by moving away from the worship of *Sonpona*, god of small-pox. It was a break that challenged his independence: he was free but could not ignore the reactions of members of his family who did not want him to do so. Nevertheless, the conflict did not enter into his relationship with his son.

Awolowo became educated as he wished. The son's great advantage over the father is that he grew up when the throes and confusion of social change in Ikenne had settled down into specific order, the colonial order. The whitemen had finally settled down; all resistance to his presence and rule thenceforth constituted a "treasonable" act.

Later, Awo himself would be a proponent of social change. However, few of his childhood experiences could provide the concreteness that his attitude to social change assumed. Born into a polygamous home, Awo is a monogamist. Also, although born into a rich family by traditional standard, Awo lost his father at the age of 11 years. With the father gone there was

confusion as to how to sponsor his education. The uncles, the beloved grandmother and even the mother lacked the means to sustain the determination of a brilliant and ambitious boy that would later give free education to millions of people. It was the courage to live and the determination to succeed that sustained him.

In reading through the autobiography the crucial factor which emerges is that Awo is a by-product of structural impact, the home, the colonial situation and the school. He learnt about social reality as these structures made demand on his time, energy and vision. In the process he discovered how he fitted into each more fully. Take his view of the society for instance, Awo sees man as a thinking and free self. In his philosophical thoughts man differ from the lower animals by having innate capacity for intelligence. This special privilege, which must be enriched by education, increases the variability of man's capacity to respond to a variety of social situations, most important of which are social constraints, arising from socialization of resources, wealth and material development. It is Awo's view that a proper and adequate socialization is important to individual's notion of the self and hence of his place in the society.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, as the individual lays out options, select and reconstruct strategies, the task of the society would be to produce citizens who will identify their successes with the successes and stability of their society. And it is Awo's contention that the heightened introspection and reflection that become characteristic of this mental life could best be achieved and practiced within the western democratic ideology.

There are two distinct ideological camps in the world today: the western democracies and the communist block ... My preference is unhesitatingly and unequivocally for the western democracies. In the present world context, when atheistic materialism is threatening to destroy or stifle all that is best and noblest in man, neutrality in international affairs, whether passive, positive or independent, is an unmitigated disservice to humanity.<sup>5</sup>

Freedom, an essential ingredient of democracy, is thus a key issue in Awo's conceptualization of self and social development. In his life time, he went about the search for his own freedom in various ways. In his training years, he challenged rules and regulations in Wesley College (see Chapter 5, 6, and 7) and criticized policies and ideas which perpetuate social inequality (see Chapters 14 and 15). From chapter 5 to the end of the text there are examples of rebellious spirit and flagrant disobedience to authority, including a contemptuous treatment of constituted authority. There are indications of self-pride, intolerance and courageous acts. He wanted to be a journalist and he became one. Later, he got involved in business adventures which were meant to satisfy the urge for materialism. Some were successful, some failed. Nevertheless, the struggle to be somebody worthwhile in the society continued and reached an ultimate as a lawyer - that profession that makes law and breaks it!

From the time he became a lawyer until now, Awo has been under pressure to conform to official positions that are emotionally and ideologically designed to retain intact the culture of the ruling political elites. Although he has accumulated a lot himself,<sup>6</sup> he has stayed out more as an opposition than an "in-member". That is, he may not disagree with the need to accumulate wealth and properties in a capitalistic economy but he is also concerned with the manner of wealth distribution. As far as he is concerned, the poor and the needy must be brought into the bandwagon of elites by broadening their access to education.

For Awo then, the act of freedom requires some kind of courage and sensitivity. And there are several examples of how Awolowo deals with social constraints. We would not catalogue these examples but we would, in knowing who he is, probe deeper into his thought processes. We would look at the statements which convey Awo's reflections on the issue of courage. The statements we have extracted are listed in table 1.

We want to acknowledge that the methodology of textual

analysis based on a single text and embracing these few statements suffer certain weaknesses such as interchanging synonyms or omitting to cite certain key phrases. The method has been used by other scholars however,<sup>7</sup> and we have taken care of the problems they have highlighted.

The extracted statements fall into three classes: (1) personalized references calling attention to what the Chief has done; (2) generalized statements which refer to nobody in particular and are offered as policy statements; (3) the expressions of non-courageous acts that also indicate personal weaknesses. Critical analysis of the statements reveal that the difference between these categories of thoughts is in the way the Chief relates to and handle social situations. For example, in those contexts in which he displayed courage, his actions were set on moral and legal principles: "I refused to plead on the ground that the judges were my accusers."<sup>8</sup> Here the Chief seems to imply that something was wrong in the constitution of the judges.

The review of the personalized and generalized statements indicate that courage involves the displacement of unwarranted constraints and a comprehension of the consequences that would follow attempt to deal with power superiors. Yet, as Awolowo himself realized on the occasions of his failures to show courage, it is the power superior that shapes the norms and values of any society. Hence, in spite of his protests, the Wesley School authorities would not change their school constitution to favour the junior students. Also, his presence at the site where his properties were being auctioned, because he could not repay the loan he got, could only deter a few, his very close friends. People went on to buy the properties. It certainly must have occurred to the young Awolowo that the greatest challenge to any self development is the understanding of the socio-cultural milieu ... the concern with legacy... how to leave traces of oneself while operating within the delicate boundaries of authority relationships. Hence his philosophical orientation to the issue of courage.

TABLE 1

## SELECTED REFERENCES ON COURAGEOUS BEHAVIOURS

Page Number	Courage Reference	Setting
*14	"I could not resist the temptation".	He was about to eat sacrificial meal.
**30	"It became imperative I should stand my ground".	A wrestling contest with a wrestler from Lagos.
*38	"I had no courage to say this to Uncle James".	Uncle James would not pay Awo's school fees. But the uncle is known for bad temper.
**39	"I got hold of a stick too, ready and determined to give blow for blow".	The wife of Awo's master abused him and made derogatory remark on his parents and tribe.
**41	"I pointed out, not without some hesitation, that he had wrongly spelt my surname".	The master calls him wolowo because he does not like the cultish aspect of Awolowo.
*46	"I did not want to face the mortification of being demoted or of having to repeat the same standard in the succeeding year".	Awo fell from a moving lorry and was badly wounded, he failed to report the accident to school authorities.
*54	"I refused to plead on the ground that the judges were my accusers."	Reaction to senior students of Wesley College Awo is accused of insubordination.

TABLE 1 (CONTD.)

Page Number	Courage Reference	Setting
**57	"My reaction was one of cool and unaffected defiance".	Awo refused to serve tea to students from Kudeti Girls School.
**57	"I ignored the assignment".	The work roster was considered unfair to junior students.
**95	"Sir, you are a man!"	Awo's property was being auctioned. He stood watching the show.
**98	"I remained calm and unperturbed".	Awo's reaction to change in business fortune.
**109	"She had courage of a rare kind, I have that too".	The statement compares the assets of a wife who stayed home to take care of the children while Awo was overseas.
**120	"Many people in the West and in the East were courageous enough to move to the periphery of the political arena . . ."	The different Nigerian ethnic groups have to deal with colonial government.
*160	"I was somewhat hesitant"	Awo is not sure of the type of constitution the country needs.
*165	"I made bold to state categorically".	Writing a memorandum to the government.

TABLE 1 (CONTD.)

Page	Courage Reference	Setting
***197	"Courage is the facing of a known danger for a noble purpose".	Talking about risks that would attend the attainment of independence.
***198	"We must not mistake fool hardiness for courage".	Talking about independence.
***243	"He was big and courageous enough to make up his own mind".	Reflection on Lord Chandos, Secretary of State for the colonies.
***257	"I was emboldened to make the following assertion".	Directing discussion on agitation for independence by 1956.
***310	"As between contending forces, we should have enough courage to make up our minds".	Outlining direction for Nigeria's foreign policy after independence.

Note:

\* Stands for non-courageous acts.

\*\* Refers to personalized references.

\*\*\* Denotes generalized statements.

Basically, every man has his own career path and he needs courage to carry on when the financial and moral resources are lacking. In the process of travelling on the career path, the self and others' interests have to inter-relate. If there should be a conflict of interest, courage is necessary to stay on one's course. We must therefore go beyond Awolowo's self perception, since there is indication that his interests do not always correspond with those of others.

## II

A vital element in any identity construction is the reaction of other people to the self one has consciously or unconsciously constructed. As already argued, the image construction which Awo attempts in his book implies that men recognize him as a courageous leader and thereby recognize a separation between the self and others in the same contemporaneous time. But as we now show, there are many Nigerians ready to question his leadership. They have reacted to his policies as "betrayal of socialism".<sup>9</sup> They have described him as arrogant.<sup>10</sup> He is regarded as "selfish", "dictatorial" and "unbending".<sup>11</sup> To some he is a tribalist, meaning that he searches for, promotes and protects the Yoruba interests.<sup>12</sup> Many would regard him as a controversial figure whose views are always antagonistic to that of the government in power. Yet one of these governments conferred a national award on him. And another sent him a congratulatory message befitting an elder statesman.<sup>13</sup>

We think that interpretation and mediation of facts are required for proper understanding of Awolowo's self image since there is a chasm to be bridged in fully reconciling Awo's self with other's perception of him. As we look at labels variously applied to him by fellow politicians — labels such as selfish and dictatorial — we think that his personality has affected the kind and duration of his relationships to other people. Actually, it has been the case that some friends — those who think he is dictatorial and unbending — turn out later as enemies. Few political enemies ever changed to be

friends. There were differences along issues, but mostly about strategies:

Master strategist and tactician with an iron fist as the Chief is, he schemed and effectively marginalized the more radical members of the party: people like S. G. Ikoku, Dr. Victor Oyenuga, Ayo Okusanya, Ayo Ogunsheye, and Dr. Sanya Onabamiro.<sup>14</sup>

The actions and policies of Chief Obafemi Awolowo are always open to many interpretations. Of course, this is how it should be in a political relationship. For the way politics presents itself is in the form of arguments made by politicians regarding the virtue of a programme or strategy of their opponents. Thus, when Awolowo went to campaign in the north in 1959, his friends regarded it as an act of courage and an attack on the feudal system nurtured by the emirs.<sup>15</sup> It was, however, a poor showing from the reactionaries point of view, especially by those who see a link with his travel to the north in 1952. They recalled that.

In October 1952, Chief Awolowo travelled to Kaduna and met with the feudal lord and NPC boss, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello. His mission: to advise the Sardauna to take urgent steps against revolutionary elements in the north who were gathering momentum and appeared to have a great future in order to avert communism in Nigeria."<sup>16</sup>

To his critic, Awo is not part of the progressive movement for change but a member of the bourgeois class. His travelling to the North attest to the real interest: the replacement of the feudal authority in the North with Awo's own brand of authoritarian and elitist rule.

Underlying the meanings of such labels as "selfish", "tribal" or "authoritarian" man is of course a notion of deviancy. Such deviant image is raised when Awo socially differentiates himself from the collective representation; as for instance when he travelled to the North in 1959. Interestingly, in reading his autobiography, it is clear that Awo would not himself deny the value of collective actions. However, the dualism of change and cultural content which menaces the former with a functional reduction to the utilitarian models and purposes of the agent requires that notion

of time, constraints and ability, be not given innately or transcendently to only collective decision. In the throes of change, there are some things which the individuals, strongly convinced about their principles, can do to reorganize the socio-economic and political structures.<sup>17</sup> They can, as Awo often does, organize their own political parties within the limits of the law.

We must remember that history has demonstrated very clearly that leaders are born and leaders are made. So that those who grope for the real Awo must go beyond the circumstances of his birth. They must appreciate Awo's dramatic emergence in national political theatre in the 40s, his Cinderella plot, the scenario of a "dark horse" upsetting the favourites in the 1954 elections, the pathos of courage and the mood of the Nigerian public to men of rare courage. They would have to see the dialectics of self and society as the individual struggles to achieve, indeed to become an important person in the society.

Until 1950, Awolowo was a relatively obscure person. Many Nigerians were familiar with such names as Herbert Macaulay, Earnest Ikoli and Nnamdi Azikiwe. These personalities dominated the political scene with their abilities, their challenge of colonialism, and their oratorical skills. In addition, each controlled a newspaper which served as organ for the expression of his ideas and opinions. Throughout the 20s and 30s, Azikiwe's *West African Pilot* was a dominant instrument for the mobilization of public awareness. So successful were these nationalists' newspapers in creating awareness that people like Awolowo could not but admire the personalities behind the papers. And it was this admiration that provided opportunity for the challenge of leadership which Azikiwe, for instance, enjoyed. Ofcourse, it took him several years to become a national figure of comparable weight.

The journey to public limelight began rather slowly and was rough. From a humble beginning as the son of a peasant farmer and sawyer, Awo rose to become the founder of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a proto-political movement which later formed the nucleus of a political party, the Action Group. It was from this political base that, as its founder

and leader, he rose to the status of Leader of Government Business in the Western Region in 1951. He became the premier of the Region in 1954. Later, he became the first leader of opposition in the Federal Parliament of Nigeria, the leader, founder and principal motivator of the Unity Party of Nigeria. He was a distinguished lawyer bestowed with the highest award of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). And as a politician of repute he was one of the few with the decorated honour of Grand Commander of The Federal Republic of Nigeria (GCFR).

Awolowo is known to his followers as "leader of the Yoruba"; he was and still is affectionately referred to as "papa" by his followers. The elusive post that he was never to achieve was the presidency of Nigeria. Billy Dudley, a well-known Nigerian political scientist, has tied this failure to the ethnic base of Awolowo's political interests.

He suggests that

as leader of the Action Group (a title by which Awo was called by his party members) and Premier of the Western Region Government, there could hardly be any doubt that by 1954 the new Oduduwa had emerged.<sup>18</sup>

Billy Dudley's view sets Awolowo's achievements within events of not only a mythical past but also a contemporary ethnic politics. From the mythical perspective, it is the general belief that Oduduwa is the founder of the Yoruba race. Yet little is known by way of scholarly research, about the man and his achievements.<sup>19</sup> A current thesis suggests that he worshipped a goddess *Oduduwa* after whom he took his name.<sup>20</sup> The success ascribed to the goddess is thus believed to have elevated and legitimized the popularity of the devotee. In which case, the potency of the *Oduduwa* leadership is the religious belief which validates his personal authority. Since this belief is peculiar to the Yoruba. It is Dudley's contention that the degree to which *Oduduwa* symbolism would allow for flexibility and manipulation in response to changing realities in pluralistic setting would be limited. Too limited to articulate the organization of large, highly differentiated grouping in a rapidly changing

society. Consequently, a person like Awolowo, with an *Oduduwa* image, can only provoke thought to a particular ethnic profile:

Awo's particularism no doubt stems from the fact that he has spent much of his life in the Western Region and as such has not been exposed to the wide range of cross-cultural influences existent in Nigerian society. Yoruba society is much 'closed' than Igbo society, the ethnic group to which Zik (Nnamdi Azikiwe, Awo's rival) belongs. Yoruba society, being closed and hierarchically ordered, could also explain the authoritarianism inherent in Awo's thought.<sup>21</sup>

If Dudley's observation of Awolowo's personality is correct, we must expect that the closed and hierarchically structured Yoruba society should develop only authoritarian personalities. Certainly not every Yoruba is authoritarian. It is a shallow knowledge of the Yoruba culture that could have produced a remark which has no foundation in reality. After all, within the Yoruba society there is an array of socio-political forms: political organizations based on patrilineal descent group, age-sets, secret ceremonial societies and several professional bodies. Each of the groups has its own leader. Hardly is any individual a leader over all the groups.<sup>22</sup> There are checks and balances in the authority relations between these bodies. As such, there can be no ubiquitous big-man tribal type.

Dudley might want to explain Awolowo's interest in political power but his authoritarian theory of Awolowo's personality is much a product of structure than of process. Such a theory cannot, for instance, account for what Oloko describes as Awolowo's "Credit Want" mentality.<sup>23</sup> This Credit Want mentality urges interest in courageous acts, in freedom, and in desire for leadership. It reflects a desire to be recognized as an achiever in a modern socio-political setting. The attention is not on the person but the achievements. This means that the individual must be seen as better than the best:

All through his struggling days, Chief Awolowo retained his anything-you-can-do-I-can-do-better attitude. At the age of 11 he had developed the ambition to own a motorcycle like the

native court clerk he first saw on this status-symbol. At the age of 16 he pleasantly discovered that his acquaintance with the three R's was much better than that of his teacher. When at the age of 17 he passed the government standard V examinations at Imo Wesleyan School, Abeokuta, he decided to pursue his education further because he had seen lawyers in court, and from the moment he was their wigs and gowns he became possessed by an overpowering desire of becoming a lawyer one day and when finally in 1946 after having triumphed over great odds he experienced a great satisfaction in beating fellow-Nigerians like Chief H. O. Davies, Q. C. and Dr. T. O. Elias in the Bar Finals.<sup>24</sup>

We have quoted extensively merely to show that every stage of Chief Awolowo's development is influenced by the Credit Want mentality. There may of course be deviations from the expectations the Credit Want Mentality generates, but in this singular character, rather than the authoritarian personality, lies the essence of the Chief's conducts. Those who have written about him, including Awolowo himself, would consider his achievements exceptional and spectacular. Writers hence title their works as: "Voice of Wisdom"<sup>25</sup> "Voice of Courage",<sup>26</sup> "Voice of Reason",<sup>27</sup> "My March Through Prison",<sup>28</sup> "The Trial of Obafemi Awolowo",<sup>29</sup> and "Awo On The Nigerian Civil War"<sup>30</sup> These selective use of language of triumph and of achievements mark the presence of an exceptional character. The language, furthermore, posits the difference between self and society; the society sets up constraints (i.e. trials, prisons, and so on) that require the mobilization of the self for purposes of transcending the constraints. In the third part of this essay we tie the self and society together.

### III

Thus far, the principle that holds together the increasingly diverse topics and excursion of this essay is Awolowo's own life; the growth, the self perception and other people's reaction to the self image. We have thus inadvertently created a duality of self and society. From a cultural determinist's perspective, it is the society that determines the kinds of

roles an individual is allowed to play. The same society creates a unique personality which every member adopts. The proponents of this school, such as Billy Dudley, would argue that the self determines the partners the individual may choose for different kinds of transactions. In other words, the society is super-ordinate to the self and it defines the permissible constellation of statuses, or social personalities, which an individual with any identity may assume. The danger in this view is that, like Dudley's position on Awolowo's character exemplifies, it emphasizes man's paucity of inventiveness while stressing the role of external contingencies – to the individual – in determining behaviour and personality. In which case, the individual commitment to the social structure rather than the freedom aspect is stressed.

Examining the problem posed by the cultural determinists in the context of people's behaviours however, we think their greatest weakness is in accounting for continuity and change in personality. In order to deal with continuity they must ask such questions as: How do members of the several groups in the society react to various kinds and degree of pressure from the social structure? Specifically, how would Awolowo as a member of various social groups in the Yoruba society behave? The answer does not lie purely in the examination of the structural impact on the individual but must take into cognisance the dynamics of people's behaviours and self constructions. Our own position is to stress the dialectics of the structural expectations which initiate and modify behavioural strategies. Take for instance the cultural position of Awo as a son and his political popularity as a Papa.

As a son in the Yoruba patrilineal society the ultimate goal is to become a father. This becomes imperative if he is the first born. He is then expected to lead others, especially those junior to him. The seniority is not determined by achievement criteria but rather by the ascriptive. It may however prove to be the case that, the first born is also the brightest. This would be purely accidental. In any case, he already has the psychology of leadership and is constrained to see those external to the family – much more than those internal to the family – as rival for leadership in the society.

In Yoruba tradition, the eldest son cannot be farther away from the father image because he, the son, embodies the continuity in the male leadership tradition. Indeed, to the Yoruba, "Iya ni Wura, Baba ni Dingi", the mother is gold, the father is the mirror. The identification with mother is only a stage in the process of full self realization. It is the father image that is vital to managing others' attitudes to one's social status and mobility.

For instance, Awolowo's remark on his parents is insightful on his perception of role models. The mother is a gentle and an unobstructive housewife. She is hardworking, kind-hearted, affectionate and unquestioningly obedient.<sup>31</sup> The father, in contrast, is a tireless worker, industrious, a great optimist, handsome and always well-dressed.<sup>32</sup> He is the embodiment of an ideal parent.<sup>33</sup> And it is on him that Awolowo modelled his behaviours. Like the father, he became unhesitatingly and unequivocally committed to western education and values. Like the father also, he was fearless in confronting social constraints. For both the father and the son, no risk is too great in the desire for social change: "It is not life that matters but the courage you bring to it".<sup>34</sup>

The crux of the matter is whether the society should accept Awo the son or the father. As the former he is a follower and as the latter, a leader. We have already noted that a section of the Nigerian society calls him Papa. Several others do not so regard him. This differential perspective to his personality affects the struggles for national leadership. The more so since those who do not see him as Papa do not regard him as a leader.

The son - first born image also creates a dilemma of its own. As a child he would have to be submissive and cooperative. Consequently, he would be less free to challenge social constraints. As a father, he is a leader, courageous, as well as an achiever. The choice between these two statuses becomes problematic for a first born: he is born to be a leader and forced by environment to be cooperative with other leaders, especially the parents. He is symbolically bet-

ween and betwixt the statuses of father and child. As such, his ambiguous and indeterminate attributes create a personality complex expressed by a rich variety of symbols which include "leader", "papa", "deviant", and "tribalist". When a first-born rises above social constraints there is expectation for social reward quite normally because this is an improvement over previous roles. Yet, the achievement is open to various interpretation from the traditionalists who expect conformity or the radicals who want social change.

In essence, the significant point this paper raises is that Awolowo's problem with the Nigerian Public is paradoxically embedded in the metaphor of the father. Those whom he had fathered want to become fathers, independent of his authority. His popularity is thus an obstacle to their own status mobility. They see in him a rival and of course you do not flatter a rival and thereby confirm his superiority.

Father is many things to many people; he is a looking glass mirror reflecting weaknesses and strength, reality and fiction, inherent contradictions in the perception and feelings of self and society. The father is a mirror both to the realities of the moment and to the dreams of the future; it is a door to the expanding horizons of the human imagination; he reflects and also brings into being.<sup>35</sup> The reactions to him would vary. Like the authorities in Wesley College, you may find him irritating and rebellious when acting as a son. However, his family may find it difficult to reject him as long as he serves their expectations and aspirations as a father. Furthermore, opponents may find him, as he struggles to be a father (i.e. by accumulating properties), ambitious and hesitate about having business dealings with him. But friends would have found in him a trust-worthy and honest personality would value his counsel. In a nutshell, it is difficult to determine the kind and amount of credit Awolowo, as papa or son, should have for his political roles in nation building. The public he has served has to judge. Their wisdom in a democratic setting which Awo identifies with cannot be questioned. This has to be so even when the

parameters the public set for assessment of leadership are not clear!

Indeed it must be stated that in a modern political theatre a father cannot hold sway over all political judgements. He cannot be always right, more so because he is both an observer and an observed. In terms of the latter, he moves through an unknown, sometimes unfamiliar territory. The public watches these moves. They make subjective and objective conclusions on his character. Indeed, given the level of Nigerian education and their political awareness, many just see the father but do not know him properly. This is because they may not have discussed with him, may not have listened to his public addresses or even read his autobiography, if any was written. The subjective or personalizing factors in public assessments of the leader cannot be ignored. For to many, the issue of life and the content and pre-occupation of the mental life of the politicians are grasped in terms of the political circumstances under which they came to flower.

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## Awolowo and His Contemporaries

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M. OKOYE

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"One of the foremost advocates, politicians and writers in West Africa" described Chief Obatemi Awolowo by his publishers in 1960. The Chief was probably the most loved and the most hated of all Nigerian leaders of his time. But by 1980, by which time he had been awarded honorary doctorate degrees from five Universities including the University of the Cape Coast in Ghana and the former President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari had conferred on him the country's highest honour, Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR), Awolowo's position as one of the Founding Fathers of Nigeria was no longer contested and the love for him far exceeded the much debated hatred for him. Seven years later, on the occasion of his 77th birthday, President Ibrahim Babangida posited that Awolowo was "the main issue of Nigerian politics during the last 35 years during which Awo, as he was fondly called by his admirers, must have found solace in the fact that many of the policies he had championed and for which he was 'derided by many had become, with the passage of time, the received policies of the day. Indeed, 'hardly a day passes in Nigeria,' as Bola Ige, one of his close colleagues for many years, said in March 1979 'without some word about him.' And it is not surprising that on his death, 9 May 1987, Nigerians from all walks of

life and political persuasions trooped to his homes in Lagos, Ibadan and in Ikenne to pay him unparalleled tribute that only few of his contemporaries worldwide have received. As the publisher of the *Africa Now* magazine, Mr Peter Enahoro, testified of him in December 1981, although Awo was Nigeria's most controversial politician (and) perhaps also Nigerian most enigmatic and complex public figures, "He was also predictable in an unpredictable way" (which may account for the fact that "those who would seem to (have been) his natural political allies often turned against him despite the skill and resources he had invested in building alliance after alliance."

To rise from a poor orphan at 11, when he lost his father, to the premiership of Western Nigeria and subsequently federal Opposition Leader and Vice-chairman of the Federal Executive Council under the military regime of General Gowon, is no easy accomplishment in any age, more so in the turbulent, even 'incandescent' politics - the phrase is John Gunther's - of post-World War II Nigeria, especially when one remembers that Awo had to vegetate in one primary school class for five years and wade through six schools, because he could not meet up with the school fees, and subsequently had to change his job five or six times. It is this experience of utter deprivation, apart from similar ideas he carried over from the Nigerian Youth Movement in the 1930s, which must have goaded him to institute free education as regional premier and to insist on the policy throughout his subsequent career.

From childhood, Awo showed amazing capacity for courage, endurance, determination and self-reliance which, in later years, made him challenge the questionable population census figures that the Gowon regime wanted to impose on a brow beaten populace in 1973 and to resign shortly before from the high office of Finance Commissioner of that regime when he felt he could 'no longer serve under an unelected government'. Against the centralisation policies of another regime, he always insisted on the entrenched principle of true

federalism, that the central and state authorities should be independent of and coordinate with one another in the discharge of their respective functions, and he openly challenged the military government's relentless and hasty moves to transfer the federal capital to dusty and empty Abuja, on the ground of excessive cost at a time of recession.

A plodder who had known grief and was acquainted with sorrows from his birth in March 1909, Awo, like many of his African contemporaries, started life as a pupil teacher before trying his luck as a clerk, trade unionist, journalist, contractor until he found his destiny in law and subsequently politics. A slow, painstaking and fore-sighted worker who had supreme confidence in himself, he was clever and lucky enough to utilise a period of reaction and division in the politics of the immediate post-World War years in Nigeria to ride to power. The story of his life is not wanting in the requisite recipe for success 'a single-minded definiteness about one's object in life: an intense concentration of all the energies of one's body and of all the forces of one's brain and mind on the attainment of one's chosen objective' as he himself defined it in 1960. Amassing wealth as a transporter and produce trader, he was Secretary of the Produce Traders Union in 1940 and of the Motor Transport Union in 1944, which he subsequently lost in the slump. He made up his losses as an army contractor during the World War which enabled him to sail to the United Kingdom in 1944, having obtained the Bachelor of Commerce degree at home.

Awo claimed that he derived his idea of Western Solidarity' that formed the mainspring of his political party, the Action Group, from Dr Azikiwe when the later broke away from the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1941, of which Awo himself was the Ibadan branch secretary for many years, spouting an Ibo cry. Earlier in London in 1945 he founded the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* as a counterpart of the Ibo Union and a vehicle of future struggle for power in Yorubaland. But it seems that, since the NYM days, Awo had always had the idea of organising the countryside from below.

an idea which was never welcomed by the bourgeoisie romantics of the NYM in Lagos who, he felt, had 'sunk into ineptitude and impotence' by that time. In March 1950, having witnessed the recurrent fiascos of Lagos political leadership resulting in the demise of the National Emergency Committee, formed four months earlier to deal with the Enugu Colliery shooting incident in which 21 miners lost their lives, he founded the Action Group in order to contest the impending 1951 election to the Western House of Assembly. The split in the ranks of the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) delegation to London in 1947 when he, Awo, was a law student there and watched with others the unsavoury quarrels between Zik and his colleagues, gave Awo his chance for a leadership role waiting to be played in Nigeria.

Even if one accepts the charge of his opponents that, apart from invoking the spirit of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestor of the Yorubas, Awo and his colleagues in the Action Group employed much cajolery, intimidation and even bribery to entice the victorious NCNC candidates to obtain a majority AG in the Western House of Assembly which made it possible for them to form the government in 1952, one must concede to Awo's credit in producing the best organised and monolithic party in the country from a queer amalgam of vested interests - middle class professionals, traditional chiefs, farmers and big businessmen. Awo once informed me that he organised the AG with the full blessing of Dr Azikiwe (Zik) whom he said he had always respected but, to his utter dismay, the latter unleashed an unprovoked attack on him and his colleagues during the inaugural congress of the party at Owo, an event which, he said, destroyed the last vestige of admiration he had for his one-time hero. This incident, he explained, revived in him old memories of Zik's 1941 dramatics in the NYM ending in the break-away of many Easterners and Ijebus and the subsequent revival, with Zik's support, of the defunct Democratic Party of Herbert Macaulay which had been too much enfeebled by the revolt of youths embodied in the NYM.

The two men however came together again and embraced each other in March 1953 when the two parties, AG and NCNC, entered into an alliance over the issue of Self-Government for Nigeria which, following a constitutional crisis of that year as a result of an internal conflict between the NCNC leadership and its parliamentary wing in the Eastern region, the two parties demanded for 1956 on the basis of which an AG front-bencher, Anthony Enahoró, tabled a motion for Self-Government in the House of Representatives. The conservative Northern Peoples Congress and the NCNC rebels, now organised in the National Independence Party, aided by the British colonial administration, opposed the motion. Unfortunately the AG-NCNC alliance broke up not long after (mainly over whether or not Lagos should be part of the Western Region) but in 1961, the University of Nigeria, established by the NCNC; Eastern Regional Government, awarded honorary doctorate degrees to Zik and Awo, and in 1964 their parties joined in a new alliance, the United Progressive Grand Alliance, to fight the general election of that year which only ended in the military coup of January 1966.

Zik and Awo met again in 1983 in Benin and agreed to 'stay together and work together' in the national interest as their parties had worked together in 1964-65 when Awo was in prison and Zik was in the State House as the ceremonial president. Awo had claimed, without any iota of contradiction, that he offered at least on two occasions, in 1959 and 1964, to serve under Zik and confessed also that he would similarly have served under the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, leader of the NPC, if he had been the Federal Prime Minister if only because, although the Sardauna was not as polished as Balewa (the incumbent prime minister) "you always knew where you stood with him." Awo's relationship with the Sardauna, the third of the triumvirate that held sway over the First Nigerian Republic, apparently passed through anxious moments. The latter met Awo privately in 1955 but was affronted by Awo's political forage and

electioneering in 1959 - with a helicopter dropping handbills from the air in many Northern cities including the strongholds of the revered Emirs and inciting the minorities and *talakawas* to rise to free themselves from the ruling oligarchy.

Yet, after the election, Awo was able to send feelers to the Sardauna (as to Zik) offering an alliance in forming a new government, and their personal relations were said to have been cordial inspite of their ideological differences (especially on the question of creating new states). Awo rarely disguised his distaste for the 'iron cast shell of ultra-conservatism' in which the NPC leaders dwelt and the sacrosanctity of the feudal system from which they drew their inspiration and main support; but he was pragmatic enough to realise that he needed them to achieve his objective. Even the judge of the high court who convicted him (with 30 others) for treasonable felony in 1963 had to confess in court that, having convicted and jailed many of Awo's lieutenants, he could not acquit the party leader - a confession which baffled many people at the time as he had added that his hands were tied; Awo had told the judge that he had fought with vigour against the feudal system in Northern Nigeria and the spread of the system to other parts of Nigeria and he strongly advocated the break-up of Northern Nigeria into more states in order to preserve 'the peace and unity of the country.

If Awo's former colleagues like S.L. Akintola, Ayo Rosiji, Anthony Enahoro, S.G. Ikoku, R.A. Fani-Kayode, J.S. Tarka, Akin Omoboriowo and others had occasion to part company with him, it was often not for Awo's failure to seek reconciliation with them. he was able to win many new friends, members of parties opposed to his own; such as E.O. Eyo, Oged Macaulay, Prince Adeleke Ade-Doyin, Nduka Eze, M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu, C.A. Abangwu, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley (all of them former NCNCers), Abba Maikwairu, Bello Ijumu (ex-Northern Elements Progressive Union deputy president and general secretary) and Muhammadu Kura (ex-NPC and Awo's running mate in the 1983 presidential election), which suggests that he, somehow, retained his charisma till the end.

At least one well-known Ghanaian contemporary, John Tettegah learnt from Awo, as he declared at the Awolowo Birthday Lecture in 1980, "this sacred truth, to disobey at all times and under all circumstances any false authority."

As a fighter, Awo never looked back and difficulties only served to inspire him to greater effort. Bold as a Moltke and far-sighted as a Murat, the 'one-way' lawyer from Ikenne had the cold, calculating genius of a Bismarck — dedicated, competent and tough. An African to the backbone, Awo rarely disguised his feelings and diplomatic niceties were a humbug to him. Nor, in his days as Western regional premier, did he succumb to the blandishments of the Opposition if only because, as he wrote in 1960, "it is neither politics nor wise for a government to submit in the open on any major issue, to the Opposition." A queer mixture of the progressive and the reactionary in the early days, he was a fanatical believer in the greatness that awaited him and he brooked no nonsense from any quarter, for he apparently appreciated the truism of Stalin that "You cannot make a revolution with silk gloves." Simple in his habits and puritan in his morals, with little ecstasies (except perhaps when he was with his family at home among whom he has confessed he enjoyed 'a true haven, a place of happiness and of imperturbable seclusion from the buffetings of life), he was a very hard worker and gave one the impression of being honest even in his occasional relapse in to parochialism. A cool, logical mind, his fatal mistake in the 1940's was to transfer his hatred for a man to his whole tribe and his failure to recognise early enough the integrating forces of modern social life; otherwise, Awo left no one in doubt that he was a patriot to the core who, if given the chance, could do much for his country with his abundant energy, audacity and perspicacity. The tight lips, cracked voice, even his miserable boyhood, organising ability and capacity to smell out opposition in time as well as inspire loyalty in his followers may have suggested to

some of his opponents that Awo could have been attracted to fascism, but he came to realise early enough that "It is unlikely that all the diverse ethnic groups in the country will succumb at one and the same time to the charm and hypnotism, of the blustering and bludgeoning of a dictator." Dictatorship would have been a risky business altogether since, for a people who have known the benefits of democratic criticism and economic self-sufficiency, dictatorship will ultimately have proved unappealing though their apathy, ignorance and fatalism may at times offer a constant challenge and temptation to a would-be Hitler.

I have heard two stories, one of which may be apocryphal, that somehow typify the man. One was that he once slapped one of his bright, younger colleagues at a party meeting for some moral lapse but quickly made it up with him by offering to pay his debt of honour. The other was that a Northerner, a leftist who had lost rapport with his party, the NEPU, and thought nothing of channeling his radical energies into Awo's AG, was compelled to ask a question, suggesting to his hearers that he dissented from Awo's pronouncements from the chair; to his surprise, one of the pillars of the party attempted to shout him down for ever daring to criticise the Leader even so mildly. My friend, who told me this story himself, was shocked by this experience of an obvious personality cult which he never had in his old party where he was a principal officer.

I first met Awo in November 1949 on the platform of the National Emergency Committee. Coming from Ibadan, where he had been practising law since his return from Britain two years earlier, Awo was rather reserved and usually occupied a back-seat in a gathering that included the late Dr. Akinola Maja, Chief H.O. Davies (NYM), the late Mazi Mbonu Ojike (NCNC), and M.A.O. Imoudu (TUC). Our paths have of course crossed again on a number of times over the years, but two occasions stand out in my memory: first in 1953, over a sumptuous luncheon, he sought to woo me (and the late Raji Abdalialh whom I asked to accompany me) into

his party, the Action Group, and twenty years later, in 1983, I delivered his Birthday Lectures (in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Ilorin) and later attended a church service in his hometown. From such brief encounters, I observed that, in spite of the apparent ambivalence which developed in me after watching his career over three decades, both of us were somehow related if only in a certain degree of stubbornness and outspokenness. I was naturally intrigued by the fate of a man of exceptionable intellect, courage and organisational ability who welded his ethnic group, the Yoruba, into a unity it never had since the chaos of the 19th century internecine wars and who, as premier of the old Western Region, had quickened his people's educational, economic and political development but, perhaps for that very reason, was feared and distrusted by many people outside his homeland – the best president Nigeria never had, one of his long-time critics, Emeka Ojukwu, called him after his death.

Of course, to many of his critics, Awo started the second phase of his political career, after the universal idealism of the NYM, on the wrong foot; that of ethnic chauvinism, and some of his pronouncements as the general secretary of the defunct *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* – like those of his great contemporary, Dr Azikiwe, as president of the defunct Ibo State Union in 1949. They were shortsighted and highly questionable. Awo's seminal work, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, published in 1947, foreshadowed his elitist and federal principles. Convinced beyond all doubt that it was the destiny of the intelligentsia of each ethnic group to rule the group and to come into some federal arrangement with their counterparts in other areas to govern the nation, Awo at this time apparently found it difficult to pass from tribes to universals and held, in fact, that language lies at the basis of all human divisions and divergencies; even in 1983 he still described it as 'the most cohesive factor in a community' adding that it is not ingrained in our people's blood that someone from outside their own tribe or linguistic group should govern them.' Accordingly, he advocated over many

years the creation of states in Nigeria, as it is in the USSR and Yugoslavia. On linguistic basis (he suggested 18 of them in 1975) as opposed to those who opted for creation of new states on the principles of geographical contiguity, economic viability and the like which, he said, risks 'uncontrollable proliferation of states in the country.'

It was in the *Path to Nigerian Freedom* that Awo first postulated his elitist middle-class theory which he subsequently used to reduce the traditional chiefs in Western Nigeria to a subordinate position. Over the years, Awo followed this programme faithfully and it is to his credit that he was able to carry along eminent intellectuals and traditional chiefs in the region and literarily to impose the federal principle on Nigeria. For over 30 years, indeed, Awo was able to string together an assortment of political alliances which, while striking on paper, were often broken by the realities of Nigerian politics. At one time, it seemed he would be the man to forge a coalition of Nigerian minority ethnic groups behind one of the three major groups which have dominated Nigerian politics. But the dream never materialised if only because in the game of numbers that ultimately counted in elective politics, the dice was heavily loaded against him and, in the words of Peter Enahoro, Awo was never able to shake off the tag of 'tribalist'. But in fairness to him, it is perhaps not so much for lack of trying, but because in a country ravaged by the very disease for which Awo was often accused, he was seen as the original carrier in whom the cankerworm took form. Matters were not helped, added Enahoro, by Awo's uncompromising, and for too often, self-righteous image as well as forthright public utterances.

Awo at first defended his tribalism on the ground that Zik and the Ihos drove him to it and that, in the early 1950s, that was the only way he and his colleagues could make any inroad into a scene dominated by Zik and the NCNC. At first he was not anxious to extend his *lebensraum* to the four corners of the world like Hitler and the dominion of Yorubaland seemed to satisfy him until about 1957 when the jeers

of his NCNC Opposition and the successes of his liberal financial policy towards his allies in other regions inspired wider ambition in him. Unashamedly lacking in idealism before now, Awo once confessed to me that he did not believe in the ideal and the possibility of uniting West Africa, we have not been able to unite Nigeria, he said, and it was no use dreaming of a West African Union. This, I think, shows at once his strength and his weakness: he was a realist of realists, and he probably despised visionaries who at this time spoke of socialism and African unity, although during the conversation referred to, in 1953, he paid a high tribute to members of the old Zikist Movement (of which I was secretary-general) whom he felt, could have been put to better purpose by Dr. Azikiwe. A liberal reformer that he was, Awo in time outgrew his fervent parochialism and later took up arms against recrudescing feudalism, while racism and capitalism of the multinational corporations; indeed, in his last years, he frequently spoke of the imports of ideals in keeping people together. But in the 1950s, Awo showed little love for Ghana of Kwame Nkrumah's CPP or Egypt of Nasser. He thought their pan-Africanism mostly 'a dream' and non-alignment in foreign policy as 'immoral, disreputable and dangerous', just as he engaged the feudal NPC of Sir Ahmadu Bello and left-of-centre NCNC of Dr Azikiwe in an all-out war of attrition. His xenophobia naturally tempered with time and he gladly agreed to deliver a Memorial Lecture in 1976 in honour of Nkrumah just as he audaciously wooed support in the Northern and Eastern regions dominated by his two great rivals.

Awo was one of the most efficient and successful public administrators of his time; this he owed not only to his industry and care for details, but also to his ability to weld together so many disparate men of talent to achieve a common purpose, although some of them later rebelled against his rigid, authoritarian code. But Awo's organising ability was astounding and within a short time of assuming office as Western Nigerian premier he was able to bring the regional

bureaucracy under strict control, to check the chiefly-dominated Native Authority courts which had served as dens of corruption and instruments of tyranny, and to throw out benefits like minimum wage and farm credits with one hand and establish with the other a network of large public and private corporations which survived his rule. Throughout his long public career, planning had a real meaning to Awo who moved with sure steps and rarely looked back after moving; thus, when he rushed a bill in 1952 to stop NCNC's general secretary, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, from becoming the Lagos Town clerk or secured an order to depose the Alafin of Oyo, amid opposing outcries, Awo did not care to observe the outward decencies of liberal democracy; he was however never afraid to follow a course of action which he thought would do the people some good, such as when he pushed through the capitation tax to finance free primary education scheme in 1953 despite violent opposition. Ruthless in dealing with his opponents in his heydays, Awo can be generous to his friends. His government Road Development Programme, Universal Primary Education, Farm Settlement and Local Government Reforms attest to his high conception of his duties as regional premier, even if his party's slogan of 'Freedom for All and Life More Abundant' did not encompass the entire electorate but only the 'groupers on top', according to his opponents.

Awo, who often accused his political opponents of inconsistencies, also had his share of this familiar sin of public life. Thus, once his battle-cry was 'Western Solidarity' but after his visit to USA in 1955 he came to preach a new doctrine of Nigerian Unity, and at the annual conference of his party in 1957 he embraced the ideal of a West African Union which he once rejected; also, at onetime, he opposed industrialisation in preference to agricultural development, but after leading an Economic Mission to Europe and America in search of capital he vastly expanded his government programmes to include many industrial projects, and the man who later declared himself a socialist adherent had presided at

his party conference in Benin which declared that it had no political ideology. In 1958, he dismissed the advocates of a republican Constitution for Nigeria as belonging to a lunatic fringe, but by 1960, following a national debate which I had started that year with the publication of a party brochure, he accepted it as achievable and even championed the cause of nationalisation of the country's basic industries like mining, shipping, banking, and insurance. Although by June 1986, he again advocated for privatisation of some State enterprises. He also condemned the craze for foreign honours by Nigerians and led his party to agitate against the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact of 1961 on the ground that it undermined national independence and created a possibility of invasion from its enemies in the event of war. The man who was supposed to be inflexible and uncompromising, advocated in his last years for tolerance and moderation in the body-politic as the only way to sustain a nation; and the man who once wrote to a friend in 1943 that 'a politician or a journalist who has no money with which to support himself and family comfortably is like a blade which has no blade' had come, by 1985, to criticise Nigerian politicians for regarding money as the over-riding thing, although ten years earlier he questioned the usefulness of public probes of office holders, holding that, while the endemic corruption in the country was bad, official corruption can never be eradicated.

Awo, like many other great men, was self-opinionated, but was also highly disciplined in both public and private; if the adoration that surrounded him led him to think that he was always right and others who opposed him wrong, this is understandable in a society where wooly-thinking and servile sycophancy have become endemic. And it was noble of him to acknowledge with grace and gratitude the unstinting loyalty of thousands of responsible men and women who, in his own words, "have put me in the forefront always." The disappointments that characterised his last years may have, in addition to the weak heart suggested afterwards by his personal physician, attenuated his 'will to live', and in

the light of his references, two months before his death, to his coming 'transition' which turned out to be prophetic, one may invoke the old cliché that, as in the case of Patrick Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Felix Moumie and Ben Barka, we, his people, killed him. Ultimately, of course, each nation kills its leaders - by overwork, assassination, exile, or even by mere calumny. unmerited ingratitude or rejection at the pools when the old leader, after a long and meritorious service, becomes a boor at last, according to a dictum of Emerson. The explanation of this familiar phenomenon in history varies from fate to some malevolence in human nature, but perhaps the only certainty in this connection is that, as the 18th century English poet, Thomas Gray, observed, 'the paths of glory (ultimately) lead but to the grave', no matter what we do.

Apart from the capacity for hard work, organisation, clear thinking, another great quality which Awo possessed to a marvellous degree was the ability to learn continually. Thus, although he did not at first think that Nigeria was more than a mere geographical expression - a cliché first coined by the 19th century Austrian Chancellor Metternich in denigration of the Resurgimento vision of Italy and made familiar in Nigeria of the mid-1940s by the lion-hearted, Governor Sir Arthur Richards (later Lord Milverton) - Awo had grown by 1966 to recognise the need, as he tells us in *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution*, to stamp out 'tribalism and most of the manifold evils which abound and proliferate, with general approval, in a capitalist economy.' Similarly, he did not at first believe that we needed any ideological guidance from outside, especially from Eastern Europe, but by 1959, when he shifted his focus of attention away from regional to national politics, his emotional and intellectual horizons had broadened tremendously, and his subsequent combination of Marxism dialectics with Christian ontology and Rosicrucian mysticism commanded the respect of the orthodox as an earnest attempt to synthesize all knowledge and evolve a behaviour pattern congruent with it.

It is likely that he achieved this synthesis in prison where he had a lot of time to read, and he attested to some of these insights in his books which (apart from his autobiography *Awo*, published in 1960) include *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution* (1966), *The People's Republic* (1968), *The Strategies and Tactics of the People's Republic* (1970), *Adventures in Power, My March Through Prison*, (1985) and so on. One may fault these works on their philosophical framework but hardly on their factual details to which the author has devoted much care.

Even his political opponents concede that, though he could be disconcertingly silent when he chose to, Awo never left any one in doubt as to where he stood with any person or on any public issue. Nor was he intimidated by the clamp-down on public criticism of government policies by the Buhari-Idiagbon regime from refuting the wild official charges of financial malfeasance against his colleagues held in detention (such as former State governors, Michael Ajasin, Bisi Onabanjo, Bola Ige, and L.K. Jakande). Apart from free public education and medicare, integrated rural development and change in some old habits, culture and tradition of Nigerians which he deemed to be inimical to his new faith, socialism, and therefore to social justice, social harmony and rapid all-round rebirth and growth, Awo in his lifetime was a strong advocate of the Federal system of government and the creation of new states on linguistic basis. Some of his opponents were wont to question his sincerity in championing the cause of ethnic minorities and their parties - for example the United Middlebelt Congress, Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement and Bornu Youth Movement - which no doubt was partly inspired by purely political considerations - the desire to win minority support to achieve his political ambition; but this is a legitimate objective and may be said to spring in his case from long-standing and deep-rooted conviction about Federalism. At least Awo had the empathy and foresight to recognise the merit of the minorities case which was part of the national search for social justice and

political stability, and he realised that the new challenges of the time gave rise everywhere to new modes of thinking not only about the people's condition of living in terms of wages, Education, Healthcare and leisure but also of social security, equality of opportunity and human dignity for all.

As I told a Lagos audience in February 1983, 'for his unrelenting commitment to the democratisation of our inherited local government structures, the steady improvement in the working conditions of our workers and peasants and provision of free Education and Health care services for all and his subsequent conversion to Socialism, I am prepared to forgive his errant political past.' It is probably not just a matter of making concession to an imperfect society that Awo and his family owned vast landed estates in Lagos and elsewhere. But one suspects that, in recognition of the fact that, as he told a university audience in 1977, corruption debases and deforms its practitioners but 'never kills them..... fertilises them, enriches them, and until kingdom come no one will succeed in eradicating this dread and endemic disease,' he was revealing not only his cynicism but his basic honesty.

Awo in 1986 declared that he will never again seek an elective office, and he never had a chance to do so. Apparently by then he had lost interest in public affairs, so that when airport journalists asked him to comment on a current public debate on whether or not Nigeria should take an IMF loan with its smothering conditionalities, he refused to do so, on the ground that 'IMF is too elementary for me to discuss . . . and I have not formed any opinion. The government is free to take a stand on the issue now' (which it did two months later, by bowing to public opinion and rejecting the loan though it thereafter imposed a more stringent structural adjustment programme on the country's economy. Zik, when similarly confronted by newsmen shortly after, was not more forthcoming with prescription, which made one young newspaper commentator dismiss the two elder statesmen as irrelevant, seeing in their 'spectator role' a mark of 'either a coward or a traitor'.

Perhaps there is right on both sides: youth has a right to mock the evasiveness of age whose bungling has helped to compound the complex problems of today, but so too has age the right to be cynical in the face of life's frustrations. After being rejected, or 'rigged out' of victory, as his supporters believed three times (in 1959, 1979 and 1983) in his bid for control of the Federal Government, a man of Awo's antecedents and commitment had a right to be angry, even to despair of democracy in his life-time as he confessed to an interviewer in 1986, because of 'intolerance and desire for wealth of Nigerians at all costs'. For, why must he or anyone continue to woo or to teach an unwilling electorate who has more to lose by not allowing him to govern?

Awo himself played a major part in the exciting but destructive politics of the last two Nigerian Republics: he never tried to idealise the past. In a Convocation address he gave as Chancellor to the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, on 9 December 1977, he pinpointed the causes for the fall of the First Republic: first was the absence of fundamental social objectives, including fundamental human rights and an implied social contract among the aggregating communities in the country, upon the attainment of independence in 1960, which should have constituted the *raison d'être* of the State and are indispensable to good and democratic government; second was the deliberate persecution of the opposition elements and a vigorous attempt to silence the voice of dissent in whatever form it was manifested; and third was "the fierce and almost cut-throat competition among the three so-called majority ethnic groups for federal hegemony." As one of the leading characters in the play, Awo cannot of course escape part of the blame for tragic obliquities which the First Republic handed on to its successors, but it is the corruption, intimidation, ballot-rigging, false declaration of results, tribalism and religious bigotry or fear of most of us which in the end made nonsense of the people's right to choose the government under which they will live.

It may well be that the atonement of Awo and his generat-

ion was half-hearted and belated and that the seeds of tribalism, corruption and ideological bankruptcy they sowed in the past had germinated and grown into such trunks that require more than six military coups and a civil war to uproot. But to their credit, despite the intense political rivalry, economic anarchy and impotence in foreign relations which characterised their heyday, Nigeria witnessed remarkable developments in her ports, wharfs, road network, agriculture, state industries and workers' housing estates under their leadership; what is more, there was gaiety, freedom, security, abundance and optimism which no longer grace our life today. There has been a great deal of double talk and ignorance in our recent history and experience suggests that we need a greater measure of discipline and social justice to nurture and sustain the nation. But this cannot detract from the pioneer work of the older generation of nationalists whose fate it was to be part of a play that had no rules and had little time to evolve such rules. Taking together his contributions and aborted hopes, one could do worse than adopt Awo's own philosophical resignation in a world where 'everything that happens to a man, happens for his own good.'

According to the Nigerian poet-laureate, Wole Soyinka, not only did Nigeria waste Awo, "some people - I do not care what hypocritical nonsense they utter - sleep better now for the fact that Chief Awolowo is gone ... because Awo, as the one man they feared most, because of his forthrightness, his integrity, his resilience of mind." But it is silly to rejoice at the death even of one's enemy; for, after all, we all will die one day, and there are, in this life, forces more enduring than individual lives, and these forces might still prevail even after the death of their initiators. With Awo's death, we shall no doubt miss his tremendous energy and moral integrity, his courage, intellectual acumen and organisational skill; but we are not likely to forget, for many years to come, his great legacy of constitutional Federalism, Universal Education and Medicare, and it is possible that his death could become a blessing in disguise, for his disciples, in Yorubaland and out-

side, can now propagate his ideas and seek to realise them without having to face the inevitable emotional hatred and suspicion of those who would not concede that in his lifetime, Awo had any good in him. The groundwork has been done by the great man, his thoughts have been recorded in copious volumes, and since society, no less than nature, abhors a vacuum, a new Awo, or rather many thousand Awos, will necessarily emerge in time to carry on his work. And if any Army major or colonel could be picked from the barracks to serve as State governor or corporation chairman, without any prior experience in statecraft, why should those who have worked with Awo for two or three decades find it too difficult to fit into his place?

What happens after Awo, will of course depend on what other extant interest groups, including the armed forces, do in the new circumstances. It is conceivable that without Awo and Zik (who has publicly disavowed any intention to participate in future politics) may well throw Nigeria, or at least that part of it once dominated by the two giants, into a melting-pot. But experience over the last three decades has shown that both continuity and discontinuity in our political development occur. There is a clear persistence in ethno-religious loyalty and voting behaviour which suggests that the giants may continue to rule even in absence; even so, there are bound to be changes if only in style and emphasis or alliance system which represent some progress on the old, bread-and-butter marriages of convenience which we have known. But the only thing certain about the future is its uncertainty, and we should not indulge in too much speculation about it: for one thing, it comes soon enough, for those who survive. It is easy enough to see Awo's death as the end of an era but history is more of a flow than a fragment, and there are many imponderables in our situation for us to say that Awo's passing will mark the end of an era or the beginning of another. Let the future take care of itself while we worry about the present which has enough problems. Long live the best of Awo! Long live the best of Nigeria!!



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# **Part Two**

**Philosophy**

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## Awolowo and the Politics of Democratic Socialism

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SEGUN GBADEGESIN

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My objective in this paper is to raise and discuss some issues in Chief Obafemi Awolowo's political philosophy. I am particularly interested in Awolowo's account of human nature, the theory of the State based on it, and the politics of democratic socialism which seems to emerge as a response to the problematics of the state and the individual. This objective is born out of my own desire to contribute to the process of filling a gap in the current scholarship on African political thought. Many of the research efforts in African social and political thought have thus far concentrated mainly on the views of political office holders as these are expressed in speeches and addresses at political rallies. This has created the impression in some quarters that political theory in Africa is inseparable from the ideologies of the ruling political elite. The claim has therefore been made that systematic political theory is non-existent in Africa.<sup>1</sup>

This is rather unfortunate, but there is, perhaps, some justification for it. Most writings presented as African political philosophy have concerned themselves with the analyses of the "thoughts" of leaders occupying national political offices. In such cases, to derive a systematic theory from the variety of speeches and addresses given on different occasions, one has to ignore the circumstances in which they are

expressed. But since those circumstances are themselves essential to understanding the thoughts they express, they can only be ignored at the cost of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. The alternative is to look for a kind of connecting thread in such speeches and addresses, and then to attempt to impose a coherence which such writings otherwise do not pretend to have. This is beside the fact that many of such speeches and addresses are usually expressed after a political act has been done, as a rationalization of the leader's position.

I am convinced that Awolowo has a systematic political theory which has been ignored for a long time, perhaps because he was not given the opportunity to lead the Nigerian nation as Head of State in his four decades of political activism. From around 1947 until his death in 1987, Awolowo held and defended a systematic theory of the state and consistently argued for a federal constitution for Nigeria on the basis of certain principles of constitution-making which he described as having universal validity. Yet it is only recently that scholars started taking interest in his political philosophy.<sup>2</sup> My objective is to contribute to this scholarly approach.<sup>3</sup>

Awolowo belongs to that tradition in political theory which embraces the philosophy of democratic socialism. The clue to his political theory is to be found in the combined effect of a distinctive theory of the State and a particular account of human nature and human motivation. In the theory of human motivation, there is an analysis of what leads individuals and families to form societies which may later metamorphose into the state, plus an account of what motivates individuals to act in particular ways. Thus we are given a sort of evolutionary theory of the State, combined with a quasi-contractual account.

According to Awolowo. "by his very nature. man is a social animal. He was never and could never be solitary."<sup>4</sup> This is his reaction to the Hobbesian state of nature theory according to which "men have no pleasure, but on the cont-

rary a great deal of grief, in keeping company, where there is no power able to over-awe them all."<sup>5</sup> Hobbes here implies that man is by nature solitary. Awo thinks otherwise. After all, even if he isn't anything else, man must be a member of a family, and the affection which exists within a family unit is such as to prevent the kind of tendency to solitude which Hobbesian theory seems to suggest, that is, "the well-being of each member of the family is the concern of all, and vice versa, and the wealth of the family is shared among its members with manifest fairness and equity. The needs of the young, the aged, the sick and the disabled; and the relative contributions of the able-bodied are the over-riding factors in the distribution of the family wealth."<sup>6</sup>

It is important to make one observation here. We should notice the important place given to the membership of a family. It is the first evidence that man is a social animal. Secondly it is the primary locus of love and affection. As Awo goes on to suggest, "because of marriage and blood affinity, the affection which exists within the family is such as to make the other members of the family trust the *paterfamilias* completely."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the family unit is basic to the understanding of the social and political life of man. It is the focus of loyalty and trust. If Awo is insistent on the idea of federalism in a multi-national state, this is the theoretical foundation. He believes that human nature is such that blood and language affinity will always emerge as a potent force in the contest for the loyalties of human beings.

If family units can remain isolated from one another, there may, perhaps, be no problem. But with time "competition among different families for the acquisition of means of livelihood, the propensity to greediness, envy, and dispute among them over a large variety of matters led to mutual strife involving violence, bloodshed, and death".<sup>8</sup> It was to eliminate this undesirable development that two or more family units had to come together to form a larger society. Thus the beginning of the state was rooted in the "passionate desire for peace" among human beings, "for mutual defence or protection against those

outside their union, as well as for the procurement of economic benefits.”<sup>9</sup> And though Awo recognizes the family as the primary unit and focus of loyalty and trust, he also regards it as a “precarious and nonviable entity,” observing that “it is the State or the aggregation of families alone which can properly and satisfactorily provide the conditions under which man can exercise his individual freedom, live a full and happy life and enjoy the fruits of his labour.”<sup>10</sup>

The state (or aggregation of families) is described as “an association of human beings established for the attainment of certain ends.” It is important to note that such associations emerge directly from the considerations of the self-interest of individual families. On this, at least, there is an agreement between Awo and Hobbes. This recognition of self-interest as a motivating factor in the development of the state plays a predominant role in Awo’s account of the principle of constitution-making. As he puts it,

... There is abundant and incontrovertible empirical evidence to the effect that families live together in a community not for the love of one another, but because of a clear realisation by them of the economic, social and political advantages as well as the collective security which such living together can impart on the constituent families. Linguistic or national groups...do live together in a multinational state like Nigeria, for the same reason, as bring families together in a uninationaI state <sup>11</sup>

For this reason, Awo is of the view that when families or linguistic groups come together either voluntarily or through the mediation of an external force, it must be assumed that there is an implied social contract to the effect that each of the groups will enjoy equal treatment, and that their interests and rights will be protected on equal basis. Failure to abide by this principle of equal treatment is bound to be disastrous for the existence of a multinational entity.<sup>12</sup>

*The People’s Republic* is a philosophical analysis of the state, its ends and means of achieving them. A summary of

Awo's main claims on the state is therefore essential at this point:

- (i) For Awo, there can be no state without some distinctive objectives or political ends. This is one of the features which he sees as distinguishing a state from other associations. For instance, a nation according to Awo does not have objectives. This follows from his definition of the nation as a natural determination based on linguistic and blood relationship. Membership of this group is involuntary. (Notice that what Awo refers to as the nation here is what many would refer to as an ethnic group). This distinction between nation and state is responsible for Awolowo's famous statement that "Nigeria is not a nation, it is a mere geographical expression". There is no doubt that in the sense he uses the term, Nigeria is a multi-national state. Again, the belief that a state must have certain objectives is responsible for Awolowo's castigation of all pre 1979 efforts at constitution-making in Nigeria. For they lacked any reference to fundamental objectives of the state.<sup>13</sup>
- (ii) The objectives of a State, according to Awo, must include the provision of a full and happy life for all its citizens. This follows from the fact that their self-interest which motivates them to form the State will require nothing less or contrary.
- (iii) To be able to attain this objective, the state must have a suitable constitution and an adequate economic arrangement.
- (iv) The most suitable constitution for a state depends on its nature and composition. It must conform to certain universally valid principles. However, given any form of constitution, the best form of government is Democracy.<sup>14</sup>

There is a strong emphasis on human motivation in Awolowo's account of the state. He traces the foundation of the state to the self-interest of family units in group survival. He justifies the relevance of his four principles of constitution-making by appeal to the self-interest of human beings. These principles are that:

- (1) If a country is uni-lingual and uni-national the constitution must be unitary.
- (2) If a country is uni-lingual or bi-lingual or multi-lingual

and also consists of communities which, though belonging to the same nation, have, over a period of years, developed some autonomous geographical separateness; the constitution must be Federal, and the constituent states must be organized on a dual basis of language and geographical separateness.

(3) If a country is bi-lingual or multi-lingual, the constitution must be Federal, and the constituent states must be organized on a dual basis of language and geographical separateness.

(4) Any experiment with a Unitary Constitution in a bi-lingual or multi-national country must fail, in the long run. Awolowo then adds that these principles will be valid as long as most human beings are motivated by self-interest:

“And we make bold to declare that these principles will hold good as long as the hearts of the vast majority of human beings continue to be ruled more by passions, emotions, individual wills, and self-interest than by objective reason and the pursuit of generally beneficial common goals...15

He also justifies political competition and multi-party system on the same ground: that people will have nothing less, because they are motivated by self-interest.

It is proper for us to see this approach as political realism and to oppose it to the kind of idealism that informs the Rousseauian obsession with the elevation of general interest and suppression of private interest. In the context of African political thought, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania epitomizes the Rousseauian obsession.<sup>16</sup> Awolowo's position appears to be a realization of the primacy of interest in politics. It is in recognition of this important fact that his account of the state starts with the motivation of family units in the protection of their interest. They are not likely to yield to any principle or action that has a tendency of jeopardising those interests. This is what Awolowo attempts to capture in the principles of constitution-making.

But there is a problem. Are these principles of constitu-

tion-making, political competition, and multi-party system valid because they provide adequate solution for the problem posed by self-interest, in the sense that they make the stability of the system possible in spite of self-interest? Or are these principles valid because they solve those problems by dissolving its cause, that is, by eradicating self-interest and individual wills? I do not think that it is the latter suggestion that makes the principles attractive. For Awolowo maintains that they will be valid until men are no longer governed by self-interest. There is no suggestion that they will bring the end of self-interest. The suggestion is, rather, that they will provide adequate stability as long as self-interest reigns.

But if so, there is a problem with the other aspect of the theory. The capitalist system is widely acclaimed to be based on this same account of human motivation. Awolowo himself agrees that "greed, selfishness, or naked self-interest is the essence and predominant motivation of capitalism"<sup>17</sup> But he rejects capitalism precisely on this ground — that it is based on self-interest, and suggests that it is bound to generate secular social disequilibrium and disintegrate. Awolowo then offers the socialist system as an alternative to capitalism. In his account, this must be because socialism is based on love rather than self-interest. Then socialism is going to provide a permanent solution to the problem of self-interest. It is going to solve the problem by replacing self-interest with love as the basic human motivation. The truth or falsity of this assertion can be put aside for a while. The point of interest is what this should mean.

Let us recall that the principles of constitution, political competition, and multi-party system are all offered as temporary panacea to the problem created by self-interest. They make for stability when greed and selfishness remain the basic human motivation. Now this is going to cease as soon as love replaces self-interest. In other words, the socialist transformation is expected to put an end to self-interest by introducing love. The question is: Will the politics of competition justified by the existence of self-interest still

be relevant at this stage when self-interest must have given way to love?. Indeed, will there be need for the state then? Awolowo maintains that the state will always be necessary. This is one point of his disagreement with revolutionary Marxism.<sup>19</sup> There seems to be a clash between the goal of socialism based on love and the continuation of a politics dictated by the fact of self-interest. In this connection, it is also appropriate to raise questions about the adequacy of this politics for the realization of the goal of socialist transformation. No doubt Awolowo is attracted to the idea that democracy implies the existence of a system of competitive election based on a multi-party system. He rejects the one-party system, favours the "democratic method" of gaining political power, and believes that a socialist party can maintain itself in power by its performance. This is optimism which may not be justified in reality. His opposition to the concept of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is based on a mistaken understanding of the distinction between dictatorship and democracy as it occurs in the context of Marxist theory.

It is also important, in this regard, to point out that Awolowo's concept of socialism cannot put an end to exploitation. Its goal is to get rid of private ownership of the means of production. But this ownership will still be vested in the State, and state capitalism will replace private capitalism. This is why Marxists regard socialism as an intermediate stage between capitalism and communism. It is a stage in which politics is predominant, with the proletariat exercising power to get rid of all forms of exploitation. Socialism is not intended to be an economic system comparable to capitalism. The alternative to capitalism is communism at which stage the state is no longer essential. Awolowo rejects this account and considers the state as a necessity. It is difficult to see how the socialist transformation that emerges will fulfil the goal of "social justice and equality", which Awolowo claims as the objectives of socialism.

The problem raised by Awolowo's rejection of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in favor of "democratic

socialism" is an instance of the larger issue of the distinction often made between dictatorship and democracy. It raises the issue of what exactly is involved in democracy. Is it solely a means of achieving a desired end of "happiness and satisfaction" for the people; or does it consist solely in the end itself? If it consists solely in the former, is there any clear example of democracy? This question is important in view of the fact that reactions against the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat derive from the fear which the word "dictatorship" generates in some people, and this is no less true of Awolowo. He writes:

We do not at all subscribe to the dictatorship of the proletariat, nor do we think that it is necessary for the latter to use the State as an instrument of arbitrary and partisan coercion against the bourgeoisie.

Why not? Awolowo's answer is that:

.....if the proletariat who are now in power are truly representative of the masses, and if the objectives being pursued by them are truly socialist and, therefore, more in harmony with the immutable law than not, then every effort on the part of the displaced capitalists to recapture power by foul means is doomed to fail and sure to rebound catastrophically on them...<sup>20</sup>

But how will the proletariat carry out its programme? How will it realize its goal of "social justice" without using the power of the state to suppress the bourgeois reactions? Awolowo himself says that he, like other socialist, insists on "the regulation of consumption, the abolition of freedom of individual enterprise and private property, and the state control of the means of production."<sup>21</sup> All these involve the use of state power to change the system of social relations and they appear to be no more than is implied in the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But Awolowo considers the suppression of opposition, including bourgeois

opposition, as proof of dictatorship, and so considers the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat unacceptable for a democratic socialist who intends to use the power of the state to impose socialist ends, which will definitely be opposed by the bourgeoisie. Apparently, the confusion arises because the socialist government will be backed by the masses of workers and proletariat, while the bourgeoisie will be in the minority. As long as this is so, it should not be difficult to have the majority approval of socialist policies and if that is possible, Awolowo sees no use for the concept of dictatorship, for describing this process. What is forgotten is that the proletariat state is thereby using its power to constitute its class and to change the system of social relations against the bourgeoisie which will do everything possible to resist. That is the essence of dictatorship and it is also applicable to the bourgeois state power.

Democratic socialism is not a new ideology. It had been a strong contender before Lenin's proletariat revolution. It proposes the possibility and desirability of a "happy marriage" between socialism and liberal democratic politics. It locates democracy in the readiness of political leaders to ask the people periodically if they approve of what is being done for their good. This requires the establishment of a multi-party system and periodic elections. Awolowo was optimistic that the goal of socialist transformation can be achieved by a system of elections and debate, and rejected the Marxist approach because "it is grounded on mutual hatred."<sup>22</sup> In his view, "democratic socialism must of necessity be democratic in its methods . . . in the manner of its deep contemplation and actual planning by its adherent."<sup>23</sup>

This raises the questions of the real connection between socialism, liberal democracy and capitalism. It seems obvious that the latter two have always been tightly connected, even conceptually. It is this sort of connection that Milton Friedman seems to have in mind when he objects to democratic socialism on the ground that:

"there is an intimate connection between economics and poli-

tics, that only certain combinations of political and economic arrangements are possible, and that, in particular, a society which is socialist cannot also be democratic, in the sense of guaranteeing individual freedom"<sup>24</sup>

While I am not endorsing this view, especially as it rests on a certain conception of individual freedom which I consider partial, I bring it up because it raises the difficulty that has to be resolved by an advocate of democratic socialism, namely, the very idea of democracy which underlies the theory. This is the conceptual hurdle that has to be jumped by the theory and politics of democratic socialism. It is a task which Obafemi Awolowo was yet to accomplish satisfactorily before he left the stage, though there is no doubt that he succeeded in raising the intellectual dust in African politics.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 See e.g. Christopher Clapham, "The Context of African Political Thought" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, 1 (1970) pp. 1-3.
2. See among others, Francis Ogunmodede's "Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Socio-Political Philosophy: A Critical Interpretation" (Rome, 1986); J. O. Fasoro, *Obafemi Awolowo's Political Theory: A Philosophical Critique*, M.A. Makinde "Mental Magnitude": Awolowo's Search for Ultimate Reality, Meaning and the Supreme Value of Human Existence; *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* in Vol. 10, No. 1., 1987.
3. This is in fulfilment of a long-standing desire which was to have materialized in the form of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin in 1980, but had to be shelved for lack of a supervisor competent in Awolowo's philosophy.
4. *The People's Republic*, Ibadan Oxford University Press, 1968 p. 76.
5. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* John Plamenatz (ed.) Collins/Fontana 1974 p.142.
6. *The People's Republic*, p. 77.
7. *Ibid.* p. 76.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 11 "Obafemi Awolowo, *Voice of Wisdom* Akure Fagbamigbe Publishers. 1981 p. 155.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 153-164.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 39-46.
- 15 *The People's Republic*, p. 91.
- 16 "See my article "Rousseau, Nyerere" and "the Politics of General interest" in *Praxis International* Vol. 4. 2, 1984.
- 17 *Op. Cit.*, pp. 188-189.
- 18 Obafemi Awolowo, *Voice of Reason*. Akure Fagbamigbe Publishers. 1981 p. 182.
- 19 *Ibid.*, pp. 192.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
- 24 Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, The University of Chicago Press. 1962 p. 8.

## Awolowo and African Socialism: A Philosophical Study\*

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M. AKIN MAKINDE

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### INTRODUCTION

Hitherto, the works of African political writers have attracted the attention of foreign scholars, particularly the works of writers like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Leopold Sendar of Senegal, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Perhaps the most productive of them all, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria, has not received the same attention as given to the above politicians probably because, unlike the others, Awolowo never had the opportunity of being a head of state, a situation that might have enhanced the chances of putting his political doctrine into practice.

For a short period from 1954 to 1959, Awolowo's principles and practice of his brand of socialism was noticeably effective in the then western region of Nigeria. His leadership at that time remains a showpiece of African democratic socialism on the continent of Africa. Had there been added to his writings the pomp, power, and prestige of a head of state his works would have attracted the attention of scholars all over the world just as every head of State is given international recognition. As a leader of China, Chairman Mao's work was avidly read and studied and the same was true of Mahatma Gandhi, Awolowo's political mentor. In Africa today, the politicians whose works receive the attention of international scholars are the political leaders, particularly heads of states like the examples cited above. Whether

this trend is justified politically or philosophically is difficult to say. But from the academic point of view, the search for African political ideas only through heads of states may be regarded as a bankruptcy of intellectual enterprise and a great disservice to academic learning.

Taking cognizance of the above point of view my paper focuses attention on the political doctrine of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, described as Awoism -- a socialism based on his philosophical doctrine of *mental magnitude*. Awolowo's doctrine of the Regime of Mental Magnitude, his argument that socialism is a normative science and his religious belief in the role which God or the "Universal mind" plays in his theory of a socialist state have led to his disagreement with his other African colleagues, notably Nyerere and Senghor who had believed that there is African socialism rooted in past African traditional societies. Thus Awolowo's objections to the idea or concept of African socialism is an important deviation from the views of his colleagues on the question: Is there an African socialism?

Awolowo's socialist doctrine is based on his idea of human association, particularly of political association, founded on his belief that man is an instrument of social, political and scientific changes. Mental magnitude is therefore a developmental theory of the mind and the individual in any socialist state, but addressed specifically to the underdeveloped nations of Africa, with Nigeria as its main target. When applied to leadership or government, particularly in African society, the Regime of Mental Magnitude becomes extremely crucial to Awolowo's social and political philosophy. Like Plato, Awolowo emphasizes mental qualities, and it is for this reason that an African socialist government must introduce *free education at all levels*, for the purpose of the training and discipline of the mind. Because he sees a relation between mind and body, his second cardinal programme is *free health for all*, for he believes in the old theory of "a sound mind in a sound body". It is after these two things have been taken care of that man can make his own positive

contributions to any society from the economic, political or scientific point of view. *Full employment* and *integrated rural development* complete the socialist programme for a meaningful development of a socialist state.

Awolowo's brand of socialism is not communism or Marxist socialism but democratic socialism par excellence. The merit of the arguments for his socialist doctrine is that African nations cannot develop unless they cultivate, individually or collectively, the Regime of Mental Magnitude which he always considers as an insurance against nepotism, bribery and corruption, inept government and ceaseless military coups. Only a little reflection would show that events in Africa have borne him out. But then Awolowo never had the opportunity of putting into practice his brand of socialism. As he often says, he who must govern and discipline others must himself be self-disciplined, i.e., cultivate the Regime of Mental Magnitude. This seems to make all the difference between his political doctrine and the events in his own country, Nigeria, which has witnessed five military coups since independence in 1960.

#### CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHERS

Before the declaration of independence by their colonial masters, some politically minded African intellectuals seem to have had their own ideas about the system of government they considered most suited to the African situation, based on the traditional beliefs of the African people. The word "socialism" is a foreign word, and may therefore have different meanings to different linguistic communities. In the African context, socialism could mean living together in a spirit of love and brotherhood. It also means, as Nyerere puts it, *Ujamaa* i.e. "familyhood" or "community spirit".<sup>1</sup> The "foundation" and "objective" of African socialism which has been in Africa all along is, according to Nyerere, the extended family.<sup>2</sup> In Leopold Senghor's sense, socialism in Africa is "community society" founded on "the general

activity of the group".<sup>3</sup> And he seems to agree with Nyerere when he (Senghor) argues that, because of its communal nature, the Negro African Society has traditionally been socialistic.<sup>4</sup> And for Nkrumah, "African traditional society is communal, egalitarian and humanistic". The root of this is to be found in African tradition. "If one seeks the socio-political ancestry of socialism one must go to the African tradition".<sup>5</sup> But in any of these African conceptions of socialism there is one thing that would be generally accepted, and that is what I call "living together in a spirit of love and brotherhood". That is what familyhood and community spirit seem to entail.

Because of the communal life of African people, individualism is a remote concept. Individuals in a traditional African society are rich or poor according to whether the whole society is rich or poor. This means that both the rich and the poor are secure, and the poor cannot starve since he could depend on the wealth of the community of which he is a member. In other words, in an African traditional society, capitalism is also a remote concept. Socialism is therefore "essentially distributive", and there can be no "acquisitive socialism." Nyerere, for instance, sees this as an attitude of mind, particularly of the traditional African people, and therefore of traditional African socialism. "True socialism", he says, "is an attitude of the mind."<sup>6</sup>

The great concerns of these thinkers is to fashion an African society in which some of its traditional values are blended with life in modern societies, particularly of the kind of life already imposed by the legacy of the colonial systems of government. Thus Leopold Senghor speaks of "integrating socialism with Negritude"<sup>7</sup> while Nkrumah attempts to integrate African socialism with "dialectical materialism".<sup>8</sup> It must be pointed out that while Nyerere and Senghor not only believe in African traditions but also advocate their revival as a social and political goal, Nkrumah thought that a return to the past would be like putting the hands of the clock back. Although he sees the need to syn-

thesize the traditional with modern political ideas, he certainly rejects pure traditionalism, or a complete revival of old traditional structures.

However, there is a different point of view that has not received as much attention as that given to any of the above writers on the idea of African Socialism. It is the view of Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria. His socialist doctrine is so radically different from the others that his social and political philosophy deserves more serious attention than hitherto given to it. The rest of this paper shall be devoted to a critical analysis of Awolowo's views on socialism in general, but African socialism in particular.

#### AWOLOWO ON THE QUESTIONS OF AFRICAN SOCIALIALISM

In the West, particularly in the United States of America, socialism is commonly viewed as a somewhat alien and perjorative word, associated with Marxism or Communism. For this reason the US is quite unwilling to see any of the African countries go socialist even though some well known scholars have shown that the US itself is more intractably socialist than many socialist States.<sup>9</sup> In recent years, there has been a great deal of controversy in Nigeria about socialism as prompted by Awolowo's writings and utterances. Some powerful politicians are afraid of the word "socialism" because, in their own opinion, socialism is just another word for communism or Marxism, while communism means general or shared poverty. This is to say that a socialist must not have property and must live the life of a poor man. But it seems to others that socialism is not as bad as it is generally portrayed in Nigeria, and that if any system of government is to be dreaded at all, it is a government where freedom and individual liberty is seriously curtailed and people are not allowed to freely make their choice of a government. This is the situation under communism or Marxist socialism whose system of government leads to totalitarianism or dictatorship.

Communism as defined is essentially a philosophy advocating the common ownership of the means of production. Under this system no individual person (or limited group of persons) is allowed to monopolize property, except for minor personal belongings. This condition must obtain in so far as property is seen as belonging to all members of the society. Private ownership is said to lead to exploitation of the many by the few. The few, usually known as the *bourgeoisie*, are held responsible for a number of social evils in the society. They usually exploit their employees by giving them less wages than they rightly deserve; they treat workers as commodities on the market, for their wages are dependent on the fluctuations of the labour market and not usually on the worth of the work they produce. In many cases, the *bourgeoisie* commercialize most occupations, including the professions, and most social institutions. It is then assumed that the elimination of the capitalist class would leave the only remaining class, i.e. the Proletariat who are mainly workers, as those who will take over the responsibility for labour and government and the administration of government. The taking over of power from the *bourgeoisie* is called the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." It is assumed that under this dictatorship, society would be at peace with itself. The above is well known to any reader of Marx and Engels.<sup>10</sup> As we have observed earlier, Nyerere, Senghor and Nkrumah believe that there is a brand of socialism rooted in African traditions.<sup>11</sup> This kind of socialism is usually referred to as African socialism. It is a socialism that may be called "communism" or "communism" judging from its various definitions as "community spirit", "community society" or "familyhood". Like the communism of Marx and Engels defined above Nyerere's conception of African socialism, also like that of Senghor, advocates the common ownership of means of production and of all the natural resources in the State. According to Nyerere, the organization of traditional African society includes fair distribution of the wealth it produces. Apart from the anti-social effects of the accumu-

lation of personal wealth, the very desire to accumulate it must be interpreted as a vote of 'no confidence' in the social system. For when a society is so organized that it cares about its individuals, then provided he is willing to work, no individual within that society should worry about what will happen to him tomorrow if he does not hoard wealth today. Society itself should look after him, or his widow, or his orphans. This is exactly what traditional African society succeeded in doing. Both the 'rich' and the 'poor' individual were completely secure in African society. Natural catastrophe brought famine, but it brought famine to everybody — 'poor' or 'rich'. No body starved, either of food or of human dignity, because he lacked personal wealth; he could depend on the wealth possessed by the community of which he was a member. That was socialism. That is socialism.....Socialism is essentially distributive.<sup>12</sup>

From this point of view Nyerere thinks that Africans must regain their former attitude of mind i.e. "traditional African socialism" and "apply it to the new societies we are building today."<sup>13</sup> This, in effect, is to say that African socialism is rooted in the tradition of African people. Therefore, for Nyerere, a true African socialism must regain the past African traditions by returning to them.

Awolowo disagrees with Nyerere's pure traditionalism. While he would agree with Nkrumah's rejection of a complete revival of the past traditional institutions which would bring the hand of the clock back he does not believe in Nkrumah's idea of atheistic "dialectical materialism"<sup>14</sup> or Senghor's idea of "integrating socialism with Negritude."<sup>15</sup> Neither does he accept the idea of synthesizing traditional beliefs, social and political institutions with modern situations, nor does he appreciate Nkrumah's pragmatic approach to African Socialism. Finally, not only does Awolowo believe that an African socialism cannot be based on African past traditional institutions, but he goes as far as denying the concept of African socialism since he believes that socialism does not have its root in any region of the world. As far as he is concerned, socialism is a normative science.

Socialism:.....as it is generally agreed by all,.....is a normative science. Before any theory at all can answer to the name of science, it must be of universal application. If any principle is purely and strictly peculiar to a given institution, region, or state, it may be a custom, practice, or even a theory, but it certainly cannot lay claim to the status of science. Just as there can be no African Ethics qua Ethics as a science, or African Logic, so there can be no African socialism. <sup>16</sup>

In another work, Awolowo argues that, as a normative science, socialism "sets the standards of human ends and social objectives which economic forces must serve, and prescribes the methods by which these forces may be controlled, directed and channelled for the attainment of the declared ends and objective."<sup>17</sup> In his opinion, those Africans "who have deep rooted prejudices against socialism.... have adopted the ambivalent approach that whilst what they call the European type of socialism is a foreign philosophy, there is a kind of socialism which is native and indigenous to Africa. This is the so-called African socialism which, according to them, is more suited to Africa than the so-called Russian or Chinese socialism."<sup>18</sup>

Continuing with his objections against the idea of African socialism, Awolowo argues that those who have spoken eloquently about African socialism or "Pragmatic African socialism" have fallen into three major errors. First, the protagonists of African socialism have mistaken certain African customs and social practices like savings through *Esusu* (thrift society), the family or communal ownership of land etc., for socialism.<sup>19</sup> In the second place, he argues that, although there was absence of greed for material acquisitions and extensive ownership of private properties in traditional African societies, this situation cannot be taken as an adherence to the socialist principles by people who were never conscious of such principles. Rather, it was the situation at that time that created "insuperable physical obstacles" to such acquisitive tendency:

In the absence of adequate and efficient communi-

cations; in the midst of incessant inter-tribal and internecine wars, with their attendant grave insecurity to property and life; and in the absence of portable and durable means of exchange which, apart from anything else, could serve as store of value, the desire and the greed to accumulate the things of this world were reduced to the barest minimum.<sup>20</sup>

In support of his argument Awolowo gives a good example from his own culture. He observes that before the advent of the British the traditional medium of exchange in Nigeria was the cowry. Twenty thousand shells of cowries made "one sack", an equivalent of five shillings which was less than fifty cents. It required an able-bodied person to carry one sack while a man was considered wealthy if he had one sack in his possession. Anyone who possessed fifty sacks, an equivalent of twelve and a half pound sterling, or about twenty dollars, would have been a millionaire. It would require fifty able-bodied persons to carry this "monetary wealth" in case of an emergency. Hence he contends that, "in the circumstances, therefore, it would be madness for anyone to possess too much of either perishable farm products, or unwieldy cowries."<sup>21</sup> Thus Awolowo seems to be saying that if people in African traditional societies lived a communal life in a community spirit, if there were no acquisitive tendencies and an individual was rich or poor according to whether the society was rich or poor, it was not because of any socialist principle known to them but because they were forced by the circumstances of that time to live that way. If this is the case, then, changes of circumstances amongst Africans must lead to changes in social, economic and political orientation. In this connection, Awolowo argues that the invention of an easily portable and durable medium of exchange marked the beginning of excessive greed for the acquisition of material wealth in Africa. What is more, the improvement of communications has helped "to fan this anti-social passion beyond all imaginable proportions."<sup>22</sup> He explains further:

As long as the barriers to extensive ownership of private property existed, the Africans, like all primitive peoples in other parts of the world, lived a life of

simplicity and contentment, which was comparatively free from the greed and naked self-interest that are prevalent in a capitalist society. But as soon as these barriers were removed and a money economy was introduced, coupled with improvement in communications, the passion for greedy accumulations of wealth became as sharp, venomous and devastating in the Africans as in the other human inhabitants of the globe.<sup>2 3</sup>

A little reflection would show the importance of Awolowo's argument under the present social and political situations in Africa. For instance, all the changes mentioned by him have made it quite easy for African leaders and politicians to accumulate inordinate wealth. If an individual person could amass as much as one billion dollars in a relatively poor country like Nigeria or much less in poorer countries in Africa, it would require about fifty million able-bodied persons (in the case of one billion dollars) to carry this "monetary wealth". Such would have been the case in the past when the possession of twenty dollars was sufficient to make one a millionaire! Surely, modern technology which has succeeded in the production of luxury goods has increased the human passion for greed in Africa and other under-developed countries.<sup>2 4</sup> With the development of printing and efficient communication system it is quite easy to carry any amount of money on a piece of paper, or to transfer large sums of money from place to place by post or cablegram. If it required a lot of people to carry only twenty dollars in the past, it certainly would be difficult to transfer one billion dollars from one part of the country to the other and certainly impossible to stack the same amount of money in foreign countries, like Switzerland, in cases of emergency. From Awolowo's position it seems obvious that the conditions in African traditional societies no longer obtain. It is also important to point out that people in African traditional societies were not conscious of any socialist principles that could be called African. If people's social and political behaviours in the African traditional societies were as simple and non-acquisitive as Nyerere and others have rightly claim-

ed, it was only for the reasons suggested by Awolowo, that is, the conditions for greed and accumulation of wealth just did not exist at that time.

Finally, Awolowo objects to what he calls "Pragmatic African Socialism." The issue here is how socialism is to be achieved, whether in African or any other societies. This is a question of methodology. Marxist-Leninist approach to socialism is through a theory of violent revolution, or any means that would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Any means is considered necessary for, in as much as the ruling class will not voluntarily relinquish their wealth, capital and power, the only thing to do is to abrogate them by *force* or violence if necessary. Thus, in his objection against pragmatic African socialism Awolowo argues that, in pragmatic socialism, there is an obvious confusion, especially between ends on the one hand and the method of (socialist) approach on the other. He argues:

Viewed from any standpoint, whether it is the Marxist, the Maoist, the Titoist, or our own brand of socialism, the normative social objectives are the same, whilst the methods of approach are conspicuously different from one another. If circumstances so dictate, a pragmatic approach to the attainment of socialist goals in a particular country may be adopted. But the fact that a particular tactic is adopted does not in any way alter the fundamental ends, or thereby necessarily make such ends pragmatic in themselves. <sup>25</sup>

From the above arguments Awolowo concludes his criticism of the concept of African socialism by showing that democratic socialism is on the same footing as pragmatic socialism but with an important difference:

While pragmatic socialism may be democratic or otherwise in its approach to socialism, democratic socialism must of necessity be democratic in its methods – at any rate, in the manner of its deep contemplation and actual planning by its adherents. <sup>26</sup>

He then makes it clear that his own brand of socialism is radically different from both the classical Marxist or Leninist socialism and communism. "Our concept of socialism is entirely different from communism or Marxian concept of socialism."<sup>27</sup> In distinguishing socialism from, and contrasting it with, communism and the Marxist concept of socialism, Awolowo argues that not only are communism and socialism not synonymous but also that, from all accounts, communism is not yet being practised anywhere in the world.<sup>28</sup> "What they have in USSR, China and other so called communist countries is socialism with its dictatorship of the proletariat, and its enforced derogation of personal freedom."<sup>29</sup>

One important difference between Awolowo's socialism and the Marxian socialism is that of methodology. For instance, he does not believe that violence is inevitable in the evolution of a socialist state, and for this reason rejects the Marxian idea of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.<sup>30</sup> In his critique of Pragmatic African Socialism he seems to have made it clear that the end does not always justify the means. Whether in Africa, Asia, Europe or Russia, socialism must be achieved by democratic means and not by violence. In this case, Awolowo is likely to have seen some similarity in the Marxist-Leninist method and that of the so-called pragmatic African socialism. It is from this point of view that Awolowo's socialism can be read as Democratic Socialism which, apart from being a rejection of pragmatic African socialism, is also a rejection of both democratic capitalism and communist socialism.<sup>31</sup> And it is important to know that, for him, Democratic Socialism is not distinctly African, since its principles are not rooted in African traditions but in the human association.

Finally, Awolowo rejects the fundamental tenet of Marxism that there can be no personal freedom in a socialist state. And because of his love for democracy, he regards as evil one party system of government which he sees as essential to Marxist-Leninist socialism.<sup>32</sup> A one party system of govern-

ment, whether civilian or military, is evil because it is unelected and can lead to dictatorship or totalitarianism.

Judging from the above it can safely be said that Awolowo's rejection of Marxist socialism and the idea of African socialism or pragmatic African socialism seems consistent with his own conception of socialism as a normative science. Particularly of African socialism his universalist conception of socialism is to show that socialism cannot be said to have its root in African traditional societies. And if this is granted it would appear that, from Awolowo's point of view, there is no brand of socialism which could properly be labelled "African socialism"; after all, we do not talk of African Logic or Ethics, he would say. This universalist view of socialism seems to suggest that the idea of African socialism is fundamentally otiose as it would be the case if one were to talk of Asian or European Socialism. There is simply socialism. For this reason he propounded a doctrine which serves as a philosophical foundation of his own brand of socialism. It is a doctrine which is quite consistent with his universalist approach. This is what he calls the "Regime of Mental Magnitude."<sup>33</sup>

#### MENTAL MAGNITUDE: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION OF AWOISM

As a deviation from the current notion of an African Socialism which is thought to be rooted in African traditional social systems, Awolowo provides a philosophical basis for his universalist doctrine of socialism. We cannot properly appreciate his conception of socialism without understanding his philosophical analysis of the human mind and the importance he attaches to the individual person as an instrument of change. In so far as socialism is seen as a particular attitude of the mind and a way of life translatable into a theory of social, political, economic and moral behaviours of man in a society, mental magnitude, as a philosophical basis of Awolowo's socialism, puts man at the centre of all activities thus making him the main instrument of social, political, scientific, economic and moral changes. The doctri-

ne of mental magnitude, therefore, leads to a profound metaphysical analysis of man in relation to his mental and physical capabilities and his well-being, both as an individual and as a member of a society. It reveals Awolowo's philosophical doctrine of dualism of mind and body and his recognition of both as constituting a person with no racial, ethnic or geographical qualification.

"Man" argues Awolowo, "is the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature: everything else by comparison is in a state of inertia."<sup>34</sup> Man is not just "an animated lump of earth mixed with water." But more than this —

He is dual in nature: part animal, part God; part conscious, part subconscious; part body, part mind.... According to christian ontology, God breathed into his nostrils and man became a living soul, The living soul is housed in the shell called body and this soul can only be the same in kind and quality, though not in degree, as the soul or Infinite Intelligence which pervades the universe and animates man. Looked at in this edifying way, every man, without exception, is a potential genius.<sup>35</sup>

In further relating the individual to the state as a whole<sup>36</sup> Awolowo tries to show that the quality of a state is the quality of its citizens, But in order to appreciate this we must understand the nature of man and recognize his mental and physical capabilities in promoting the general happiness of each and all in a society. Hence,

proper knowledge of man, and a thorough appreciation and competent application of the principles which govern his physical culture, his mental development, and his spiritual self-realization, is indispensable to any efforts for promoting and guaranteeing his general well-being and happiness.<sup>37</sup>

But more important is Awolowo's belief in the superiority of the mind over the body. Like Plato in his *Republic* Awolowo believes that the soul or mind should rule the body, and takes it as an immutable law that the soul commands while the body obeys. The soul or mind is the seat of man's rational faculty, the body the seat of appetite or desires or

what he calls "negative emotions"<sup>38</sup> Ideally then, reason should govern man's appetite or desire. When this is brought into his idea of a socialist state Awolowo believes, like Plato's idea of a philosopher king, that only men of reason should govern in a society. But if reason is dethroned for appetite, then the human mind is seized by negative emotions. This situation leads to corruption of the mind which in turn leads to all sorts of evils like greed, bribery, nepotism, abuse and misuse of power, stealing, cheating, smuggling, violence and disrespect for the rule of law – all of which Awolowo sees as flourishing phenomena in Africa, particularly in his own country, Nigeria. Therefore, for the purpose of effective government and a just and egalitarian society, those who aspire to leadership in a socialist state should be those who are ruled by reason as opposed to mere appetite or desire for bodily pleasure. In other words, they must be mentally equipped, for a leader without a sound and disciplined mind cannot rule in Awolowo's ideal of a socialist state. In order to be master of others and inculcate in them a sense of discipline, one has to be first and foremost master of his own mind and be himself self disciplined. According to him,

Men of affairs and wisdom everywhere are unanimous in the view that only 'those who are masters of themselves become masters of others'. Indeed Aristotle has said it, with the authority of one of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived: 'Let him that would move the world, first move himself.'<sup>39</sup>

An essential tool for a good training and discipline of the mind is EDUCATION which Awolowo makes as the first cardinal programme of his socialist party. Whether in Africa or Asia, Russia or America education and discipline of the mind are seen as essential to the improvement of the individual and of the society as a whole. An educated carpenter will be more efficient than an illiterate carpenter, and the same can be said of farmers, builders, and even traditional healers. But more importantly, the education and training of the minds of those who aspire to leadership is absolutely essential, particularly the kind that is needed for the cultivation of mental

magnitude. As Awolowo himself suggests, to make a success of governing the nation, "Nigerian leaders should possess comprehension, mental magnitude, and spiritual depth."<sup>40</sup>

By comprehension he means "the ability of a man to appreciate and grasp the salient details as well as most of the practical and temporal implications of a given problem or situation"<sup>41</sup> Precisely for this reason, he is against the idea of African socialism based on past traditions. For him it would appear that such an idea of socialism is retrogressive, for it certainly appeals to the past when people had no disciplined education and so were incapable of grasping the salient details of socialist principles.<sup>42</sup>

Since Awolowo believes in the dualism of mind and body and a relation between them, he sees the need for the development of both, and through, a socialist programme. For this reason, and particularly for the development of mental magnitude, the body, like the mind, must be taken care of. One of his justifications in this regard is his belief, dating back from Plato, of the saying: A sound mind in a sound body.<sup>43</sup> A proper education, in Awolowo's view, consists of the training of both mind and body. It is this kind of education that can help man live a balanced and disciplined life.

The cardinal aim of education is not.....to teach a man to read and write, to acquire a profession, to master a vocation, or to be versed in the liberal arts. All these are only means to the end of true education, which is to help a man live a full, happy, and triumphant life. In other words, any system of education which does not help a man to have a healthy and sound body, an alert brain, and a balanced and disciplined instinctive urge, is both misconceived and dangerous.<sup>44</sup>

The aim of education, therefore, is to make it possible for man's physical organs and his instincts to function positively and harmoniously.<sup>45</sup> As he makes it clear in an earlier page:

If all the organs in man, together with the five senses and all the instincts are balanced and functioning normally and harmoniously as Nature intends them to, there will be no such things as negative<sup>4</sup> emotions.....murder and all forms of crime, will be

non-existent. Man would then live a full, happy, glorious and triumphant life. <sup>46</sup>

From the above Awolowo sees the second important cardinal programme in a socialist state as free medical health-care for all, coming after the first, i.e. *free education at all levels*. It is believed that only when people have a sound mind in a sound body will the remaining socialist programmes naturally fall into place, viz, *full employment and integrated rural development*. It is at this point that every individual can make his own meaningful contributions to the society by acting as an instrument of social, political, moral or scientific change. What is more, educated citizens would know their rights (as opposed to the uneducated and unenlightened traditional societies), thus preventing injustice either from fellow citizens or the state. And if rulers are themselves of educated and disciplined minds, they would know the limit of their powers and the purpose of leadership in a community of equally enlightened people. From this perspective it would appear, as Awolowo argues, that the Presidency of Nigeria, or any country whatsoever, "is not an office of pleasure" <sup>47</sup> Well may he contend that in any socialist state, irrespective of geographical location, good leadership involves self-conquest, and self conquest is attainable only by cultivating "the regime of mental magnitude". <sup>48</sup> And he contends that, in this regime, we are free from—

- (1) The negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed.
- (2) Indulgence in the wrong types of food and drink.
- (3) Excessive or immoral craving for sex. In short, in this regime we conquer what Kant calls 'the tyranny of the flesh' and become free. <sup>49</sup>

The overall implication of Awolowo's discussion on the Regime of Mental Magnitude is that socialism cannot be said to have purely an African root. Everywhere man is recognized as a social and political animal. <sup>50</sup> And to evolve a good socialist state a proper understanding of the nature of man as an instrument of social and political change is essential.

This cannot be understood by merely returning to past traditions which in no way fits into Awolowo's doctrine of mental magnitude. What he seems to be saying is that, whether in Russia, Western Europe, America, Asia or Africa, those who aspire to rule a socialist state must cultivate the regime of mental magnitude lest their rule prove to be a curse to man and society. But apart from the ruler and his lieutenants other people in the society must also possess mental magnitude through education and self discipline. Therefore, the totality of what is known as the Regime of Mental Magnitude consists of the rational and disciplined behaviour of the individuals as well as the collective members of a society, from the social, moral, political and economic points of view. But the most important of all is the disciplined behaviour of the ruler without whose example the entire super-structure of a socialist state, as conceived by Awolowo, would collapse and degenerate into a state of anarchy. A state of anarchy usually leads into dictatorship after the forcible overthrow of the indisciplined ruler and the members of his government. Social and political events on the continent of Africa since Independence (there has been five forcible overthrows of government in Nigeria, for instance, since she gained Independence from colonial rule in 1960) seem to have demonstrated clearly his concern for the regime of mental magnitude in African countries.

There is, however, an issue that Awolowo shares with some of his colleagues. With the possible exemption of Nkrumah<sup>51</sup> he agrees with his other colleagues that socialism is not anti-God or anti-religion. Nyerere, for instance, argues that African socialism does not demand that its followers become atheist as Marxist socialism does, and sees no contradiction between socialism and Christianity, Islam or other religions provided they accept the equality of men.<sup>52</sup> Like Nyerere, Awolowo is not intolerant of religion, a situation which further highlights the conflict of his socialist views with the orthodox or classical views of the Marxist-Leninist communism or socialism. Believing fervently in God and Jesus Christ,

and Mohammed as the chosen prophet of Allah, he contends that socialism and all the great religions have the same objective.<sup>53</sup> The objective of socialism, as seen by him, consists of justice and equality.<sup>54</sup>

One important difference between Awolowo and his colleagues on the above issue is the great reliance he puts on the role of God in his social and political philosophy.<sup>55</sup> Apart from his doctrine of mental magnitude he rests his socialist doctrine on the religious conception of love which he derives from the biblical injunction "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it. 'Love your neighbour as thyself.....'"<sup>56</sup> From this it follows that "the touchstone of what is good, be it thought or action, is LOVE. We are to love our neighbours as ourselves. "This is the law and the prophets".<sup>57</sup> Although a little lower than God, man is made in his His image. Therefore, apart from individual mind which represents mental magnitude there is the universal mind which is God, the creator of the universe. "He is the universal mind which permeates and pervades all things."<sup>58</sup> It is from this universal mind that love, as an important virtue in the human association, permeates the mind of man. If a man possesses this religious love and acts in obedience to the biblical (Christian) injunction "Love thy neighbour as thyself", then he truly possesses "spiritual depth" and "mental magnitude". Although Awolowo sees these two as synonymous, the terms "spiritual depth" and "mental magnitude" seem to complement each other. Mental magnitude involves spiritual depth and spiritual depth involves mental magnitude. The presence of both is the only insurance against greed, naked selfishness, fear, and other "negative emotions" that are predominant in a capitalist society. Therefore, although his first book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, was a ruthless fight for freedom against imperialism of the rule imposed by one state on the other,<sup>59</sup> i.e. the colonial rule, his other books, especially *The People's Republic Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*

and *The Problems of Africa* show that Awolowo is quite aware of the possibility of the problems that might follow self-rule or Independence, granted his understanding of the relative backwardness of the African people. Under this condition, all talks about evolving an African socialism fashioned, as it were, on traditional social organization is not only an attempt to equate African socialism with traditional social organization but also to put the hand of the clock backward and thus block the natural course of social and political progress. Therefore, rather than rely on past African social institutions (traditionalism), Awolowo uses the regime of mental magnitude as the philosophical foundation of socialism, that is, his own brand of socialism popularly known as *Awoism*.<sup>60</sup>

The above has shown the importance of mental magnitude, involving spiritual depth, to Awolowo's socialist ideal. In fact, some commentators have suggested that socialism and mental magnitude are the two main pillars upon which Awolowo's universe of ideas and actions rests. Both, it has been suggested, are two sides of the same coin.<sup>61</sup> In my own judgment, the overall concern of Awolowo in his socialist doctrine (*Awoism*) is that if Africans must govern themselves well they must forget about past traditions in order to be rendered mentally and physically good through the cultivation of the regime of mental magnitude, the alpha and omega of his social and political philosophy. In the absence of this all the fight for freedom from colonial rulers may turn out to be counter-productive. This seems to show beyond any shadow of doubt how eager Awolowo is to find every device and policy that would prove Africans capable of governing themselves in freedom and virtue<sup>62</sup>; it is, I believe, the quintessence of his socialism, otherwise known as *Awoism*.

#### CONCLUSION

From our discussion in this paper three important issues arise. First is Awolowo's rejection of the idea of African

socialism. Second is his conception of socialism as a normative science, his philosophical doctrines of the mind (including the universal mind) and the regime of mental magnitude which are all given in support of his views against the traditionalist's conception of African socialism. Thirdly, he appears to be one of the few social and political philosophers who ascribe a definite role to God in a social and political theory. However, I think objections can very easily and quickly be raised against this last position which, from both the philosophical and scientific points of view, appears to be the most vulnerable to attack in Awolowo's theory of state. For instance, it may be argued that he relies too much on the role of God in his socialist doctrine<sup>63</sup> and that such a position is anti-scientific and, consequently, anti-science,<sup>64</sup> a situation which seems inconsistent with a truly scientific conception of socialism. It may further be argued that, like George Berkeley's postulate of God as the universal mind which perceives all things, Awolowo's idea of God as the universal mind permeating all minds is open to the same kind of objection against Berkeley's spiritualism or subjective idealism, for its anti-scientific implication.<sup>65</sup> Other issues to be noted are his objection to the use, if necessary, of force and violence as a means to a socialist end; his rejection of the fundamental tenet of Marxist socialism that there can be no personal freedom in a socialist state; his love for democracy and complete distaste for one-party state or dictatorship; and, above all, his total condemnation of atheistic communism or socialism - all of which suggest an important deviation from Marxist-Leninist socialism in Awolowo's brand of socialism.

But I also think that objections can be raised against his conception of socialism as a normative science which he sees as comparable to the exact sciences, especially logic. Because logic or mathematics and social science do not belong to the same category of science that enjoys a modicum of universal validity, his argument that there can be no African socialism just because there is no African logic does not seem to me

a valid one. After all, we do talk of African or American Philosophy but we do not talk of African or American logic. We also talk, and quite legitimately too, of British socialism<sup>66</sup> although we do not talk of British logic or mathematics. In so far as socialism is a theory of human association aimed at setting a pattern of, and correcting or improving, social, political and economic behaviours in a society, it must reflect the beliefs, aims and aspirations of particular cultures which, as a matter of natural necessity, must be influenced by the circumstances of a people's lives and environments, temper, prejudices, language and thought.<sup>67</sup> In this regard, socialism, as a kind of social and political philosophy, cannot claim to be a science in the real sense of the word, let alone pretend to rest on any universally valid principles. In the opinion of some eminent scientists it would pass as "transcience",<sup>68</sup> in spite of its useful and noble objectives. The greatest difficulty confronting social science is that, unlike natural or physical science, it deals with the difficult phenomenon of the human mind.

Although Awolowo's objections against Nyerere's, Senghor's and Nkrumah's traditional foundation of African socialism is intuitively plausible, at least from the vantage point of modernity, his total rejection of the concept of African socialism seems to be a fundamental error. As I have argued somewhere else,<sup>69</sup> if there is African Philosophy and Awolowo is an African social and political philosopher his thinking must, in a very important sense, be African even if the topic of his discussion is western or oriental philosophy. From this point of view his opinions about socialism does reflect an African thought and could, therefore, legitimately be described as an African socialism, a species of African social and political philosophy. To deny the possibility of an African socialism, a product of an African thought, is to deny the possibility of an African philosophy, which is equally a product of an African thought. In the development or criticism of other philosophical points of view - be it western,

oriental or African - an individual philosopher brings in a philosophy of his own. It is precisely for this reason that the topic of our discussion "Awolowo and African Socialism" can rightly be described as Awolowo's socialism, or *Awoism* as it is otherwise known, and that this would be the case whether his work is a critique of democratic capitalism, Marxist communism, African socialism or pragmatic African socialism. This is to say that *Awoism* is a social and political philosophy written by Awolowo from his African experience, and designed for the improvement of the social and political situations in Nigeria in particular, and in the continent of Africa in general. And if *Awoism* which is in fact seen by Awolowo himself as more relevant to contemporary Black Africa than that of Marx and Engels<sup>70</sup> is not an African socialism, or at least a species of it, then I should say I know not what it is. Be this as it may, it could still be granted that Awolowo's conception of socialism and his objections against the very idea of African socialism do raise interesting philosophical questions for any uncritical, positive response to the question: Is there an African Socialism? Perhaps a new debate on this issue, similar in kind to an earlier protracted question, "Is there an African Philosophy?", is a philosophically interesting possibility.

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2. *Op. cit.*, p. 11
3. Leopold Sedar Senghor, *On African Socialism*. New York, Praeger Publications, 1964 p. 94.

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.
5. Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1965, p. 78. I am indebted to Joseph Osei, one of my graduate students in African Philosophy at Ohio University, Athens, U.S.A., for making this point known to me.
6. Nyerere, *op. cit.* p. 1.
7. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
8. *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
9. See, for instance, Maurice Crantston, 'The U.S. is more intractably socialist than France', in *The Wall Street Journal*, August 24, 1983 p. 21. Crantston is a Professor of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science.
10. Karl Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Harold Laski ed. London, 1942. This work has had numerous editions.
11. See Notes 1-5 above.
12. Nyerere *op. cit.* 3-4. On another page Nyerere says "In tribal society, the individuals or the families within a tribe were 'rich' or 'poor' according to whether the whole tribe was rich or poor. If the tribe prospered, all the members of the tribe shared in its prosperity." (p.9)
13. *Op. cit.*, p. 8.
14. *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
15. Senghor, *op. cit.* p. 165.
16. Obafemi Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1968 p. 208.
17. See Awolowo's *Socialism in the Service of New Nigeria*, (text of a public lecture delivered at the University of Ife, as the Chancellor of the University, on 9 April, 1970), Ibadan University Press, 1970. p. 6.

18 *Ibid.*

19 Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, p. 209.

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Op. cit.*, pp. 209 - 210.

23 *Ibid.*

24. Incidentally, I have myself discussed this matter in a lecture "Technology and Development: The Problem of Africa" delivered to the College of Engineering, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, 15 May, 1984, revised and published under a new title, "Technology Transfer: An African Dilemma" in John W. Murphy, Algis Mickunas, and Joseph J. Pilotta eds: *The Underside of High Technology*. New York/London: Greenwood Press, 1986, pp 177 -189.

25 Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, p. 210. An obvious objection against Nkrumah's position.

26 *Ibid.*

27 *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

28 *Op. cit.* p. 191, and *The Problems of Africa: The Need for Ideological Reappraisal*, London, Macmillan 1977, pp. 61 - 63.

29 *The Problems of Africa*, pp. 61-62.

30 *The People's Republic*, p. 195.

31 The idea of Democratic socialism is implicit in Awolowo's writings. See *The People's Republic*, chapter 8, "The Socialist Approach". In this connection it must be pointed out that the official manifesto of Awolowo's old political party - The Action Group of Nigeria - issued out on the eve of Nigeria Independence in 1960 was entitled "Democratic Socialism". See Awolowo: "Case for Ideological Orientation" in his *Voice of Reason*, Akure, Fagbamigbe Publishers, 1981, p. 186.

- 32 This view is central to Awolowo's discussion in *The People's Republic*, chapter 5 entitled "Constitutional Basis".
- 33 *The People's Republic*, chapter 9; *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution, Ibadan*, Oxford University Press, 1966, chapter VI and, to some extent, "Ideological Reappraisal", the fourth Lecture, in *The Problems of Africa*, pp. 52-73.
- 34 *The Problems of Africa*, p. 53.
- 35 *Op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 36 *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.
- 37 *The People's Republic*, p. 211
- 38 *Op. cit.*, pp. 213 - 214.
- 39 Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 158.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 *The People's Republic*, p. 229.
- 43 *Op. cit.*, p. 227.
- 44 *Op. cit.*, pp. 215 - 216.
- 45 *Op. cit.*, p. 215.
- 46 *Op. cit.*, p. 214.
- 46 See for instance, Awolowo's *Voice of Reason*, Akure, Fagbamigbe Publishers, 1981, pp. 142-147.
- 48 *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 158.
- 49 *The People's Republic*, p. 230.

- 50 In this connection Awolowo refers to Aristotle's definition of man as "Political animal". See *The Peoples Republic*, p. 226.
- 51 For Kwame Nkrumah's view on atheistic socialism see his view on dialectical materialism in his *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1965, p. 77.
- 52 Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*. (A selection from writings and speeches, 1965-1967). Dar-es-Salaam/New York, Oxford University Press, 1968 p. 13.
- 53 *The People's Republic*, p. 206. (See also *Voice of Reason*, pp. 177-184.)
- 54 *Op. cit.*, p. 192.
- 55 See for instance Omoregbe Nwanwene, "Awolowo's Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria - A Review Article" *Quarterly Journal of Administration* (University of Ife) Vol. V, No 2, January 1971, p. 229.
- 56 *The New English Bible, Matthew 19: 16-24*, quoted by Awolowo just before the preface to *The People's Republic*.
- 57 *Op. cit.*, p. 206.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Omoregbe Nwanwene, "Awolowo's Political Philosophy" *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1970, p. 129.
- 60 See for instance, Akin Omoboriowo's book, *Awoism: A Select Theme of the Complex Ideology of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, Ibadan, Evans Brothers (Nigeria) Ltd., 1982.
- 61 Hezekiah A. Oluwasanmi "Foreward" to Akin Omoboriowo's *Awoism* above p. xi.
- 62 In this regard Awolowo goes as far as suggesting a programme training for leaders in African societies, particularly in his own country Nigeria, in a way reminiscent of Plato's programme for the training of philosopher kings (in Plato: *Republic*). After a good university education the most important

training for leadership is to be carried out by an Institute of National Guidance which will endeavour to train Nigerian political leaders towards the cultivation of certain attributes and attitudes of mind that are necessary conditions for the Regime of Mental Magnitude. The same Institute will try to give all citizens the socialist orientation, particularly in the area of discipline, self confidence, hard work and other virtues that are necessary for Nigeria to meet its socialist objectives. See Awolowo: *Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1970. See also Omoreghe Nwanwene "Awolowo's Strategy and Tractis of The People's Republic of Nigeria - A Review Article" above, pp. 237-240, for a discussion on Awolowo's training programme for the achievement of his ideal of a socialist state. From Awolowo's insistence on good education and training of the mind it appears that democracy, if based only on majority rule, could be dangerous if it means that a government could be elected by an illiterate majority. Such a majority cannot bring into being a Regime of Mental Magnitude, especially in the sense in which, both the ruler and the ruled can be said to possess mental magnitude, a necessary condition for the former. Hence, his great emphasis on education and disciplined training of the mind as the first cardinal programme of his socialist party, the old Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), is non-negotiable.

- 63 See Nwanwene in note 55 above. In another paper Nwanwene has suggested that the religious justification of Awolowo's ideal state is likely to sell this state to religious enthusiasts. See his paper "Awolowo's political philosophy", in *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, Vol. IV, 1970, p. 147. Perhaps in this connection, the excesses of some religious fundamentalists in the third world countries, especially the rulers of Iran and Libya, may be cited as examples. This point was made by one of my graduate students in African Philosophy, Miss Uchenna Evuleocha, in her paper on "Awoism", Ohio University, Athens, Spring, 1983/84.
- 64 See for instance, Earnest Nagel, "In Defense of Atheism" in Paul Edwards and Arthur Pap ed: *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*, New York, The Free Press, 1965 pp. 460-472, and my criticism of Nagel in a paper titled "Pascal's Wager and the Atheist's Dilemma", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 17, No 3, pp. 115 - 129.
- 65 See for instance George Berkeley, *The Principles of Human Knowledge* G. J. Warnock ed., London: Wm. Collins Sons & Co. 1962. For some interesting discussion on Berkeley's spiritualism see Bertrand Russell: *History of*

*Western Philosophy*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966. chapter on "George Berkeley" and Jonathan Bennet, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971.

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67 See for instance, Bertrand Russel, *A History of Western Philosophy* above, p. 14, and Obafemi Awolowo, *The People's Republic* p. 214.

68 This point was made by Alvin M. Weinberg in his plenary Address, "Values in Science", at the Thirteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences, J. W. Marriot Hotel, Washington D. C. 2 - 5 Sept., 1984.

69 That there is an African Philosophy is perhaps the most important contention in my lecture "African Philosophy, Culture and Traditional Medicine" the First Fulbright Hays Lecture in the United States, delivered at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, May 2, 1984.

70 *Problems of Africa*, p. 69.

**NOTE** \*The original version of this paper was presented at the Conference on Black Socio-Political Thought, Centre for Afro-American Studies, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, U.S.A., 26-28 April, 1984.

## Awolowo's Socialism: A Politico-Conceptual Assessment

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Among all his peers, Obafemi Awolowo stands out as a politician who realizes the need to go beyond speeches, the rhetoric of constituency meetings, and the popular predilections of election manifestos. He has bequeathed to us, in addition to an abundance of speeches, manifestos and the like which is part of the politician's stock in trade, a body of works in political thought which, to say the least, is impressive. We may quibble over how much of his theory is informed by his practice and how much of his practice is guided by his theory. What we may not do is ignore the man's contribution to the uplifting of the level of political debate in our country. This paper represents an attempt to recognize this contribution and direct focus on an aspect of it which in light of current controversies and political ferment in Nigeria deserves closer scrutiny. I refer specifically to Awolowo's advocacy of socialism as the only political option that will lead Nigeria to a full efflorescence of her potential and a realization of the promise of independence for her populace.

Any attempt at studying any aspect of Awolowo's work is fraught with danger. Before and more so after Awolowo's death, his life and works have become the favourite haunt of mythmakers and opportunistic fellow-travellers for whom the eulogization and adulation of Awolowo is a daily pre-

occupation. For this category of people, Awolowo has become a saint triumphant, the story of whose life is told in increasingly apocryphal terms. Thus one who decides to take a sober, critical look at any aspect of the man's thought runs the sure risk of agitating the mythmakers. But we shall not be deterred by such risks.

At another level, those who are not mythmakers but are sectarians of the cult of Awolowo are sure to take umbrage at the efforts of a researcher to subject his works to the canons of critical scrutiny. However, to abandon the attempt because of this possibility is to dishonour the memory of a thinker who did not suffer fools gladly and whose surgical mind was at its best when he was dismantling his opponent's arguments. We pay him tribute by critically assessing his own thoughts.

Finally, this writer is not unmindful of the fact that he probably would be convicted of partisanship before being heard, given his Marxist sympathies and preference for class-materialist analysis. Let me say at the outset that what follows represents a more or less internalist reading of Awolowo's writings for, and on socialism, and an attempt to show its weaknesses and strengths on the basis of the assumptions which underpin the writings themselves. This last point immediately generates a different order of questions from those who would be quick to accuse me of taking Awolowo too seriously. I shall not be deterred by such criticism either. For there are plausible responses to the question; why study Awolowo's socialism?

There are people who would question the worth of studying Awolowo's socialism. For those who fall within this category, studying Awolowo's socialism assumes that Awolowo's advocacy for socialism is genuine and that his socialist professions deserve to be taken seriously. According to this set of people, Awolowo's claims to being a socialist are suspect and his avowal of socialism is a mere gimmick targeted at voters and the progressive intelligentsia to win him legitimacy and acceptance as a progressive. Many

Nigerian leftists tend to fall within this category. Even though not many of us have taken pains to read what Awolowo has written, there is no dearth of people who merely take a cursory look at Awolowo's own life and dismiss as gratuitous his strident and persistent advocacy of socialism.

Without doubt there are enough materials in his writings to make it very difficult to place him in the political spectrum. I refer here to his unabashed elitism which makes him to speak condescendingly of ordinary people all too often. For instance, in his *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Awolowo repeatedly stresses that the masses of the people are

ignorant, and will not be bothered by politics. Their sole preoccupation is the search for food, clothing and shelter of a wretched type. To them, it does not seem to matter who rules the country, so long as they are allowed to live their lives in peace and crude comfort.<sup>1</sup>

This was in 1947. One might argue that he was caught then in the colonial world-view which had made him to hierarchize the peoples of Nigeria in the same work. That is, one might say with Richard Sklar:

Fabian socialism made a deep impression on Awolowo during his law-school years in London, and the vaguely elitist, really meritocratic, preoccupation of his early thought has not survived his deeper belief in equalitarian democracy.<sup>2</sup>

Sklar was writing in 1963 and by then (from 1960), Awolowo had started his increasingly strident avowal of socialism as the best ideology for Nigeria. Nevertheless, Sklar spoke too soon. If he were correct, one would expect that Awolowo's writings and rhetoric in the post-1960 period would be devoid of the "vaguely elitist, really meritocratic, preoccupation of his early thought". There is no evidence to support such a view in Awolowo's writings. As recently as 1970 we find the following:

It will be generally agreed that the objectives which we have set out in this book are attainable. But it must be emphasized that they will be attained only if Nigerian political leaders possess and hold, respectively, certain attitudes and attributes of mind; and guide and lead the entire masses of their people to cultivate or at least to strive-perseveringly to cultivate them.<sup>3</sup>

It is significant that in the passage just quoted, Awolowo appeals only to "Nigerian political leaders". For the same elitism which informed the earlier submissions is embedded in this charge to those whose duty it is to lead the people to the socialist millenium. I shall say more about this abundant elitism in the latter part of this essay. I have introduced this excursus into the elitist dimensions of Awolowo's perorations to show that there is some ground for doubting the genuineness of Awolowo's fidelity to socialism.

It is not only Awolowo's elitism which induces doubts about his socialist commitments. In his life, Awolowo was a very wealthy, propertied Chief. This sometimes predisposes people to think that his socialism is suspect. Even more importantly, his writings are replete with conflicting pronouncements about socialism and his own ideological preferences. I cite some instances.

In his *Autobiography*, in chapter 15, where he gave an account of his eight years in office as Premier of the defunct Western Region, he averred, *inter alia*:

....In the economic sphere, the dominant note of my regime was that the government must ensure a never-ceasing expansion in the economy and wealth of the Region, and an equitable distribution of each additional unit of wealth. In this connection I refused to be wedded to any particular ism. I had declared at Owo (at the inauguration of the Action Group) that one of our guiding principles should be 'the total abolition of want by means of any economic policy which is both expedient and effective'. The emphasis, as far as I am concerned, has always been on the words 'expedient and effective'. From time to time, the point has been keenly urged by a very influential body of people in the party that the Action Group should declare itself a socialist party. My own view, which is shared

by many, is that what matters is not the label which a party bears, but the policy which it actually pursues either in office or opposition.<sup>4</sup>

He then went on to say that it would be reckless and productive of economic chaos for Nigeria to elect for a rigid socialist policy or an undiluted capitalism. In fact he was of the view then that downright state ownership of the means of production would create more problems for his government than it set out to solve. So we find that on the eve of independence, in his summation of the experiences of his eight years in office he was a votary of the mixed economy school and whatever economic policy is 'expedient and effective'.

Politically, there was a corresponding preference for Western bourgeois liberal democracy. In his characteristic trenchant style he stated,

There are two distinct ideological camps in the world today: the Western democracies and the communist bloc. For reasons which I will presently give, my preference is unhesitatingly and unequivocally for the Western democracies.<sup>6</sup>

We do not need to go into the reasons for Awolowo's ideological preference at this time. For such a preference does not easily cohere with his later avowal of socialism and this might be used to cast doubts on the sincerity of his avowal.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of the problems with Awolowo's avowal of socialism adumbrated in the preceding paragraphs, I still insist that it is not only unfair, it is absolutely unwarranted to dismiss his claims without further ado. In the first place, Awolowo's record as Premier of the old Western Region attests to his concern for the welfare of the citizens. And without doubt, he led the most progressive regime in Nigeria before independence. As Sklar aptly observed. "In the decade prior to independence no political

party in Nigeria rivalled the Action Group's distinctive emphasis on social and economic planning."<sup>8</sup> All this was at a time when he had not openly declared for socialism. However, by the time he declared for socialism, he was out of power and never held power again, either at the centre or in the region. So one must suspend judgment on whether or not he would have implemented his socialism in power. By the same token, one must refrain from casting doubts on his socialist professions. Finally, it is my belief that given the plethora of theoretical formulations and avowals of socialism in his writings, in spite of inconsistencies here and there, there is enough justification for examining Awolowo's socialism. To this task I now address myself.

Why does Awolowo defend socialism? Beyond the propagandistic appeal to an ideology which *prima facie* claims to pursue the welfare of the people, Awolowo places his choice of socialism on the basis of a strong, wide-ranging, even if unconvincing, critique of capitalism. I have undertaken an assessment of his critique of capitalism elsewhere<sup>9</sup> There are three distinct but related strands in his critique of capitalism. They are the ontological-ethical, theoretical and practical defects of capitalism. We shall not be concerned with the details of this critique. A summary of their main themes would suffice.

For Awolowo, the innate driving force of humans is "self-interest-greed". This proclivity towards greed receives its fullest, most uninhibited expression under capitalism. The hope is that as each person promotes her interest she is led by an 'invisible hand' to promote an end which was no part of her original intention – the public interest. This Awolowo has christened the principle of 'Egoistic Altruism'.<sup>10</sup> The altruistic result is unplanned. Awolowo argues that "Apart from being a contradiction in terms, the postulate of egoistic altruism has never achieved the laudable ends which the formidable Adam Smith, who without using the same terminology was the first proponent of the postulate

ascribed to it. Adam Smith's invisible hand has led mankind to the realms of incalculable waste and disaster."<sup>11</sup> The unspoken assumption in the preceding is a condemnatory attitude towards capitalism for its bringing out the worst in human nature and for leading humanity to waste and disaster. Hence it diminishes humanity. I presume that Awolowo thinks this is wrong.

Theoretically, Awolowo rejects capitalism because it conflicts with the principles of the dialectic. As a matter of fact, capitalism is inexorably doomed and the triumph of socialism is indefeasible for this single reason. Capitalism is a system founded on naked self-interest. The touchstone of what is good is LOVE. Anything which falls short of LOVE is evil. Hardly anyone will argue that capitalism allows love to flourish. If the true dialectic enjoins us to love our neighbours and capitalism enjoins greed and chicanery, it follows that capitalism is evil. As evil is bound to wither in the fulness of time no matter what we say or do, so is capitalism destined for self-destruction.

Since greed, selfishness or naked self-interest is the essence and predominant motivation of capitalism, the system is bound to generate secular social disequilibrium in the society in which it is operative, and to diminish and degenerate through time until it suffers extinction, yielding place to another and better system which either approaches or approximates to the ideal of LOVE.<sup>12</sup>

On a practical level, Awolowo believes that a developing country like Nigeria cannot afford the unplanned evolution of the capitalist system which is characterized by waste and inefficient allocation of resources. Capitalism, due to lack of planning, is wracked by anarchy in production symptomatic of the absence of coordination among producers, between producers on the one hand, and consumers on the other which makes crises endemic to the system. The panacea to these ills is socialism which is anchored on central planning and coordination of economic activities.

We have shown in Chapters 6 and 7 of *The People's Republic* that the pursuit of the capitalist ideal of economic freedom of industry and enterprise, which is the fountain head of perfect competition or perfect market and of unbridled monopoly and oligopoly, has led to enormous waste, misutilization and underutilization of resources, misdirected output, and the paradox of starvation in the midst of plenty. But all these evils can be prevented by means of central planning, central control, and central coordination of economic activities.<sup>13</sup>

Awolowo's rejection of capitalism is well-argued and thorough. As he sees it, socialism alone is capable of providing the much-needed platform for the redemption of the promise of independence for Nigerians. So what does Awolowo understand by socialism?

In the rest of this paper, I shall explicate Awolowo's definition of socialism, his arguments for his preference and the means by which it is to be achieved. This will be followed by a political and conceptual assessment of his defence of socialism. I shall argue that whereas one could grant that his account of socialism is plausible, it is conceptually incoherent and politically inadequate. But first let us explicate.

What is socialism? Socialism is a normative social science. It is in the same category as ethics. But whilst the latter seeks to set the standards for human conduct, socialism seeks to establish the standards for economic behaviour and objectives..... (Socialism) sets the standards of human ends which economic forces must serve, and prescribes the methods by which these forces may be controlled, directed, and channelled for the attainment of the ends in view.<sup>14</sup>

This is by no means the only definition of socialism to be met with in Awolowo's writings. Sometimes he uses socialism to designate a development strategy. At other times socialism best ensures the realization of our nature as *imago Dei*. However, what I have quoted is his theoretical statement of socialism and, I believe, this description to be elastic enough to accommodate the other usages one finds

in his writings. For instance, as a normative social science which establishes standards for economic behaviour and social objectives, socialism can legislate what programme of development to follow which will bring forth the best in human nature and help ensure the healthiest evolution of human individuality even as it cultivates our sociality. Hence my decision to direct my attention on this definition of socialism.

Socialism is a normative social science. As a science it must eschew any signs of parochialism; it must have universal applicability. If this is the case, and Awolowo argues that it is, then it is but a short step to the rejection of 'African Socialism'. Awolowo abjures African Socialism.

If any principle is purely and strictly peculiar to a given institution, region, or state, it may be a custom, practice, or even a theory, but it certainly cannot lay claim to the status of science. Just as there can be no African ethics *qua* Ethics as a science, or African logic, so there can be no African socialism.<sup>15</sup>

What then are the main features of socialism conceived as a normative social science? With an eye on the normative dimension of the definition, socialism is "a politico-economic ideal whose sole aim is social justice". The principal aim which economic forces must serve is the attainment of social justice. What is social justice?

By social justice, in this context, is meant the just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth amongst those factors which have made positive, necessary, and effective contributions to its production. And such factors are labour and entrepreneurship, which are two species, degrees or gradations of the same phenomenon – the application to the land of the efforts of man, assisted by capital which is wealth accumulated from an antecedent union of labour and entrepreneurship with land.<sup>16</sup>

Looking at this description of the main objective of socialism, there are those who might argue that there is nothing special there that would make a capitalist demur. This aim of socialism is such that almost everyone who cares the least bit about social injustice would be a socialist. This will expand the concept of socialism beyond all recognizable borders. And this is not Awolowo's aim. As a matter of fact, he is quick to reject any serious commitment to social justice on the part of capitalists. The reason why he believes that a capitalist cannot be seriously committed to social justice is easy to identify.

In a polity in which social justice obtains, there shall be a just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth. The latter is present not merely where the capitalist pays good wages to his or her workers but gets to keep a disproportionate percentage of the social product as profits on his or her investments. Of course, for a capitalist, social justice does not require more. For Awolowo, however, insofar as the principal means of production — land, labour, and capital — remain in private hands such that some people are forced to sell their labour-power in lieu of their subsistence and others, just by merely owning the means of production, can live off the labour of others, talk of social justice is gratuitous.

Social justice obtains only in "a state of affairs in which the resources provided by Nature belong to all the citizens equally, and the products of the union of land and labour are appropriated to labour of all gradations and skills through the media of good wages, respectable standard of living, abolition of unemployment, free provision of social amenities such as education, health, etc."<sup>17</sup> Notice that if the state of affairs described in the passage just quoted were to obtain, it would mean that no one would own any major means of production. Secondly, since all shall live on good wages paid to labour of different gradations and skills, there shall be no private appropriation of labour-power. Thirdly, the category of

people who live off the accumulated labour of others through the media of rent, dividend or profit, interest and inheritance shall be eliminated. Put in more concrete terms, the objective of social justice enjoined by socialism means:

(i) the abolition of rent, dividend or profit, interest and inheritance; (ii) the legal elimination of the *rentier* class; and (iii) the recognition that all the able-bodied citizens of the State are workers or labourers of various gradatjõns or skills, and that this being so all able-bodied citizens who work or render services to the State are entitled to remunerations only in the forms of salaries or wages of various scales.<sup>18</sup>

The reason that all must labour and earn wages is that labour is the crucial component in the production process in the absence of which all the other means of production cannot yield anything. Since this is the case, any income appropriated by anybody from a production process to which she has not contributed her labour is unearned and therefore, unjust; for it comes out of another's portion whose labour has not been fully requited. That is why Awolowo, at least on paper, is against all forms of rent dividend or profit, interest or inheritance. Even the entrepreneur must get paid for entrepreneurship and no more!

Let us examine some of the principal points and underlying assumptions of Awolowo's advocacy. Socialism, conceived as the ethic of economic behaviour and social objectives, embodies an equivocation. On the one hand, socialism is equated with its own end – social justice – such that where there is social justice there is socialism. At the same time, socialism is a means to social justice. As such it is called socialization or the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Awolowo does not show any awareness of this equivocal meaning of socialism. But it is important to bear it in mind in any analysis of Awolowo's socialism. We should

be clear in our minds whether we are examining the means or the end of socialism at any given time. For one may embrace the goal of social justice without concurring in the method of socialization about which we shall say more presently.

A principal assumption of Awolowo's definition of socialism is that of the *prima facie* rightness of the common ownership of the resources of the nation and that each one has an equal entitlement to part-ownership. It is a signal absence in his entire corpus that he does not even consider that this could be a problem. No doubt, talk of common ownership as a pre-requisite for ensuring individual welfare within the collective is a very appealing standpoint. But it is by no means obvious. If pressed, Awolowo might have argued that as human beings made in the image of God, only common ownership can ensure that no person is permitted to fall into the throes of destitution while there is an excessive accumulation of wealth at one end of the society. The collective welfare that would result from the common ownership of the resources of the nation more than offsets the slight displeasure that would result from the denial of a right to a huge accretion of wealth to one individual. However arguments need be advanced against, say, a Lockean who believes that whatever I have mixed my labour with belongs to me and a Nozickian libertarian who argues that any attempt at divesting an individual of her holdings justly acquired through ~~her~~ labour or by transfer voluntarily effected, in pursuit of some end-pattern principles is patently unjust. My contention is that it is not obvious that common ownership is *prima facie* right. The assumption that it is, is plausible but inadequate.

Another assumption is that the abolition of rent, etc., the elimination of the *rentier* class and the conferment of worker status on all citizens would translate to the triumph of socialism. This assumption is implausible. I shall presently adumbrate the reasons why. For now it suffices to point out that it infact rests on an even more implau-

sible assumption of the nobility of purpose of the guardians and inheritors of socialism. This seems to me to be a pious hope conditioned by Awolowo's elitism. Awolowo does not argue that socialism will be instituted by everyone in the society. Rather the socialist millenium will be heralded by those who have entered "the regime of mental magnitude" Needless to say, as long as the propagators and executors of socialism remain members of the regime of mental magnitude, we can reasonably expect that they will not be deflected from their noble course by "(1) the negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed (2) indulgence in the wrong types of food and drink, and in ostentatious consumption; and (3) excessive or immoral craving for sex."<sup>19</sup> Given that this regime is accessible to only a few, then our hope for the triumph and survival of socialism lies in the availability of these few people. Their numbers must necessarily be small because the conditions for entry into the regime of mental magnitude are very stringent.

However, the forces ranged against the propagators and executors of socialism are quite many and strong. These include the erstwhile capitalists who will not easily relinquish power or renounce their claim to property; the masses of the people who remain sunk in their hankering after numerous wants and are easily deceived, etc., etc. Awolowo's socialist guardians have no armour against these forces save their faith in the inexorable evolution of the universal mind which will ensure the eventual triumph of good over evil and the very pious hope that the goodness of socialism will be its best recommendation to those who might essay to undermine it.<sup>20</sup> After the experience of Salvador Allende in Chile, I am not sure that there are too many socialists *a la* Awolowo in the world today who will trust the survival of their régime to the self-evident goodness of socialism and the machinations of the universal mind.

The problem is not with Awolowo's elitism, odious as it seems to some of us. In my view, his elitism is not incom-

patible with his embrace of socialism. It may be the case that the guardians of the State, infused with the right attributes and attitudes, may be able to tutor the rest of us through the transition to socialism. There is nothing odd about that. The problem, though, is that Awolowo ignores the reality of class struggle in the society in which he wants to effect a socialist transformation.

Now and again he acknowledges that the interests of the capitalists are at variance with those of the people who produce the wealth the capitalists live off. Under the present conditions of our country, the capitalists and their agents hold the State in thrall. Meanwhile, Awolowo is clear-headed enough to know that the captains of finance will not easily relinquish their hold on the State and on the levers of economic production. It means that socialists must be ready to do battle with their capitalist antagonists if they are going to succeed at heralding the socialist millennium. What we have in essence is a contradiction between the interests of the capitalists which lie in the private appropriation of the fruits of socialized production; and those of socialists which tend towards complementing socialized production with socialized appropriation. In the circumstance, the contradiction is generated precisely because capitalists cannot admit the desirability of the socialist goal and still remain capitalists. The same goes for the socialists. In other words, the triumph of one side necessarily entails the defeat of the other. That is the nature of the contradiction between capitalists and socialists.

The option of a mixed economy is unavailable in Awolowo's socialist state not because the State will run every enterprise down to the smallest *Buka*. The option is foreclosed because, as has been pointed out, everyone will live off his or her wages and salaries. Even when people own business and make as much money as they can, the State shall ensure that (1) it taxes all excess earnings beyond the upper income ceiling fixed by law out of the hands of

those who make them; (2) there is no right of inheritance, especially the kind that smacks of unearned income or could be used to exploit the labour of others. So, between the capitalist state and the socialist state, for Awolowo, there is no middle road. Unknown to Awolowo, the situation he ends up with is exactly one in which the capitalists face certain ruination, come socialist victory.

If I am right in this reading, then the problem with his socialism at this level is not that it will be enthroned by an elite few but that he does not sufficiently equip his socialist forces with the wherewithal to prosecute the struggle with the capitalists. This is what I mean when I suggest that he ignores the reality of class struggle. An all-encompassing socialist option of the kind Awolowo advances must be ready to join battle with foes who are implacable and would put in everything to thwart a socialist victory. Why does Awolowo not take seriously the problem posed by the reality of class struggle given that he is not unmindful of its existence? The answer lies in Awolowo's opposition to Marxian socialism.

At almost every stop in his numerous defences of socialism, there is some polemic against Marxism. There are many points of divergence between Awolowo's socialism and the Marxian variant. But two are principal. In the first place, he parts ways with Marxian socialism over the issue of the most appropriate means by which to instal socialism. If we may anticipate a later discussion a little, whereas he believes that Marxian socialism is pledged to the necessity of a bloody revolution to usher in socialism, his own preference is for the ballot box and persuasion. As a corollary, Marxian socialism, in Awolowo's estimation, seeks systematically to suppress and eventually to eliminate the capitalists under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Awolowo would have none of that. However there shall be a discussion of these issues when we come to the question of how socialism is to be achieved.

In the second place, Awolowo avers that his conception of socialism is entirely different from that of the Marxian one because whereas for the Marxian conception the State is an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat down and will become redundant in a future communist order, Awolowo believes that the State "is an absolute necessity in human evolution from primeval crudity to physical, intellectual and spiritual perfection."<sup>21</sup> Additionally, it is only within the State that human beings can enjoy personal freedom, by which Awolowo sets much store, and live a full and happy life. At a level, he shares the historical conception of the State with the Marxists. He too believes that the State has a beginning in time and has mutated over time. The disagreement turns on the nature of the State and what will be its eventual fate.

He rejects the class instrumentalist conception of the State because, according to him, any system in which a class, whether the bourgeoisie or the proletariat or any other, uses the State "as an arbitrary and partisan instrument of coercion against the other offends against (his) own concept of the dialectic and is bound to fail, because, since it is grounded in mutual hatred, it of necessity contains within it the germ of its own eventual dissolution."<sup>22</sup> For him a class State is a perversion. Contrary to this conception, the State can, and must be used to harness the economic forces within the polity to attain life more abundant for all. This is why the State is indispensable to the achievement of socialism.

Underlying his account of the nature, functions and future of the State is an assumption that the State is a neutral institution which can be put to good or bad use by whoever dominates it. A neutralist conception of the State is apt to reject any attempt to show that the State is always marked by the nature of the polity in which it occurs. Hence, the tendency for such a conception to ignore the fact that the State is a major component in the arsenal of the class or

group which is dominant in society at any one time against its opponents. Moreover, he seems to be unmindful of the fact that to take over a State suffused with those who are pledged to and are beneficiaries and votaries of capitalism, and hope to put it at the service of socialist transformation is naive and dangerous in the extreme. It is to give the opponents of socialism an Archimedean point - given the importance Awolowo attaches to the State - from which to subvert the aim and effort of the guardians of socialism.

One is thus led to conclude that, in light of Awolowo's own theoretical formulations, he must be ready either to join battle with the opponents of socialism and flush them out of the State and other crucial institutions of society or else risk the abortion of the socialist project. I submit that here is an incoherence right at the vortex of Awolowo's account: on the one hand, he acknowledges that the socialist State risks a capitalist backlash; on the other hand, so as not to offend against the dialectic of LOVE, he denies the guardians of socialism what promises to be their best and most potent weapon - a clearly partisan state - in the inevitable battle.

Awolowo's failure to grapple with the implications of class struggle for his theory and the consequent incoherence he ends up with is traceable to his implausible identification of Marxian socialism with a strong thirst for blood in the revolution that would usher in socialism. And at least one commentator has followed him in this misidentification, Francis Ogunmodede.<sup>23</sup> Beyond mere assertions, there is no place in Awolowo's theoretical writings where he documents the ascription to Marxists of a preference for a bloody revolution as the only means of taking power and building socialism. In the first two objections to socialism which he considered in *The People's Republic*, there is a single reference to Marx from *Capital* where it is said that 'force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one'. Outside of this, we have general references to Marx and Engels' advocacy of the dictatorship of the proletariat

which Awolowo invariably, but wrongly, interprets as a regime of force to which he counterposed his alternative peaceful means.

I argue that a lot more support is needed than has been provided by Awolowo to clinch this polemic against Marxian socialism. The Marxian socialist position is a lot more nuanced than Awolowo permitted himself to believe and a reading of their works shorn of the ideological special pleading typified by Ogunmodede would reveal their very critical support for 'democratic means' when appropriate without ever losing sight of the fact that progressive forces may have to resort to violence to meet the violence of the captains of finance and their agents or preempt it. In other words, there is no necessary connection between Marxian socialism and violence. In the absence of further evidence from Awolowo I suggest that his affirmation of such a connection is wrong and unfounded.

Thus far, I have been concerned to examine the theoretical postulations of Awolowo's socialism. Socialism is a normative social science whose aim is social justice. I have argued that this conception of socialism contains an equivocation that should be kept in mind in any discussion of Awolowo's theory. More importantly, I have tried to argue that the theory is built on some assumptions not all of which are plausible and, or adequate. I conclude that given the implausible assumptions and theoretical incoherence at the heart of the theory, it offers very inadequate foundations on which to build a successful practice. In what follows, I want to examine his account of the methods by which socialism will be achieved. There too I shall conclude that the political programme it embodies cannot form the basis for an effective practice.

Reading Awolowo, one is left in no doubt at all that, should he ever hold power at the centre, he has worked out a practical plan by which to bring about the socialist order. We have seen that he abjures violence and anything that smacks of force in the process of installing socialism. Neither at the

beginning nor in the aftermath of the struggle for socialism would he counsel the use of force. Given that his opposition to force and violence brooks no exception, Awolowo is left to the artifices of law and persuasion and the inexorable workings of the universal mind to bring about socialism. What are the concrete features of this method?

The singular failing of capitalism is its lack of planning. Even when altruistic results obtain from the interplay of self-interests, they are chance occurrences rather than planned outcomes. By contrast, the most important recommendation of socialism is planning. The first step is concluded as soon as we identify the aim of socialism - social justice. The next step is to decide the means in an appropriate rational scheme. For planning to take place, its executors must be in control of as many of the variables involved as circumstances would permit. In this particular case, the executors of socialist planning must be able to control the means of production in order thereby to harness these means to the service of all. In essence planning, which socialism requires, is impossible unless there is ownership and control of the means of production by the State, the principal medium through which the socialist project is to be consummated. A precondition for this ownership and control is, of course, the attainment of State power by legal means.

Once State power has been achieved, the unfolding of what I call a legal - attitudinal strategy for social change begins. The first step towards the construction of socialism is "the nationalization, public ownership, or socialization of the means of production, exchange, and distribution."<sup>24</sup> This means that all the means of production would be vested in the State. The nationalization, public ownership, or socialization of the means of production is the most important element in Awolowo's explication of the means by which socialism is to be achieved. In fact, to deny the need for socialization is at the same time to abandon the commitment to social justice.<sup>25</sup>

With nationalization, the State can create the condition for

the deployment of the other means for the achievement of socialism viz: (1) the regulation by legislative acts of consumption; (2) the rationalization of remuneration; (3) the prevention of the re-emergence of greed and avarice-motivated projects which typify capitalism and; (4) full employment. There is, therefore, no doubt that nationalization is the centrepiece of Awolowo's practical means for constructing socialism. So let us examine the idea in some detail.

In his writings, Awolowo seems to believe that nationalization, public ownership and socialization all mean the same thing. I do not think that this assumption is correct. In the first place nationalization refers to the vesting in the nation through the medium of the State the ownership and control of whatever it is that is nationalized. Public ownership is akin to it. However, the mere fact that ownership is vested in the State does not mean that ownership has become socialized. Whether or not nationalized property is socialized will be determined by the character of the State and those who control it. For instance, the commanding heights of the Brazilian economy are in the hands of the Brazilian State which remains capitalist. Socialization occurs only where the nationalization of the means of production is followed by an increasing democratization of the control over the production process. This democratization is not effected simply by bringing people out quinquennially to vote for a segment of the ruling elite who will rule them for another five years. This is one dimension that Awolowo does not look at. Once one bears in mind that he takes nationalization, public ownership, and socialization to denote the same thing, one can still undertake an exposition of what this means.

Nationalization will enable the government to determine the pattern and direction of production, consumption or exchange; and what share of the national produce which equitably belongs and must go to each of the factors of production.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, with nationalization, the government will be able to use the instrument of the budget deliberately to influence the direction of the country's economy

for the benefit of the people. In this way, even though there might still exist a private sector alongside the public sector - this is a feature of the democratic socialist state - government's control of the economy and planning will enable the State to control the profit-motive and harness it for the common good.<sup>27</sup> In sum, nationalization will equip the government to bring about the effective coordination of all economic activities, and to effect the direct control of the forces of supply and demand and of the margin of profit with a view to taming, humanizing, and canalizing them for the good of Nigerians in general.<sup>28</sup> It is very difficult to quarrel with Awolowo's account of the good that will attach to nationalization.

Nationalization, according to Awolowo, cannot be accomplished in one fell swoop. That is, Nigeria cannot become socialist in one instant act of transformation. If this were to happen, there would be "chaotic social upheaval".<sup>29</sup> Thus nationalization will be gradual and the process spread over five years during which the support institutions for socialism - "ideological adaptation and orientation, mental weeding, and moral disinfection and disinfestation, in all the sectors of the society" and the production of "a highly qualified cadre of professionals, managers, technologists, and administrators" will be put in place.<sup>30</sup>

In the intervening period, through a strategy of attrition, the elimination of the *rentier* class will be set in motion. No one who already owns the means of production shall be divested of or made to surrender her holdings except on payment of a fair compensation. There is no philosophical justification provided for this strategy beyond warnings of social upheaval bred by resentment on the part of those who would be divested of their holdings without compensation. The reason such a justification is lacking is that Awolowo does not bother himself with the question of whether or not the extant private holdings have been acquired justly. For if he is right that dividend, interest, and rent are unearned and unjustified income, and much of the holdings he seeks to nationalize have been acquired from such unearned income,

it is problematic to insist that compensation be paid for holdings unjustly acquired. Since there will be no right of inheritance, the *rentier* class will be eliminated with time and the endogenous accretion of fabulous wealth to a family will be ended.

Under democratic socialism, some private ownership of some means of production will exist. But where such is the case, so as to forbid and stamp out any venture or undertaking which is motivated by greed, or is productive of hatred, bitterness, and undue and widespread disaffection, the State should set a statutory maximum limit to the income to any one of those in control of such means of production. Lastly, all channels of acquisition of private property and means of production must be blocked by law.<sup>31</sup> The resultant effect of these measures is to make it impossible for capitalists to ease their way back into contention while socialist construction is underway.

Nationalization and the prevention of a capitalist comeback will be complemented by a deliberate strategy designed to create new individuals with new habits and new ways of life on whom will rest the hopes for the survival of socialism. This is the regulation of consumption and production by legislative acts. We have already seen what the regulation of production entails. What does regulation of consumption by law involve?

Awolowo distinguishes between the WANTS which people have which "are infinite and incapable of regulation" and their NEEDS which "are limited, ascertainable, and amenable to statutory regulation".<sup>32</sup> Human needs are for those things like food, clothing, shelter, avenues of knowledge and the like which, in appropriate quality and quantity enable us to have sound health in body and mind and human dignity. Our wants are for those things we crave for but whose lack does not diminish our human dignity nor impair our health in body and mind. These include alcoholic beverages, tobacco, pornographic books, prestigious house, etc. For there to be a happy life we must abjure "injurious

consumption" at all times and avoid the satisfaction of our wants while the majority of our fellow persons are unable to meet their needs.<sup>33</sup> It is the duty of "the legislators in any given period (to) know what is good for the masses of the people whose accredited representatives they are."<sup>34</sup> To this end, they must make laws to limit, if not entirely discourage, the satisfaction of people's wants as long as the majority of their electors are struggling to fulfil their needs. These needs and the limit of their satisfaction must be used to fix a baseline for the standard of living in a society below which people must not be allowed to fall. Awolowo also advocates the fixing of a maximum standard of living which no one is allowed to exceed.<sup>35</sup>

The regulation of consumption by law will enable the State to direct the production or utilization of resources to essential ends; to ensure that the country is self-reliant and self-sufficient in the short run in consumer goods, and in the long run in capital goods as well; to regulate consumption in such a way that savings is encouraged for the enhancement of capital formation; and lastly, to make sure that the country's exports are enough to pay for the imports of capital goods and other essential items of consumer goods while contributing to the enlargement of world trade and prosperity even as it benefits from international division of labour.<sup>36</sup> He advocates that the socialist State should borrow a leaf from the capitalists in deciding upon the means by which to curb, control, or regulate the infinite preferences of a large multitude of consumers: *advertising*. His description bears quoting in full:

It is a well - known technique of modern salesmanship for producers decisively to induce and influence the tastes of consumers, without the latter realizing that what they regard as their peculiar personal tastes have been psychologically and externally induced in them by sheer, skilful, and consummate advertising. It follows, therefore, that, within wide limits, the government can, from the point of view of economy social desirability, national inte-

rest, and the health of individual Nigerian citizens, decide what shall be produced, and then mount a publicity campaign designed to induce people's tastes for what is produced.<sup>37</sup>

As usual, one has difficulty disagreeing with Awolowo's goals. Anyone who has a smattering knowledge of Nigeria's political economy during the heady days of the Oil Boom cannot but be struck by how much pandering to the wants of the elite and their few hangers-on contributed to the plummet that followed when oil prices took a nosedive on the international market. Perhaps if legislators of the period had known the needs of the people and kept to their satisfaction while placing reins on their wants, we would not be in the dire mess we are now in. Furthermore, it is hard not to concede that a strategy that is geared to the satisfaction of needs rather than the fulfilment of wants is one that will redound to the benefit of all. And lastly, the fact that the majority is induced to want choices crafted by a few who control the economy under capitalism is irrefragable.

Having said that, one cannot fail to notice some dangers that lurk in the regulation by law of people's consumption patterns to which Awolowo does not advert his mind. This failure is not peculiar to Awolowo. It is a problem that all of us who talk about creating the new individual must confront in different degrees. Requiring that legislators know what is good for their constituencies assumes that what is good for the people is susceptible to easy ascertainment or that it is an objective quantity that could be laid hold of quite easily. The danger of paternalism looms very large. How are we sure that what is passed off as the good of the masses is *really* not *what* the rulers think is or ought to be their good? Secondly, what happens if the State falls into the hands of cynics who manipulate people's tastes for the sheer fun of it? Thirdly, there is the danger of the homogenization of tastes and lifestyles which will bring in its wake monotony and ennui for the people. To those who advance the last objection, Awolowo replies by admitting that it may well be

the case that variety is the spice of life. However, he insists that the Socialist State cannot afford the free-for-all conditions of capitalism. He asseverates

But we would like to emphasize that a capricious and insensate craving for senseless variety does lead to enormous and unnecessary waste of resources; to disruption of productive programmes; and to eventual social disaster.<sup>38</sup>

Awolowo's reply does not amount to a rebuttal to the third objection. The problem is precisely to determine the borders of "senseless variety". With this I conclude my exposition of the means by which Awolowo hopes to consummate the socialist project. I have called it a legal - attitudinal strategy for social change. It is legal because it envisages that no step will be taken towards the construction of socialism which is not sanctioned by law. It is attitudinal because it calls for the legal transformation of people's behaviour in institutions which are left untouched in their principals. Even the State which is the centrepiece of the socialist project will just be taken over by the builders of socialism and used, without more, for the construction of socialism. In essence it is a revolution by attrition. The legal framework ensures that nothing is done to procure change which does not have the sanction of law. No force, no mayhem. No doubt, if successful, it will be a brilliant piece of social engineering. But it is not persuasive. Nor does it hold up to critical scrutiny.

We have seen that both in theory and practice, control of the State is absolutely essential to the building of socialism. I have already identified the theoretical problems with this viewpoint. Similar problems suggest themselves in the question of means. Awolowo assumes throughout the discussion that State power will be held and maintained by socialists once they are elected to power. This presupposes that either there will be no backlash from capitalists and their sympathizers, or if there is, it will be beaten back easily. Awolowo does not say that there will be no attempt on the part of capita-

lists to beat back the socialist advance. But Awolowo counsels that force is not necessary, even to effect the overthrow of capitalism, because capitalism will suffer perdition due to the fact that its inherent nature is incompatible with the dictates of the universal mind as embodied in the dialectic of LOVE. Even if force were required to overthrow capitalism, socialism, if properly implemented, can count on the universal mind to thwart any attempt by displaced capitalists to recapture power. This is a most implausible assumption which requires faith. For one must believe in the omnipotence of the universal mind to trust that that is all that is needed, in the final analysis, to doom a capitalist restoration.

The consummation of the socialist project is entrusted to "a hard core of Nigerian leaders and experts with unflagging socialist orientation who will dedicate themselves to the great objective of making socialism work successfully in Nigeria."<sup>39</sup> This assumes that State power will be held by human beings who possess largeness of heart, nobility of spirit and purity of thought. Such an assumption flies in the face of Awolowo's own account of human nature according to which greed and the pursuit of self-interest are inherent traits. It is easy to argue that inheritors of socialism would be different since they will be socialized into socialism. But it requires another leap of faith to trust that such leaders as are described by Awolowo would be available in sufficient quantities in light of our historical experience since independence. This is not to say that it is impossible to achieve. It is only that I am dubious that it is only leaders that we need. We need a mobilized people who will force their leaders to remain on the chosen path or be removed. Such a provision is lacking in Awolowo's strategy.

Lastly, Awolowo's entire strategy is predicated upon the twin assumptions of the efficacy of the universal mind and the sufficiency of law. I have already dealt with the first. It is not clear to me that the law, any legal system, can bear the weight Awolowo puts on it. Awolowo's trust in law is

plausible only if one assumes that like the State the law is neutral between the contending forces in the society. But this often is not the case. Even though the law is not always an instrument in the hands of a class, there is little doubt that the law often is. For instance, a socialist regime in Nigeria will first have to rewrite the Constitution to eliminate the right to private property, enshrine the rationalization of remuneration, revoke the right of inheritance, etc. Unless this is done, the judiciary can be relied upon to pronounce on the unconstitutionality of such enabling legal instruments the socialist State needs. For the socialist leaders to be in a position to prosecute their struggle they must either have an overwhelming majority in parliament in which case socialist legislators would outvote their capitalist-oriented opponents; or, the socialist minority must be able to make its views prevail by exercising a dictatorship on their opponents. Secondly, even if the socialists could prevail for the duration of their tenure, nothing stops a successor capitalist-minded regime from reversing the socialist process. Britain under Margaret Thatcher remains a good example of this danger. And such a regime will have the law on its side. After all, it is an accepted convention of parliamentary democracy — Awolowo's preferred vehicle of socialist transformation — that a parliament cannot bind future parliaments to its decisions.

So the socialist State cannot hope that successor regimes will adhere to socialism in a properly-constituted parliamentary democracy. The upshot is that socialism enacted by law rests for that same reason on a very thin ledge. The possibility of reversal underscores the insufficiency of law even in association with the universal mind and this in turn casts very serious doubts on the possibility of long-term social engineering as a viable strategy for the construction of socialism. I conclude that Awolowo's legal-attitudinal strategy for social change cannot actuate a successful socialist practice.

I want to end this paper by adumbrating a few general

questions which arise for the kind of advocacy for socialism undertaken by Awolowo. I have dwelt extensively on his elitism. I want to add one last question: who makes the laws to usher in socialism? Who implements them? It is obvious that it is not the popular masses. So it is from the ranks of the same elite who live off the extant capitalist order that the socialist liberators are to be found. But the severance of their ties with their objective class position and interest which is a prerequisite for genuinely transformative politics receives no mention in Awolowo's writings. By this absence, he effectively keeps the majority out of the corridors of power save when they are called out to decide who among the 'leaders' would rule them for another five years. Such an exclusion is quite incongruous with a genuinely socialist programme.

In Awolowo's democratic socialist State there would still be some private ownership of the means of production and people would still be permitted to make as much money as they can. However, they would neither be permitted to bequeath such wealth to their offspring or use it to underwrite a standard of living which exceeds the upper ceiling fixed by the State. And whatever excess money they make over and above the highest remuneration fixed by the State would be taxed out of their hands. But why allow people to build houses they cannot obtain rents on nor will to their children? Why allow people to make money only to tax it out of their hands? If the law says that they may not invest it, can they not use it to foment crises for the socialist regime and even buy people over to their cause? This question is even more urgent given Awolowo's contention that there is an ample proclivity to greed in human nature.

Finally, what is the philosophical justification for divesting people of their earnings, regulating their consumption habits, denying them the right to bequeath their estates to their progeny and, for taxation? Perhaps there are those who are more sympathetic to Awolowo's project who would supply answers to my questions. On my part, I wish to con-

clude that for the reasons already alluded to in the essay, Awolowo's socialism is theoretically incoherent and politically inadequate.

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2. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, New York, Nok, 1983 p. 281.
3. Obafemi Awolowo, *The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic*, Lagos and London, Macmillan, 1970, p. 95.
4. Obafemi Awolowo, *Awo: An Autobiography* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961, p. 283.
5. Awolowo, *Autobiography*., p. 284.
6. Awolowo, *Autobiography*., p. 309.
7. There are those who would cast doubts on Awolowo's socialism from a different direction: the character of the parties he led. The Action Group for instance until 1960 never avowed socialism. See Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, chapter 6, for a thorough discussion of the ideological tendencies within the Action Group. However, even while the AG did not clearly elect for socialism, the attainment of a socialist order was a clearly stated goal of the Unity Party of Nigeria which Awolowo led from 1979 to 1983. Personally, I have refrained from judging the sincerity of his socialist professions by the character of his parties. My reasons will become clear presently.
8. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*., p. 268.
9. See Olufemi Taiwo, 'The Political Thought of Obafemi Awolowo'. Forthcoming in *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*.
10. Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 160.
11. Awolowo, p. 166.
12. Awolowo, pp. 188-9.
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15. Awolowo, p. 208.
16. Awolowo, *Strategy and Tactics.*, p. 36.
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23. Francis I. Ogunmodede, *Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Socio-Political Philosophy: A Critical Interpretation.* (Rome: n.p., 1986), chapter VII.
24. Awolowo, *Strategy and Tactics.*, p. 36.
25. Awolowo, p. 37.
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30. Awolowo, p. 328.
31. Awolowo, p. 195.
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## Awolowo's Metaphysics

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MOSES OKE

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### INTRODUCTION

In the fashion of the Pythagorean School, the disciples, admirers, followers, adversaries, and spectators of Chief Obafemi Awolowo are of two distinctive and exhaustive kinds: the 'acusmatici' and the 'mathematici'<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority are the 'acusmatici'. The few 'mathematici' are also of varying degrees of comprehension. In the large mass of the 'acusmatici' we have the chanters, the sloganeers, the drummers, the poets, the musicians, the journalists, the officials, the bureaucrats, the voters and their wards, each according to his or her side of the fence. Of the 'mathematici' we may count a few scholars, some close associates and a handful of confidants. The close associates and confidants would most likely have participated in the conception, birth and demise of some of the chief's ideas to have given them a better understanding of his views than outsiders. Some scholars, very few of them, have had to dig into the chief's published and unpublished works to have some grasp of his thought and practice.

This classification into two groups is often to be noticed around great thinkers and leaders of men such as Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Prophet Mohammed. The violence to self and others, the praise and the contempt, the reverence and the blasphemy, the awe and the defiance which were manifested around such men often came from the 'acusmatici'

who participated with their hearts rather than with their heads. Also, like those other great men, Awolowo's genius must have contained both a rational and a religious quality such as are seldom united in the same person.

Among the few who participated with their heads, there was rapport and harmony in disagreement. There have always been conscious mutual efforts and rational persuasion.

Most of those who could be counted in the philosophical wing of 'Awoism'<sup>2</sup> have however been concerned, almost exclusively with Awolowo's practical philosophy. Interest in the development of his theoretical philosophy is just beginning.<sup>3</sup> This essay takes a cue from Makinde's pioneering efforts at articulating Awolowo's theoretical framework (Makinde, 1987a, 1987b). For the avoidance of doubts, we shall briefly introduce what is to be understood by 'metaphysics' in this context.

#### WHAT IS METAPHYSICS

The term 'metaphysics' was first employed (about 70BC) by Andronicus of Rhodes in the editing of Aristotle's works. In its original signification, this term was used only for referring to those treatises of Aristotle which came after ('meta') another group of treatises called the Physics ('ta physica') (Kreyche, 1959 p. 1). This, of course, is only the *nominal* meaning of the term. Its *real* meaning will be clarified in the following discussion.

Historically, metaphysicians have traditionally been concerned with making the world intelligible. They have attempted to construct systems which describe the nature of the world as a whole claiming to make ultimate statements about reality and the nature of things. Although they have always differed, a thematic undercurrent of all traditional metaphysics, and a primary intention of all traditional metaphysicians is the study of Being or Reality. It has always been conceived as an attempt to portray the most general features of the world. In more recent terms, it is a search

for the nature of the ultimate justifications of our beliefs about the world.

For Aristotle, it is a science that studies being qua being'; it is first 'philosophy' which inquires into universal first principles and first questions. It is also 'wisdom' and 'theology'. It is concerned with the basic and primary problems and issues concerning the nature of ultimate fact (Metaphysics, Bk, IV, 1). In Descartes' own view, metaphysics is the foundation of all human knowledge, it is the roots of the tree of knowledge (Principles in Haldane and Ross, p. 211) In the view of A.E. Taylor, metaphysics is,

a systematic and impartial enquiry as to what we really mean by the familiar distinction between 'seems' and 'is', that is to say a scientific enquiry into the general characteristics by which reality or real being is distinguished from mere appearances not in one special sphere of study but universally (Taylor, 1903, p. 4)

The same theme is expressed repeatedly by Whitehead. He defines metaphysics or speculative philosophy as,

the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted. (Whitehead, 1929, p.3: 1933, p.285)

He says again that

By 'metaphysics' I mean the science which seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensably relevant to the analysis of everything that happens. (Whitehead, 1926, p. 72 fn.)

In the same vein, Brand Blanshard conceives the problems of metaphysics as "the final road blocks in the journey of understanding" (Blanshard, in Kennick and Lazerowitz, 1966). It is the discipline which deals with the most fundamental and ultimate questions concerning the universe. These

questions are, in Blanshard's view, always around us everywhere, they spring up naturally in the mind of any thoughtful person who asks sustained questions about the world around him.

A rather radical conception of metaphysics is that of R.G. Collingwood. In his view, metaphysics is the systematic inquiry into people's world-views as contained in their sciences, arts, daily activities, and how these views change from epoch to epoch. It is not 'paraphysics' and is not a futile attempt to know what lies beyond the limits of experience. Rather, it is an attempt to discover the absolute presuppositions of people's inquiries into the details of the physical world. (Collingwood, 1937, p. 65, and 1940).

From the foregoing conceptions of metaphysics, we may notice the three unique features of the discipline. It claims to say what reality exists or what the real nature of a thing is. It claims to be universal, most fundamental and most comprehensive in a way in which no other science or art is. And, it claims to reach conclusions which are intellectually impregnable and thus possess a unique kind of certainty. Hence, we may conclude by saying that metaphysics is the attempt

to know things in terms of the *universal and ultimate* causes of their being, in consequence of which it is science in a higher sense of the word than in any other habit of knowledge. Considered in this light, metaphysics is even more aptly characterized by the term 'wisdom' than by the term 'science' ...Each of the particular science is remotely dependent on the principles of metaphysics which are those of reality itself. (Kreyche, 1959, p. 15).

Finally, it has to be noted that metaphysics is not speculation in the common sense of 'guesswork' or in the nature of stock exchange enterprise. It is also not mysticism or any of the occult or supernatural sciences and activities generally. Rather, as Dorothy Emmet has very rightly noted:

"Metaphysics is an analogical way of reasoning. That is to say, it takes concepts drawn from some form of experience

6: some relation within experience and extends them either so as to say something about the nature of 'reality', or so as to suggest a possible mode of coordinating other experiences of different types from that from which the concept was originally derived". (Emmet, 1946, p. 5)

Also, as Fromm and Xirau have correctly observed,

"Any metaphysical system is a conception of the world" a world perspective, a "weltanschauung" Metaphysics is born out of two questions: 'what, life?'; 'Life, what for?' Metaphysics tries to explain the place of man in the universe and thus tells us what the conduct of man should be in the process of living. In this sense, metaphysical speculation is vital, not idle speculation" (Fromm and Xirau, 1968 p. 17).

We conclude therefore that no man can sit down and learn normative theories of social and political organization, law, religion, philosophy, morality, education, and so on, without bringing to the task the metaphysical preconceptions which spring out of his own character and experience. Without such preconceptions, the writer would be a marooned desert islander, a ship-wrecked navigator without compass or map. Such a writer or tourist would be a bungling wanderer, un-understanding and un-understood lacking both organization and coordination in his thought and practice.

By Awolowo's metaphysics, we mean the system of ultimate universal principles, the absolute presuppositions of his world-view which congeal into the organizational element in his theories and practices. Fortunately, Awolowo is unlike those "writers of philosophy" of whom Bertrand Russell says are usually unconscious of their concealed metaphysics (Russell, 1939, p. 138). Awolowo was conscious of his metaphysics. Even though he did not write a systematized metaphysical treatise, he gave enough clues as to what his overall world-view is, from which he drew his hypotheses, and formulated the feelings which served as a guide to his private and public conduct.

There are two immediate ends that would be served by

articulating this world-view into a substantive system of metaphysics. It would form a solid basis of understanding the man, his theories and practice of social and political organisation. It would also bring new insights into the ever current and relevant problems of academic philosophy, and create a quarry from which moral sentiments and scientific hypotheses can be drawn, in the attempt to understand man and his environment. In this way, Awolowo's transition will only be the end of the beginning of an era, such that even though he were dead, yet he lives.

This is but a modest preface to the enormous, but very rewarding work, that lies ahead as scholars begin to show more interest in the theoretical foundations of Awolowo's socio-political theories. For now, we shall concentrate on his philosophy of mind which Makinde has rightly remarked is at the heart of his philosophy (Makinde 1987b). In other words, we shall not, in this essay, deal with Awolowo's metaphysical views on God, and of man's freewill and determinism, and causality, except in so far as they illuminate his philosophy of mind.

#### STRUCTURE

Even in its comprehensiveness, metaphysics cannot comprehend all the phenomena of the universe in all their variations and manifestations, all at once. It requires an Archimedic point of reference,<sup>4</sup> from which to view the universe. For each metaphysical system, this point of reference constitutes its basic or primary category in terms of which the other categories are to be understood.

The Ionian school of philosophy (circa 600 BC) sought this heuristic focus in matter - their primary category of existence in the universe. They believed that if they could discover the primary or originative substance of the universe they would have arrived at the 'first principle', the 'arche' in terms of which they could account for the whole universe. They thus became the earliest school of material monism. The Pythagoreans sought theirs in the form or the structure, as opposed to the content or matter, of the

universe. They thus became the first rationalist school of philosophy. And so on.

For Awolowo, the primary category, the most fundamental entity in the universe, in terms of which to express the first principles is man. He says:

Man is the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature: everything else by comparison is in a state of inertia (Awolowo, 1977, p. 53).

According to Makinde's interpretation of the ontological declaration, Awolowo "sees man as the instrument of social, political, economic and scientific changes" (Makinde, 1987a p. 5). This ontological decision is neither arbitrary nor concealed. It was borne out of his character and experience, and uncompromisingly followed for half a century in his writings, speeches and socio-political activities. Also, he did not leave any inquirer in doubt as to his preconceived centre of the universe, the orb of the universal wheel. On this, Makinde's testimony is note worthy:

From our discussion, I can now say, with his authority, that the most important philosophical issue in Awolowo's mind is the nature of man. Man, according to him, being the sole dynamic in nature, should be the primary concern of the philosopher. (Makinde, 1987b, pp. 7 & 13).

And, as Martin Hollis had rightly stipulated:

Every social theory needs a metaphysics . . . in which a model of man and a model of science complement each other. (Hollis, 1977, p. 3).

In view of Awolowo's choice of man as the core of the metaphysics for his social theory, we may rightly claim that he espouses a humanist metaphysics. What his humanism contains will be the subject of the next sections.

#### CONTENT:

Since Awolowo did not write a specific systematised work in metaphysics, the clues to his views on reality will have to be

garnered from his various works. Of particular relevance for this purpose are his *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966), *The People's Republic* (1968), *The Problems of Africa* (1977), *Path to Nigerian Greatness* (1981), and *Voice of Wisdom* (1981). In his view, these principles need not be expatiated more than he had done. In his view, the principles, as they are expressed, are self-evident, since "a word, they say, is enough to the wise" (Awolowo, 1966, p. 158).

Towards understanding reality, Awolowo chose to understand man and his relationship to the rest of the universe. He says "The sole object of our discourse in this book is Man" (Awolowo 1968, p. 211). Concerning Man, Awolowo's metaphysics includes an ontology, a conception of human nature or human personality, a theory of causality, a philosophy of mind, a theodicy and an eschatology. All these views can however be adequately understood through a study of his philosophy of mind which Makinde had urged Awolowo to write down but which he could not do (see Makinde 1987b, p. 7)

The beginning of metaphysics is an ontological assertion. Awolowo, having asserted the existence of man, proceeded to contemplate on the nature of man. It is from his conception of the nature of man that he formulated his ethical theory, his social and political theories, his principles of conduct in public and private affairs. Undoubtedly, it is in terms of this conception of man that he would want his works and life assessed.

#### THE NATURE OF MAN

Against the background of the world's imponderable plethora of phenomena, man must have wondered about his place in the universe. He must have felt puny and lost in the mystery of the universe — like an ant in the bowel of an elephant. Hence, his defensive battles against nature, to understand, master and control it. This is not less true for the natural scientists as for the social scientists.

Given the background of the permanent chaos and crises in human existence, reflective men have, from antiquity, belie-

ved that behind the chaos, the flux, the complexity and multiplicity, there is an abiding order, a harmony, a permanence, a simple principle, a unity. Awolowo, like many other great thinkers in the history of ideas, seeks this principle in 'essence' rather than in 'existence'. Man has been led by his existential experiences to conscious attempts of self-discovery. The questions that have been asked are: "What am I?," "Who am I?," "What is my origin?," "What is the purpose or meaning of my existence?," and "What is my end?,". Attempts to answer these and many other kindred questions have produced several theories of human nature.<sup>5</sup> A detailed study of Awolowo's theory of human nature vis-a-vis those other theories will not be our task on this occasion. Only the points essential for his philosophy of mind will be discussed in the present context.

#### AWOLOWO'S CONCEPTION OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

Since Greek antiquity, it has been thought that there is something called 'human nature' or 'the essence of man', by virtue of which man is man, and is unique among other beings in the universe. But just what constitutes this essence has led to controversies and a variety of positions. It is a fundamental problem of metaphysics which cannot be settled by an appeal to empirical facts.

Many have rejected the idea of a fixed human nature. They argue that a study of the history of humanity reveals that man in one epoch is vastly different from man in other epochs, such that it would be unrealistic to talk of a trans-historical human nature which is common to all men in all epochs. They also argue that in view of the abuses to which the concept has been put in several epochs, the realistic thing to do is to adopt a historical, rather than an *a priori* approach to the study of man. Those who are opposed to this relativistic approach argue that without a fixed unalterable human nature, there could not be a unity of men and there could not be any value or norm which would be valid for men.

A more fundamental issue with regard to the nature of man, however, is in connection with the wider universe.

That is, with respect of whether man is or is not different in nature, from other sentient beings. For the monists, material or spiritual, everything is of the same kind. Atheists and agnostics generally do not regard man as possessing a nature that transcends the physical. Theists, on the other hand, ascribe to man a divine spiritual element over and above his physical being. Both atheists and agnostics as well as theists could however agree to one claim, viz: that man is a composite of body and mind. Problems and disagreements only arise when attempt is made to specify the meaning of 'mind' and its relation to the body. Those who regard man as a composite of two elements are referred to as dualists. The question for us is: How does Awolowo's conception of man fit into this background?

For Awolowo, the Psalmist has expressed the unassailable truth about the nature of man. According to the Psalmist: What is man ...made a little lower than God and crowned with glory and honour (Awolowo, 1968, p. 211) Awolowo agrees with the sages that only those who are masters of themselves can become masters of others, and with Aristotle that anyone who would move the world must first move himself. (Awolowo, 1966, p. 158). Hence, in making it a cardinal point of his philosophy to analyse human personality, Awolowo must have reasoned rightly that self-mastery and self-motion are conditional upon self-knowledge. He must then have asked himself: What am I? Who am I?

In answering these questions, Awolowo first examines and rejects the view of those who may be called material monists. They claim that man is entirely a physical entity, an animated lump of earth. In the view of these:

atheists and agnostics, man is just *homo sapiens* – an evolutionary animal species of the primate class, corporeal in every sense and 'of the earth' or 'earthy' (Awolowo, 1968, pp. 211-2).

In his view, this physicalist conception of man is really a degradation of man to a level that is lower than that of the other animals in the universe. This is a judgment that springs ~~from~~ observation. Awolowo notes that the beasts are physi-

cally superior to man in several respects. He also notes that these beasts are better adjusted to their environment than man is to his own. He notes further that the other animals are better able to harmonise their instincts than man is able to harmonise his. Hence, if man is regarded as a mere physical entity, then he is indeed lower, poorer and weaker than the beasts of the forests. This is a deduction that 'the atheists and the agnostics' will not find pleasant to accept. The situation presents a dilemma which the material monists cannot rebut without repudiating their monism.

However, the claim that man has something in his nature which other animals lack need not necessarily be a consequence of theism. Atheists and agnostics could as well believe in an extra-physical nature of man. What they might deny or doubt is that this extra element of man is divine. In Awolowo's view, "There is *something* then which differentiates man from the other animals" (Awolowo, 1968, p. 212). This 'something' is the subject of his 'regime of mental magnitude' which is a product of his metaphysics. Awolowo was aware of the problem of defining or specifying this 'something'. Generally, it is described as either 'thought' or 'spirit'.

In Pascal's view,

Thought constitutes the greatness of man. Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in Nature, but he is a thinking reed. . . . All our dignity consists then in thought. By it we must elevate ourselves, and not by space and time which we cannot fill" (Blaise Pascal, in Fromm and Xirau, 1980, pp. 153-4).

Descartes also held that thought is the primary essence of man. Man has therefore been distinguished from other animate beings in terms of his intellectual powers. From this feature, we may correctly deduce some other essential attributes of man to which Awolowo subscribes. Man is a *rational being*, in consequence of which he is a *social being* and a *political animal* ('zoon politicon') and a *purposive designer and producer* (homo-faber); he is also a *symbol-making animal* (Awolowo, 1968, p. 211; p. 229). In view of these

attributes it has been thought that in addition to his corporeal nature, man also possesses a mental nature. This is the dualism of mind and body which may be consistently held by theists as well as by atheists and agnostics. Awolowo is a dualist in this respect.

#### AWOLOWO'S PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

For Awolowo, the above stereotyped dualism does not fully account for the nature of man. He reduces the so-called mental attributes to man's innate dispositions which are necessary for "the procreation, preservation, and perpetuation of his species." In Awolowo's view, these instincts, because they could "operate independently of (man's) will", do not define man's mental component. In fact, he regards them as parts of man's physical being, although they are significantly different from the physical senses. This difference between the senses and the instincts consists in their relation to the will whereas the physical senses are "man's instruments for observation, analysis, judgment, reflection, and reason", the instincts "predispose him to emotionalism and impulsiveness," (Awolowo, 1968, 213). Furthermore, whereas man has a voluntary and conscious control over the use of his physical senses, he does not have such a control over his instincts. This explains why he asserts that the five physical senses are rational and objective. They are rational in that they are subject to the deliberative control of man's intellect. For instance, a person can deliberately control the use of his eyes by closing and opening them as he thinks fit. The intellect is, in turn, under the control of a higher authority – the will, which may be weak or strong, good or bad. The senses are objective in that their reports are inter-subjectively verifiable. This is not the case with the manifestation of the instincts. For instance, fear is not a state in which a person deliberately decides to be; rather, it is automatically triggered on in appropriate circumstances in those who have a propensity for that feeling. Also, the instincts are not objective in that we cannot conclusively verify that any other person has or does not have a particu-

lar emotion or feeling. Even when the other person manifests the corresponding behaviour, we still cannot claim to know that he has or does not have the relevant instinct. This raises an epistemological problem of other minds to which Awolowo offers a solipsistic solution. In his view, there cannot be knowledge of other minds. (Awolowo, 1968, p. 75).

At this point, Awolowo makes a radical departure from orthodoxy. The two aspects of man which he characterises as physical constitute the dualism of body and mind in orthodox Western philosophy. Reflection and reason are traditionally appealed to in distinguishing man from other animals. Traditional dualists argue that consciousness and rational reflection constitute man's mind by virtue of which man alone is able to think or to philosophize or to deliberate. They then conclude that since thought or deliberation is not a material phenomenon, mind must be incorporeal, and since other animals are supposed to lack this attribute, it constitutes that which makes man unique among other sentient beings. This is evident in Cartesian dualism from which the traditional problems of mind and body have arisen in modern philosophy. Given that the mind is not identical to the brain or any other part of the nervous system, which is material and yet it is a part of man, the question arises as to where the mind is located in man. It has been argued against Cartesian dualism that if the mind as an entity is locatable in the body, then it is no longer immaterial since only what is material can occupy space. Another problem in Cartesian dualism is that of specifying the relationship between mind and body. How does the immaterial, intangible mind affect the material body, and vice-versa? Can the mind exist independently of the body? If the mind and body do interact, where is the area of interaction? Conceptual analysis has shown that the main error in Cartesian dualism lies in its conception of the mind as an independent entity, thereby falling into the fallacy of "*unum nonem nominatum*" (White, 1967).

Awolowo gets around these problems by construing the mind as a state rather than a thing. Hence, the problem of the mind's location does not arise. For him reflection as well as conscious and objective reasoning are functions of the cerebrospinal nervous system. They are bodily functions just like seeing and smelling (Awolowo, 1968, p. 221). This system of nerves furnishes man with knowledge of the world at two levels. The five physical senses furnish man with sense knowledge in virtue of which he is a sentient being. This kind of knowledge he shares with other animals. The cerebral part of the system is the seat of reflection as well as the seat of conscious and objective reasoning. It gives rise to 'passive knowledge' which for biological reasons may be lacking in the other sentient beings. But, since this kind of knowledge, otherwise called intellect, is a function of the physical body, it cannot be hypostasised into a separate entity. Awolowo seems then to espouse an identity of theory of mind and body, if by "mind" we mean what we have characterised as "passive intellect".

At another level, Awolowo holds the belief that there is a dual causal interaction between the sense and the intellect. This does not in any way contradict the earlier position of identity. The senses and the intellect are identical only in that they both belong to a physical system of nerves; they perform different functions. What is, is one body indivisible, with members of the same kind performing different functions which are united in the single physical entity. This is analogous to the constitution of a community or a state. The question to ask then is: How are the senses related to the intellect?

Since the five physical senses serve as man's contacts with the universe, while the intellect only consciously and objectively reasons about the information supplied by the senses, it follows that intellectual activity has its root in the activities of the senses. On the other hand, since the cerebrospinal system of nerves "presides over our organs of sensation and movement" (Awolowo, 1968, p. 221), and the intellect

alone is not one of these organs, but has its seat in this nervous system, it follows that the presiding is done by the intellect. In effect, it is the intellectual function of the cerebrospinal nervous system that controls the body's organs of sensation and movement. The intellect may thus instruct the eyes to close so as not to see a sight considered indecent, or the limbs to carry a man to, either the library or the bar, according to the intellect's judgment.

We see then that what the senses gather from the outside determine what the intellect consciously deliberates upon while the outcome of the intellectual deliberation determines what the senses subsequently do. This is however a process that can be completely explained mechanically, given certain conditions. This is to say, it is a purely physical dialectical relationship between the organs of sensation and movement and the faculty of reason. The implicit assumption in this version of the physical theory of mind is that the mental words used to describe all the non-physical events, processes, and so on, do not name any entities at all. It is a proposal that the physical language that is used in talking about the mind should be interpreted semi-literally, by analogy with its use in our talking about bodies (Alan R. White, 1967, pp. 31-38).

A similar causal interaction is further claimed to exist between the cerebrospinal nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. It should be noted here again that Awolowo does not posit a non-physical interaction between the two systems of nerves. Rather, he argues that they are physically connected. Although the unconscious, involuntary bodily actions which are performed by the autonomic nervous system are not consciously or voluntarily controlled or directed by the other system of nerves, the two are invariably interlocked. The beating of the heart, and the secretion of hormones and enzymes are not activities that one can normally control. The rate at which the heart beats and the quantity of hormones secreted however vary with the states of the senses and the intellect. For example, if a man sees

a lion, the intellect, if it knows what a lion is, gives a danger signal to the rest of the body. The signal triggers off the appropriate glands to secrete more of certain hormones to cope with the emergency. The extra quantities of adrenalin and super adrenalin put the man in a more alert and energetic mood. The intellect then proceeds to give further direction to the locomotor organs as to how to respond to the situation. It determines whether the man should retreat or attack. The man's behaviour is then interpreted either as fear or as bravery or as fool-hardiness. In each case, the autonomic system continues to function as the situation demands independent of control from the intellect. The cerebrospinal system is however continuously responding physically under the influence of the 'drugs' supplied by the hormonal system. As Awolowo carefully analyses, this dual relationship can both be vicious and virtuous. In which case it would depend on the individual's total personality. In his view, the autonomic system does influence the cerebrospinal system of nerves as effectively as the latter do the former" (Awolowo 1968, p. 223).

It has to be noted again, that the "constant relation between the two systems of nerves" is entirely physical. The myth of the mind as the ghost in the machine has no place in Awolowo's account. However, in view of his argument to the effect that thought and action are separate functions of the body which are causally influencing one another equally, we cannot call him an epiphenomenalist. If he had concluded his philosophy of mind at this point, it would have been accurate to describe him as espousing a mind-brain identity theory. In view of these considerations, his theory up to this point is a constructive synthesis of dualism and identity. The dualist aspect is at two levels; one, the separate existence of two independent nervous systems; two, the separable existence of sensation and intellect in the cerebrospinal nervous system. This dualism is however not of the epiphenomenalist kind because it contains a two-way, rather than a one-way causal interactionism. which is also at two levels. (1)

The senses and the intellect are causally connected in the cerebrospinal system, to which they both belong; (2) The non-rational, subjective, involuntary body actions (instincts and appetites), and the rational, objective, voluntary actions (sensation and movement) are also causally connected in a dual way through the intellect. The identity aspect is conveyed by the fact that both the cerebrospinal nervous system, – in its dual constitution of the organs of sensation and movement, and the intellect – and the autonomic nervous system are entirely physical parts and physical functions. It is therefore important to note that he regards man's physical part as a function of the physical body. He is therefore committed to a psycho-physical dualism, albeit with a distinctive strategy that avoids the traditional problems which arise for the Cartesian version, without lapsing into epiphenomenalism.

We may, at this point, understand Awolowo to be advancing an 'ad hoc' tripartite division of the human body. We have the passive intellectual, the sensitive, and the instinctive parts, all constantly connected. The passive intellectual constitutes what is referred to as the mind in the traditional theories, while the sensitive and the instinctive parts constitute the body. In another sense, we may say that Awolowo divides man's body into two major parts: the external and the internal. The external part is composed of the five physical senses with which man interacts with his environment. The internal has two aspects; the instincts and the intellect. As already noted, the external and the internal are causally connected via the intellect which controls the other aspects and thereby belongs to both major parts.

The foregoing is however not a complete account of man in Awolowo's philosophy. Man at this stage is not yet completely distinguished from the other animals because they too possess the three physical aspects that have been ascribed to man. That is, they too possess both a cerebrospinal nervous system and autonomic nervous system. Moreover, Awolowo's

claim that "Basically, we are - all of us - what our ancestors and environment make us" (Awolowo, 1968, pp.214-5), is as true for man as for beasts. With respect to the argument that man is more intelligent than beasts, it suffices to point to this fact of genetic and environmental determinism to account for the different levels of intelligence between man and beast as well as between men. It can therefore not be the possession of the passive, 'animal' intellectual faculty that gives man his dignity in the assembly of animals. The use of this faculty, in itself, can only lead to instinctive, unscientific thinking for self-preservation, self-procreation, and self-perpetuation, according to each animal's physical endowment. Furthermore, the passive intellect cannot be the source of morality, which is uniquely attributed to man, since it only engages in deductive reasoning based on sense perception. This is proved by common observation that, acclaimed intellectuals are not always very wise or morally upright persons. An intellectual could very well be a villain if he lacks spiritual guidance; in fact many are. Hence, the passive intellect is not wisdom from which springs human morality.

If man were completely described by his physical attributes alone, then he would be 'zoon rationalis' rather than 'homo rationalis.' What makes him 'homo' over his 'zoon' nature must therefore be sought outside the animal body. This explains Awolowo's rejection of the view of the atheists and agnostics who conceive man in purely material terms. In his own view, man conceived as the atheists and the agnostics do, has not realised his personhood, his humanity. Hence, Awolowo's claim that "there is *something* then which differentiates man from the other animals" (Awolowo, 1968, p.212). Although he devoted a rather large space to the examination of "man in all his facets as a physical entity" relative to the space in which this 'something' is discussed, his position is clear on the issue ("A word is enough to the wise"). To arrive at this 'something', we need a fuller account of Awolowo's ontology.

He says:

we begin by affirming an a priori proposition that the universe is a cosmos and not a chaos. There is an immutable law..... something referred to as the universal mind (Awolowo, 1968, p.186).

In the cosmological sense in which 'law' is used here, the immutable law is the motive force behind the order and harmony of the universe. This force is a law unto itself and does not obey any other; *it is autonomic*. It is the supreme intelligence behind the universe, and its creative dynamism is expressed as natural laws. It is this source of natural laws that is immutable by virtue of which the natural laws derive their necessity and universality. This immutable law or universal mind is the governing element of the universe. The occasional reference to "this immutable law" as "the universal mind" shows that the law is not just a law in either the sense of a legislation or a regularity, but that it is a legislator, a regulator. This universal law-maker, this ruler of the universe can command anything into and out of being by his *thought* which is "father to words and deeds". In effect, all that can be is already contained in the infinity of this universal mind to which only man can tune in. When a man tunes in, through his thought, words and deeds, to this universal mind, the latent and dormant creative forces in him become potent and dynamic, for good or for evil depending on the individual (Awolowo, 1968, p.187). It is this special relation to the universal mind that ultimately distinguishes man from the other animals. Hence, for Awolowo's complete conception of man, we must move from the purely physical level to a higher, spiritual ontological level.

He declares:

"The christian ontology which I personally believe to be the correct ontology is set out in Genesis Chapter 1, vv. 26-28 and Chapter II. v.7 (Awolowo. 1981a, p.128).

This ontology of the Genesis is to the effect that God expressed in words his thought of making man in his own image and

proceeded by action to make man in his own image. In addition, God thought of giving man dominion over all other things which he had created and, in deed gave him such dominion. We see then that the power to create the universe was already latent and dormant in the Universal mind. This power was only activated by the thought, words and deeds of God. If God's thought had been evil towards man, He would have activated the latent power accordingly. We should draw a parallel between this activation of the Universal mind's power and the activation of the latent creative force in man. The ontology further states that man was made in two parts. First, he was moulded from the dust of the earth by the Lord God; next God respired divine life into the moulded earthen being. The phrase: "and man became a living being" (Genesis II, v.7) is important in Awolowo's ontology. This ontology is in essential aspects, similar to the ontology of the Yoruba who Awolowo led politically for almost half a century (Gbadegesin, 1984, p.179; Makinde 1984, pp.190-191). We should therefore give it some consideration.

Other animals which were created by God are also living beings, yet God did not breathe into their nostrils to animate them. This, from the Christian point of view, proves that man has a divine element in him which distinguishes him from those other animals. It is in this act of divine respiration that man became uniquely joined to the universal mind. And, it is this breath of God in man that is immortal because the universal mind is immutable and eternal. Awolowo also believes that God who is the creator of the universe is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient (Awolowo, 1968, pp.206, 209). It is in virtue of this supremely intelligent universal mind in man that he is capable of thinking. As Awolowo puts it: "It is thinking that distinguishes man from the other animals and makes him the image of God" (Awolowo, 1968, p.228). Just as it is thought, words and deeds that make God the sole dynamic force in the uncreated universe, so do these same three attributes also make man the sole dynamic force in nature or in the created universe. Therein lie the glory

and the honour with which God crowned man.

We see therefore why Awolowo regards the Psalmist's conception of man as the only truth which, however, the atheists and the agnostics have failed to see. It is therefore not the case that there are two conceptions of man in Awolowo's philosophy of mind. There is only one conception presented in two phases, both for explanatory efficacy and for pedagogical efficiency. Put differently, it is only one conception expressed in two languages - physicalistic and mentalistic - to suit various purposes and to combine various conceptions. As Awolowo expresses the complexity of the situation: Man is an animal: but an animal with considerable difference..... He is not a body with a Soul, but a Soul covered with a body" (Awolowo, 1981b, p.173). Hence, the need to consider man as a body and as a soul - from the physical and the non-physical perspectives.

At the animal level, man has physical and psychological attributes otherwise called body and mind respectively. The psychological attributes are in themselves and of two kinds. There are the instincts and the intellect. At this level man has a dual nature. The two aspects, however, resolve into one, viz the physical body. That is, although the psychological attributes are not physical members of his physiological self, they are functions of those members. The relationship between the two aspects is also clearly explained in physical terms. There is no mystery in how they interact. The mutual causal interaction between them takes place constantly through the interconnection of the two nervous systems. Both aspects of man at this level are perishable and one cannot exist independently of the other. If the body dies, the intellect and the instincts also cease to exist. Similarly, if the intellect and the instincts cease to function, the senses cannot operate and the body sinks into a vegetative existence.

Since the faculty of reasoning or the seat of the intellect (or intelligence) is nothing other than the brain, and since other animals also possess brains, it follows that what distinguishes man from them is not the faculty of reason. Hence,

the addition of 'thinking' as the sole differential between man and the other animals. Obviously then, this differential can only be accounted for by the unique creation of man. Hence, man is more than the duality of physiological and psychological attributes. A thorough comprehension of Awolowo's position here shows that there are no philosophical problems of body and mind at this level at all.

It is when we consider Awolowo's conception of the human mind that we come to a complete conception of the human person. He says:

"man is a manifestation of three phenomena. The first is the soul which is the indwelling God. The second is the subjective mind which is the seat of man's reasoning ability. The third is the objective mind which can see, hear, smell, and touch ..... that is the body of man" (Awolowo, 1981a, p.129).

And, the soul is "the subconscious" phase of the mind (Awolowo, 1981b, p.13). From our previous analysis, we can plainly understand this tripartite division of the human person without any ambiguities.

Since the animal body and mind are ultimately of the same category it matters not which term - body or mind - we use for them. Hence, there is no ambivalence in Awolowo's reference to the body as the objective mind, or to the psyche as "the subjective mind". The introduction of the soul we have already treated. The tripartite division of the mind is therefore not in conflict with Awolowo's claim that "man is dual in nature, he has a body and a mind" (Awolowo, 1981b, p.12). The only proper conclusion to draw from the conjunction of "man is dual in nature" and "man is a manifestation of three phenomena" is that without the soul which is the indwelling God, the mind of man is earthy and beast-like. It is also only this soul that is imperishable and incorruptible. Anyone who lacks it then is an animal; he is dead though he were living. A Godless human being is a beast; perhaps more beastly than other beasts because of his better developed

faculty of reasoning. It is this spiritual part of the mind that enables man to develop his mind beyond the level of the lower animals and to transcend the world of children (Cfr. Ogunmodede, 1986, p.66); it is this part that enables man to think scientifically. As Awolowo puts it:

“Thinking is a spiritual process”, which is developed by constantly engaging “in clear, decisive, calm, deliberate, sustained, and constructive thinking with a definite end in view, which end should benefit the thinker as well as others (Awolowo, 1968, p.227).

What emerges from the above is Awolowo's distinction between ‘human being’ and ‘person’. The attached diagrammatic sketch of Awolowo's concept of human personality makes the point clear.

#### MIND-BODY RELATIONSHIP: PHASE 1

As the diagram on p. 263 shows, there is a series of causal relationships in Awolowo's philosophy of mind. The first of two major relationships in this series is the realm of human being. It is a prototype of the second major relationship in the realm of the person, the ‘*imago Dei*’.

According to a Yoruba adage, if the ear does not hear evil, the mind does not despair, *Mutatis mutandis*. The same can be said for the other senses of perception. If the mind is caused to despair, it may in itself arouse the emotion of anger. If this emotion is indulged by the intellect, it may lead to physical violence either on self or on others. In which case, it may turn out as the Yoruba further say, that anger is ignorant of its owner's leglessness. However, violence necessarily occasions the intellect to put the physical senses and the locomotor organs on the alert; they in turn are automatically fuelled by the involuntary nervous system. In order to maintain his life in harmony, a human being must learn to strike a balance between his instincts and his intellect. This is what Awolowo means by the cultivation of ‘the regime of mental

magnitude'. Omoboriowo (1982) and Makinde (1987a) have attempted to explicate the content of this regime. It is this mental magnitude that will give to a human being's intellect the dominion over his physical senses and instincts. In the fashion of Plato's political theory of the mind, the intellect becomes the charioteer driving with two horses. The physical senses are the obedient horse, while the instincts are the disobedient horse. In order for the chariot to perform effectively, the charioteer must be able to control its horses well. In other words, in order that a human being may live successfully, his life must be ruled by reason which must be consciously developed to enable it moderate, positively, the influences of sensations, appetites and desires on itself. We should not, however, forget that the thoughts which proceed from the intellect also influence the instincts and the physical senses. Consider, for example, a man who wants to commit adultery with a particular lady. The thought arose in his mind, most likely as a consequence of what his physical senses gathered. If he is not sexually continent or if he has a weak will, he would fall into the temptation. He would begin to devise means and design strategies to realise his adulterous aim, employing both his mind and his body. It is in order to guard against such ruinous dissipations and negative distractions of mind and body that Awolowo recommends the regime of mental magnitude.

In Awolowo's view, the cultivation of this regime of mental magnitude should be the proper goal of education. In effect, the two-way causal interaction between body and mind, is well within the capacity of each individual to control, - ".....it is well within the capacity of a man or woman to control or sublimate his or her instinct" (Awolowo, 1968, p.225). Since the instincts are naturally independent of the will, they are quite capable of ruining an individual's life, thereby preventing him or her from living "a happy, healthy, prosperous, full life - a triumphant life" (omoboriowo, 1982, p.46) which is every human being's birth right. The end of true education or culture is to give man self-mastery and

self-conquest. This will "make it possible for man's physical organs as well as his instincts to function normally, positively, and harmoniously" (Awolowo, 1968, p.215). This beautiful state will be achieved when reason has completely taken over the control of a man's life, thus making him to be moderate in all things. As Makinde summarised:

In its totality, mental magnitude is a philosophical doctrine which derives from a theory of mind and body, with the assertion that the mental is superior to the physical element of a person, and should take control over the emotions, desires, and actions of man (Makinde, 1987a, p.?)

A problem arises at this point that is worth noticing. The sole purpose of Awolowo's philosophy of mind is the establishment of the mental as superior to the physical. The question to ask is whether Awolowo regards this mental superiority as a fact or as a problem. If it is a fact, the assertion is either superfluous or an explanation is needed to show how the mental has lost its superiority, to the extent that a plea should be entered in its behalf. On the other hand, if mental superiority is not a fact, but a problem, something will be needed beyond reason itself to facilitate the regime of mental magnitude. Perhaps, this further 'thing' is the will. But this itself is not any less problematic than reason. For instance, the problem of weakness of the will has remained unresolved since the days of Socrates (See Mortimore, G.W. (ed). 1971). In other words, a plea for reasonableness in man's life is either redundant or self-defeating. If man is already in the grips of reason which nothing in the man can overcome, he gains nothing by being counselled to get into or remain in the grips of reason. Conversely, if man could be in the grips of either reason or emotion because one is not superior to the other, and man is not already in the grips of reason, then he cannot benefit from the counsel of reason; man will therefore, in this case, require an external force to tilt the balance of power in favour of reason. The implications of this simple constructive

dilemma, which Awolowo seems not to have considered, are far-reaching when eventually fully discussed.

However, the relationship between mind and body in Awolowo's theory is non-mysterious, demythologized, empirically verifiable. The structure of this relationship serves many purposes - private, domestic, social, political, economic, educational and theological. An important point to bear in mind with respect to these purposes is that while others will be 'educated' some others will have to be the educators, just as the instincts that need to be controlled are controlled by the intellect. But, who is to educate the educators; what gives the educator the right to educate? What is to control reason in its control of the body? Also, just as only a well-developed intellect can effectively control the instincts, so only the well-educated can successfully educate those who are educable. The analogies seem obvious now when we consider Awolowo's position on social and political organisation and objectives. At each level, the controlling power must be concentrated in the hands of the reasonable, thinking, well-adjusted members, who incidentally are always very few. It is only through such rational apical control that there can be social harmony, political stability, economic growth and scientific development

#### MIND-BODY RELATIONSHIP: PHASE II (SOUL-HUMAN BEING RELATION)

The Soul is light-years apart from the body - "The subconscious mind is in a class of itself" (Awolowo, 1981b, p. 19). This phase of the mind

never errs in the performance of its functions. If the conclusions which it manifests are wrong, it must be because the information supplied to it are inaccurate *ab initio* (Awolowo, 1981b, p.16)

It is like the chief executive of an organization acting on the advice and information supplied by his subordinates. But, is it not like defining something as being supremely perfect and at the same time shielding it from blame whenever it is found

to be any less than perfect.? If the soul, which is also the universal mind, the indwelling God, is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, how come that it should ever be misled by what is by far very inferior to it. This is more so in view of the fact that a two-way causal interaction is not posited between soul and body. Rather, the relationship is that of one-way domination of soul on body. Ought any excuse be pleaded for the fallibility of a conceptually omnipotent being who is also omniscient, omnipotent, and, from the christian point of view, also benevolent? A conceptual contradiction is involved in such a view. The socio-political analogues should be considered. For instance, why should a supposedly perfect ruler be shielded from responsibility for his manifested imperfections? This raises the problems of God and evil, of freedom and determinism, of destiny and creation. What we notice here is that the farther Awolowo's theory goes from the empirical level, the more difficult it is to avoid serious metaphysical problems.

Concerning the soul of man, Awolowo asserts that it is of the same quality with the universal mind or God (Awolowo, 1981b, p.18), hence it "is invisible, intangible and imperceptible" (Awolowo, 1981a, p.129). It is spatio-temporally infinite, eternal, immortal, and capable of action from a distance (Awolowo, 1981c, p.3). It is capable of an independent discarnate existence and activity (Awolowo, 1981a, p.129) - this has to be so since it came from the primordial dynamic essence who is God. In this, the soul resembles Anaximander's 'apeirondivine'. In virtue of being a chip of God, the human soul is also all-powerful, all-knowing, and ubiquitous (Awolowo, 1977, p.230; 1981b, p.16). The features of discarnate existence and activity differentiate the soul from the psyche, consciousness or the physical mind. The human soul differs from the divine essence only in magnitude (lest the creature become its creator's equal), but it "is the projection of the God Essence into man" (Awolowo 1968, p.230; 1981b, p.18). The soul is also characterised as a person's "Inner Self" with whom one can enter into spiritual commu-

nication under certain conditions (Awolowo 1981a, p.52). The soul as the "inner self" is comparable to the element of "ori-inu" in the primary Yoruba conception of human personality (Makinde, 1984a, p.).

Paradoxically, in spite of the divine nature of the subconscious mind (i.e. the soul),

in all the multifarious functions of the body and mind, the role of the body is dominant and almost decisive (Awolowo, 1981b, p.24).

This is because

If the body is diseased or, disintegrates, the mind cannot, in the one case, function at its best, and in the other, at all (Awolowo, 1981b, p.24)

Also, "if the body is dead, there can be no mind - whether conscious or subconscious" (Awolowo, 1968, p.230). Awolowo's 'craftsman and tool' simile (1981b, p.13) clearly illustrates his view of the soul-body relationship. If the trained craftsman has good tools, the fruits of the spirit will be manifest; the potential genius in him will be fully actualised. But this will only be about once in ten cases that the tools are good and the craftsman will be well trained (Awolowo, 1981b, p.15). But, for a trained craftsman with bad tools, it is the case of the soul willing but the body being unable. The inability of the body arises from the harmful effects of bad living and bad thinking on the intellect, instincts and physical organs of man. The explanation for this is that:

.....a destructive and selfish employment of the functions of the subjective mind is fraught with disastrous physiological consequences ..... As a man thinketh, so he is (Awolowo, 1981b, pp. 11 and 15).

This further suggests that the soul may not have an absolute dominion over the body, or that the soul is not omnipotent

after all.

Since the subjective mind is a part of the body, and since it provides the data which the spiritual subconscious mind processes deductively, it follows that if there is murk in the subjective phase, the end-product will also be murk: garbage in, garbage out. The relationship is fully explained when Awolowo says:

The subconscious phase takes exclusive charge of all the functions of the body. It is also the seat of instincts, emotions, habits, reflexes and memories. Its reasoning processes are deductive only, using as its premises the information supplied by the objective phase and only processed and interpreted by the subjective phase (Awolowo, 1981b, p.23).

In this deductive activity, the subconscious phase (i.e. the soul) never errs if the information from the subjective phase are accurate. The implicit computer metaphor is instructive. There is thus a constant connection between the soul and the body through the autonomic nervous system.

The soul is housed in the body (Awolowo, 1977, p.54); but it is neither imprisoned there in, as in Plato, nor is it a ghost in the machine, as in Descartes. It is man's "Inner Self", which is free and autonomous, but whose exercise of freedom and autonomy is relative to the level to which each man has cultivated the regime of mental magnitude. The cultivation of this regime is therefore a necessary though not a sufficient condition for a balanced human personality. When a man knows the truth, and is unshakably convinced of it, - that he is the greatest of all wonders, the most marvelous of all miracles; that he is a link between two worlds, -the terrestrial and the celestial, that he is an intermediary between two classes of being - the biological and the spiritual; that he is the resident vicar of God on earth, and so a micro-God with dominion over all other created beings in the universe; that he is ordained to be the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature - then he will be free from the

lead weight of his earthy body. He will then have transcended the regime of mental magnitude into the realm of spiritual depth. When he is thus free, he would be able to enter into communion with the Universal mind to realise the genius in him according to his character. Hence, a man can turn out to be either an evil or a benevolent genius, depending on his character or the state of his subjective mind, because, as rightly put by Heraclitus, "a man's character is his destiny" (Fromm and Xiran, 1968, p.44). Others who cannot tune in to the divine essence in them, will live as ordinary men and women, in varying degrees. In order to be a benevolent genius, a person will have to take the route of either religious faith or rational contemplation to conquer the tyranny of the flesh. When a man had done this, he regains his freedom and is automatically able to attain spiritual depth, under certain conditions, for the full realisation of his Godly human personality and thought. Attempts to explicate the details of the regime of mental magnitude and those of spiritual depth, which derive from Awolowo's philosophy of mind which we have sketched, have been made by Omoboriowo, Makinde and Ogunmodede.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Finally, we have to note the parallel relationships between the parts of each phase of man. At the physical level, the intellect is superior to both the instincts and the senses. The three are however causally interacting all the time. Where the intellect is undeveloped, the instincts control the individual. A man so controlled lacks thought which distinguishes man from the other animals; he is therefore an animal. Analogously, a state that lacks an intelligent government is not different from the jungle. When there is intellect, but the negative emotions have been nourished instead of the positive ones, the thoughts that will ensue will also be negative and the consequent actions like wise. Intellect plus bad character is equal to sophisticated villainy. As it is in indivi-

dual human beings, so it is in aggregations of them.

When man is considered as a mind, the subjective phase of the conscious layer is superior to the objective phase. Both phases however causally interact through the body's nervous systems, exactly as in the interaction between the physique and the psyche. The objective phase and the subjective phase of the conscious layer of the mind correspond, respectively, to the physical and the psychical parts (orthodox body and 'mind') of man-as-a-physical-entity. This entity is the earthy man or the human being which is an object of scientific study.

The subconscious layer of the mind, which is the first of the three phases of the human person, is superior to the other two phases. It is directly connected to the subjective phase through the autonomic nervous system. It should be noted that Awolowo does not substantiate this relationship as he does for the others. This is the non-scientific aspect of man - the spiritual aspect which passeth human understanding. However, indications are that the soul is a rational element with which God, man's creator, endowed man at the beginning of life. This element of thought is however unlike mere human, 'passive' intellect, although at their different levels, the two occupy a similar controlling status. There is therefore no reason to worry about the nature or location of the soul in the body. It is immaterial, intangible, imperceptible and spiritual. It constitutes the subconscious layer of the human mind that was added to man from the universal mind. It is in virtue of it that every person is a potential genius. As with the psyche (which is also the subjective phase of the conscious layer of the mind), the soul also interacts with the physical mind.

Another problem that might arise for Awolowo's metaphysical system is its absolute reliance on God. Having not given a demonstration of the existence of God, Awolowo's metaphysics might be said to commit the fallacy of explaining the unknown with the unknown, *ignobum per ignobus*. This objection appears to have been taken care of, however. For

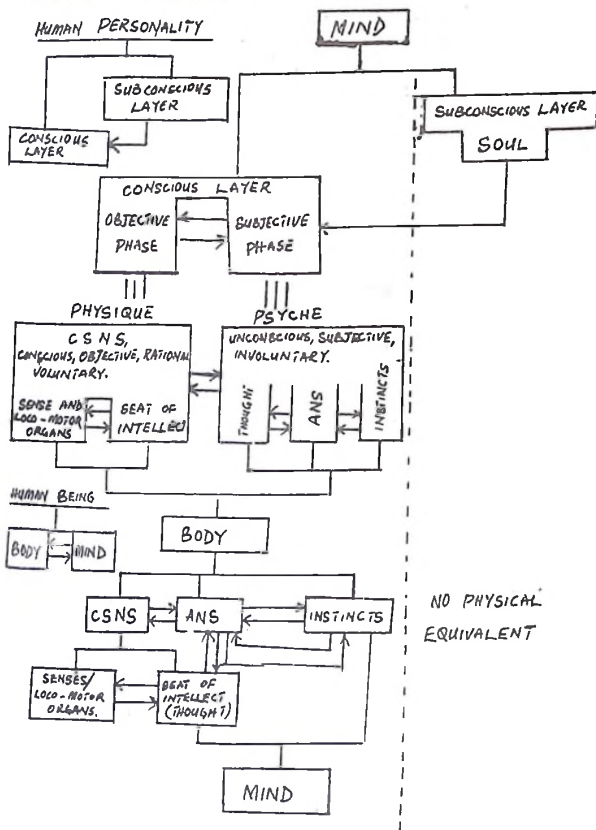
Awolowo, the only truth which can set a man free is "that man has been made 'a little lower than God'". In the unique combination of the religious and the rational elements of his genius he provides that this truth may be known either "by an act of faith or by a process of rigorous and systematic reasoning" (Awolowo, 1968, p.230). Hence, there is still the way of rational contemplation by which atheists and agnostics can arrive at the truth that man is the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature, the unique and most developed intelligence in the perceptible universe. In short, by the use of reason alone, the atheist and the agnostic can arrive at the truth that man is the architect of the fortune and misfortune of his universe. What Awolowo does not provide is the way this rational reflection can be carried out or what its premises will be.

In conclusion, we have to note that Awolowo's philosophy of mind has not only avoided some of the notorious problems in the orthodox discussions of the issue of mind and body, but is also constructive synthesis of many of the extant views. As such, it is a theory that can plausibly recommend itself to a broad spectrum of perspectives. It is also capable of generating more testable hypotheses than the traditional theories. Its broad base is however the source of both its strength and weakness, in that it is capable of being used to rationalise theories of both negative and positive, reactionary and revolutionary, manipulations of man and society.

It is however noteworthy, that Awolowo's philosophy of mind has brought together his socio-cultural, historical, religious, political and economic experiences in the framing of a unique world-view. Particularly, he has been able, to a large extent, to reconcile the primary conception of man in his native Yoruba cultural setting (see Abimbola, 1971) with contemporary Judaeo-Christian and Western conceptions of human personality (see Makinde, 1984). In this broad-based metaphysical theory of mind, we can identify several theories of mind such as the political, the physical,

## APPENDIX TO "AWOLowo'S METAPHYSICS"

DIAGRAM OF AWOLowo'S PHILOSOPHY OF MIND.



- N.B. CSNS = CEREBRO SPINAL NERVOUS SYSTEM  
 ANS = AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM.  
 → = CAUSAL INTERACTION IN THAT DIRECTION.  
 ||| = EQUIVALENT TO

the domestic, the economic and the Freudian theories of mind. To have understood this metaphysical theory, then, is to have cleared the last road-block in the journey of understanding Awolowo's thought and practice in several areas. Both those who agree and those who disagree with Awolowo will therefore have an objective rational framework within which to express themselves.

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1. According to the Neoplatonist Iamblichus, "The philosophy of the *acusmatici* consists of undemonstrated sayings, without argument, enjoining certain courses of action. These and other dicta of Pythagoras they endeavour to preserve as divine revelation, making no claim to say anything of their own. Indeed they hold it would be wrong to do so: those of their number are accounted the wisest who have learned the greatest number of *acusmata*" Also, Porphyry says: His teaching took two forms and of his followers some were called *mathematici* and some *acusmatici*. The *mathematici* were those who had mastered the deepest and most fully worked-out parts of his wisdom, the *acusmatici* those who had only heard summarized precepts from the writings, without full explanations" (Guthrie, pp. 191-192) above.
2. 'Awoism' is the name of the ideology fashioned from Awolowo's ideas and his practice of politics. See Omoboriowo A. 1982.
3. A foremost pioneer in this regard is Makinde, M. Akin, see his (1987a) and (1987b) above.
4. Archimedes had said: "Give me a place to stand on and I move the world" in Pappus, vii, in Hultsh, F. Pappi Alexandrini Collectionis quae supersunt (Berlin, 1976-8) III, to ml, p.1060, 1-4. See Arber, A. (1954) above.
5. Some of these views are contained in:  
 Fromm, E. (1968), Fromm and Xirau (1980), Makinde, M. (1984), Makinde, M. (1985), Gbadegesin, O. (1984), Abimbola, W. (1971), McMurtry, J. (1978), Flew, A. (1964), and Mouroux, J. (1961).

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# **Part Three**

## **Ideology and Economy**

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## Awolowo's Economic Thought in Historical Perspective

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P. ZACHERNUK

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Chief Obafemi Awolowo, over more than forty years at the centre of Nigerian public life, acquired a reputation not only as a staunch democratic socialist, but also as something of a Nigerian philosopher. Indeed, Awolowo portrayed himself as a socialist who developed his basic ideas over the years, while his supporters in the Unity Party of Nigeria often elaborated on this theme.<sup>1</sup> There has even been an academic treatise published recently on Awolowo's democratic socialist "Socio-Political Philosophy".<sup>2</sup> His major books of the last two decades do in fact present themselves as philosophical work which, as a group, offer a systematic, socialist solution to Nigeria's multiple problems.<sup>3</sup> However, both claims – that Awolowo developed gradually as a socialist, and that he arrived at a consistent socialist philosophy – are open to question and re-evaluation.

Awolowo's acceptance of capitalism in the 1950s, contrasted to his condemnation of it in the early 1960s, must raise doubts about his steady development from socialist roots; his more recent rejection of public corporations and renewed defense of private enterprise must make one wonder in which direction he was growing.<sup>4</sup> His 1968 assertion that it is "folly and courting certain failure to attempt to practise socialism by halves"<sup>5</sup>, juxtaposed against his enduring faith

in a mixed economy, must raise questions about how his "thought system and philosophy"<sup>6</sup> fit together as a whole.

This paper will nevertheless attempt to find some order and continuity in the development of Awolowo's economic thought. As a first step, we must recognize that Awolowo always write as a politician, and for a purpose; his writings must therefore be understood within their contexts.<sup>7</sup> When viewed as a part of Nigerian history, we find in them not the unfolding of a socialist philosophy, but connections of quite a different sort.

Throughout his career, Awolowo's economic thought was concerned with certain ends: freeing Nigeria from foreign control, creating opportunities for Nigerians, improving their general welfare. But these concerns, which are at the core of his socialist reputation, have not formed the core of his economic ideas. Rather, socialist principles have been overlaid on a more fundamental pursuit. The central aim has not been to create a socialist Nigeria, but to develop Nigeria under the control of essentially the same coalition of classes which formed the prime constituency of the nationalist Action Group. His socialism is an extension of his nationalism; it is a means of empowering certain classes – and especially the entrepreneurs – to overcome the obstacles they have faced in the colonial and post-colonial Nigerian economy. Further, in moving through its various stages, Awolowo's economic thought has, like his nationalism, largely followed broader Nigerian trends. Awolowo adopted aspects of socialism to meet certain political and material conditions, but, in the final analysis, these ideas seem to have left his original commitments intact.

The first extended statement of Awolowo's economic thought that we have is a memorandum he penned for the Ibadan branch of the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1940.<sup>8</sup> Awolowo was then, as his autobiography makes clear, an ambitious young member. He actively followed Nigerian public affairs and intellectual events in both Ibadan and Lagos. With his Progressive Economic Corporation and in

other business ventures and attempted careers, he sought to earn enough to be able to study law in England, and thus to enter politics as a major figure. By 1940 he had already been a journalist, a money lender, a transport owner, and a cocoa buyer, and was in the process of overcoming a personal financial disaster following the abrupt end of the cocoa boom in 1938.<sup>9</sup>

Awolowo's bankruptcy, and his economic difficulties in general, were embedded in a set of wider economic problems facing Nigerians at the time. As Nigeria had become firmly embedded in the world economy, the era of the Nigerian merchant princes of the nineteenth century had become the era of the big firms. Nigerian merchants and middlemen, and others operating as individuals or in small partnerships, could not compete with the immense power of firms such as the United Africa Company, nor resist their ability to dominate the economy and absorb Nigerians into their networks. Foreign capital also controlled almost all of the new industrial enterprises of the early twentieth century. The general refusal of British and other foreign banks to grant credit to Nigerians compounded their struggle to find a suitable economic role for themselves in the colonial economy, especially one that matched the promise of the earlier era. In politics and government, too, they found themselves excluded or reduced to a subordinate role. The colonial service restricted Africans to the lower levels; political evolution seemed to favour traditional, not emergent, elites. Nigerians embedded in the colonial economy, ambitious to benefit from it, found more frustration than opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout the interwar period the nationalist movement responded to these frustrations and ambitions with both political and economic programmes.<sup>11</sup> Demands for Africanization of the government bureaucracy and, belatedly, for political control promised to raise the educated element to their proper economic and social status in colonial society. Government clerkships had long been seen as a secure means of economic advance; the steady and loud demands for

better education facilities and more bureaucratic openings to accept the graduates reveal how heavily the aspirant middle classes relied on this avenue of advance. The economic aspect of the nationalist response had been formulated by the National Congress of British West Africa in the 1920s, and attempted by men such as W. Tete Ansa through the 1930s. Meeting in 1920, the National Congress resolved

That this Conference, being strongly convinced that the time has come for the co-operation of the peoples of the British West African dependencies in promoting their economical development, recommends . . . the formation of . . . the British West African Co-operative Association . . . with powers, *inter alia*, to fund banks, promote shipping facilities, establish Co-operative Stores, and produce buying centres, in such wise as to inspire and maintain a British West African Economical development.<sup>12</sup>

To solve their predicament Africans would not change the economy, but change themselves. They would have to group together, organize their own banks and other sources of credit and learn how to compete successfully in the colonial economy. In an era when state intervention in the marketplace was not yet the accepted orthodoxy, the nationalists did not look to the state for succor, but only to guarantee free trade by limiting the monopoly power of the foreign firms. Thus the protest against the cocoa buying agreement in 1937–38 presented the end of monopolies as the basic solution. "Competition is said to be the life blood of any kind of trade and more than anything else has helped the economic development of many a country in the modern world."<sup>13</sup> Cooperation, in the sense of cordial relations between Nigerians in order to allow them to equal the solidarity of the foreigners, and develop their own industries under a free market regime, remained a key theme in Nigerian development programmes of the interwar period.

until we are able to match the foreigners... by organizing efficiently and competing equally, on the same basis as they are doing at present, we should continue to fill columns of newsprint with meaningless economic flabdoodles.<sup>14</sup>

Awolowo, unsuccessful in his various but typical ambitions, fits neatly in to this heritage, as does his memorandum. Basically, he proposes that the Ibadan branch of the Youth Movement establish a "Cooperative Thrift and Consumer Society", to enable Nigerian consumers to economize through bulk purchasing, and perhaps to become producers of some consumer goods, particularly food, locally. He also proposes that the Nigerian Motor Transport Union, an organization of transport owners of which he was a member, adopt some cooperative principles, in order to obtain the economies of scale available to larger, foreign transport companies. Further, Awolowo recommends that the Transport Union, the Produce Traders Association (of which he was the Ibadan branch secretary), and any other union that so wishes, affiliate with the Youth Movement to create a united front of Nigerian interests.

This plan is clearly intended to enable Nigerians to compete as equals with their established competitors.

At the moment, there is no capital in the country large enough to create rival establishments to those of the foreign capitalists. . . While we fold our arms and look on, the great potential wealth of the country is being systematically tapped and drained by these foreign adventurers. If we say we will wait until we are able to accumulate large capitals, the day of our economic salvation will be postponed indefinitely.

But weak as we are in the matter of capital, we have a formidable weapon which only awaits being properly utilized by us. We have the means of co-operation at our disposal. If we are united truly and indeed we can change the economic aspect of this country almost overnight. By unity we could with

one accord refuse to submit one minute longer to the economic exploitation we have bitterly suffered... This is why I say that the economic salvation of this country lies in Co-operation.<sup>15</sup>

Awolowo's programme incorporates the nationalist myth of the unified nation.

As subject nation [sic], we have no decisive voice in the affairs of our Government. As subject and economically backward country [sic], we are helplessly open to economic exploitation . . . under the auspices of the European firms with the Syrian Traders as their commercial minions. These people have what the Africans never have had and never have under present conditions. They have huge capitals and unlimited credit at their disposal.<sup>16</sup>

He recognizes that there are conflicts between Nigerian farmers and produce traders, but these can and should be subsumed under the nationalist leadership of the NYM in a natural alliance against the real opposition, the foreign companies.<sup>17</sup> The battle for economic salvation will not be fought along lines of privilege and wealth, but according to nationality.

In this memorandum, we can see his socialism foreshadowed: "Capitalism must be carefully eschewed in our national economic aspiration, first because it is bound to prove ineffective at the present stage of our development generally, second because of its pronounced anti-socialistic tendencies."<sup>18</sup> However, his critique of capitalism is circumscribed: "I do not, however, mean by this that individual enterprises should be discouraged, but I do suggest that co-operative activities and ventures directly under the control of Africans themselves should be more emphasized than any other project."<sup>19</sup> This cooperation, moreover, does not imply any pooling of ownership, but only a pooling of resources among owners, to make them more competitive in a free enterprise economy. Awolowo reveals here the enduring themes of his

thought, and the kernel of the peculiarity of his socialist programme. Private enterprise is accepted as the motor of development. "Capitalism" is opposed principally because it has been colonized; cooperation (later socialism) is proposed because it offers Nigerians a chance to even the scales. Awolowo is not rejecting capitalist economics; he only wants to direct more wealth into Nigerian hands.

A new consensus about economic development swept Nigeria during the Second World War.<sup>20</sup> The panacea of the free market was usurped by the idea of government control. Planning and State Welfarism became established as the economic orthodoxies of the future. The State, enlarged and omniscient, would oversee and regulate the development effort, ensuring rationality and efficiency. This closely paralleled a shift in British domestic politics, and indeed was inspired and informed by that shift.<sup>21</sup> It also was a logical response to the potential of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Capital grants, industrial diversification, and the expansion of transportation systems were improvements Nigerian merchants and entrepreneurs could appreciate. The NYM Charter in 1938 had mentioned the need for economic planning. By 1943 Nnamdi Azikiwe had developed this into a more extensive programme of State-led development and welfare socialism, voicing the common platform of almost all nationalists. Objections arose not over the idea of rationalizing the modernization process, but over who was to control it, and in whose interests. This dispute lay behind the protest against the "Obnoxious Ordinances" in 1945. In British hands, marketing board funds and development grants continued to favour export production under foreign control. If the nationalists could secure more political power, those funds could be used to enhance their status within the colonial economic system.

If the NYM failed to act on Awolowo's suggestions, it was not because their ideas were at odds. He was an active member of the Youth Movement, and with it pushed the government to take the lead in a wide variety of development initiatives,

advocated economic planning, and criticized what was done in terms that implicitly accepted the overall thrust of British policy.<sup>22</sup> While in England as a law student from 1944 to 1946, Awolowo joined the British Fabian Society and kept in step with the new consensus.<sup>23</sup> *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, written in 1945, though primarily concerned with local government reform, reveals these influences. Awolowo objects not to the Colonial Welfare and Development Act, nor to the cocoa marketing schemes themselves, but to the fact that Nigerians were little consulted in their formulation.<sup>24</sup> Awolowo may have stood towards the conservative side of political and economic thought in the 1940s – Azikiwe certainly used more fiery rhetoric while men such as trade union leader Soyemi Coker pushed more radical programmes – but he too recognized the potential of a controlled economy.<sup>25</sup>

In 1951, when Awolowo launched the Action Group, the basic consensus between the colonial administration and southern Nigerian nationalist politicians about the problems of economic development was still intact. Heated debates, and some radical political movements, did arise over the nature and timing of constitutional devolution, but on this, too, a consensus emerged in the later years of the decade. By the eve of Independence, a cordial atmosphere prevailed; nationalists greeted their departing rulers as old and trusted friends.

A World Bank mission report drafted in 1955 defined the economic consensus in detail, providing the pith of the federal and regional development plans which followed.<sup>26</sup> The basic need was capital, and for skilled labour and management to put it to good use. Social services would have to be rapidly improved to secure the future of development. Agriculture would remain the foundation of the economy although increased agricultural exports would support diversification into small import substitution industries. Foreign expertise would be needed for these and especially for heavy industries. The State would oversee the whole effort, owning

some essential services and providing incentives, models and financial support to private interests.

The World Bank Mission and colonial administration planners stressed the need for foreign investment, and the need to limit public ownership to unprofitable, essential services. The Nigerian nationalist coalition agreed that substantial amounts of foreign capital would be needed. Clearly, an enlarged state with an increased budget, and Africanization policies in the public and private sectors, offered the opportunities for social and economic advance, both licit and illicit, they had long awaited. For most members of the middle classes increased foreign investment and continuing foreign economic control would only help their ambition of growing rich within the established economic system. But the nationalists were not as quick to limit the realm of public ownership. A stronger State would enhance Nigerian bargaining power against foreign investors, and make their activities more lucrative for Nigerians. Nationalization was also attractive to Nigerian entrepreneurs and economic nationalists, who foreshadowed the demands characteristic of a "national bourgeoisie".<sup>27</sup> Nigerian entrepreneurs feared unlimited foreign competition; economic nationalists, including rising members of the technocratic and bureaucratic elites, feared losing control over the economy generally. State welfare capitalism became a central element in Nigerian economic thought, as a means of advancing Nigeria interests. Socialism became a fashionable word in nationalist circles, in a sense that "meant nationalization if one was talking of expatriate enterprise, but meant private enterprise if one was referring to Nigerian-owned business."<sup>28</sup> But the attractions of state ownership were limited by the entrepreneurs' fears that it could threaten their activities, and much more importantly by their need to sustain good relations with foreign investors. In general, "their socialism was against foreign economic domination only if it was impossible to arrive at a satisfactory *modus vivendi* between themselves and foreign capital."<sup>29</sup>

Although the small left wing of the Action Group, manned by radicals and Marxist intellectuals, pressed for a more socialist and nationalist orientation, the bulk of the party shared in the general contentment with the emergent order, and faced these dilemmas.<sup>30</sup> The Action Group was primarily the voice of the aspirant Yoruba middle classes. Its right wing represented the large and wealthy group of Yoruba entrepreneurs, merchants, produce traders and contractors, trying to shape the new order to their benefit. The party's centre was comprised of forward-looking traditional rulers, teachers, professionals and the full time politicians and party officials. The latter were more imbued with Fabian and welfare state ideals, but still concerned with advancing their interests through the state. Within the party there was thus a wide variety of opinions regarding socialism, nationalization, and foreign investment -- but all sought to make the state into an instrument to advance their interests.

As befitted a party leader, Awolowo followed a policy broad enough to please the party's various factions, appealing to voters while nurturing the middle classes. Seen by observers as a moderate,<sup>31</sup> he kept the party "between Fabian socialism and welfare state capitalism."<sup>32</sup> Citing the need for economic planning, a mixed economy and control over foreign capital, Awolowo dedicated the Action Group to "fashion out and pursue any economic policy that will ensure prosperity and contentment to the citizens of Nigeria."<sup>33</sup> Portraying his party as "the only party of the common man in Nigeria",<sup>34</sup> he promised that the "Life more Abundant" of the Action Group motto would be achieved through free primary education, improved health services, guaranteed minimum standards of living, and multi-faceted agricultural programmes. These policies would eventually lead to the "creation of a Welfare State in Nigeria",<sup>35</sup> in which minimum standards were protected, and Nigerians could aspire to wealth heretofore undreamed of.

Awolowo could assume a more radical stance, as he did at the height of the fight over self-government early in the

decade. He had "no more confidence in the good faith of British rule in Nigeria" after discovering how "subtly evil and revolting" it was.<sup>36</sup> British rule was not humanitarian, but "for the sole purpose of satisfying Britain's economic self-interest"<sup>37</sup>; the need to be rid of the British was urgent. "British imperialists and capitalists" in Nigeria were cited as more dangerous enemies than even the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons.<sup>38</sup> However, these strident attacks on imperialism were inspired by Awolowo's nationalism, not by his socialism; they did not demand any reform of his economic thought.

At its 1952 convention the Action Group explicitly rejected socialism and all other "isms", opting instead to approach economic problems pragmatically. Awolowo endorsed the World Bank's proposals and his government in the Western Region broadly followed its recommendations, exceeding its expectations and the other regions in the provision of social and economic services.<sup>39</sup> Under the Action Group in the Western Region, as in the rest of Nigeria, the political and business members of the middle classes allied in their exploitation of the development corporations, loan boards, financial institutions and political spoils. This alliance did not contribute much to the development of national control over the economy, but did contribute much to the enrichment of the middle classes through property speculation, government contracting, and plain corruption.<sup>40</sup>

Awolowo also advised protection and support for Nigerian entrepreneurs specifically. Controls would be placed on foreign investment in many small import substitution industries, because

the moment you allow foreign investors to invest in the various industries, you are shutting the door to Nigerians, and you are going to reduce the people of this country perpetually to Clerks, Sub-Managers, Semi-Directors and what-nots to serve under foreign investors.<sup>41</sup>

The government would provide Nigerian entrepreneurs with various incentives, and oblige foreign investors to allow

Nigerian partners at least half the total investment. It also undertook to use the State to establish industries which private enterprise found beyond its capabilities for the time being. The Action Group aimed,

for the present, to arrest the tendency of our industrial activities being concentrated in the hands of foreigners, and, in the long run, to ensure that all major industrial activities are either vested in the state or in our fellow countrymen, as is now the case in Europe and America.<sup>42</sup>

One aim of Awolowo's social welfare programmes was to help the people to provide more support for Nigerian entrepreneurs. Wary of excessive reliance on foreign aid or loans, Awolowo advocated raising as much development capital as possible through taxation from those who presently produced — the farmers and workers. He demanded higher productivity, urging that all "leaders of opinion. . . should combine as a team to inculcate it in our workers that every moment they waste at work means so much pound, shilling or pence lost to the national income".<sup>43</sup> Farmers, to fund the development drive, would have to be freed from "their enslavement by ignorance and superstition", and cured of their "ante-deluvian", harmful methods, in order to produce more for export.<sup>44</sup> Much of the capital raised would then be put directly by the state towards the creation of industrial entrepreneurs.<sup>45</sup>

As Independence neared, constitutional debates were displaced by concern over how to protect future investment and development. Awolowo, in speeches aimed at prospective foreign investors, addressed these concerns. He assured his audience that Nigeria, with a stable constitution and strong democratic tradition, had a promising future. Earlier demands for Nigerian partnership with foreign capital were tempered. Not only did Nigeria need "the drive and energy of American businessman to start the wheels of industry turning"<sup>46</sup>, but foreign investors were promised various

incentives, including the right to full repatriation of profits and capital. Awolowo explicitly requested foreign aid and investment to preempt radical political movements in Nigeria and preserve the present pattern of prosperity for the benefit of investors and recipients alike.<sup>47</sup>

The nature of Awolowo's economic thought in the 1950s may not be altogether clear, but his claim to have been a budding socialist clearly needs some revision.<sup>48</sup> His primary concern was not to analyze or overcome social conflicts within Nigeria, but to solve the perceived conflict between Nigeria, as a whole, and colonial rule. His central purpose was to secure more political and economic control for Nigerians. The State was clearly to be active in this effort; nationalization could be used when necessary. The Welfare State ideal remained, but it seemed that the lot of workers and farmers had to be improved as much for their own sake as for the sake of national development. Awolowo's economic thought stood apart from other politicians not by being in solidarity with the underprivileged, but by criticizing the foreign borrowing that was in vogue and in voicing fears about mortgaging Nigeria's future to foreigners. Awolowo's position in these years was essentially like those of his political competitors: it promised "Life more Abundant" to all voters, but promised abundance to the middle classes above all.

When Awolowo lost his campaign for the 1959 Federal elections, he and the Action Group found themselves in an altered political context. Although they held power in the Western Region, a coalition between the NPC and the NCNC left them out of power at the centre. Unless the constitution was changed to remove the ability of the Northern Region to dominate the Federal Government, the Action Group's chances of controlling the centre were limited. Two responses to this problem developed within the Action Group. One, which came to be led by Western Region Premier Chief Akintola, sought to join the NPC and NCNC government coalition in some compromise that would win the Yoruba elite at least a portion of the "national cake". The other,

under the leadership of Awolowo, opted to seek more extensive control by altering the nature of political alignments within Nigeria.<sup>49</sup>

The possibility of new political alignments had arisen with the groundswell of popular discontent against the emergent political system of the First Republic. The abuse of power and privilege by the politicians and the men of matter who supported them had gone on long enough to alienate some of the majority who suffered bad government while they themselves realized few of the benefits of government patronage or the spoils of office. As early as 1959 the Nigerian Union of Unemployed People protested against all political parties for their lack of concern.<sup>50</sup> More formidable organizations, such as the Nigerian Youth Congress, the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party, and radical factions within the trade union movement, revealed that not only were many Nigerians unhappy with the status quo, they were also ready to organize against it.<sup>51</sup>

The Awolowo faction, in this situation, made a definite shift to the left, eventually shedding the Akintola faction. Why Awolowo chose this route is not exactly clear. Several good reasons have been suggested. He might have been attempting to undercut the power of Akintola, who as Western Region Premier had secured some of the influence and power within the Action Group which Awolowo had lost in his federal defeat.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, it was at least partly a tactical decision on behalf of the party – an attempt, through an alliance with the discontented masses, to organize an effective opposition in a political system heretofore dominated by the middle classes. Acting not as a party of the Yoruba, but as a party of all the poor and oppressed, the Action Group stood a chance of reordering the political game and winning power at the centre. It might also have been inspired by genuine socialist ideals, activated by recent experiences. This shift involved the rise of the party's left wing, which had long sought Awolowo's support for more radical policies.<sup>53</sup> The fact that from this time on Awolowo remained a self-

owed socialist also suggests that ideology played some part. In any case, as Sklar has pointed out, the motivations of tactic and ideology are not mutually exclusive.<sup>54</sup> Whatever the reason for this shift, the important point for this study is to recognize that Awolowo the democratic socialist did not betray his earlier political *persona*.

Awolowo acquired a more radical appearance partly through rhetoric and symbol. He visited Nkrumah in Ghana in 1961, and reversed some of his earlier positions on Pan-Africanism.<sup>55</sup> On the domestic front, he came out with an "Eight Point Programme" in 1960, calling for reduction of various duties that weighed on the common man, increased taxes against the privileged, and nationalization of the insurance industry. Such measures would insure a more equitable distribution of the national wealth, while a "high powered planning commission" would oversee the development effort.<sup>56</sup> The overall aim was "to close, so far as it lies within our power and is compatible with socialist ideals, the yawning gap between the haves and the havenots" through a "dual operation of levelling down and levelling up." This would bring the "speedy abolition of disease, ignorance and want", and introduce a "new era of abundance for all."<sup>57</sup>

As the internal war against the Akintola faction intensified, this radical tone deepened. Nationalization became more prominent. In 1961 Awolowo described it as "the cornerstone, and an indispensable tool of . . . socialism." Basic industrial and commercial concerns were to be placed under state control; foreign investors were to be warned that in the long term they would be bought out, albeit with full fair compensation. Through nationalization planning, and more equitable taxation, his socialist regime would see "that each citizen gives according to his ability and receives according to his need."<sup>58</sup>

Awolowo was accused of approaching communism for advocating such extensive nationalization. The Federal Minister of Finance also warned that "new talk of further

nationalization can only frighten off those who wish to invest in Nigeria."<sup>59</sup> But this leftwards shift is not all it seems to be. Awolowo was not in the socialist vanguard. The NCNC had talked of socialism since the early 1950s, and it officially adopted a programme of "pragmatic socialism" at its January 1962 convention. Both the United Progressive Grand Alliance, and the Nigerian National Alliance, led by the conservative Northern Peoples' Congress, used the "magic word" in their 1964 campaigns.<sup>60</sup> A January 1963 survey of Members of the Federal House of Representatives revealed that a large majority admired the Soviet economic model, and thought Nigeria could learn from it.<sup>61</sup> Although Awolowo may have had a clearer idea of what he meant by socialism than some of his peers, his programme was still far milder than the 1961 proposals of the Nigerian Youth Congress or the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxes offered by the Socialist Farmers and Workers Party in 1964.<sup>62</sup>

The content was set in terms of compromise rather than conversion, and remained moderate. Awolowo proposed a middle road between the evils of capitalism and communism, combining only the good elements of both. If the state was to secure

the greatest good of the greatest number, then the forces of supply and demand must not be left to operate unfettered as under the capitalist system, nor must the forces be subjected to arbitrary and inhuman control, as under the communist system.<sup>63</sup>

Rather, economic forces must be tamed through such means as antimonopoly laws, trade union legislation, and graduated taxation. "Democratic socialism" was defined as

an economic system which recognizes, as a matter of fundamental principles, the liberty and dignity of the individual, his economic well-being and brotherhood

*[The text on this page is extremely blurry and illegible. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly containing names and dates, but the specific content cannot be discerned.]*

Committee of Friends maintained the core of the Action Group organization; when the electoral race re-opened in 1978, Awolowo and his Unity Party of Nigeria were first out of the gate, using Awolowo's writings as the basis of their programme.<sup>69</sup> These books can be seen as a continuation of Awolowo's earlier career. They were written to attract political support, and they made this appeal on largely the same grounds, if in a more elaborate, more explicitly socialist form.

The programme is presented as a democratic socialist one. At times, this claim does seem to ring true. Capitalism is roundly condemned as an economic system whose "postulates... are false and untenable"<sup>70</sup>, a system in which

it is only the few that flourish at the expense of the many. It is a system which legalizes stealing and thieving by cunning and tradition, and also permits recovery by the same methods. It is a system which puts a premium on the worst vices of man, and discriminates against the best virtues.<sup>71</sup>

It is plainly stated that, for Nigeria as for Africa in general, "socialism is to be preferred to capitalism".<sup>72</sup> Largely because it thrives on human vices such as greed, Awolowo asserts that capitalism is inevitably destined to be replaced by socialism anyway.<sup>73</sup>

Awolowo also challenges the legitimacy of such basic tenets of the capitalist system as private property. Because society as a whole combines to create the means of production, he argues, "it is a fraud on society at large, and in particular on those who have directly combined to produce them, to leave the means of production in private hands as private property."<sup>74</sup> Because private property is unjust, to obtain "social justice for all", "the only means . . . is the nationalization, public ownership, or socialization of the means of production, exchange and distribution."<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the socialism Awolowo advocates seems to be far-reaching in nature.

...the aims of socialism are social justice and a state of affairs in which the resources of the Nation belong to all the citizens equally, and the fruits of the union of land and labour are appropriated to all of all gradations and skills through the payment of good wages, respectable standards of living, full employment, free provision of social amenities, education, health, etc.

...objectives may be stated in more concrete terms. (i) the abolition of rent, dividend or profit, interest and inheritance; (ii) the legal elimination of the rich class and (iii) the recognition that all the able-bodied citizens of the State are workers of various gradations and skills, and ...are entitled to remunerations only in the forms of salaries or wages of various scales.<sup>76</sup>

This seems to be a socialist programme that demands the common ownership of the means of production, the abolition not only of *rentiers* and capitalists, but also of private property, the levelling of all citizens into wage earners, and guaranteed minimum standards of living for all. When examined more critically, however, Awolowo's elaborated socialism is in fact very limited in its intentions and in its new departures.

First, Awolowo creates a particular picture of capitalism to attack. He thoroughly criticizes some of its theoretical premises and faults, stressing the arbitrary nature of its rewards, its planlessness, recurrent crises, and ability to exploit. But he then carries this characterization almost to the point of caricature, reducing capitalism to a global conspiracy of evil men.

In all their nefarious activities, the capitalists are formidable. There are only a few of them in the entire world... they are able to maintain a close and well-knit cabal which can operate with swift, concerted, and satanic efficiency against dissenting governments and individuals.<sup>77</sup>

He suggests that perhaps sixty families control the economies of the United States and Western Europe. Democratic governments have little power over these capitalists, rather "governments exist only to act as umpires for the capitalist cannibals in their cut-throat duels."<sup>78</sup> By portraying modern capitalism as profoundly evil, Awolowo can dismiss any hope of its reform, and make even a very mild sort of socialism appear attractive by contrast. This definition of capitalism also allows him to claim that it does not really exist in Nigeria, at least not as a force the democratic power of the people need fear.<sup>79</sup>

More importantly, the apparently strong socialist statements extracted above are qualified, and sometimes contradicted, in other passages. He evicts private property from his system, for example, only to enshrine the "right to property, and to protection of property against confiscation or acquisition without compensation" in his proposed constitution.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Awolowo's abolition of the *rentier* class is, when fully understood, more aptly described in another passage as a "rationalization of remuneration". He proposes to place a ceiling on private incomes and salaries, and to limit personal wealth to what one earns through labour. "Unearned" income, such as inheritance, rent and dividends, will be taxed away until the *rentier* class disappears through attrition.<sup>81</sup> But this will not mean the end of the capitalist class, because labour, in Awolowo's definition, includes the activities of certain capitalists: "it is clear that the only agent of production which deserves to be given incentive is labour; that is, labour of various gradations and skills, including the so-called entrepreneur."<sup>82</sup> Social justice demands

the just and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth amongst those factors which have made positive, necessary, and effective contributions to its production. And such factors are labour and entrepreneurship, which are two species of the same phenomenon.<sup>83</sup>

Awolowo sees great virtue in hard work, and would like to see the return of the entrepreneur of old times, "the enterprising man who combined initiation and co-ordination of productive activities with ownership of capital." The targets of his policy here are only those "idle absentee capitalists"<sup>84</sup> who grow rich by using the entrepreneurial skills of others.

Nationalization, declared to be essential to socialism, will also be only a gradual achievement. It must be preceded, or at least accompanied, by processes of "Nigerianization" and "rationalization." Those who will eventually be expropriated will receive full compensation. When it is complete, it is not clear how extensive it will be. It seems that small landlords will be permitted, and that many wholesale, retail and small manufacturing concerns will remain in the hands of private entrepreneurs. Further, those in "infrastructural occupations", including not only professionals such as doctors and lawyers, but local government officials, publishers and civil servants, would be left more or less on their own.

Except in so far as they are voluntarily or compulsorily brought or impressed into government services and public enterprises, and contractually employed in private enterprises and services, those in these occupations would be left free to pursue their own professions and vocations, subject to such laws as may, from time to time, be made for the regulation of their activities and earnings, and to ensure that what they do is in the best interests of our economy and peoples.<sup>85</sup>

Awolowo defines socialist justice in a way which accommodates his defense of private property, protection of professionals, and praise of entrepreneurs. It calls for an "equitable distribution of wealth",<sup>86</sup> not an equal one, because all men are not created equal. "Socialism recognizes difference in innate talents or latent ability. It never claimed equality of talents for all men, nor has it ever demanded that it is possible to make all men equal as to their respective abilities."<sup>87</sup> The aim of socialism is not to make men equal.

but to create an environment in which all men have an equal chance to make good of themselves. Socialist justice consists in setting certain upper and lower limits in the distribution of wealth, and allowing individuals to fall between them where they will. Under socialism,

since each member of society is going to benefit from the resultant development according to . . . his contribution to the social pool, it is essential that he should have equal opportunity like his fellows to make the utmost contribution which his ability allows.<sup>88</sup>

The "goal of socialism is to create equal opportunity for everybody"; the motto is "from each according to his ability and to each according to his deed."<sup>89</sup>

We can see that this is an odd variety of socialism. It defends private property, even in the hands of entrepreneurs. Defined as equality of opportunity, it suggests the ideals of the free market as much as those of socialism. Examination of Awolowo's views of African history, and especially his treatment of the idea of class struggle in Africa, reveals how deeply Awolowo's economic thought is affected by his commitment to these and other liberal ideals.

Awolowo uses his theory of history to explain how socialism is not only inevitable, but also destined to arrive with a minimum of disruption. He proposes his own "dialectic", as an improvement on those of Plato, Hegel and Marx, asserting that ideas determine the process of history. Through a dialectic progression, the "universal mind" effects change in the material world, and promotes the triumph of good over evil. A person's good thought or actions can accelerate this process:

whatever thought we hold dear, entertain, and cherish will manifest itself in concrete forms whether we like it or not. The fundamental law is that thought is the cause, and the material world is only an effect. If we persistently think and cherish good thoughts, good will result; if evil, evil will result.<sup>90</sup>

However, evil thoughts or actions can only temporarily obstruct the action of the universal law; in the end it will have its way. Socialism, based on the ideal of love, must arrive; capitalism, and its greedy advocates, must depart.<sup>91</sup>

The universal mind can be absolutely trusted to play its part: it will, by processes which no human mind can possibly conceive, fructify all good plans, and actualize evil ones for the discomfiture or ruin of their authors.<sup>92</sup>

Not only is the triumph of socialism assured, once established it will be permanently ensconced.

Those who oppose it and in their opposition adopt the methods of violence, fraud, bitterness or destruction will only find themselves in unequal combat with the transcendental and insuperable forces of the universal mind working for the elimination of all that is evil, under the influence of the dialectic thoughts and actions of true and dedicated socialists.<sup>93</sup>

Awolowo's views on class relations also deny the need for much struggle or disruption in the transition to socialism. In this overview of the African past, Awolowo does assert that "class struggle and class hatred" have existed from very early times, and that the antagonisms between the dominant minority and the "oppressed" majority even intensified through the colonial period.<sup>94</sup> But when it comes to analysing Nigerian class relations in the years after decolonization, Awolowo discerns neither class conflict nor any inherent evils in the present ruling class. His summary of the faults of the rulers of independent Nigeria identifies only their poor attitudes and ethics: they have pursued the wrong priorities, lacked insight, sought permanent personal power, and abused the State in this search. But, "above all, and this is the crux of the matter, they have never really made enough effort to discern and reach the heart, the core and the roots of the four problems adumbrated above."<sup>95</sup> Never mention-

ing the need to find new leaders from a different class, Awolowo asserts that the objectives of socialism "will be obtained only if Nigerian political leaders possess and hold, respectively, certain attributes and attitudes of mind, and guide and lead the entire masses of their people [sic] to cultivate, or at least to strive perseveringly to cultivate them."<sup>96</sup> "Patriotism", "altruism", "love", discipline, hardwork and self-confidence, Awolowo implies, are the secrets to socialist success.<sup>97</sup>

Awolowo builds a philosophical system in which socialism – the realization of all that is good – is inevitable. Opposition to socialism is not determined by class, but by one's attitudes. Thus the advent of socialism does not require the removal of the present ruling class, but only a new mental orientation of leaders and followers. Leaders with the right attitudes, supported by masses of similar virtue, need only a well-composed democratic constitution, which can put their good intentions into effect, to bring about socialism.<sup>98</sup>

Buttressed by this theoretical structure, Awolowo goes on to emphatically deny both that capitalists threaten Nigeria, and that the advent of socialism must be accompanied by the class violence against the ruling middle class predicted by Marx.

For the time being, Black Africa has no emperors, no absolute monarchs, no opulent aristocrats, no big land-owners, no war lords and no capitalists with vast financial empires, whose positions, wealth and excessive acts can provoke the extremities of violent reaction from the masses of the people, and who will fight to the last ditch to defend those positions and wealth. Not only do we not have such men now; they are not even likely to emerge in the near future.....

For Africa, therefore, socialism can be introduced by democratic processes and the excesses of the budding African capitalists as well as the social control of the means of production can respectively be checked and brought about by laws enacted by the people's elected parliaments.<sup>99</sup>

The new order, based on moderate reforms, achieved by gradual stages, led by the established rulers, and defending many existing middle class privileges, will be, indeed, very much like the old.

The affinity between the present order and the socialist order Awolowo proposes arises from the strong continuities that run through his intellectual and political career. Awolowo began his career as a nationalist member of the emergent middle class; his socialist ideas are very much imbued by these beginnings.

Democratic government was a necessary condition of freedom and development for Nigerian nationalists; it is also necessary for Awolowo's socialism. Socialism is safe only if democracy is secure. Nigerianization — another nationalist war cry — is presented as a prerequisite for nationalization. Patriotism is listed as one of the socialist attributes of mind. We have seen how Awolowo incorporated into his early thought the nationalist myth that the nation as a whole is posed against external enemies. This sacrosanct nation persists in his socialist doctrine, in his dismissal of class conflict within Nigeria, and in the faith that all Nigerians will approach socialism together. Moreover, the "articulate minority" who led the nationalist struggle, such as Awolowo himself, will also be qualified to lead Nigerians into their socialist republic.

The nationalists had two basic quests: to take control of Nigerian affairs out of imperial hands, and to pursue rapid national development under their own leadership. The promise of controlling forces which had long been beyond the influence of Nigerians makes socialism attractive to Awolowo.

In the infant and primitive days of *homo sapiens*, ignorance of the economic forces at work, and of the mechanics of controlling them and making them serve human progress and happiness, is excusable. At this point in time, however, such ignorance is not only inexcusable but also damnable in the extreme. For by the use of the appropriate scientific tools we can analyse these forces and understand them and by so doing, discover the most effective way of controlling and directing these forces for our good and benefits. [sic] <sup>100</sup>

For Awolowo, socialism is less a revolutionary doctrine than a means of understanding and controlling the development process.

What is socialism? Socialism is a normative social science. It is in the same category as ethnics. But whilst the latter seeks to set the standards for human conduct, socialism seeks to establish the standards for economic behaviour and social objectives. It is, in a very important respect, unlike the science of economics which studies the forces at work in any society and in the world at large.... Socialism, as a normative science, also studies these forces, but goes much further. It sets the standards of human ends which economic forces must serve, and prescribes the methods by which these forces may be controlled, directed, and channelled for the attainment of the ends in view.<sup>101</sup>

Socialism, in short, is largely an extension of Awolowo's original nationalist concerns.

The socialist elements of Awolowo's economic thought have been adopted partly to serve political purposes. Awolowo made his programme more attractive by assuring his readers that he had arrived at the truths of politics and economics.<sup>102</sup> Socialist ideas such as economic planning and nationalization became orthodoxies that no politician could afford to ignore. The promises of social justice, guaranteed welfare, just rewards, for labour and equality of opportunity had obvious value in election campaigns especially when similar promises were being made by most other political competitors.<sup>103</sup> Some of the ambiguities and contradictions which abound in Awolowo's socialist programme can thus be attributed to the need to make it appeal to various audiences and classes. But the source of these flaws lies in Awolowo's continuing commitment to the interests of the Nigerian middle classes.

Awolowo rose in the 1950s as a leader of the Yoruba educated and business elite, leading their push to control the state and widen the scope of their economic opportunities. His earlier ambition – to empower Nigerian entrepreneurs against their competition through cooperative

methods – was now pursued through the more powerful agency of the State, within the ideology of planned development. He hoped to raise Nigerians within the national economy and the State, to give them economic power to match their status of political independence. In the political context of the First Republic, and under the constitutional requirements of the Second, Awolowo was obliged to try to widen the appeal of his economic programme. His socialist programme aims at raising the general welfare by establishing State control over economic forces. But the concern for the general welfare, while no doubt genuine, is subordinated to the interests of the property owning, entrepreneurial and professional middle classes. By defining socialism as equality of opportunity, insisting on a system of distribution according to deed, and defending the virtues of entrepreneurs, Awolowo perpetuates social inequalities for the sake of maintaining a dynamic, competitive economy in which the productivity of workers and owners will be encouraged and rewarded.

Awolowo's policies have been intended to provide some aid to workers and farmers. They have also worked to the advantage of those contractors, directors of public corporations and other members of the middle class who live by manipulation of the state and political power. The Unity Party had such members and supporters, just as the Action Group had.<sup>104</sup> But Awolowo's early reluctance to rely too heavily on foreign capital, his praise and protection of entrepreneurs, and his clear programme for abolishing the *rentier* class, all suggest that Awolowo would not identify himself with these interests.<sup>105</sup> His true heroes are not these non-productive, parasitic members of the present ruling class, but rather the same colition of classes which formed the core of the Action Group's support in the 1950s. The heart of Awolowo's economic thought, under whichever rubric one chooses to place it, has consistently sought to advance the interests of the truly entrepreneurial middle classes and their colleagues in the professions. It is these groups which

hold for Awolowo the promise of creating in Nigeria a modern, orderly, industrially productive, capitalist welfare state, and of securing for Nigerians some control over their own economy.

#### AFTERWORD

After the publication of *The Problems of Africa* in 1977, Awolowo reversed his policy on nationalization. Disillusioned by the abuse of state power in the Second Republic and by the way state corporations have squandered the gains of the oil boom, Awolowo decided that public ownership is best avoided, at least for the time being. "Experience has taught me", he argued, "that it is unwise for government to go into business enterprises. It is an avenue for stealing."<sup>106</sup> It is not clear when or if Awolowo would have again supported nationalization. Socialism remained his eventual goal, but he also cited the lack of vested personal interest as one reason why public employees are so inefficient and wasteful. For the present, Awolowo wanted initiative placed back in private hands as the most effective means of building Nigeria's productive capacity.<sup>107</sup>

This reversal nicely reveals the relationship between Awolowo's socialism and the heart of his economic thought. When it became apparent that nationalization was not going to achieve the ends desired, Awolowo reverted to welcoming foreign investment and involvement while continuing to pursue the development of the Nigerian capitalist class. Thus, in the 1978 presidential campaign, Awolowo endorsed an economic policy that might have been his in the 1950s:

We wholeheartedly support the objectives of the indigenization of the national economy. We shall evolve policies that will aid Nigerian entrepreneurs to feel more confident about investing their resources and energies in the area of industrialization. But we will also actively encourage foreign capital investment in those areas of industrialization which immediately require the more sophisticated production processes, and managerial and technical skills.<sup>108</sup>

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17. See his recommendation along these lines in *ibid.*, pp. 12-13; also his account of the protest against the palm kernel ban in 1940, *Awo*, pp. 128-31. In this same way, Awolowo saw no problem equating his Motor Transport Union's 1937 strike against the threat posed to their business by the 'double licence fee' to a battle for the general welfare of Nigeria. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
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71. *Ibid.*, p. xii., also p. 172
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73. *People's Republic*, pp. 188-9.
74. *Problems of Africa*, p. 63
75. *Strategy and Tactics*, p. 36.
76. *People's Republic*, p. 192-3. Awolowo covers the basics of his socialist programme in pp. 190-200.
77. *Problems of Africa*, p. 59.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-60, 65; *People's Republic*, pp. 166-180. See "Approach to the Economic Problem of Nigeria."
- 80 *Strategy and Tactics*, pp. 66, also pp. 36,46. Awolowo mentions in passing that in the People's Republic the right to form a private company and reap the profits of it would be protected by the constitution. *People's Republic*, p. 272. In another passage criticizing capitalism Awolowo remarks that the right to private property is "fair and unexceptionable. If a man works hard

to produce certain goods, he surely should have the right to keep them as his own." What he objects to is the way in which private property is governed under capitalism. *Problems of Africa*, pp. 57-9.

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85 *Strategy and Tactics*, p. 46; see p. 36-46 for the scope of his nationalization programme.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

87 *Problems of Africa*, p. 46.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Interview with Zachernuk, section iv, p. 3; *Problems of Africa*, p. 63. In *The People's Republic*, p. 192, Awolowo gives this motto as "From each according to ability and to each according to his deed or need as the case may be met; deeds will determine rewards beyond that.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 187.

91 See *Ibid.*, pp. 186-9 for Awolowo's concepts of the "dialectic" and the "universal mind".

92 *Ibid.*, p. 197.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 200.

94 *Problems of Africa*, pp. 10-15; *Strategy and Tactics*, pp. 25-30.

95 *Problems of Africa*, p. 51, see pp. 35-51.

96 *Strategy and Tactics*, p. 95. Awolowo carries this idea of the attitudinal basis of socialism farther. The concept of "mental magnitude" argues that better health and happiness will arise from a suppression of the "negative emotions" and reinforcement of the positive ones. Practising "mental magnitude" will make socialism easier to attain and socialism will make "mental magnitude" easier to sustain. See *People's Republic*, pp. 211-31.

97 *Strategy and Tactics*, pp. 96-8.

- 98 The nature of democracy, and of the Nigerian constitution, have of course been central concerns of Awolowo which I have not dealt with here. Democratic government for Awolowo is analogous to socialism in being the only political system in accord with the intention of the universal mind. If faithfully upheld, it will ensure a just social order. See *People's Republic*, pp. 75-118, 254-94; Ogunmodede, *Socio-Political Philosophy*, pp. 105-67.
- 99 *Problems of Africa*, p. 65.
- 100 *People's Republic*, p. 181.
- 101 *Ibid.*, pp. 190-1.
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. vii-viii.
- 103 As in the 1950s, the main political parties of the Second Republic offered few ideological alternatives. Most observers also agree that Awolowo's UPN was if anything closer to the centre than the People's Redemption Party. Falola and Ihonvbere, *Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic*, pp. 49-75; Dudley, "The Nigerian elections of 1979", Ladun Anise, "Political Parties and Election Manifestos", in Odediran, ed., *The Nigerian 1979 Elections*, pp. 87-9.
- 104 Falola and Ihonvbere, *Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic*, p. 56.
- 105 As Mackintosh notes of Awolowo before 1962, he "fell into no clear ideological category", but "his radicalism was a personal objection to high living and incompetence among second rate politicians who did nothing in return." *Nigerian Government and Politics*, p. 443.
- 106 *Guardian* (Lagos), 27 June, 1987. Ogunmodede discusses the reasons for Awolowo's reversal in *Socio-Political Philosophy*, pp. 233-4, and, based on a 1984 interview with him, locates the shift "between 1978 and 1979".
- 107 Interview with Zachernuk, section iv, pp. 9-10.
- 108 *Daily Times*, 22 September, 1978, quoted in Falola and Ihonvbere, *Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic*, p. 56.

# **From a Bourgeois to Social Democrat: A Study in the Evolution of Awolowo's Concept of Ideology**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In marked contrast to other political actors that had at one time or the other been at the helm of affairs in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Awolowo is regarded by many as the most controversial, most coherent, most articulate and most progressive political strategist and ideologue the nation has ever produced. His bluntness, his willingness to approach any issue however delicate, his ability to present a head-on assault on issues which many leaders prefer to rail against rather than to solve, and above all, his courage, perseverance and endurance to rise despite many disappointments that would have crushed lesser human beings; (all these attributes) endeared him to millions of his teeming supporters and avowed followers, and at the same time, earned him the enmity and envy of his political adversaries.

As the first Premier of the Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Awolowo left behind an impressive record of achievements, unequalled by any other region in the Federation. Among these were the successful programme of free primary education, the expanding medical programme including free medical care for children under eighteen years of age, the extensive programme of loans to farmers and entrepreneurs, the steady Nigerianization of the senior civil service, and the introduction of a five shillings per day minimum wage (at a time when other regions paid two shillings and six pence) for

employers of the region as early as 1954.<sup>2</sup> Although Chief Awolowo was never a revolutionary-socialist of the Marxist-Leninist typology, in a milieu where his contemporaries and political adversaries shied away from any firm ideological commitment, he made his mark as a welfarist, liberal-reformer and a social-democrat.

The ideological conviction was, however, arrived at by Chief Awolowo, after a long, tortuous and gradual evolutionary process. Having started life from humble beginnings, by dint of hard work and perseverance, Awo became a petty-bourgeois. After having amassed a good fortune he metamorphosed into a multimillionaire bourgeois. Ideologically, from a pro-west, arch-capitalist and anti-communist position, he evolved into a welfarist, liberal-reformer and social democrat. He preached equality of opportunities for all, irrespective of one's position in life and tried to raise the living standard of the workers and down-trodden. This contradiction in Awo's ideological position has caused many to raise an eyebrow as to why a multi-millionaire should defend the workers' interests and preach socialism. What did he stand to gain? Was he out to deceive the masses or to preserve the status-quo by maintaining the exploitation of the masses? It has been alleged that social-democrats are the most dangerous enemies of the exploited class, since they only reform the situation but do not change it.

It is therefore the *raison d'être* of this scholarship to trace the evolution of Awo's concept of ideology, to show if his "volte-face" from a pro-west, anti-socialist, arch-capitalist ideological position to a social-democrat was genuinely motivated, and to attempt to locate and place him in his rightful ideological perspective in the Nigerian and world Marxian school of ideological socialist thoughts.

### The Non-Issues

In all societies, ideology or political culture is an amalgam of traditional, often sub-conscious, influences and deliberate indoctrination of the masses by dominant class and institu-

tions. In the "American Dilemma", the author, Gunnar Myrdal was able to identify an "American Creed", which included those democratic (read, capitalist - C.A.A.) principles inculcated by the schools, the churches, the mass-media and other institutions, as well as those traditions transmitted from generation to generation. Similar deliberate traditional amalgam and indoctrination have also been detected in other modern societies.

But, unfortunately, the reverse has been the case here in Nigeria. One interesting feature of post-independence political development in Nigeria has been the conscious or subconscious attempts on the part of the ruling elite both the civilian politicians and their counterparts in military uniforms - to shy away from promulgating any clear-cut, positive and all-embracing ideology. It is on record that the first Prime Minister, the Late Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa swore to prevent the infiltration of communism or communistic ideology into the country.<sup>3</sup> Military rulers like late General Murtala Mohammed and the incumbent General Ibrahim Babangida had also shown their dislike for the adoption or adaptation of any clear-cut ideology for the nation,<sup>4</sup> despite their adherence and preference for "mixed-economy", "privatization" and "commercialization" of Nigeria's economic activities. But, one thing is certain. Despite the talk about "neutrality" in the East-west ideological struggles, the Nigeria ruling elite has been operating as a junior in the metropole-periphery, patron-client, master-servant relationship with the developed western capitalist nations. Nigerian leaders have been subservient to the international monopoly and Western imperialism.

However, it is on record that late Chief Awolowo in his numerous works was very consistent and coherent in formulating a socialist ideology for Nigeria. From his *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947), to his *Adventures in Power* (1985), he has dealt in one way or the other with the question of ideology.<sup>5</sup> Whether he practised what he preached was a different matter, but, the fact remains that he had been very consistent

and firm in his ideological postures.

At this state it is pertinent to digress and take a look at the word "ideology". Why has that word been so much debased, feared and despised? The English political dictionary defines ideology simply as "a systematic body of ideas"<sup>6</sup> But that concept is largely descriptive and inadequate for our purpose for it plays no significant analytic role. The concept ideology in its modern meaning, originated with that group of savants in the French Revolution who were entrusted by the convention of 1795 with the founding of a new centre of Revolutionary thought<sup>4</sup>. Ever since that time, the term ideology has passed<sup>3</sup> through many evolutionary stages. Professor Armstrong contends that ideology is a "systematic, indeed a scientific, doctrine capable of guiding the process of human transformation."<sup>7</sup> It is also a "systematic body of concepts, especially about human life or culture. It includes a way of life and thinking characteristic of an individual or a group of individuals on particular aspects of class relation."<sup>8</sup> Ideology is also a School of thought engaged in the task of "elaborating and advocating conceptions of the good life, and of describing the forms and social action and organization necessary for their achievement."<sup>9</sup> At this juncture, it is pertinent to bear in mind that after the success of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in - 1971, the world was polarized into two contending socio-economic and political ideologies, viz-a-viz, capitalist, or Western bloc, and socialist, or the Eastern bloc. Whatever one might say to the contrary, these two systems (ideologies) have come to dominate the world. Any other "ism" is a by-product of one or the other of both schools of thought. In conclusion, it can be reasonably said that the purpose of all ideology, seeks not merely to influence a limited range of political behaviour, but to remake the entire society. While all socialists are agreed that the major objective of an all-embracing ideology is to remake the world, they differ on how to achieve this objective. Those who favour a gradualist, reformist, evolutionary process are the social-democrats.

## THE REAL ISSUES

The main concern in this section is to focus attention on some objective and subjective factors of colonial rule which shaped the world outlook of Chief Awolowo and the Nigerian ruling elite and to show that their ideological orientation in favour of the so-called capitalist "free-enterprise", "open-door" economic policies and anti-socialist values had a long history and were compounded out of several factors.

Firstly, there was that long colonial experience, during which everything that mattered in the life of the country, namely, education, government, patterns of trade, money and banking etc., was exclusively British oriented. Also during this period, Nigeria's only link with the outside world was via Britain and she was insulated from the rest of the world, especially from the "dangerous bolshevism" of the USSR that by its successful experiment in socialist ideology was a 'threat' to the 'stability' of the colonial system.

Furthermore, the British Colonial Administration threw round Nigeria a "cordon-sanitaire" as a result of which the only political ideology, apart from the traditional values to which politically conscious Nigerians were exposed was British with its "parliamentary democracy" and "free-enterprise" values. Another important ideological factor that helped to shape the values of Awo and others was the vigorous anti-communist offensive mounted by the colonial authorities in the 1950's. Dr Osoba has cited an instance when in 1955 an order signed by one Mr. Muir banned a total of thirty-three books, pamphlets, and other publications feared to carry communist propaganda.<sup>10</sup>

The British colonialists, having exacerbated by their divide and rule policy in the country - the major ethno-regional dichotomy and acute socio-economic disparities, made sure that before departure they achieved the crystallization of their own interests and the class interest of the newly emergent elite. They made sure they saddled in the corridors of power, leaders (Awo, Azikiwe, Balewa, Ahmadu Bello etc) who accepted the capitalist ideology and were anti-socialist

in orientation. This corroborates the assertion of the American scholars that "values and interests determine what ruling groups wish to accomplish and also how they may accomplish it".<sup>11</sup> In one word, there was a convergence of values and interests between the departing colonial rulers and the newly emergent Nigerian ruling elite. In this way, as Dr. Osoba has rightly said "a pro-western, pro-capitalist and anti-socialist ideology inspired by the departing colonialists became the colossal myth used to gloss over all the ugly contradictions"<sup>12</sup> in Nigeria's politico-ideological struggles.

#### AWO, THE BOURGEOIS: FORMATIVE YEARS

From the foregoing, it is evident that one of the lasting legacies of colonial tutelage had been the profound imposition on Awo, and the newly emergent Nigerian ruling elite, of Western values and ideals. Furthermore, of profound interest in the Nigerian political evolution has been the attitudes of the ruling elite towards property and towards wealth individually acquired, and the relationship between wealth and political power. The acquisition of wealth was a guarantee of an upward mobility in the hierarchy of power and influence.

This 'home-truth' was not lost on the young Awo. Because of his humble background, he was obsessed with amassing wealth. His autobiography, *Awo*, written in 1960 provides a most readable account of his poor background and deprived beginnings. He was born at Ikenne, Ijebu Remo Division in 1909 into a well to do family. Awo descended from an illustrious and noble ancestry. His father, an ardent Christian, was a farmer, a sawyer of moderate means and an employer of labour.<sup>13</sup> However, the early death of his father when he was only eleven became handicap to the young and ambitious Awo.

In his formative years, Awo had to undertake several business ventures. He engaged in money-lending, a usurious undertaking, public letter-writing, taxi-proprietorship, produce (cocoa, cotton, palm-kernels) buying and motor transport business.<sup>14</sup> He was also Secretary of the Nigerian

Motor Transport Union and an influential member of other important Associations, namely, the Nigerian Produce Traders' Association, the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria, and the Nigerian Youth Movement of which he served as the Provincial Secretary for Western Region.<sup>15</sup> Later he became a Food Contractor for the Army and there he got the wherewithal to finance his legal training in England after efforts to secure a £1400 loan from business magnate, Chief Adeola Odutola proved futile.

In between, young Awo knew penury, hunger and unemployment. He understood that upward mobility in the society could only be achieved by a correlation between the individual acquisition of wealth and the exercise of legitimate political power. He therefore set himself the task of first seeking the former, i.e. amassing wealth and thereafter to achieve the latter, i.e. political power.

In a letter addressed to his mentor and great friend, Late Mr. Ernest Ikoli, Awo wrote that he was going "to make all the money that is possible to make in Nigeria", and "to acquire a profession". After getting this profession he added prophetically, "I should like to make more money. That may take another five years. Then I shall start a new offensive."<sup>16</sup> In his formative years, Awo accepted the myth and world view of colonial rule as tutelage and an instrument of development. In his path to Nigerian freedom, he said that: "the educated minority in each ethnical group are the people who are qualified by natural rights to lead their fellow nationals into higher political development. Unless they desire a change it would be futile to impose it upon their group."<sup>17</sup> Although Awo was critical of some aspects of British Colonial policies, like other nationalists he accepted the 'status-quo' and the form of government laid down by the British for Nigeria. According to his autobiography, "all that the nationalists downward had been doing was to fit themselves into the framework."<sup>18</sup>

In the East-West ideological struggles, Awo pitched his tent closely with the capitalist West. A century of British Colon-

ial tutelage, propaganda and brainwashing was not without any effect on the Nigerian nationalist leader. In one of his innumerable speeches on this theme, Awo opined that:

"We have declared repeatedly that after independence Nigeria will remain a member of the Commonwealth of Nations..... The point on which there is divergence of opinion among Nigerian leaders is the nature of the tie and friendship which we would like to see subsist between Nigeria and Britain. In my considered opinion, a realistic policy for Nigeria should be governed by a close and conscientious friendship with Britain. The sort of relationship which I want to see exist between Britain and Nigeria is the kind that exists between Britain on the one hand and the countries of Canada, Australia and New Zealand on the other. It is a relationship among sister-nations. <sup>19</sup>

In the ideological context, Awo maintained the following rigid position vis-a-vis the two dominant world ideologies.

There are two distinct ideological camps in the world today: the western democracies and the communist bloc.... The preference is unhesitatingly and unequivocally for the Western democracies...." "In the present world context, when atheistic materialism is threatening to destroy or stifle all that is best and noblest in man, neutrality in international affairs, whether passive, positive or independent, is an unmitigated disservice to humanity. <sup>20</sup>

In a nutshell, Awo's utterances and statements showed that essentially colonial and dependence consciousness informed his thought process and ideological position. He was committed to the colonially derived and popularized capitalist conceptual and ideological framework. He had amassed considerable wealth and he was bent on defending the status-quo. Whatever might be said to the contrary, Awo arrived on the Nigerian politico-ideological scene a bourgeois and he belonged to the pro-capitalist ideological camp.

## AWO IN THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL SETTING

In *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Awolowo put forth the view that Nigeria was "a geographical expression", including within its boundaries various cultural-linguistic nationalities, each of which consisted of tribes and clans. He maintained that each nationality group has its own indigenous constitutions, which under alien rule, were abused and perverted to the detriment of public welfare and peaceful social progress. To the idea that every national group has its indigenous constitution that had been corrupted under colonial rule, Awolowo added the dictum that the constitution of each cultural nationality should be its own "domestic concern." Every such nationality is entitled and should be encouraged to develop its own political institutions within the framework of a Nigerian Federation.

Awolowo's thesis found favour in Youth Movement Circles and among other members of the Yoruba intelligentsia who were anxious to check the spread of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Hence in 1945 Chief Obafemi Awolowo and several other students in London in 1945 established the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa - the mythical progenitor and cultural hero of the Yorubas. Its aim was: "to infuse solidarity into the disjointed tribes that constitute the Yoruba ethnic group, to raise their morale, to rehabilitate their self-respect, and to imbue them with the confidence that they are an important factor in the forging of the federal unity of Nigeria."<sup>21</sup> The *Egbe* was an alliance between the traditional aristocratic elite, and the new Western-educated bourgeoisie. It was from this pan-ethnic organization that Awolowo founded the Action Group of Nigeria (AG), a political party, to contest the 1951 elections that was then to be organized on a semi-democratic basis.

At this stage, pragmatic, rather than ideological considerations predicated Awolowo's moves. Since his aims were to counter external influence, infuse solidarity in the Yoruba

and win the 1951 elections, he needed the organizational structure of the *Egbe* for a mass base, the financial support of the eminent Yoruba and also the blessing of the Chiefs. Awolowo was of the opinion that while most of the illiterate masses detest the person of some individual chiefs, chieftancy was of incalculable sentimental value for the masses, who will still have superstitious respect for the institutions which the chiefs represent. This being so, Awolowo opined, "it is imperative as a matter of practical politics, that we use the most effective means ready to hand for organizing masses for rapid political advancement."<sup>22</sup>

One of the declared aims of the AG at its inception was. . . "to create an atmosphere in which the best available men, whatever the colour of their politics, could take an active part in shaping the nation's future"<sup>23</sup>. Hence from the beginning the AG harboured all people, from "the privileged seeking an umbrella"<sup>24</sup>, to self-confessed Marxists. Membership was open to farmers, traders, market-women, blacksmiths, carpenters, artisans, tailors, merchants, lawyers, doctors, contractors, and all alike. It was a party of the masses with reverence for Obas (feudals), understanding for the rich (bourgeoisie/capitalists) and complete identification with the aspirations of the down-trodden, common man (working proletariats).

Due to its composition, three ideological tendencies might be distinguished, in the AG leadership which may be identified as right, left, and centre with respect to the universal yardstick of Marxian equalitarianism. The core element of conservative opinion in the AG was a bureaucratic group of feudal aristocracy, the compradore and business group of impressive size, influence and affluence in the Western Region. This element included a considerable number of entrepreneurs, merchants and bankers, many of whom were strongly nationalistic owing largely to their past colonial experience of economic and social frustration. These elements formed the high finance group referred to as the 'Elders'. The AG 'Elders' exercised extra-constitutional

rights and dictated the tune of the party. The 'Elder' donated the fund for running the elections and when at last the AG took up state power, the 'Elders' used state power to foster the interest of the class they represented.<sup>25</sup>

The dominant tendency in the AG lay to the left of the business elite; it included a majority of the professional men and the teachers, most of the active politicians and the progressive elements among the traditional chiefs. The social philosophy of Action Group centrism has been described by Sklar as "principled" welfare statism to distinguish it from the "pragmatic" welfare statism of the right wing.<sup>26</sup> This centrist tendency of non or quasi-socialistic radicals of the militant nationalist policy of 'positive action' was led by chief Anthony Enahoro. These were the people committed to socialism in principle, as against the pragmatic socialism of the right wing. Among these centrists were Awolowo and most of the younger professional men represented in the party.

Awolowo had earlier outlined the aims of the party at one of the meetings thus: to plan education, social and welfare services, reform of land tenure, industrialization, town planning, transport, mines and communications.<sup>27</sup> Awolowo both economically and politically, was for the individual. Said he, "I believe that every citizen, however humble and lowly his station in life, has a right to demand from his government the creation of those conditions which will enable him progressively to enjoy, according to civilized standards, the basic necessities of life as well as reasonable comfort and a measure of luxury. . . . all men and women should be treated as equal, both as political and economic beings"<sup>28</sup>. Awolowo saw the role of government as not only discovering and developing the talents of the people, but also by providing equal opportunities weed out those environmental and hereditary factors that lead to disparities in the society. In the light of this populist socialism of the centre, one can see the differences between the right and centre on economic matters. While the right

supported government's participation in industrial project because it saw such participation as a holding operation against monopoly by foreign investors until the local capitalists take over, Awo and the centre conceived of such operations as a means of redistributing wealth to guarantee "life more abundant" for the whole people.<sup>29</sup>

The Action Group's ideological spectrum was further widened when a group of Marxists joined the party in 1954. These Marxian intellectuals-Sam Ikoku, Gogo Chu Nzeribe, O. Agunbiade-Bamishe, Victor Oyenuga, Ayo Ogunsheye and Ayo Okusaga - whose attempts to found a United Working People's Party were foiled by harassment, detentions and trials by the police, decided to join the AG.<sup>30</sup> The socialists were partly responsible for the national expansion of the AG their contribution being largely ideological rather than organizational.

It was therefore clear from the onset that a clear ideological programme would split the party from top to bottom. Hence the AG never adopted a doctrinaire ideological position. In practice however, party line fluctuated between Fabian socialism and welfare state capitalism. Fabian socialism made a deep impression on Awolowo during his law-school years in London and he deeply believed in equalitarian democracy.<sup>31</sup> With the approach to independence and the decision of the AG to expand massively into the Northern Region in order to compete on a grand scale with the Northern People's Congress, all major factions within the party became ardent proponents of liberal democracy, including freedom of speech, due process of law, and the extension of the franchise to Northern women.<sup>32</sup>

#### AWO, THE TURNING-POINT AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Following the 1959 Federal elections, Chief Obafemi Awolowo became the Leader of the Opposition in the Federal House. The party had lost the elections. AG leaders evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the total situation.

They agreed that under existing conditions their party on its own was unlikely to be voted to power at the Federal level. Two schools of thought developed: one, looking toward the formation of a progressive alliance that would be able to dislodge the conservative regime in the North, favoured a policy of collaboration with the NCNC, and hoped to revive the spirit of anti regionalism in order to effect the division of Nigeria, especially the North, into more states. The other concerned with preserving the political status-quo in Western Nigeria and with securing for the Western Region full Federal recognition in matters of natural planning, opted for collaboration with the feudal NPC within the framework of a national government that would include the ruling elements of all the regions.<sup>33</sup>

Within the AG, radical antiregionalism was championed by the Leader of the Federal opposition, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Some would attribute his seemingly sudden swing to the left mainly to motivations of a basically opportunistic sort. Undoubtedly, Awo said that the Action Group would come to power only, if at all, as a party of popular protest against the existing social and political order. Others would interpret his ideological reorientation in a different vein as the outcome of his increasingly clear perception of the major faults in Nigeria's political economy. These explanations are not mutually exclusive. In any case, Awolowo rallied the radicals in his party, while the more conservative members gravitated to the leadership of Chief Ladoke Akin-tola, the Regional Premier.

As the opposition party, the Action Group sought to capitalize on the frustrations of the radical and liberal elements.<sup>34</sup> To do this, the Action Group modified and in some cases reversed its own policies and adopted new policies. It called on the government to adopt nationalization in principle, although the party had been against this before.

It accused the government of being too pro-west, although the Action Group had advocated this as late as 1959. It urged the government to join the Union of African States

although the party had formerly been opposed to the idea of political pan-africanism.

Awolowo did not favour the idea of the Action Group joining a new national government that would include all the regional government parties. In his view, "virile opposition" was essential to the well-being of Nigeria. "If there is any fear for the Action Group," he said, "it is not fear originating from without, but from within."<sup>35</sup> Thus far, the AG had been a nationalist movement, eschewing any clear-cut ideology but concentrating on building a welfare state in the West and getting rid of the British colonialists. But in 1960, in order to deal effectively with these pressing problems and in order to present the electorate with an alternative to the government, Awolowo proposed the creation of two special committees, one on ideology and the other on tactics, and then decided to adopt an ideology.

Enahoro has given insight into the thinking of the party leaders at the material period:

It had been enough, thus far, for the Action Group to be a nationalist movement. This would no longer suffice after independence. After nine years of existence, the question of a party ideology could no longer be avoided. Without ideology, a political party in Nigeria can survive for some time as a cloak for tribal prejudices and old personal antagonisms, but when these are overcome, as they are bound rapidly to be, what faith would sustain a party which in this case was the opposition? Opposition for its own sake was pointless, and the ease and alacrity with which members of the opposition parties defect to government parties in Nigeria demonstrate already, that, in the absence of ideological convictions, member of Parliament and their supporters would sooner be identified with the Government party, from whom they may expect favours, than the opposition. In order to survive Africa's untested democracies, a political party must be in office; it must make such a strong appeal to the sectional-tribal, religious or cultural-prejudices of its members as would make them resist the blandishments or threats of the ruling party; or it must represent ideologically, a clear and distinc-

tive alternative to the existing order.<sup>36</sup>

Enahoro had been quoted at length to show the factors that predicated Awolowo's new ideological posture.

In confirmation of Awo's turn leftward from his central-liberalist position, when the Party Congress met in September 1960, it adopted a manifesto which espoused the ideology of "Democratic socialism", interpreted as "Socialism within the context of a parliamentary democracy."<sup>37</sup> The new party programme envisaged the construction of a "mixed socialist economy", combining elements of public and private enterprise within the framework of a comprehensive national plan.

Chief Awolowo who had been in the centre of the party now moved left. His public utterances reflected this. On 1st October, 1960, Independence Day, he spoke on "Democratic Socialism" before the International journalists assembled in Lagos. He then toured Nigeria to propagate the ideas of his party and to perfect its organization in various parts of the country. His public and parliamentary speeches throughout 1961 revealed the markedly leftward tendency of his thought. On 13 January 1961, he spoke on "Approach to the Economic Problems of Nigeria" to students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. On 30 January 1961, he spoke on "The Place of workers in an Independent Nigeria." On 4 February, 1961, he spoke on "The Meaning and Implications of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact", to the students of the Nigerian College, Enugu. On 9 February 1961, he lectured on "Economics and Ethics of National Minimum Wage", On 21 February 1961, his address was titled "Nigeria in Search of Economic Freedom". On 24 February 1961, in an address to Nigerian students in London, he dealt with "Philosophy for Independent Nigeria." And on 18 January, 1962 at the University of Ibadan, he spoke on "The case for ideological Re-orientation". One recurrent theme, of his innumerable lecture, was the criticism of the growing domination of Nigeria's economy by imperialist, capitalistic forces and their Nigerian collaborators. In June 1961, Chief Awolowo visited the Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah for discussions Thenceforth his criticisms of Nigerian foreign policy became increasingly clear-out and ideological, and he seemed to have

aligned his party with the Casablanca group's persuasion in pan-African affairs.

All the while, Awo made preparations to intensify the propagation of the AG ideas. In this connection, he solicited the aid of certain non-party intellectuals who were sympathetic to the creed of democratic socialism. He valued their intelligence and they, in turn, were ready with ideas to remedy the ills of the Nigerian society. In October 1961, Awolowo formed a study group called the National Reconstruction Committee, which included about one dozen persons, among them university lecturers and professors, some of whom were not actually members of his party. The members of this committee produced several working papers on various topics, including the case for austerity measures in government, the implications of a commitment to the creed of democratic socialism, economic planning, and pan-African affairs. When in December 1961 these papers were presented to the Federal Executive Council (of the AG), the paper on austerity measures, deploring the extravagant financial benefits extended at public expense to governmental ministers and civil servants, was said to have occasioned bitter debate: a few party leaders are also reported to have alleged that "Awolowo had fallen into the hands of 'communists'".<sup>38</sup>

On 2 February 1962, Awolowo delivered a presidential address to the historic Jos Action Group Congress, assembled at Jos, in Northern Nigeria. In candour, he said: We must admit, "openly for once", the existence of "real and dangerous contradictions" within the party. He took note of "a growing disaffection between privileged and non-privileged classes (so-called) within the party". He also referred to several basic policy conflicts, and finally on the adoption of an explicit socialistic programme. Resolutions on matters of policy adopted by the Jos congress confirmed the ascendancy of Awo's ideological position. Supporters of Awolowo were elected to key Federal offices, in particular S. G. Ikoku, Leader of Opposition in the Eastern House of Assembly and known for his left-wing socialist

views, was elected as the Party's Federal Secretary.

It is pertinent at this juncture to digress and take a critical look at Awo's democratic socialism. What differentiates it from the revolutionary Marxian socialism? Democratic socialism is a petty-bourgeois ideology based on collaborations of class forces in society. It is a liberal middle of the way house, which aims at improving the lot of the masses by economic reforms. It believes in private ownership of the means of production and distribution and therefore sanctions the exploitation of man by man. It is therefore, not socialist in essence, but liberal-reformist capitalism.

Socialism, as it is known, aims at public ownership of the means of production and distribution with the aim of eliminating the exploitation of man by man. Socialism aims at the abolition of private property (not personal property) which is the basis of privilege and exploitation of the working masses. A system that aimed at protecting private property and expanding its scope could not build socialism. So it was with the AG's democratic socialism.

A look into the manifesto of the Action Group captioned "Democratic Socialism" shows clearly the basic concepts of these democrats. The manifesto opened:

Nigeria has entered a new era. The battle against imperialism has been fought and won .... Accordingly, a political party of the common people must strongly project and protect the best interests of the first two classes, the wage earner and self-employed, of our community and reflect their true aspirations .....

At the same time adequate provision must be made to allow certain indigenous elements of the third grouping—employer class—to expand their economic activities in a way to contribute to the welfare of the society .... we believe in a planned economy under which the public sector is run by the State and the private sector is open to free enterprise.

The AG programme, as contained in the foregoing, was that of liberal State-capitalism. The battle against imperialism is yet to be won. What the nation fought and won was "Flag" independence. Economic independence is still a long way to fruition. The AG tried to marry into an alliance two antagonistic and irreconcilable classes; the employer and the employed, the exploiter and the exploited, the rich and the poor. A system with free enterprise, where the private sector holds sway has nothing to do with socialism.

Awo's democratic socialism is a reformatory socialism which admits the existence of private property, side by side with public ownership of the means of production, exchange and distribution, the rule of the society by the State and the victory and installation of socialism through the democratic electoral process *ONLY* (emphasis ours, C. A. A). He opined:

In my considered and settled opinion, the best political ideal for mankind is Democratic socialism which is founded, among others, on the principles of the well-being of the individual and brotherhood among all men irrespective of creed, colour and race. <sup>39</sup>

The democratic socialism of Awo is based on three fundamental principles. Hear him. "It is the resolution of our party to build a democratic socialist society founded on the three principles of national greatness, the well-being of the individual and international brotherhood."<sup>40</sup>

In a nutshell, the democratic socialism of Awolowo guaranteed the same liberal-bourgeois freedom and rights. He opined:

I and most of my colleagues are democrats by nature, and socialists by conviction. We believe in the democratic way of life: equality under the law, respect for the fundamental rights of individual citizens, and the existence of independent and impartial tribunals where these rights could be enforced. We believe that the generality of the people should enjoy this life and do so in reasonable abundance.

## AWO: AN IDEOLOGICAL REAPPRAISAL

From his *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947) to *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution* (1966) ..... to *Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic* (1970) ..... and down to *The Need for an Ideological Reappraisal* (1977). etc, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had spelt out with a clarity and intellectual rigour, all his major ideas, ideals and ideologies, from which spring all his political and social actions. He had established himself as a great political thinker on the continent. One point needs be noted at this juncture.

The basic tenets of socialism are not in dispute among advocates of the socialist system of political economy. They are all agreed on the state control of the means of production, exchange and distribution; "the abolition of freedom of free-enterprise and private-property", and on the regulation of consumption. The source of dispute and violent disagreement among socialists of differing persuasions, is the choice of the appropriate methods or instruments for the attainment of the socialist goals.

"Our own concept of socialism", declared Awolowo, "is entirely different from communism and the Marxian concept of socialism"<sup>41</sup> Chief Awolowo rejected the class struggle, violent revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, or of any class as appropriate methods in establishing a socialist order in Nigeria, or in any African country for that matter. He approved of the gradualist, democratic, evolutionary process in achieving socialism. On this subject he said inter-alia:

I fervently prefer the inconveniences of democracy to the inarticulate and fearful material comfort of a dictatorship, even granting that such comfort overcomes the way of the majority under a totalitarian system ..... The idealist-pragmatist reformer will strive to make the people ready. If he imposes himself on them against their will, he is a spoiler and not a reformer.<sup>42</sup>

For Awolowo, there are no irreconcilable classes, in

Africa where neither the tyranny which typified Tsarist Russia, nor the cruelty that disfigured the dynastic regimes in China has had the same opportunity and material means to germinate and flower. But, is that the truth? Are there no antagonistic classes in Africa? The fact is that, here in Nigeria, for example, the masses are embittered, marginalized and have been alienated. In a system, where less than one-tenth of the population commands 90% share of society's resources, controls state apparatus of power, and uses it violently to suppress the legitimate rights and aspirations of the masses, would the classes not be antagonistic? The answer of course is obvious.

In his classic, *Problems of Africa*, Chief Awolowo devoted much more time to the examination of the basic concepts of capitalism and socialism. Awo showed that in a capitalist system, since the so-called entrepreneur more often than not is also the land-owner and supplier of capital, and since the supplies of land, capital and entrepreneurship are scarce relative to the supply of labour, the laws of supply and demand and marginal productivity see to it that labour gets the worst of the bargain. The result is that, continued Awo, whilst the owner or owners of the other agents flourish fabulously, labour, which is the prime contributor, remains impoverished. The labourer never has enough to enable him to acquire property, and, therefore, has none to keep.<sup>43</sup> Awolowo further showed the utter fallacy of the claims by the apologists of capitalism that there can be equality under that system. According to Awo, "labour and the peasantry have never been, and will never under capitalism be able to contract on the basis of equality with the owners of land and capital. Awo also showed that capitalism is an incurably exploitative and corruptive system."<sup>44</sup>

After having shown that capitalism is unjust and exploitative, Awo went on to further deliberate on some socialist alternatives. Quoting extensively from Andrew Hacher's Political Theory that:

Every real revolution is a social one, in that it brings a new class to power and allows it to remodel society in its own image.

and that .... The old ruling class will not give up its power peacefully or voluntarily, especially when it knows that it will have no privileged status in the new society. If change is to be significant, then bloodshed will be the rule rather than the exception. "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one." .... only by civil war will the proletariat be able to wrest control over the instruments from the bourgeoisie.<sup>4 5</sup>

Awo came to the wrong conclusion that the features portrayed above are not characteristic of contemporary Africa. To maintain as Awo did that Africa has no opulent aristocrats, no absolute monarchs, no big land-owners whose wealth and position can provoke extremities of violent reaction from the masses of the people, is to say the least, dishonest and far from the truth. If the chief himself could buy a ₦1 million worth of land, what do you expect him to say? Well, he had to defend his class interest. The masses have been provoked enough by the display of wealth, opulence and affluence by a negligible few, what they only need is a leader of men, the likes of Marx, Lenin, Mao, to show them the way, and they will gladly follow.

Awo's assertion that, "For Africa, therefore, socialism can be introduced by democratic processes and the excesses of the budding African capitalists as well as the social control of the means of production can respectively be checked and brought about by laws enacted by the people's elected parliaments", runs contrary to his argument as quoted in note 45 above that the old ruling class will never relinquish power voluntarily or peacefully. More so in the African context where the rulers have adopted a sit-tight attitude, and where only Military coup d'états and counter coups force these sit-tight politicians, statesmen, and military-generals out of office.

A glance at the UPN manifesto also sheds some light on Awo's concept of ideology. This political party was the continuation of the old AG. It drew its support mostly from the Yoruba-speaking areas of Nigeria. The leader was Chief Obafemi Awolowo, erstwhile multi-millionaire 'socialist'. Like its predecessor, the AG, the UPN was a party of the bourgeoisie with a firm base in industry and commerce. Hence any talk about revolution was anathema to them.

Awo's imprint of free education at all levels for all, integrated rural development, the provision of free health services for all and full employment were the four cardinal programmes of the UPN. The party stressed the ideology of modernization, talked of re-ordering and not of revolutionizing the economy. The party planned to adopt socialism in order to reorder and modernize the economy, but the party leader, Chief Awolowo warned:

no one nation ever attains a worthwhile goal designed for the benefit of the entire people in one fell swoop without courting irreparable or prolonged disaster for the people concerned. Indeed any attempt to attain the goal of socialism in one frantic leap is bound to generate widespread alarm, social upheaval and distress and attendant violence. <sup>46</sup>

Awo and his followers did all they could to avoid even talking about revolution. They were the enlightened and more efficient bourgeoisie. Like Lenin had warned, social democrats are the most dangerous adversaries/allies of the revolutionary working class; for they understood the need for defensive radicalism, especially radical sloganeering, productive capitalism; and discipline and efficiency. They are deeply entrenched in the capitalist production, hence are more efficient and adroit in the defence of capitalism. They make use of their understanding of Marxism to deceive and manipulate the masses and to halt a revolutionary alternative. Hear what Awo had to say here:

Since the cornerstone of socialism is the conversion of private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to public ownership, it follows that under democratic socialism such conversion cannot be wholesale or in one fell swoop.<sup>47</sup>

The fact is that no private ownership will ever become public. On the contrary, public will be "privatized" and, or "commercialized".

Awolowo's socialism can be described as a tacful way of making the people go on a wild-goose chase. In one of his innumerable addresses, he was quoted as saying:

I hold the view that the conditions of the masses in Nigeria, though very bad in some parts of the federation, in the circumstances, it is the considered view of my party that the ideals of socialism can be realized in Nigeria by waging a battle of words and wits, rather than by engaging in a clash of steel and an exchange of bullets. By adopting these democratic means, the struggle against the evil forces of capitalism may be protracted, and victory might be somewhat long delayed. But, in Nigerian circumstances, I think it is better so.<sup>48</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, Awo's ideology can be summerized thus:

a secular socialist State in which there will be no automatic confiscation of private property, and if perchance, such conversion did take place, when made shall be accompanied by the payment of fair compensation.

the major reason why individuals amass considerable fortune is to raise the status of the people. It may be necessary in the process by the process of taxation to take part of the wealth of the so-called wealthy people and give it to the government for use in developing the masses of the people.

Awolowo rejected Marxism, explicitly denied the necessity of class struggle and class analysis, as found in the

classic socialist matrix, he rejected dialectical materialism and atheism.

Awo did not believe in violence and bloodshed to establish a new socialist order — although he vehemently disliked the inequities induced by capitalism saying that free enterprise is basically anarchic in nature and in fact satanic and iniquitous — rather he believed in peaceful gradual processes.

These are the revisionist views of pro-capitalists rather than of the left. They had nothing to do with socialism, but much with welfare — or social-reformism. One thing is certain, whether in theory or in practice, Awo can be flawed or not, the fact remains that he had played the historical role of such liberal thinkers — that of spreading palliatives to the masses in order to halt a revolutionary alternative.<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, Awo's summation of himself would be pertinent here. "I would like to be remembered", he said to an interviewer, "for creating the basis for an irreversible revolution in education, in the provision of social amenities, and in the fight for social justice in Nigeria. I have not yet succeeded in all of these. But I have set a pattern which no other Nigerian can ignore or reverse."

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## **Towards an Autochthonous Industrialization Policy for Nigeria: Reflections on Awolowo's Thought on Economic Liberation**

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**J.F. ODEY**

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**Awo once said:**

**We are not at all concerned with the past except to learn from it. But we are very much concerned with the future, and it is to the making of that future in order to remake society that we are resolved to direct our efforts and talents<sup>1</sup>**

**In this investigation, we shall be concerned with how to advance Awo's thoughts on the liberation of Nigeria. The legacies of Obafemi Awolowo (1909–1987) for the Nigerian society can be studied from several perspectives as he was an astute politician, economist, administrator, an illustrious jurist, an outstanding statesman, an author and a distinguished scholar, a philosopher, a mystic, one of the founding fathers of Nigeria, and in short, the sage of his time.<sup>2</sup> Awo's robust thoughts and omnibus personality can best be examined from a micro level as a macro-level attempt would not only be shallow for a research paper, but it would also be unwieldy for any one person to handle.**

**What is intended here therefore is to briefly examine Awo's notion of liberation, and to explore how this can be achieved through an autochthonous industrialization policy that is autonomous, autocentric or self-sustaining, home-grown and capable of freeing Nigeria from internal colonialism**

and external reliance. On industrialization, Awo had little to say. However, his contribution to industrial development can be traced to the establishment of the Odu'a conglomerate with trans-sectoral investments, and the fact that he established the first industrial estate in Nigeria at Ikeja, Lagos.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, we shall summarize Awo's thoughts on liberation or freedom and then attempt to explore briefly the roots of industrial paralysis in Nigeria, after which we suggest the way forward.

#### AWO'S THOUGHT ON LIBERATION

On Awo's return to Nigeria after his search for the golden fleece, he spearheaded the formation of the Action Group in 1950-51. Among other interests, the Action Group considered the end of British colonialism as cardinal.<sup>4</sup> Awo guaranteed freedom to all and promised life more abundant, and these were later adopted to become the motto of the Action Group.

It was Awo's conviction that it is only in freedom that Nigerians realize and develop all their talents and potentialities, and act in full dignity. In *Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Socio-political Philosophy*, F. Ogunmodede discussed several forms of freedom identified by Awo.<sup>5</sup> Generally, it was emphasized by Awo that in liberation, man is free of constraints and inhibitions to develop his talents as he desires in order to better his lot. In this case liberation of Nigeria would mean that Nigerians would think and act as they wish at such times and manner as they decide.<sup>6</sup> However, when liberated all citizens must enjoy their freedom as a collectivity. According to Awo, liberty is meaningful when it is extended and enjoyed by a person with due regard to its enjoyment by others.<sup>7</sup> Thus, liberation involves equality of access and opportunity for all citizens regardless of their religion, sex, creed, ethnic group, occupation etc, to develop their different talents as they wish.

For Awo, it is when a country is politically self-autonomous

and economically self-viable and reliant that it can be regarded as liberated and fully independent. He believed that freedom is the inalienable right of man and so is not something subject to negotiation or debate.<sup>8</sup> British colonialism in Nigeria was considered by Awo as a negation of the freedom of Nigerians and so unsupported by any standard of morality.<sup>9</sup>

Awo's vision of a liberated Nigeria is one where a political sovereign country is independent of foreign control or direction and where the exploitation of the resources is organized for the common good.<sup>10</sup> In his own view, a country like Nigeria which is dependent on the grace of foreign resources cannot claim to be independent. Awo saw such a dependent situation as being dangerous because when we entrust the development of our country and people to foreigners who are mercenarious in their activities, we are then inviting looters as the foreign investors are mainly looking for the booty they can loot.

It is also Awo's conviction that it is only Nigerians that can make Nigeria free and great.<sup>11</sup> In order to make Nigeria great, Nigeria must first of all struggle quickly for her economic freedom, otherwise planning and regulation of the economy will fail woefully.<sup>12</sup> For Awo, the assistance of foreigners can only supplement our self-efforts, as it is only the people of a given state that can fight for their freedom. According to Awo, freedom is an essential ingredient which cannot be achieved via self-pity and charity donations from rich industrialized countries, but through our self-efforts and self-denial.<sup>13</sup>

Awo went further to opine that man can only be useful to himself and his community when he is politically conscious and free. This has to be so because human dignity is useless without the liberation of man. What is implied here is that it is not adequate to say Nigeria is free from British or foreign rule, but one has to also be interested in how free Nigerians are even under the leadership of their fellow

Nigerians. A situation where external rule is replaced by internal colonialism or the domination of majority of Nigerians by some few elites is therefore anti-thetical to Awo's dreams of a liberated Nigeria. On this ground Awo tried to fight feudal relics by restraining their excesses.

Having outlined Awo's vision of liberation, let us now examine the origin of industrial underdevelopment and dependency in Nigeria before proposing an industrialization policy that will translate Awo's dreams into reality.

#### THE ROOTS OF INDUSTRIAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT AND DEPENDENCY

Several studies have highlighted the history, politics, and economics of colonial and neo-colonial economy of Nigeria.<sup>14</sup> The main thrust of the consequences of the brutal contact between European and Nigerian economies is that the latter was penetrated by imperialist interests and subsequently became distorted, dominated, peripheralized and incorporated as a satellite into the industrialised world economy through patterns of trade and investments.<sup>15</sup> British colonial imperialism interfered with and aborted the normal or original development of the productive forces in Nigeria. Nigeria was then restructured as a colony of imperialist, by imperialist and for imperialist interests and their allies.

The import substitution industrialization policy that was initiated by the colonial-imperialist government gave the mandate for industrial development to foreign investors, trans-national corporations, international organizations and industrialised powers. The objectives for industrialization excluded the question of economic independence. Generous incentives were provided to foreign investors to attract them to invest in industries in Nigeria, and such investors responded to the call by establishing turn-key and screw-driver or assembly-type factories. Their primary consideration was to protect the market share of Nigeria for their products by establishing sales outlets not to generate an independent industrial base to compete with metropolitan

manufactures.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the structure of industrial development in the colonial period remained dependent on foreign resources.

Even after nominal independence, the successive civilian and military governments in Nigeria continued to pursue industrialization policies that relied heavily on the colonial type and the advice of foreign investors, international organization (principally the World Bank Group), and industrialized powers. The result was not only the reproduction of new forms of dependence but the reinforcement of old ones; hence, strengthening instead of loosening neo-colonial domination.

What has emerged therefore is an industrial development pattern geared towards or dictated by the demands of the industrialized countries or foreign interests who supply, own and control vital resources like technology, capital, entrepreneurial skills and management, which Nigeria depends on to produce. A necessary precondition for sustaining the policy of industrialization (whether import substitution, export promotion or resource base) and other economic policies like indigenization or nationalization has been dependent co-operation with, and subservience to the metropolitan economies. This has led to the rise of a grotesque form of industrial development which is based on dependence accumulation and development.<sup>17</sup> This pattern of development involves Nigeria's non-participation in industrialization as a marginalized part of the capitalist world economy. The effects of our non-involvement in industrialization as a country and a people are manifestly staring at us. This can be summed up in Nigeria's increasing external economic dependency and underdevelopment, the near complete loss of our economic sovereignty, and the take-over of the economy today by foreign interests led by the World Bank, masquaring under the guise of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to modernize the exploitation of Nigeria and further entrench the country in the orbit of metropolitan principals as a neocolony of international monopoly capital.<sup>18</sup>

The failure of Nigeria to industrialize autonomously therefore has to do with the fact that Nigeria, like many Third World States is operating within the imperialist framework of a dependent system which has built-in forces that limit accumulation and expansion, guarantees Nigeria's subordination to, and exploitation by monopoly capital; and which then acts as an obstacle to independent and viable development or prosperity. This dependent capitalist framework, it must be conceived is supported by our elites who are either unwilling or unable (most probably the former) to do what is scientifically manifest, socially equitable and morally fair and just. Rather, they prefer to pursue self-interested and decadent policies that advance foreign interests and generate dependence, social disintegration, political degeneration of the autonomy of Nigeria and mass pauperization of the citizenry. It is obvious that without our local or national autonomy, as Awo had observed earlier, we cannot be masters of our own destiny, but glorified slaves in self-afflicted chains and foreign imposed self-rewarding assistance.

The fact which needs to be emphasised is that contemporary Nigeria cannot construct her society by mechanically imitating foreign technological and institutional models, or relying on other people's ready-made solutions or toeing the Western or Eastern paths to development. This is because cultural contexts are never exactly the same and historical conditions for the Western type of development have been lost. This loss is due to several serious changes that have taken place in the capitalist process of growth and development. Some of these important processes include the emergence of trans-national corporations (TNCS) as imperialist agents monopolising technology and acting as invisible governments; there is now a strong political control against industrialization by imperialist countries; and Nigeria stands not only as a late starter but a weak competitor against more efficient producers in metropolitan states.<sup>19</sup>

The manifestations of industrial quagmire and other symptoms of under-development in Nigeria are not aberrations of

a normal pattern of industrial development, or problems inherent in new or late industrializing countries which will peter out with time. Rather, beneath the visible problems of dependence on foreign raw materials, capital, technology and managerial skills; the issue of factory closures, chronic unemployment, run-away inflation, low capacity utilization, overflowing factory warehouses, over-squeezing of the poor, there exist an elaborate and thorough organized system with definite structures which function to generate definite structures and consequences and will insist on reproducing such effects, unless the system is fundamentally challenged, destroyed and replaced by another.<sup>20</sup>

The attempts at nationalization do not provide the solution because the Nigerian State is neocolonial, the government that operates the state apparatus pursues neocolonial policies; the state and the government are run by comprador neocolonial elites who are themselves controlled by monopolies, and so the intervention of the state in the economy protects foreign monopoly capital and their allies. Thus, the nationalized or public sector remains (like the private one) objectively and structurally incorporated into, and forms part of monopoly enterprise in the sense that the state serves monopoly capital.<sup>21</sup> Currently under the Structural Adjustment Programme, de-nationalization or privatization has become the favourable option which signals victory for monopoly capital and their agents.

In the case of indigenization efforts, Nigerian comprador elements and bourgeois nationalism have myopic interest and selfish ends, i.e. to seek promotion within the hierarchical income bracket and power structure of the capitalist world, and to share from the booty that imperialism loots from Nigeria. There is little or no intention on the part of the advocates of indigenization to achieve national liberation or economic justice. As imperialist allies, the comprador state and elites cannot lead in the struggle to do-away with the stronghold of TNCS, or to disengage from dependence and underdevelopment.<sup>22</sup> The recent call for de-indigenization

by some Nigerians indicates the lack of faith in indigenization policy.

Thus, the expectation of using indigenization as a vehicle for national economic autonomy, and nationalization as an instrument for state capitalism remain as mere slogans and comprador bourgeois utopia.<sup>23</sup> Now that privatization has become the 'sing-song', it is apparent that the captains of the Nigerian ship have run out of policies and so have willingly surrendered by deciding to compromise with or reinforce the links with the imperialist system through the World Bank-led SAP.

Given the above situation therefore, it becomes imperative for patriots to embark on an anti-imperialist struggle. The immediate objective of the struggle is to eliminate neo-colonial domination or dependency in order to create the fundamental condition for achieving autocentric industrialization and economic liberation. Bearing in mind our diagnosis of the problem of industrial dependence we now set out below the panacea.

#### RECOMMEND AUTOCHTHONOUS INDUSTRIALIZATION POLICY

The strong links between industrialization, general economic development, and national power require that whatever alternative industrialization policy that emerges would have to take into account not only the entire national economy and society, but the entire imperialist peripheries, trapped in the chains of TNCS. The type of development envisaged has to be autochthonous. A brief explanation of autochthonous development would enhance our discussion.

By Autochthonous Development (AD) we mean the capacity for self-propelling growth and the autocentric expansion of productive forces. In order to be self-propelling, we have to rely on ourselves, to acknowledge our values, and view such values as the guiding forces of our action, to have self-confidence, self-pride and to make self-sacrifice. As a home-grown development, AD entails an autonomously guided

process of accumulation of capital under national control; the wish to be unconditionally free and independent to determine our own destiny and resist external interference; to guarantee enough latitude for the formulation and execution of our economic plans and social legislations that are in the interest of all, approved by all and supported by all.

AD compares with Mao Tse Tung's phrase *TauLi Keng Sheng*, which literally can be explained as regeneration through one's own efforts, setting one's goals and finding solutions to one's own problems on the basis of self-experience, from one's own group, historical antecedents and environmental setting.<sup>24</sup> Thus, AD rejects copitacism, but favours doing things for ourselves, with what we have, by the means we have known and have attained, in order to satisfy our most basic necessities first in order to make man free from want before proceeding to think of comforts and luxuries. In AD emphasis has to be placed on the production of machines, plants, equipments, spare parts, food, clothing, shelter materials, health-care products, facilities for mass transportation, job creation and productive investments.

AD sees man as the centre-piece of and the target for development, in order to uphold man's dignity, his self-respect and his appropriate status in the land of his birth—Nigeria. In the words of Julius Nyerere,

. . .the very purpose of society — its reason for existence — is and must be the individual man, his growth, his health, his security, his dignity and therefore his happiness.<sup>25</sup>

Concomittantly, the alienation of man in the production process is abhorred, and so should be abolished through mass participation and control of the production distribution and consumption process. This is necessary because as Mao Tse Tung had opined:

the people and the people alone are the motive force in the making of world history and the masses have boundless creative power.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the slogan "power to the people" has to take its turn practically. This means AD must not be directed from the top, but has to germinate from below in order to be meaningful and viable. The peasants, workers, traders, professionals, students, artisan, herdsmen, fishermen etc, have to see themselves as masters of their own need satisfaction devoid of limping along and evolving a psychology of relying on the government for initiative and support, or depending on fraudulent external assistance. It is when the generality of the people are made to feel a sense of self-determination that their interests are aroused to take part in the development process, to acquire new skills, improve on old ones, evolve a sense of self-worth and stimulate innate abilities of the people. When everybody is integrated into the production process then everybody will seek to benefit from the fruits of their labour. This is essential because AD is also seen as the domination by the immediate producer over their conditions of existence, and in the first place over their means of production.<sup>27</sup>

In AD, the society owes a duty to care for the citizens who are willing and able to work, and development has to be measured not in index numbers or abstract official fanciful statistics of national income, per capital income, saving ratios, index of industrial production, but on how best the living conditions of the people are improved and how happy and free Nigerians find themselves. Activities which give Nigerian people greater control of their own affairs are activities, for AD. This is because they are liberated and liberation is the most essential ingredient of AD. In the same view, development among other things is the process of liberation of people and societies from poverty and domination.<sup>28</sup>

In AD, what is expected is a harmonized cooperative and

humane Nigeria in which the citizens, regardless of their religion, ethno-linguistic group, state or occupation live at the expense of nobody else, in partnership with each other and nature, and in solidarity with the future generations and other oppressed people of the world. AD means freedom and social justice, the establishment of popular democracy in which sovereignty is vested in the broad masses of the people, such that Nigeria will then operate on the basis that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.<sup>29</sup> How can AD be achieved? This takes us to the question of strategy.

#### STRATEGY FOR AD

No doubt this is an uphill task. The strategy has to begin with a temporary de-linking from the world economy (dominated by imperialist forces) which has created and still perpetuates the conditions for the exploitation of Nigeria, and guarantees the slow death of Nigerians, by siphoning nearly all our surplus and leaving us poorer and poorer.<sup>30</sup> A break with world imperialism will permit progressive forces in Nigeria to align and realign, to initiate and struggle for liberation, reconstruction and to embark on a home-coming approach to development with a human face.<sup>31</sup> There is the need to look-inwards, to mobilize and rely on our indigenous talents, to pioneer our own development models, to experiment with the models, to build up theories and practices for others to emulate.

In order to build autonomy, it is necessary to reject external assistance during the period of de-incorporation because such assistance is selfishly inspired. In fact the exploitative and dominating nature of foreign help has been clearly brought out by Leo Tolstoy who used the analogy of two people, with one (the helper) saying to the other (being helped) as follows:

I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me and yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him, and wish to ease his lot by any means possible except getting off his back.<sup>32</sup>

In the strategy for AD, we must insist on our foreign helpers to step down from our backs and to go home and leave us alone to solve our problems.

Given a self imposed blockade situation, the loss of imports would stimulate the search for local substitutes which abound in Nigeria. When we are left on our own, we would be motivated into creativity, inventions, innovations and diffusion. Faced with hardships, given the liberty and encouragement, man tends to seek an escape route with greater courage, determination and the will to survive. This is one important lesson from the short-lived "Biafran Republic" where the will to survive led to the harnessing of local resources, some of which were hitherto unknown, unused, or misused. It has been expressed that "necessity is the mother of invention", and through a system of trial and error, perseverance and patience, we shall build an autonomous system; and with continuous practice, we shall improve on our achievements, for as the saying goes, "practice makes for perfection." When we find ourselves with only local conditions, we will develop confidence in our resourcefulness.

An important step toward ameliorating the condition of the citizens is to restructure neocolonial institutions which sustain dependence and which have marginalized the majority classes. It would be necessary to create new popular democratic institutions with decentralized patterns of local control, planning machinery and process; legitimate representation of the interests in Nigeria; respect for the decisions of the majority and the rights of the minority. This will boost mass participation, self-realization and self-fulfilment. When there is adequate autonomy in the smallest units, participation will then be allowed at the grass roots, and this in turn will stimulate local creativity.

In AD there have to be an integration of the different socio-economic sectors and the unicity of the separately developing branches of the economy into an organic and dynamic system, resistant to adverse foreign economic manipulations. The distinctions between urban and rural, rich and poor, commercial and subsistence production, traditional and modern sectors, industrial and agrarian sectors will have to be abolished, transformed and merged into an integrated national economy with a flexible and internal dynamic.

In a bid to eradicate internal colonialism, the peasant and proletariat have to be liberated. Agriculture and rural transformation are crucial. Land reform to redistribute land to the poorer classes entails the necessary elimination of the land lord classes. Since industrial development is seen as part of total economic development, it has to be organically linked to other sectors especially agriculture. Thus, with an inner-directed fulcrum of development, there will emerge a strong national industrial base with well-developed linkages for example between agriculture, infrastructure, capital goods, intermediate and mass consumption goods.

One of the greatest imperative for AD is to rehabilitate labour. The citizens have to be re-educated on the dignity of labour. People have to be tutored to accept that you have to work in order to produce, and that you have to produce in order to develop, and you have to develop in order to be autonomous, to achieve self-realization and freedom. We have to influence the way people think and their approach to problems. This may entail a 'cultural revolution' to change peoples neocolonial mentality, stereotype habits, values, prejudices, perceptions, priorities in order to realize complete mental and psychological decolonization, and to give birth to autochthonous Nigerians.

AD has to be carried out as a dynamic struggle taking place at several levels beginning with the individual ward, village, town, local government area, State and to the national level. Thus, if the basic inputs needed to produce goods and services have to be procured after recoupling with the external

world, we have to do so following concentric circles, on autonomous terms, from a position of strength, but not from a weak position in which we function as an appendage of an external order that we neither satisfactorily comprehend nor control. We need to recompose and redirect Nigeria's international relations on more equitable terms in order to achieve interdependency between Nigeria and the external world.

A significant imperative in AD is the need for an ideological base. We have to formulate an ideology that is home-made, nationalistic, broad-based, popular, mass or proletarian and progressive. The ideology has to reflect on our problems, it has to set out solutions to our problems, the goals to be achieved, and it has to relate to the overall transformation of Nigeria. The ideology must define the means to achieve our collectively-set goals all based on or derived from our historical experience and environment.

The contemporary ideology is far from the ideal of the generality of Nigerians. This is because it reflects the ideal of the dominant classes. The ideology is mystified and garbed in euphemistic and flamboyant rhetorics by our leaders, and forced down on the majority classes by the few local and foreign ruling classes. The foreign ideology alienates the bulk of Nigerians as it is anti-equity, anti-progress, anti-democratic, and anti-Nigerian people. This makes it abundantly necessary to dispense with such an oppressive ideology, to formulate one that is liberational, anti-imperialist, anti-exploitation, anti-repression, and anti-tyranny, and one that will suit our self-realization and fulfilment.

Once there is a popular ideology that emanates from the people, this will enhance social mobilization. This is because when a general philosophy of life is embraced taking into consideration the expectation of the people for freedom, social justice and economic upliftment, the social change that is desired will be carried out with the widest commitment and participation of all Nigerians — irrespective of class, ethnic group, religion or state of origin. The people will be willing to make sacrifices, if the potential rewards from a

proposed policy is convincing to them.

If autochthonous industrial development has to be viable, then it must provide home-grown substitutes for imports, and it must rest heavily on indigenous technology, capital, raw materials and managerial or entrepreneurial skills. But how are these industrial requisites to be obtained, given a situation where we are left on our own without our foreign principals? This is the task to be examined next, beginning with how to achieve technological autonomy.

#### TECHNOLOGICAL INDEPENDENCE

Technology is used here to mean vital Scientific knowledge that has been evolved and adapted to practical use, and is available to be applied for the purpose of solving problems and satisfying basic human wants. Technology has to be conceived as part of culture and it involves several skills, methods and choices that enable people to do what they wish, in their own manner reflecting their history, environmental time, values, goals, needs and judgement.

The role of technology in industrialization and general economic development has long been established as no country has attained greatness without a sound, dynamic and autonomous technological base.<sup>33</sup> The issue of technology transfer to Nigeria has to be dismissed as a myth sponsored by the ruling classes and propagated by bourgeois scholars of both the industrialized countries and Nigeria. It is based on a false promise of the goodwill of imperialist states and the wrong diagnosis of imperialism, which will never jettison its principles of monopoly of exclusive knowledge and global domination in order to help new competitors.<sup>34</sup> Against the background of such a blind alley, what we need is to initiate or originate our technology that will suit our local culture. This also requires indigenous and autonomous research, design, application, modelling, foundrying, pilot

projects, testing, modification and adaptation of research findings.

Having disengaged from the outside world the first step would be to take an inventory of existing industrial plants and to restructure the plants and equipments. This requires improvisation, adaptation, technical learning or training on the job. Nigerian technicians and engineers can dismantle the plants into the smallest parts, put the parts together again and try to see how the machines work. Thereafter, Nigerians will proceed to fabricate the component parts locally using local foundries or blacksmiths, some of who abound at Awka in Anambra state, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene in Cross River state, Ijebu in Ogun State, etc. It will also be necessary to take an inventory of indigenous peasant Science and Technology of (S and T) and build up a data bank of indigenous S and T, which had hitherto been relegated to the background due to the imposition of imported high technology. We also have to rely on artisa students, researchers in research institutes, higher institutions of learning etc. Such a S and T research programme would have to be coordinated by a body to be called Centre for Research, Information, Documentation and Public Enlightenment (CRIDPE). All discoveries or breakthroughs would have to be documented, credited, patented, publicized, tested, innovated diffused and improved upon. After several trials, errors, and continuous practice, we shall achieve technological sophistication. The organization of technology fairs is recommended from the family level, through the villages, clans, towns, local government areas, states and national level. This will enable all and sundry to, display new techniques, processes and products.

Given a state of temporary cut-off from imported high technology, the issue of inferior local technology tagged sometimes as "Ijebu made", "Awka made", "Uyo made", "Aba made", or "Ibo made", will not arise. The important thing would be how to use the available techniques to achieve desired results. Defunct Biafra met her needs with local inventions. For example, crude oil was refined on a daily output

of about 32,000 litres.<sup>35</sup> It is hereby proposed that all the indigenous, especially 'Biafran' Scientists and their inventions should be invited and encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, create new technological processes and their embodiments, to adapt and improve their technique, to maximize the resources in materials, manpower and capital in order to realize our goals.

The technology we need has to be labour-intensive, congruent with our Nigerian conditions and with its framework built into Nigeria structures. It has to evolve from the grass-roots. It has to be subjugated to human needs, it has to use Nigerian natural resources and there has to be a bond between problem-solving and technological development, rather than research that merely enriches culture. In producing local solid technology, having invented the skills or know-how, emphasis should be on heavy industries in order to produce machines and basic products needed to produce other machines, equipment and other intermediate goods. The superiority of beginning with heavy industries instead of light industries will help us to master plant engineering-capabilities and meet the demand for strategic industries.<sup>36</sup>

#### CAPITAL INDEPENDENCE

This will focus on how to achieve a large degree of autonomy in the process of capital accumulation or formation which is vital for industrial development. Accumulation here is conceived of as an economic process whereby surplus value is realized in the mines, plantations, farms, factories etc. We would like to dismiss as a misnomer the claim that foreign capital aids self-reliant development. This is because of the danger of indebtedness, decapitalization, and financial leakages in the economy which is derived from the fact that foreign capital is profit motivated; and acts as pump sucking surpluses from Nigeria. Also, foreign resources are not neutral and have their values and political influence which undermine Nigeria's sovereignty.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, capital needed for industrialization has to be generated in Nigeria. It is important that we have a collective and concentrated accumulation. Also, the limited local resources have to be maximally utilized. This can be enhanced through collective planning of the national economy to curb the excesses of spontaneity of the economy; to reallocate capital from frivolous, conspicuous consumption and luxury items to serve the needs of the society's primary accumulation; to restructure the investments in favour of capital goods sector and basic needs. With national control of banks, insurance and other financial houses, Nigerian people will have the institutional machinery needed for national credit allocation.

In Nigeria there are some financial resources that exist outside the formal banking sector, especially in the rural areas which can be mobilized and invested in collectively owned and controlled industries. The last currency exchange exercise in 1984 surprised some observers when peasants and other petty commodity producers exchanged huge sums of the old currency for the new ones. It is important for us to emphasize that it is not necessary to have huge billions of naira before one can develop. Our oil wells since the seventies have spilled several billions, but we have equally spilled the billions on white elephant projects and even proceeded to borrow huge billions without providing enough jobs, drinkable water, roads, shelter, education, food, industrial raw materials, technology, electricity, etc.

If one examines the capital structure of most industries in Nigeria, it would be noticed that the cost of setting up new industries is high and often exaggerated due to the cost of foreign consultancy, importation of turn-key plants, equipment, the contract system of designing, building and supplying materials at inflated cost, with the fraudulent 'kick-back' syndrome. Yet in several industries, there is low capacity utilization, the dominance of foreign inputs, ownership and control which result in huge foreign exchange drain. When however, we incubate Nigeria, we would require to use our

locally invented, cheap and simple capital-saving technology, our raw materials, our entrepreneurs, plus our huge reserve of labour which would be well trained for the different jobs in the industries. Also, if we put our priorities right, Nigeria will be able to set up industries in virtually every village of Nigeria. The experience of China having to organize production to meet local needs with over a billion people and for export, without a significant foreign debt has convinced us that by effectively mobilizing our local material and human resources, embracing simplicity, honesty, hardwork and discipline, we can still achieve freedom and greatness.<sup>38</sup> We have to abolish the multi-million naira syndrome, ultra-modern complex tendency and use the little available capital with little developed technology most suited to our factor endowments.

#### TRADE INDEPENDENCE

The main plank of the Nigerian economy has been dependence on foreign trade either to sell our crude oil and other products or to buy all that we need in order to produce, consume and to survive.<sup>39</sup> This situation renders Nigeria's prosperity precarious as the economy will expand and contract depending on the whims of our trading principals. In the drive to construct autochthonous industrialization, all raw materials and intermediate inputs have to be sourced locally. It may be necessary to recycle used materials such as papers, metal sheets and cans, plastic materials, bottles, etc. We would have to process our agricultural, forest and mineral resources into industrial raw materials for use in the manufacture of other goods, instead of the present decadent practice of exporting agricultural products like cotton and importing yarn to produce textile fabric in Nigeria. Industrial enterprises would have to establish backward and forward linkages and be integrated upstream downstream.

The imposition of a restriction on the economy will protect

local producers from foreign competition and build enough confidence in whatever can be produced locally using local materials. Having evolved a solid economic foundation in Nigeria capable of supporting the national economy, satisfying all our basic necessities, then we can begin to open up to the external world beginning with our closest neighbours and based on what we basically need. We have to choose our trading partners at a comparable level of power so that Nigeria will be less vulnerable to foreign manipulations. Foreign trade would then be used to reinforce instead of to distort our autochthonous development and national economy. Thus, the basic internal economy inspite of the re-linking with the world economy has to be insulated from any subversive consequences of linkage with the world market. This can be done via import quotas, tariffs, or total ban of some goods in order to control access of other products into the market.

Furthermore, it would be important to establish an export economy alongside the domestic one. Although the export economy would be separated from the domestic one, there will be unity in the separation. For example, the domestic market would draw from the proceeds of the international market but with enough immunity against the crippling trap of fluctuations in the world market.<sup>40</sup> It is highly recommended that production for domestic consumption or market has to take precedence over that for foreign market, even though in the industrialization of the West export market was paramount. This was possible for the early industrializers when the state of protectionism was minimal and few world competitors had emerged then as suppliers of industrial goods.<sup>41</sup> It is like placing the cart before the horse to think of export promotion, industrialization (or drive) when we have not been able to produce basic needs to satisfy the domestic market.

#### ENTREPRENEURIAL AND MANAGERIAL INDEPENDENCE

The entrepreneur is the most dynamic engine of any enter-

prise. This is because his decisions give life to other latent factors of production. There is the likelihood of an immediate stoppage of or drastic reduction in the entrenchment of expatriate staff in Nigerian industries if foreign investment is prohibited (initially and later minimized) and industries collectivized. This is because it is the importation of turnkey factories, foreign capital and foreign technology that is accompanied by foreign technical staff, management agents, consultants, directors etc., who penetrate Nigeria to control their branch plants and to ensure that their capital and investments in Nigeria satisfy the needs of metropolitan economies. Thus, when the struggle against imperialism begins, these foreign skills needed to manage foreign investments will become useless in our new drive for AD.

Management of collective enterprises will have to be collectivized and democratized so that the factory managers, the state planners and the workers in the factory floor will become co-owners and co-managers of the means of production, and members of the working class. Thus, matters affecting the enterprises will be discussed by all. This will ensure de-alienation, self-control, self-fulfilment as workers are not separated from the ownership of the means of production; workers influence general managerial decisions, and workers control their immediate work process. Ultimately, there will be popular industrial democracy in the management of production. The production process and output will then be geared to the basic needs of workers and other producing classes like peasants, artisans professionals who supply the raw materials and take part in consuming the finished products. By so doing, workers and peasants will become upgraded as proprietors of collectivized enterprises and this in turn will motivate them to increase their productivity of labour, to reduce loitering, inefficiency and indiscipline. The result will be commitment to the success of the enterprise as workers will be free to offer suggestions from the factory floors which may be more useful than the supposed expert

testimony of the remote top management. When workers participate in managing enterprises, quicker and more efficient communication of ideas takes place on the enterprises between the general categories of staff. This in turn will minimize industrial conflict.

The question of management of enterprises has to be situated in the context of the general leadership in the country at large. This is because good leadership is a key factor in the combination of men, materials, time and money to attain desired goals. The type of national leadership that can champion autochthonous development in Nigeria has to be genuinely anti-imperialist, having the commitment of national character and total national liberation. The leaders have to be self-less, patriotic, receptive, honest, disciplined, courageous and with a high integrity capable of inspiring confidence in the body politic. They must govern for and with the people, but not against or without the people. They have to uphold general instead of particularistic or personal interests. They have to live by examples in an austere style, unostentatious, so that when they appeal to the people to tighten their belts and make sacrifices, the people will comply willingly because they see the leaders setting the pace and living by examples instead of by rhetorics.

If we can muster the leadership with the qualities outlined above (some of which Awo had), and adhere to the autochthonous principles discussed, guided by a mass, popular democratic ideology that effects mass mobilization of all local resources, then the struggle for the liberation of Nigeria through the construction of autochthonous industrial base would become a practical possibility.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to outline Awo's thoughts on human freedom and economic liberation. We noted the fact that for Awo, the task of economic liberation has to precede that of construction. The origin of Nigeria's present industrial paraly-

sis was explored and traced to imperialist domination of the economy. In a bid to extend and realize Awo's vision of liberation, we proceeded to suggest how Nigeria can be liberated through an autochthonous industrialization policy which has to be home-grown, anti-imperialist, egalitarian, ideologically oriented; and with man as the focus of and for his development.

Since foreign investors dominate our industrialization process through their ownership and control of vital resources like technology, capital, entrepreneurial skills, management, and raw materials which are largely imported, we had to specifically provide a clue as to how to re-generate these essential resources in Nigeria, by Nigerians, for Nigerians with Nigerian resources. Given the strangle-hold on the economy by foreign monopolies, the condition for this re-birth therefore requires our temporary de-incorporation from the imperialist world system for a period of time so as to create the free atmosphere for autonomous process of accumulation and development.

What is important is for us to attempt a sober reflection or critical re-examination of our antecedent history of hopeless dependent development in order to see if the path we have pursued to date has served us well as a people. Different people may reach different conclusions as to the adequacy or otherwise of our past and present development principles and practices, depending on their interests, their perceptions and their role in the resource allocation process. It is our conviction in this paper that, if we attempt an autochthonous path, we may not be able to build a nuclear plant or "black bomb", aeroplane, air-conditioners, rockets, video sets and computers immediately. However, we shall succeed in meeting our basic necessities of life by being able to provide enough food, shelter, clothing, drinking water, health-care, education, transport facilities and jobs to all that are needy, in order to usher in enduring prosperity for all and sundry. Ultimately, after meeting our necessities, we can then begin

to think of how to reach the moon. In order for us to be happy, human and free, it is absolutely necessary for us to be able to eat, sleep, be clothed, be healthy, be educated, to move about and have jobs to do.

In conclusion, if we are to achieve economic liberation which Awo strongly advocated, then we must begin work on an autochthonous path by withdrawing from the present world economy in order to build our foundation as a sovereign state. However, if we prefer to remain and pursue neocolonial policies, we will be voluntarily mortgaging the liberties of not only our present generation, but also of the future one, and surrendering to continuous dependence, underdevelopment and neocolonial exploitation in perpetuity. Our failure to achieve autonomous industrialization and economic liberation can thus be explained not as the failure of foreign investors (or the World Bank and her associated organizations) who have the right to protect and advance their interests globally, but the failure of Nigerians, especially the leaders, to sincerely lead by examples to do what is scientifically manifest, socially equitable and morally fair and just; to free the economy from foreign and domestic exploitation, to establish a firm national control of the economy and to break the strangulating grip of TNCS, International Organizations, industrialized powers and their agents some of whom are self-styled Nigerian nationalist, patriots and indigenous businessmen.

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- 34 For a discussion of the issues in technology transfer see Osita Eze, "The Illusions of Technology Transfer", in Asikpo Essien-Ibok (ed), *Towards Progressive Nigeria*, Kano, Triumph Publishing Company 1983, S. Wangwe, "Transfer of Technology, Issues and Policies, *Utafiti*, Vol. IV, No. 1., 1979, pp. 3-14; A. T. Gana, "The ideology of Technology Transfer, in Asikpo Essien-Ibok, *Op. Cit.*
- 35 E. A. Ikoku, *African Development with a Human Face*, p. 15
- 36 For a detailed discussion, Piero Sraffa, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- 37 Empirical evidence does not support the claim that foreign capital aids development and emancipation as many Third World recipient of foreign capital especially debt-paralyzed Latin American States have become borrowing and debt addicts, hooked to the borrowing Syndrome, without a concomitant attainment of economic development, social justice, liberation or autonomy. See Cheryl Payer, *The Debt Trap*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974; T. Hayter, *Aid as Imperialism*, Middlesex, Penguin, 1971.
- 38 For a discussion of Chinese development, see Alex Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1977.
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# Awolowo's Planning Strategies: Their Implications On Nigerian Development

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## INTRODUCTION

One distinctive apotheosis put forward by (Chinua Achebe 1987) was when he asserted that Chief Awolowo was bound to send through the length and breadth of Nigeria, tremors of powerful emotion suitable to the passing of a remarkable and highly controversial figure. Obviously, many people actually believed that Chief Awolowo was controversial because of his perceptions, predictions and strategies of phenomena affecting human existence. Although, he had dismissed such claim in many circles and the last instance was three months before his death when he claimed that,

"(Awolowo 1987)". I have never regarded myself as having a monopoly of wisdom. The trouble is that when most people in public life and in the position of leadership and rulership are spending whole days and nights carousing in clubs or in the company of men of shady character and women of easy virtue, I, like a few others, am always at my post working hard at the country's problems and trying to find solutions for them.....

This paper intends to highlight whether Chief Obafemi Awolowo actually demonstrated this statement in his planning strategies. If so, how feasible in the Nigerian context?. This paper does not intend to deal with what some people saw as the controversial posture of the Nationalist.

His planning strategies demand appraisal because of his acclaimed philosophy on economic development. For Awolowo, political freedom is meaningless unless it goes hand in hand with economic freedom. Anyone who cares to read his history right will readily concur that the prime motivation for imperialist predictions, conquest and rule are economic in character. To put it in his own words, "if the imperialist powers can accomplish their economic exploitation of the weaker nations without political control they will much prefer to do it that way". This abhorrence of international exploitation is replicated in his perpetual fight against intral-national oppression and exploitation. Perhaps, it is this position (the upliftment of the common man) that draws the battle line with the *status quo*. What one is saying is that Awolowo's planning strategies did not give room for exploitation and this shall be demonstrated in this paper. To accomplish this, various of Awolowo's strategies (in form of policies and statements) in some specific areas of the Nigerian economy would be highlighted specially, in the area of agriculture, education and industrialization. The concluding section examines whether his strategic sermons yielded fruit. If such fruit was far below expectation, then what factors are responsible and finally, what could be done to achieve the objectives of his planning strategies in Nigeria now and hereafter.

#### OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF PLANNING STRATEGIES

To understand Awo's planning strategies, it may be necessary to briefly highlight the operational meaning of "planning strategy" and later relate this to the strategies of Awoism. Most writers on political economy see planning strategy as an organized, intelligent, coherent attempt by an individual or a group of individuals to select the best available alternatives to achieve specific goals. It represents the rational application of human knowledge to the process of reading

decisions which are to serve as the basic of human action. The central core of the meaning remains the establishment of the relationship between means and ends with the objective of achieving the latter by the most efficient use of the former. Or put differently, planning strategies are the exercise of intelligence to deal with facts and situations as they are, and to find ways of solving problems. Whatever be a planning strategy adopted, whether in the area of agriculture, or education or industrialization or in any other sphere of human endeavour, what matters mostly is that policies to be implemented in planning processes should be clear and specific. These should extend not only to the objectives to be achieved but also to the procedure of implementation. Furthermore, planning requires organization. Once more, planning strategies should be able to assess whether resources were allocated and used according to plan and whether activities were performed according to plan. It can easily be argued therefore that the success or failure of any policy depends on the activities, already carried out at the policy formulation stage as well as at the implementation stage. If a policy is not well formulated, the planning strategies might fail woefully. Similarly, a well formulated policy fail, if it is not well executed. Thus, policy implementation in planning process could be confronted with some problems such as poor planning, inadequate resources, low administrative efficiency or lack of commitment by field staff, political influence, lack of public support and lack of adherence to procedures of implementation. Planning strategies should involve:

- (i) A survey of things as they are;
- (ii) An observation of what needs to be done;
- (iii) A study of means of implementation practical ways of implementation.

When this sequence is followed, planning is likely to be quite different from that done by reference to abstract

situations. To this end there is also a need for improvement of the planning milieu.

With this background, Awolowo's philosophy can be exhaustively discussed in the area chosen as a case study in this paper. We would like to know whether some of his planning strategies actually fall within the orbit of the laid-down strategies milieu.

#### PLANNING MILIEU IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

In the area of agriculture, Awolowo made a lot of contributions. He was of the opinion (1960) that agricultural productivity management is important and it is by paying attention to this that agricultural productivity can be improved. Improvement of agricultural productivity itself is important in any economy. He further claimed that the right decisions are made regarding most appropriate and profitable crops and livestock to produce. According to Awolowo, the various aspects of farm management worth considering and the management involve:

- (i) farmland;
- (ii) farm labour;
- (iii) farm capital;
- (iv) soils and crops;
- (v) livestock;
- (vi) farm records and accounts; and finally
- (vii) farm planning and budgeting.

He stated that the key factors that farm manager who want to be effective and efficient should bear in mind with respect (i-vii) above are the following (1963):

- (i) For agricultural improvement and mechanization there is a need for a large holding of land. Where such big holdings cannot be easily pur-

chased by one individual because of lack of money, farmers can cooperate and execute a land consolidation scheme. A farmer should consider what he himself is likely to earn from a piece of land before arranging to buy or rent it, to earn high gross margins per hectare of land, any of the following methods according to him, can be used.

- (ii) Grow more profitable crops; practice multiple cropping, provided this does not reduce yield and shorten the length of the buslying fallow; keep livestock where they do not compete with cash crops; increase yields by adopting the right variety and cultural practices; sell via marketing outlets and at times that are more economical.

On management of farm labour the following strategies were put forward by him. Production of more crops per hectare of land; choosing of the right enterprise to produce; improvement of farm layout; using of improved tools and working methods; maintenance of good labour relations, payment of wages in relation to the amount and quality of the work done.

On the management of farm capital, the following were suggested by him. Ways by which this can be managed are: Careful repair and maintenance; full utilization, investment in ventures that will bring higher profits.

On the management of soils and crops the following suggestions were put forward that, there should be maintenance of soil by shade trees cover crops or mulches; use of land wisely by planting forest reserves on steppes for grazing or permanent crops and by planting annual crops on gently sloping lowland; always work across the slope, never up and down; practice strip cropping; utilize storm drains, terraces, grass strips and bunds.

For the attainment of good crop management, the fol-

lowing were suggested – Utilize arable crop rotation; return organic matter and plant nutrients to the soil; cultivate and plant early; employ correct spacing; control weeds; plant new varieties of crops; examine the utilization of paying fertilizers; eradicate or reduce the effect of pests and diseases; examine the benefits and costs of embarking on irrigation and execute the most advisable decision.

In the Western region, (Awolowo 1960) instructed that the method of agricultural activities demanded a change in view of the colonial policies on agriculture which was mere deviation between the planned process and actual implementation process.

Hence, it was recommended under his regional government that mechanization is the shortest means to accelerate agricultural productivity and not crude implements such as hoes and cutlasses. In this regard, the Western region was instructed to formulate a prolonged forward mechanized agriculture.

In furtherance of this strategy, farm settlements were established and periodic agricultural exhibitions and food campaigns were introduced and finally co-operative movements were established to co-ordinate the activities of the farmers in general.

#### FREE EDUCATION POLICY

Education is a weapon of social mobility and of status improvement. In one of his public lectures, Awolowo once declared that “every Nigerian citizen must be educated at public expense to the limits of his natural ability to enable him in the finest possible state, to produce the utmost he is capable of”. The opportunity to initiate and implement his policy came during this premiership which came into effect on April 14, 1955. The implementation procedure involved reduction of school duration from eight years to six years and the abolishing of school fees.

The white paper based on the 1952 census figures antici-

pated that some additional 170,000 children of the 6 to 7 age group would be enrolled in class one by year starting from January 1955 to 1959. By record, his government spent \$3,358,720.00 on education in each financial year and by 1960, almost 41% of its total revenue was expended on education. As indicated by Ade Adetuye (1987) when appraising Awolowo's policy on education, he declared that whether in or out of government he (Awo) never ceased to advocate for the free Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. After providing the economic backbone for the prosecution of the civil war; Ade Adetuye further noted that, General Gowon's contribution to his success announced a UPE Programme in January, 1974.

The commencement of the second Republic, 1979-83, gave Awolowo yet another opportunity to implement his educational policies but this time free education from primary schools to the University level. The UPN controlled states of Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Bendel and Lagos pursued this policy of free education for all. For example, in Lagos State, the number of primary schools rose from 604 in 1979 to 954 in 1980. Secondary schools rose from 79 to 180 in 1980. In addition except in Oyo State, all the remaining UPN-controlled states established universities.

#### PURE ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

With practical economic strategies that one can reflect upon, Awolowo's aspiration for industrialization can now be considered. The principles which he was noted for emerged before he became an active politician. It should be recalled that in June 1941, he submitted a note to the Ibadan Branch of Nigerian Youth Movement calling for the formation of co-operative movements as a means of capital formation for investment propensity. He believed strongly that foreign capitalists should be discouraged, so that economic independence could be gained. On 18 November 1961, he declared before the House of Representatives that

I only wish to re-emphasise before closing that the type of planning and regulation which I have mentioned cannot be formulated by foreigners with capitalistic backgrounds, but by qualified Nigerians, who, together with their fellow citizens wear the shoe of a mismanaged and deteriorating economy and therefore know where it pinches

He believed that agriculture should be developed, some key sectors of the economy nationalized and a more rational approach to attract foreign investment designed. Also in his 1961 speech, he spoke extensively on ways to sustain a favourable balance of payment most especially on current account. According to him high importation should be minimized and exportation should be expanded. The logic behind this was his desire for accruing more foreign reserves for capital projects. In addition, he recommended at least 50% cut in the allowances of parliamentarians including himself, so that part of this money could be diverted to investment. More importantly, Awolowo was a firm believer in internal revenue generation. As indicated by (Amuzie Akpako et. al. 1987),

Chief Awolowo in his economic policies exhibited traits of a typical fiscalist or a keynesian economist who believes that economic stability and growth are best achieved through the use of fiscal instruments (notably tax) in controlling aggregate demand.

In this regard, Chief Awolowo was fundamentally opposed to the monetarist school of thought which believes that what matters is money and that as long as interest rate is adjusted, market forces would interplay to bring about a desirable situation in the economy. On the two occasions that he had the opportunity to manage the economy first as the Premier of the Western Region (1954 – 1959) and as the Federal Commissioner of finance (1967 – 1971). Chief Awolowo pursued to the hilt his fiscalist approach to economic management. The following are facts and figures to justify Awolowo's economic management:-

During his tenure as premier of the Western region, Chief Awolowo pursued a successful policy of matching expenditure to actual revenue as opposed to the 'street begging economy' he accused the Federal Government of excessive spending. In fact, actual surpluses were recorded in a number of instances between recurrent revenue and recurrent expenditure. In the 1958/1959 fiscal year for instance an estimated surplus of £473,070 was recorded. His government depended mostly on earnings from the cocoa and palm kernel trade as the source of the bulk of its revenue outside the statutory revenue from the consolidated revenue account of the Federal Government. But efforts were made to derive revenue from other sources. In the 1956/57 fiscal year for example, direct taxes accounted for a total of £905,199 for the Western Regional Government. The Government also earned £383,107 from licences, £207,377 from court fees and £179,431 from government departments. In the same year revenue from government properly accounted for £328,805 and reimbursement for expenditure incurred on behalf of the Federal Government, a further £1.03 million for that fiscal year. Actual revenue came to £15522,125; for which payments from the Federal Government accounted for £11,455.

One of the innovative avenues of generating revenue was the then Western Regional Government lottery. In the 1957/58 fiscal year, this method yield £89,550 and that was after the sum of £40,000 had been transferred to the Western Nigeria Development Fund.

In line with his belief in the existence of government enterprise side by side with the private sector, the Western region of Nigeria financed corporations such as O'dua Investment Company which was unfiltered in its operations. The Western Region's Ministry of Trade and Industries was restricted to providing advisory services for the corporation as well as collation of trade data required by businessmen and answering enquiries concerning the region. Direct investment in the Western Regional Government were mainly in real estate and warehouse used by produce buyers and the Western Nigerian

marketing Board.

However, as at July 31 1955, £740,799 worth of treasury bills were listed among the assets of the government. Water supply which was a social service provided little revenue but the government also invested in mechanical and woodwork machinery and from all such investment, the government earned £270,000 in the 1958/59 fiscal year, £186,000 in 1957/58 £186,543 in 1956/57. The rest of the commercial ventures were carried out by the Western Region of Nigeria Finance Corporation and the Western Region Production Development Board. The former was an investment company while the latter was concerned with stimulating production activities. Estimated Revenue from the Board increased from £17,500 in 1958/58 to £50,000 in 1958/59. But that of the finance corporation dropped forward at the end of Chief Awolowo's tenure from £26,250,00 in 1957/58 to £19,250 in 1958/59.

Chief Awolowo's fiscalist approach to economic management manifested itself more profoundly at the federal level during the four years within which he brilliantly managed the national economy during a period when the nation was engulfed in a costly civil war.

In many ways, the current Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which is purely a monetarist economic management approach represents a dismantling of the various fiscalist controls and regulations which Chief Awolowo initiated then. Most of these controls had far-reaching impact, especially in the banking sector of the economy. In the area of monetary and banking policy, Chief Awolowo as the finance commissioner introduced Treasury Certificates to supplement Treasury Bills and ways and means of advances of raising revenue within the economy, having refused to borrow funds from the International Financial System during the war years. The specific fiscal instruments which Chief Awolowo imposed during the war years and on which he relied as sources of revenue to execute the war included the capital gains tax of up to 20%, terminal dues paid by all ships evacuating mineral oil from Nigerian Ports and the turnover tax which was imposed on companies whether or not they

had recorded profits for the year in question.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo demonstrated a very Unique strategy during the Nigeria civil war when he was federal minister of finance as earlier mentioned. The strategy he applied, though unfavourable to the then "Biafran Government" and rather favourable to the then Federal Military Government under Gowon, was of importance. It should be noted that Chief Awolowo made a categorical statement then that "starvation is the legitimate weapon of war and you cannot be feeding your enemy". To achieve this, he blocked all routes through which food could enter the then "Biafran Republic." This strategy no doubt made it possible for Nigeria to be re-United because, a hungry man cannot fight war on an empty stomach. In recent years, during Shehu Shagari regime Chief Awolowo alerted the Nigeria nation on the "economic ship" of Nigeria which was heading towards a "rock". Nigeria would be in "trouble" if the Shagari regime did not avert this situation. Although he suggested what Nigerian could do to avoid this "ugly" economic predicament, his warnings were not heeded.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF ALOWO'S PLANNING STRATEGIES

Awolowo's planning strategies are somewhat positive although the Chief himself has been accused of corruption. Consider for instance the statement by the Coker commission of inquiry in 1962.

We are satisfied by and large that Chief Awolowo knew everything about this diversion of large sums of money both from the National Bank of Nigeria Limited and the National Investment and Properties Company Limited into the coffers of the AG. This scheme was to build around him with money an empire financially formidable both in Nigeria and abroad, an empire in which dominance would be maintained by him by the power of the money which he had given out". This commission was set up by the then federal government to investigate allegations of financial management in certain public corporations and Boards

owned by the then Western Region Government. These malpractices took place between 1954 and 1959 when Awolowo was the premier of the Western Region. Although, Chief Awolowo denied all this saying.

I have a clean record inspite of the Coker Commission of Inquiry. My conscience tells me so. I never stole anybody's money. I never took a bribe. I never offered it at any stage in my life, God knows it, and I know it .

Our main concern is to examine Awolowo's planning strategies objectives. On agriculture in the first instance, despite his strategies before the military intervention in 1966, food production did not increase as expected in the Western region. This can be best confirmed by the table below.

*TABLE I: Estimated Money Value of Major Food Items in the Western Region Between 1960-1963*

<i>Crop</i>	<i>Millions (&amp;) 1960.</i>	<i>Millions (&amp;) 1962-1963.</i>
Yam	205.3	198.8
Maize	62.1	56.8
Cocoyams	36.2	29.0
Cassav	28.5	27.2

*Source:* *Extracted from Economic Bulletin for African* vol. vii, No. 1, January, 1975 page 5 containing estimated money value of some major food production in all the regions of Nigeria between 1960-63 and states between 1972-73.

TABLE II: Production of Major Food Crops (Thousand Tonnes) in Western Region (1960 - 1965)

Year	Yam	Maize	Cassava
1960	3.07	2.02	3.00
1961	2.09	2.03	3.03
1962	2.01	2.01	2.07
1963	2.03	1.20	2.15
1964	1.99	0.90	1.03
1965	1.28	0.70	0.08

Source: Extracted from the "production of Major food crops (thousand tonnes) for all Regions of the Nigeria" as supplied by the *Federal Office of Statistics*, Lagos.

Looking very critically on the two tables, one would instantly notice that despite the laudable programmes of Chief Awolowo, agricultural productivity in the area of food items was decreasing. It should be added again that studies carried out by the food research institute in Stanford University, 1975, confirmed that food decreased in favour of the great emphasis placed on cash crop such as cocoa. But unfortunately, the revenue from cocoa production which came mainly from the Western Region was not allowed to be exclusively utilized by the Nigerian commodity board.

Had the money been exclusively reserved for the Western Region, this part of the country should have been more developed than the present situation.

On the free education initiated by Chief Awolowo in 1955, many who enjoyed it, continue to praise him for this laudable programme, and the beneficiaries in the old Western region today have occupied and still occupy strategic positions in both the Private and the Public sectors.

The interviews conducted in Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Bendel and Lagos which formed the former Western Region confirm the true position of this assertion. In each state, 100 people across various professional establishments were interviewed to inquire where they benefitted from Awolowo's free education scheme. The table below justifies our claims. In table

TABLE 3

<i>States</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Ondo	0	100%
Ogun	2	98%
Oyo	1	99%
Lagos	3	97%
Bendel	10	90%
TOTAL	16(3.2%)	484(96.8%)

*Question:* Did you enjoy free education of Obafemi Awolowo in 1955?

3 among the 500 interviewed, only 16 people said that they did not enjoy free education. This figure is certainly minimal and represents only 3.2% of those interviewed whereas, about 484 agreed that they benefitted from Awolowo's free education and this represents 96.8% of the totality of those interviewed. In the UPN-controlled states, one of the programmes initiated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo was Free Education at all levels. The UPN sought to work for the establishment of a literate state. Though, this programme was laudable our survey as revealed by *table 4* confirmed that more than half of those interviewed believed that the UPN's

TABLE 4

<i>States</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Ondo	50	50
Ogun	68	32
Oyo	70	30
Lagos	15	85
Bendel	62	38
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>265 (53%)</b>	<b>235 (47%)</b>

**Question:** Was the free education by the UPN a success between (1979-1983)?

educational programme was not successful, with the exception of those in Lagos State. Majority of those interviewed in the rest of the states declared the programme unsuccessful. About 53% declared it wholly unsuccessful while about 57% declared it successful (*see table 4*). It was also revealed that the performance of those who took the ordinary level G.C.E. examination under free education was woeful. This can be confirmed by the statistics below in *Table 5*.

Looking closely at the table, it would be seen that in the 1978/79 set before UPN's free education, out of 479,124 students that took ordinary level G.C.E. Examinations, 58,970 of them passed with five credits and above which represents 12.3% whereas in the first set of free education products of 1984/85 with about 542,116 students only 47,989 passed with five credits which represent 8.9%. The implication of this is that, students in earlier years did better than those who enjoyed free education. In his strategies, coming into his economic philosophy having considered that of education, no doubt about this, Chief Awolowo could be accredited for his foresight. In the first instance, his

TABLE 5

**RESULTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR THE FIRST SET OF THOSE WHO ENJOYED FREE EDUCATION IN THE UPN-CONTROLLED STATES (1979 — 83)**

States	Students for O/L C. C. E. before 1984 (1978-79)	No of passes with at least 5 credits above.	No of failures	Students of 1984 /1985.	No of Passes	No of Failures
Lagos	31,200	2,460	28,740	38,652	1,250	37,402
Ogun	28,565	3,185	25,380	32,143	3,100	29,043
Oyo	148,785	16,211	132,574	178,652	14,143	161,509
Ondo	132,432	13,642	118,790	143,231	11,241	131,990
Bendel	138,142	23,472	114,670	152,438	18,255	134,183
TOTAL	479,124	58,970 (12.3%)	420,154 (87.7%)	545,116	47,989 (8.9%)	494,127 (91.1%)

SOURCE: WAEC OFFICE, LAGOS.

fiscal policy during his tenure in Public Offices yielded many things for the people of Nigeria. For example, he established the television at Ibadan which is the first of its type in Africa, the liberty stadium at Ibadan and finally the Industrial Estate in Ikeja now in Lagos State. Again, Awolowo economic strategies also featured during the period of the civil war. He blocked all routes through which food was entering the then Biafra as formerly claimed. In addition, as a Federal Minister of finance under the then Gowon's administration, Chief Awolowo made it possible that no single kobo was obtained as loan from any quarter to administer the war. The implication of his prognostication about Nigerian economy during Shagari's administration also deserves our attention. He then warned the administration of the pending economic doom. Even though the then Federal Government denied the pending doom but the implication of his prognosticating strategies became manifested through the huge debt incurred by Nigeria. (Barnisaye 1985). That at the end of March 1981, Nigeria's 19 states and Federal governments had recorded external debts totalling ₦4,428.8 million; that the Government of the United States of America granted the Federal Government under Shagari in 1980 credit totalling 180 million American dollars to combat the effect of drought in certain parts of the country, and that by Wednesday, July 13, 1982, the Federal Government of Nigeria signed a ₦1.4 billion loan agreement in London with a consortium of 25 European, American and Middle-East banks. Having considered the implications of his planning strategies, it is necessary to outline and discuss what is really, responsible for the *relative* successes! Take for granted his programmes of Free Education, Free Health services, Full Employment and Integrated Rural Development during the second Republic, one would notice that some of these programmes failed to achieve their set objectives. All the activities, pronouncements and expenditures of the party's elected candidates (Barnisaye 1984) were later to revolve around these cardinal programmes. Declaring "democratic

socialism" as its goal, the UPN then sought to work for the establishment of a welfare state with tools, regulations and institutions which are capitalist in nature. It was obvious to critical observers right from the beginning that the UPN's goals would face three-major problems. First, can a party, which is by no means dominant in the political process operate a system which is opposed to those of the dominant party? Second, irrespective of the good intentions of the party's leadership can the public count on the commitment of other members of the party?. Finally, to what extent is the party prepared to confront other forces which are likely (even certain) to oppose its programmes? The UPN also had policies aimed at encouraging local capitalist and even foreign investors. According to its manifesto:

We whole heartedly support the objectives of the indigenization of the national economy .....We shall evolve policies that will aid Nigerian entrepreneurs to feel more confident about investing their resources and energies in the area of industrialization. But we will also actively encourage foreign capital investment in those areas of industrialization which immediately require the more sophisticated production processes, and managerial and technical skills.

This aspect of the UPN manifesto clearly contradicts its goal at building a socialist state. The programme does not provide the strategies and tactics for mobilising Nigerian workers and peasants against imperialist domination and exploitation. The elimination of capitalist relations of production and exchange and the institution of a popular workers' state. This means that at best, the UPN was a reformist political party, with extended liberal capitalist interests. However, it must be pointed out that of the six political parties which contested elections in Nigeria's second Republic, the UPN had the clearest and most committed programme against which it could be judged. Intra-party

competition, inefficiency and corruption to some of the UPN states, as well as opposition from the dominant ruling UPN government at the Centre threw the four cardinal programmes of the party into serious Jeopardy, except perhaps in Lagos State.

More importantly, the Awolowo's strategies were bound to face crisis and they actually faced crisis not minding the good intention of the Nationalist. The nature of Nigerian state is what could be mentioned here. There is a tendency in the study of the crisis of Nigerian poor performance of policy initiation to focus on super-structural and peripheral issues. There has been a complete neglect of the linkage(s) between the nature of the peripheral state and the bourgeoisie with the underdevelopment and crisis of the economic sector. In addition, the extent to which structural distortions, class contradictions and struggles have initiated against effective policy initiative and implementation have been overlooked. As claimed (Bamisaye 1984) it is impossible to divorce the nature, contradictions and crisis of the agrarian sector. In addition, the extent to which structural distortions, in any society from the specificity of the social formation, the pattern of capital accumulation, the nature and role of the state and the direction of class struggles. Any strategy from anybody which does not put these into consideration cannot capture, expose and explain the contradictions between rural social forces and the state as well as its agents and allies. The historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production (particularly land) for example, that is to say the process of depeasantisation and proletarianisation, cannot be conceptualised in isolation of the dynamics and contradictions within and between sectors (rural/urban), classes and the state. The transformation of particular formations from say feudal to capitalist, the socialist to communist mode of production involves the internal articulation of the specific mode as well as the activities of the state which, through the hegemony, control our national resources and the means of coercion, influen-

ces and direct such as transformation.

The manner in which capital accumulation takes place, which involves an interventionist role by the state, either through expropriation, is equally reflective of the historical specificities of the formation. Thus, the accumulative base of dominant class has direct implications for the policies initiated towards the economic sector. These and all others crises should be removed before any planning strategy can work in a country such as Nigeria. Even Awolowo tried to dismantle some of these social ills during his life time but his efforts did not yield the expected fruits as a result of the existing problems of a typical peripheral society such as Nigeria. The literature on the nature of the state in peripheral societies has tended to emphasise its "post-colonial" nature at the expense of its capitalist nature (Paul Bray 1981 Michela Freyhod 1978). The emphasis on its overdevelopment, over-extension and interventionist character, specifies the peripheral state of Nigeria as a crisis-ridden, unstable and pre-hegemonic state. Nigeria has been operating and still operating the new-colonial capitalist system which actually contradicts Awolowo's planning strategies. In fact, this system is the most unproductive and crisis ridden in peripheral societies. The Nigerian situation is made worse given the fact that the accumulative base of the bourgeoisie is in commerce, real estate and transportations. The co-existence of more than one "mode of production" in the social formation peasant and capitalist, also generates contradictions and conflicts (Julius Ihonvbere 1983). That is why strategies to develop must take cognizance of this problem. Hence, Chief Awolowo's planning strategies suffered a great deal because of this unique situation of Nigeria. Future planning strategies should endeavour to examine the extent of the damages done by the nature of our society and what can be done to remove the problems. Ozay Mehmet planning policies or guidelines can be put forward.

- (a) Production and consumption of good services must be for the "common good" and satisfy both efficiency and equity criteria;

- (b) anti-poverty planning and policy instruments should be utilised to eliminate excessively large disparities in incomes and living standard between individuals, groups and regions; and
- (c) the political decision-making process must be reformed to permit expanded popular participation so that social choices reflect the much and preferences of all social groups.

Finally, as indicated (Bamisaye, 1985) the survival of the Nigeria state depends essentially on the ruling elites of the state in being good keepers of their disadvantaged majority. Basically, developmental problems in Nigeria can be traced to lack of proper policy implementation. There is the need to give dignity of labour a prime of place. Most Nigerians today are interested in being in control of large sum of money without much to show for it in term of labour and capital inputs. It is necessary therefore for the government of Nigeria (either State or Federal) to be equipped with coherent policies embracing both direct and indirect control measure. This could only be done to achieve in a practical sense the objectives of any planning strategy whether that of Awolowo or any other person trusted with the administration of Nigeria now or in the future.

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## Awolowo and Revenue Allocation in Nigeria

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### INTRODUCTION

Chief Obafemi Awolowo occupied a central position in the development of Nigerian federalism. His role in the evolution and development of federal finance cannot be overemphasized. As one of the 'Big Three' of the 1950's, on him devolved the task of presenting and defending the Western position vis-a-vis the contending position of the other two Regions. In this task, Chief Awolowo performed so well that he earned for himself several appellations from his political friends and opponents.

This paper attempts to evaluate Chief Awolowo's contribution to the debate and controversy over revenue allocation in the period. On the surface, this is a very simple task. However, there are certain questions, the most difficult of which are the questions of methodology and procedure. Firstly, the body of information available is limited by the time of writing: the paper could not benefit from invaluable information that could have been collected through an oral interview with Chief Awolowo himself. We have, therefore, used entirely extant written materials gleaned from his publications, certain private papers, Western Regional Government publications, Reports of commissions and constitutional conferences, proceedings of crucial meetings and newspapers especially the *Daily Service*.

Secondly, some of the sources available to us exist as *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* or Action Group party documents. It is an onerous task to determine which of them was 'penned' by Chief Awolowo, and which others were written by other party stalwarts and opinion makers. Studies of Nigeria political parties have revealed that the Action Group adopted strictly democratic procedures in meetings and in deciding on major party policies; and that Chief Awolowo at no time attempted to be more than the *primus inter pares*. However, there is no doubt that Awolowo was the 'master builder of the Action Group,' and his views were generally dominant. Thus, without discounting the contribution of other party members (especially those who occupied the office from which some of the documents were said to have originated), we have taken the methodological licence to regard the writings of the Action Group, especially key submissions at key constitutional conferences attended by Chief Awolowo, as his views.

Thirdly, we have limited our discussion in this paper to 1950-1960, the decade when major political and economic decisions were taken about the future of Nigeria, and when Chief Awolowo was in power in the Western Region. This is due partly to the limitation of the data and information available, and partly to the need for depth rather than breadth in the study of such a personality as Awolowo, and such a phenomenon as revenue allocation.

The paper has five sections. The first deals with the origins of the debate on revenue allocation in 1950. The second section describes the battle of Chief Awolowo for the adoption of the principle of derivation. The third evaluates the factors responsible for the success of Chief Awolowo in this battle. The fourth and fifth sections analyse the gains by the people and government of Western Nigeria from Chief Awolowo's battle and the resultant improvement in the Region's revenue position.

## REGIONAL COMPETITION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REVENUE ALLOCATION, 1950.

Throughout the 1950's the debate on revenue allocation revolved around the search for the most acceptable principles and formulas. It is noteworthy that the debate took on a regional character. This is not surprising, as the regional elites conceived revenue allocation appropriately as an integral aspect of the whole question of the distribution and balance of political and economic power. In this condition of regional competition and antagonism, each of the regions advocated the adoption of principles and formulas most favourable to it. At every opportunity, usually during the constitutional conferences and budget sessions of the Central legislature, the elites harped on these principles and sought to coerce the colonial administration to adopt their own regional viewpoint.

Concretely, the Northern Region advocated the principle of population. It had been demonstrated by the various, ad-hoc censuses that, in population and land size, the North was as large as the West and East combined. Thus, an allocation of the general, non-declared<sup>1</sup> revenue of Nigeria on the basis of population would return more money to the Northern Region than any other. Moreover, the Northern elites, in their desire to catch up with the rest of the country, discovered that the North needed more money than any other region, and that only a *per capita* system of revenue allocation could bring the desired revenue.

The Western regional elites were in favour of the principle of derivation. By this principle, each of the three Regions would receive an allocation of revenue which would be related to the amount which that Region contributed to the revenue of Nigeria as a whole. Needless to say, the objective realities of the regional economies in the 1950's indicated, that the Western Region was the biggest contributor to the Nigerian economy. What with the export crops of the Region, and the consumption of imported, luxury, heavily

taxed goods by the burgeoning class! It then became imperative that the Western regional elites, confronted by similar, selfish claims from other Regions, should decide on allocation by derivation. For, this was the only way of taking from the general, non-declared revenue of Nigeria an enormous amount directly related to the proportion of the regional contribution to those revenues.

The Eastern Region in the 1950's was poorer than the other Regions. It was least served by derivation, and only partially served by population. The elites settled for an allocation based on the principle of needs and national interest. This principle postulated that there were certain services, such as the maintenance of law and order, and education, the cost of which should be borne by the Central Government. Thus, allocation should be made in accordance with the existing social services performed by each Region. By this, the Eastern Region hoped to benefit greatly because of the fastly expanding level of government-funded schools in Eastern Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

The best demonstration of the conflicting claims of the Regional elites was in 1950 at the Ibadan General Conference on the Nigerian Constitution.

The general course of the debate at this General Conference is very interesting to follow. For one thing, it shows the deep seated contradiction among the political elites who couched their selfish and regionalist interests in nationalist slogans. As it was becoming clear that real power would be granted at the Regional level, the members of the political elite broke ranks and would stop at nothing in their search for the domination of their respective Regions. One good way of doing this, they realised, was by cornering as much of Central, Nigerian revenue as was possible within their Regions. Thus, none of the positions taken in the debate on revenue allocation at the General Conference was objective and in the national interest.

There were three major regional and antagonistic sides at the Conference: the Northern, the Western and the Eastern

sides. The debate was actually opened by the Northern delegation; and the Northern viewpoint was ably presented by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.<sup>3</sup> He gave, as reasons for the Northern demand for a *per capita* method of allocating centrally collected revenues, the urgent need to redress the injustices done to that Region by the past systems of revenue allocation. Sir Abubakar traced the history of government finance in Nigeria and concluded that the North had consistently since 1914 been made to sacrifice for the rest of the country. The Central Government had been able to do this because, Balewa reasoned, the Northern people were not given the opportunity to express themselves:

The Northern peoples were unaware of the political system at the time. We were being told that Nigeria had a Legislative Council which legislated only for the south and Northerners were out of it.<sup>4</sup>

Now, Balewa continued, the North was aware of the injustices done to it; and rejected the allocation of central revenue on the principle of derivation. According to him,

We have come to a point when we realise that we must move fast, and faster than any Region in the country... We have suggested that allocation of revenue should be on a *per capita* basis.<sup>5</sup>

Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa then went further to dismiss the general belief and fear in the South that a *per capita* principle of revenue allocation was likely to work against the two other Regions and starve their schools, hospitals and other services of the necessary funds for maintenance and expansion works. In Balewa's view, the South already had too much, and it was only right that available revenue should be spent on areas that had very little. In addition, even by derivation, the North would have more funds than either the West or the East. But, in Balewa's opinion, this was not 'fair' enough to the North. This is because the Richards

— Phillipson approach did not take into account what each Region paid (per person) in direct tax: 3s. 10d in the North, 2s.8d. in the West, and 2s. 3d. in the East.<sup>6</sup> Balewa then closed his submission on the Northern demand by a threat:

Now, if you take the *per capita* basis which we think is a right formula we are ready to join you. Now, if you take the volume of trade (derivation) which is not a workable formula, I think it is another question.<sup>7</sup>

Many other Northern elites spoke to corroborate this argument and demand. Mallam Ribadu especially asserted that the other Regions in the country had been developed at the expense of, and with funds derived from, the North. He claimed that the expenditure of funds from indirect taxation was a mystery to the Northerners. Apart from personal emoluments of Government employees serving in the North (a large percentage of which were Southerners) which the Central Government paid, all other services and works were financed by the Native Administrations (NAA) from their own funds. This, Ribadu insisted, shows that most of the revenue derived from the North was spent in other Regions. This misnomer had been going on for years, and only a *per capita* principle could give some fairness to the North.<sup>8</sup>

From the speeches by the Northern elites,<sup>9</sup> it is clear that the demand for a *per capita* principle of revenue allocation was made not because the Region was being cheated by the existing system, but in order to ensure that a far larger share of these revenues was cornered in the Northern Region. The Region's population strength was the only means that could effect such a desire.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Western and Eastern (in short, 'Southern') delegations, in spite of the disagreements between them, collectively opposed this Northern demand. The members of the delegations agreed with their Northern counterparts that a revision was necessary in the

revenue allocation system. However, they disagreed with the Northern suggestion that the allocation henceforth be based on population. This would, in their own view, give the North too much and would advance the much dreaded scenario of 'Northern domination.' In addition, a diminution in the shares of the Western and Eastern Regions would occur, and this would have the major impact on the maintenance and expansion of amenities in these two Regions. According to Mr. S. Oluwole Awokoya, 'many of the hospitals and schools in the West and East would be closed down and there would be retrenchment in clerical services, public works departments and Nigerian Railway. . . .'<sup>10</sup>

Advancing this 'Southern' position further, Mr. E. A. Prest conceded to the North the need for development at a faster rate than the South: 'No member of the West would grudge a member of the North in any budget session if he asked for a block allocation for the North in order to carry out a development scheme for the progress of his people.'<sup>11</sup> But a *per capita* allocation of revenue was opposed as it would make the North have 'the whole' of the revenue available for distribution.

While the Western and Eastern delegations shared this common ground in opposition to the demand of the Northern delegation, the members of the two delegations diverged on the method of revenue allocation which each of them preferred. The Western delegation was of the view that it was their region, and not the North, which was being unjustly treated by the existing revenue allocation system. According to Bode Thomas, the Western Region which Sir Sydney Phillipson had calculated as contributing 31 per cent to the Central revenues was receiving only 25 per cent of central allocations. If the North was looking for additional revenue, Bode Thomas offered, it should begin to contribute more to Central Government funds rather than 'oppress' other Regions with its huge population. As far as the West was concerned, derivation should be applied as strictly as

possible.

The view of the Eastern delegation was different. To them, the 'needs' of each Region, not the 'volume of trade' (derivation) or population, should form the basis of allocation of central funds. The delegation argued that it was not the deliberate policy of the Nigerian governments, or an act of the Eastern regional peoples, that the North should be less developed than the south. Rather, it was the conservative nature of Northern rulers who believed that modernisation meant Christianisation and preferred to close their eyes to western ways. Thus, when the South was spending its revenue on modern amenities, the North was investing its accumulating surpluses abroad. In the words of E. N. Egbuna, 'in the coffers of the Northern Provinces they have funds which they are unable to use, and it is known that in the East we have no funds and we have plenty to do with them.'<sup>12</sup> Therefore, only the principle of needs would do justice to the people of the Eastern Region.

On the whole, the debate was fierce and the positions were not compromised. However, the energy and passion dissipated on the debate produced no immediate solution. Rather, the matter of revenue sharing was referred to an expert commission, the Hicks-Phillipson Commission, to study, and advise the Parties involved.

What we have endeavoured to do in this section is to establish the background to whatever Chief Awolowo's views on revenue allocation were in the period. The important thing that comes out of the foregoing discussion is the existence of regional competition throughout the 1950's. The origins of this phenomenon have been treated in existing studies of Nigerian politics and economy in the last days of colonial rule. We only need to add here that Chief Awolowo's position was in congruence with the Western Regional position, and was in defence of the latter against virulent claims from other Regions.

## CHIEF AWOLOWO AND THE BATTLE FOR DERIVATION, 1950-54

Although Chief Awolowo was not a member of the Western Regional delegation to the 1950 General Conference where the regional delegation battled each other to a standstill over revenue allocation, he took a keen interest in the proceedings of the Conference; and, immediately the Conference closed, Chief Awolowo, under the banner of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, began to amplify the views of the regional delegation on revenue sharing.

On behalf of the *Egbe*, Chief Awolowo drafted and presented an eleven-page memorandum<sup>13</sup> to the Hicks-Phillipson Commission. In it, Chief Awolowo argued that the Western Region was the richest and the largest contributor of revenue to the Central coffers. As a result, he would want the allocation of revenue to be governed by the principle of derivation and not 'even progress', population or national interest. He further claimed that the West was being cheated by the existing system of revenue sharing. In accepting the memorandum, the Secretary to the Hicks-Phillipson Commission, Mr. V. G. McMullan, was quoted to have said that 'the views and facts most ably put forward in it will be given the fullest consideration.'<sup>14</sup>

Chief Awolowo followed up the memorandum by leading a delegation of the *Egbe* to an interview with the Acting Governor of Nigeria on 27 October, 1950.<sup>15</sup> At the interview, he 'reiterated and amplified' the demands earlier made in the memorandum. He argued that 'the allocation by derivation was justifiable under financial grounds and by the dictates of practical politics,' and maintained that derivation was the only principle acceptable to the people of the Western Region.<sup>16</sup>

It is clear that Chief Awolowo drew his inspiration regarding revenue allocation from the proceedings of the Ibadan Conference. There were two main kernels of Chief Awolowo's position on revenue sharing in 1950. Firstly, he believed that the Richards-Phillipson revenue sharing system which

started to be applied in 1948 was unfair to the Western Region. The unfairness was not by relying on derivation as the sole principle; rather, it owed to the data on which the allocation was based in practice. Although it is possible to see Chief Awolowo's claim that the West was being cheated as a replica of the allegation made by the Northern Regional elites at the Ibadan Conference, it is noteworthy that he was proved right by the Hicks-Phillipson Commission report.<sup>17</sup>

The second kernel of Chief Awolowo's position on revenue allocation in 1950 was to employ the issue to score a political point against the Eastern Regional elites. This he did by demonstrating vividly how the West had been assisting the Eastern Regional Government since the introduction of the Richards Constitution, and how much of the development in the East in health and educational facilities could in fact be traced to the Western finances.

Firstly, Chief Awolowo claimed that the 'ideal percentages' of regional derivation of Nigerian revenue as calculated by Sir Sydney Phillipson in 1946 were not strictly applied in the allocation of revenue between 1948 and 1952. These ideal percentages were North 43.5, West 29, and East 27.5<sup>18</sup>. However, the actual percentages used throughout the period, with very little variation, were North 37.1, West 26.9 and East 36. By comparing these figures, Chief Awolowo concluded that the North and the West had both been cheated while the East was made to benefit at their expense. Chief Awolowo blamed the Central Government for allowing such a thing to happen. He agreed that at the inauguration of the Richards Constitution it was desirable that an enforced, rapid reduction in the scale of expenditure in a particular region should be avoided. However, he queried the Government for continuing the allocation of available revenue with reference not to derivation but to the existing scale of expenditure in the regions. For, according to him the practice made the realisation of a sense of financial responsibility very difficult to achieve in the shortest possible time.

Secondly, Chief Awolowo claimed that even the 'ideal

percentages' were wrong, having been based on poor data. This claim was again corroborated by the findings of the Hicks-Phillipson Commission. According to Chief Awolowo, rather than the 43.5, 29 and 27.5 percent respectively for the North, West and East, the distribution should have been 36, 33 and 31 per cent respectively if certain issues had been taken into consideration. Thus, both the North and the East had gained at the expense of the West, as the actual allocation had been 37.1, 26.9 and 36 per cent for the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions.<sup>19</sup>

In his characteristic style, Chief Awolowo summed up his critique of the Richards-Phillipson system thus:

For some years before the introduction of the Richards' Constitution, the fiscal policy of the Nigerian Government had been particularly biased in favour of the East and against the West. This policy was, as we have shown, continued under the Richards Constitution. A long period of financial discrimination in favour of the East has led to startling results in the fields of educational and health development.<sup>20</sup>

The political effects of the Richards-Phillipson system of revenue allocation was also evaluated by Chief Awolowo. According to him development in the East had surpassed that of the West, so much so that

some misguided educated Easterners have begun to look down on the Westerners with contempt and as inferiors. What is more . . . the fiscal policy of the past has induced a sense of financial irresponsibility in many of the Eastern political leaders. As for the North, they have been made by the financial report to develop a sense of grievous wrong. They felt that they had been unfairly treated far too much in the past, and they tend to look upon the other Regions as shameless parasites. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Whatever hopes Chief Awolowo had in the Hicks-Phillipson Commission were dashed when the Commission did not seem to have listened to the Western regional position on

revenue sharing. Firstly, the Commission mis-interpreted its terms of reference. The second item of the terms of reference read: 'if investigation by the expert Commission proves that one Region has been unfairly treated in the past years, that Region should be allowed a block grant so as to make up for part of what it has lost.' The Commission entirely misfired by assuming right from the outset that when the Ibadan General Conference recommended that a block grant should be given to the Region which was found to be unfairly treated they were referring to the North and the North alone. Although Professor Hicks did a thorough investigation, and although he arrived at the conclusion on the deprivation test that the West had been unfairly treated in the past years, he went ahead to recommend a block grant to the North (and not the West) based on the 'under-equipment test'.<sup>22</sup>

The Report, when it came out in 1951, surprised Chief Awolowo as well as other elites in the Western Region. The *Daily Service*, in its editorial, dismissed the Report as grossly unfair to the West. It went further that

. . . we endorse the Commission's finding that the North deserves a special grant under the principle of needs. But by apparently acting wholly and solely on the assumption that the North is the only aggrieved party, the Commission committed a major blunder . . . We are anxious that no Region should be cheated in the bargain for unity . . . the West is being made the Cinderella of Nigerian unity.<sup>23</sup>

The elites in the Western Region, although they disagreed with Professor Hicks for not recommending that a block grant be given to the West, went ahead to play a political game which backfired. Hicks and Phillipson had recommended the payment of a block grant of £2 million to the Northern Region on account of its relatively low level of development vis-a-vis the other Regions. At the Committee of Sixteen<sup>24</sup> which was to discuss these recommendations, the leaders representing the Western Region proposed an

amendment, seeking to give the North a once-for-all grant of £3 million. In this way, they hoped that another amendment being sought by the Western Region (which would extend the application of the principle of derivation) would receive the blessing of the Northern leaders. These amendments were approved by the Committee; but the colonial administration rejected them and stuck to the £2 million under-equipment grant earlier recommended by the Hicks-Phillipson Commission.

Chief Awolowo later referred to this incident and poured acid on the Eastern Regional elites for opposing the amendments. According to him, the Western leaders sought the amendments not because they believed that the North had been unfairly treated in the past years, 'but because they wanted to give a greater opportunity to the North for accelerated development and progress.'<sup>25</sup>

The Hicks report also drew the criticism of the Western Regional elites, especially Chief Obafemi Awolowo, on the system of revenue allocation recommended and accepted by the Government. The Commission recommended four principles: Independent Revenue, Derivation, Needs, and National Interest. By independent revenue, the Commission referred to revenue source which would be entirely controlled by the Regional Governments. These included direct tax, motor and liquor licences, land and mining rents and petrol tax. By the calculation of the Commission, each Regional Government would be able to make up to 25 per cent of its revenue needs from the independent Revenue.<sup>26</sup>

The other three principles were recommended for allocating non-declared revenues. Derivation was to be applied in the sharing of petrol tax, and 50 per cent of the tax on tobacco and cigarettes.<sup>27</sup> Needs, which the Commission interpreted as allocation on the basis of population: 'for, in the absence of other information, the needs of different people may be assumed to be equal,'<sup>28</sup> was to apply in the form of a capitation grant which the Central Government would pay on each adult male taxpayer in each Region.

This was to the favour of the Northern Region, just as derivation favoured the West. The third principle, National Interest, had been called for by the Eastern Region. In application, an educational grant-in-aid, the whole cost of expenditure on the police by Regional Governments, and 50 per cent of the cost of N. A. Police, would be paid by the Central Government to the Regions.<sup>29</sup>

The first problem which the Western Regional elites had with the Hicks-Phillipson report was in the half-hearted application of the principle of derivation. They found it unpalatable that derivation was only one of three other principles, and that only 50 per cent of the proceeds from tobacco taxes would go to the Regions. Of course, their attempt to ensure that the whole proceed went to the Regions 'was thwarted by the Eastern leaders and the Financial Secretary.'

Chief Awolowo was especially critical of the Commission's application of the principle of Needs and National Interest. He stated that Professor Hicks 'wandered from the domain of economics into that of political idealism' in the treatment of the principle of Needs. Chief Awolowo disagreed with Hicks' view that 'the needs of different people may be assumed to be equal,' on three different grounds — social, political and psychological.

On social grounds, Chief Awolowo argued that the needs of the various occupational groups were different. According to him, 'the needs of the average citizens in the West are certainly higher than those of the average citizens in the East and North.'

If we accepted the proposition of Professor Hicks, then the needs of a lawyer, doctor or a successful merchant would be equal to those of a farm labourer, or a peasant in any of the three Regions. But the facts are well known to all of us that what may be regarded as unattainable luxuries by the farm labourer or peasant (in the East and North) may be necessities to the lawyer or doctor or even average trader in the West.<sup>30</sup>

On political grounds, Chief Awolowo argued that it was arbitrary to treat all individuals as equal. 'The more politically conscious a group of people are, the greater the demands they make on their government for the provision of modern amenities'. Chief Awolowo continued that:

An ordinary man in the street in the North may not care whether or not his Government provides certain amenities for him. But (his counterpart) in the West cares very much, and he will rush to the press or to a mass meeting to condemn the Government if his demands are not met. . . .<sup>31</sup>

On psychological grounds, Chief Awolowo claimed that the people of the West who consumed imported tobacco, alcoholic beverages and petrol should be considered specially by the principle of needs. He further expatiated that:

It is natural that the bodies which consume these commodities will crave for certain amenities which will have the effect of neutralising any injurious effects which might be created, and will certainly like to feel that they are deriving some benefits from their fashionable habits which some Christians and Moslems are only too prone to condemn.<sup>32</sup>

Essentially, Chief Awolowo's argument was to establish that the needs of different human beings were not equal; and that, instead of a flat-rate capitation grant, a discriminatory rate should be applied where the Western Regional share would be highest, followed by the East, and finally the North in order of existing social amenities.

Awolowo's criticisms were not taken into account, and the revenue allocation formula as recommended by the Hicks – Phillipson Commission was adopted by the colonial administration. The cumulative effect of this was that the Western Region continued to lose money, as it were, to the North and the East. Indeed, the Commission itself stated clearly in its report that 'the Capitation Grant is that part of our

scheme which . . . tends to prevent the West from getting too far ahead, relatively to the other parts of the country.'<sup>33</sup> Chief Awolowo saw in this recommendation the ruthless and remorseless arrest of the progress of a virile and ambitious community.

The Western leaders' disagreements with the allocation system made them demand the revision of the constitutional framework at every available opportunity. That chance of a revision came in 1953, and it was the year of triumph for Chief Awolowo in his battle for derivation. That year, the London Conference on the Revision of the Constitution accepted Chief Awolowo's proposals of a Federal Government for Nigeria, and the allocation of revenues according to the principle of derivation alone. The acceptance of the latter proposal was brought out clearly in the terms of reference given to Sir Louis Chick, the sole commissioner to review the existing system of revenue allocation. Item number two of the terms of reference expressly asked Sir Louis Chick, in the light of the conclusions of the London Conference,

to enquire how revenues available, or to be made available to the Regions and to the Centre can best be collected and distributed, having regard on the one hand to the need to provide to the Regions and the Centre an adequate measure of fiscal autonomy within their own sphere of government and, on the other hand, *to the importance of ensuring that the total revenues available to Nigeria are allocated in such a way that the principle of derivation is followed to the fullest degree compatible with meeting the reasonable needs of the Centre and each of the Regions* (emphasis ours).<sup>34</sup>

Faced with this term of reference, Sir Louis Chick was able to complete his investigation and recommendations within a very short time. Moreover, he was faced only with the task of finding what suitable financial arrangement could be made for a Region unable to balance its budget. Much more relevant to the present study, Sir Louis Chick made pronouncements about the sources of Nigerian revenue which pleased Chief Awolowo very much. He revealed, as far as the data

could support him, that the Western Region was contributing 40 per cent to the Central (Federal) Government revenue, while the North and East contributed 30 per cent each. In other words, the 30-40-30 ratio for the North, West and East should be used in allocating funds from the Federal Government.<sup>35</sup> This is the root of the financial prosperity of the Western Region in the last six years of colonial rule; and this was the source of the wealth which the Action Group Government of Chief Obafemi Awolowo utilised in the various programme which we will soon discuss.

Perhaps we should state here that Chief Awolowo and the Action Group were not entirely satisfied with the arrangement recommended by Sir Louis Chick. As far as they were concerned, Chick had not followed very closely the terms of reference given to him. That is, the Commissioner had not given derivation his entire attention. This critique of the Report which emanated from the 'Office of the Secretary-General of the Action Group' sounded very much like Chief Awolowo's writing; and it should be understood within the context of Regional competition and struggle for power.

Chief Awolowo and the Action Group had ten points of criticism against the Chick Report. Five of them will be treated here as examples of the politics of revenue allocation. Firstly, Chief Awolowo criticised Sir Louis Chick in his awarding certain funds to the Eastern Regional Government from the uncommitted reserves of the Central Government. Chick had recommended the award of £500,000 in the first year of operating the Federal Constitution (i.e. 1954/55), and another £250,000 the following year to 'give the Eastern Region a breathing space in which to raise more revenue from the various sources within its own legislative competence.'<sup>36</sup> Chief Awolowo's disagreement with this 'discretionary grant' was based on five major points. He accused the elites of the Region for having lived 'most ungratefully' in the past 'on the resources of other people.' He argued that the grant was unnecessary, and that it was a complete negation of the principles enunciated by Louis Chick himself. Furthermore,

he maintained that the Eastern Regional Government did not need a breathing space to raise revenues desired for its activities. Chief Awolowo very pungently condemned the governing class in the East as living a 'parasitic' life even though the people of the Region were 'virile, alert and highly ambitious.' He ended this critique of the discretionary grant by advising the Eastern Regional Government to reject the grant:

if the Eastern Region Government is worth its salt, it must refuse to submit to economic spoon-feeding such as is proposed by Sir Louis. If it does not do so, it will stand condemned in the eyes of all responsible and self-respecting people here in Nigeria and abroad.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, Chief Awolowo criticised Sir Louis Chick's method of allocating the £7 million which was the uncommitted reserves of the Central Government. Sir Louis Chick had given the North, West and East £3 million, £2 million and £2 million respectively. Chief Awolowo felt that Sir Louis Chick should have used the derivation principle, and not that arbitrary formula. He then urged the Colonial administration to disregard Chick's sharing procedure, and adopt derivation which would have given the North, West and East £2.1 million, £2.8 million and £2.1 million respectively.<sup>38</sup> Needless to say, the Colonial Government did not accept the plea, and the uncommitted reserve of £7 million was shared as recommended by Chick.

Thirdly, Sir Louis Chick was attacked on his allocation of revenue from duties on beer. The Fiscal Commissioner had recommended that proceeds from excise duties on beer should be allocated as follows: 50 per cent to the Federal Government, 50 per cent to the Regions according to derivation. Chief Awolowo wanted 100 per cent of the proceeds to go to the Regions. According to him, 'the drinking of beer and other alcoholic beverages is condemned and tabooed by the North on religious grounds. Many self-righteous elements from the East often talk glibly of the extravagance of the Westerners (in beer drinking).' Thus,

those who on religious and ethical grounds object to the consumption of alcoholic beverages have no right to share in the revenue derivable therefrom, except such as can be strictly attributed to their Regions.<sup>39</sup>

Fourthly, Chief Awolowo was not satisfied with the treatment of the revenue from hides and skins. Sir Louis had recommended that 50 per cent of the revenue should be kept by the Federal Government while the other half should be paid fully to the Northern Region. The Fiscal Commissioner had argued that the hides and skins exported from the South were obtained from the North. Chief Awolowo, however, disagreed with this view. According to him,

It is true that the humped cattle which are slaughtered for meat in the South are obtained from the North. But each of the cattle was bought and paid for as a whole — that is, meat, skin and all. As soon as the cattle are paid for and brought to the South they have become the exclusive property of the South. . . . The Southern butchers could have sold the skins for meat if they liked. If they chose instead to export them, it is palpably unfair to deprive Regions, in which the 'owners' of these commodities live, of the revenue which is derived therefrom.<sup>40</sup>

What, we might ask, was so important about the proceeds from export duty on hides and skins to warrant such a controversy? The figures readily available on the export of hides and skins in 1951 show that the revenue from this head was £440,000.<sup>41</sup> Of this, 77 per cent (or £338,000) was attributable to the North, 19 per cent (or £83,000) to the West, and 4 per cent (or £17,600) to the East. Sir Louis Chick had recommended that 50 per cent of this be kept by the Federal Government meaning that the Northern Regional Government would receive £220,000. However, if derivation had been used in allocating the remaining 50 per cent, by Chief Awolowo's calculation, the North, West and East would have received £169,000; £41,500; and £8,800. From the look of it, the revenue was very small. But Chief Awolowo believed it was not insignificant.

According to him, 'the share to the West would erect two secondary school buildings or one hospital annually, and that to the East would supply at least four primary school buildings of eight classes, or six of six classes annually.'<sup>42</sup>

Fifthly, Chief Awolowo took Sir Louis Chick up on the allocation of revenue from mining royalties, rents and export. And here, he made comments that were indicative of his effort to differentiate mineral from agricultural products in the application of the principle of derivation. Sir Louis had recommended that the proceeds from mining royalties should all go to the Northern Region since that was where all the mining works were located (i.e., tin mining). Chief Awolowo's disagreement with this recommendation stemmed from two major considerations. Firstly, he argued succinctly that the mines were developed by 'Nigerian' money and the proceeds therefrom should accrue to all parts of the country. It will be more appropriate to allow Chief Awolowo to speak here:

Up till a few years ago, 50 per cent of all mining royalties used to accrue to the UAC Ltd who were the successors of the Royal Niger Company. But after a long and relentless agitation by Southern politicians the share to the UAC was bought over by the Nigerian Government with Nigerian money amounting to £1 million. Also, not long ago a good deal of money was spent by the Nigerian Government in rehabilitating the mines in the North. If the UAC had not been paid off, half of the (money) now allocated to the North would have gone to them; and if the mines had not been rehabilitated they would not perhaps have been yielding so much royalty. Why then . . . should the North benefit from resources redeemed and sustained by Nigerian money, to the exclusion of other Regions?<sup>43</sup>

The second ground on which Chief Awolowo disagreed with the award of the proceeds from mining to the North was on what mining royalties and rents could cause in the future. He took the position that mineral wealth was not the same as agricultural wealth. While the latter was deliberately created by the people of a particular Region, the former

was an accidental and natural benefit to which the people of that Region contributed nothing. Thus, the allocation of mineral wealth should be 50 per cent to the Federal Government through which other Regions would benefit, and the rest to the Region where the mineral was extracted. This was more so when there were clear optimism and indication that petroleum was available in the East. 'This might yield substantial revenue in the future', and the Eastern Regional Government would be at an advantage in this 'lucrative source of revenue.'<sup>44</sup>

None of Chief Awolowo's suggestions was taken by the Colonial Administration in the inauguration of the Federal Constitution and in implementing the revenue allocation system as recommended by Sir Louis Chick. But the adoption of derivation as the sole principle of revenue allocation worked to the advantage of the Western Region. *Table I* vividly demonstrates the extent to which the Region benefited; and shows the result, in financial terms, of Chief Awolowo's long battle for derivation.

#### FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUCCESS OF CHIEF AWOLOWO IN THE BATTLE FOR DERIVATION

We have identified five major factors as accounting for the success of Chief Awolowo and the Action Group in the battle for derivation. The first was the singular skill and persistence of Chief Awolowo in advancing the Western Regional viewpoint. He and the others in the Action Group employed every opportunity to press the point that the Western Region was being cheated, and that only the adoption of derivation was acceptable to the people of the West. Moreover, he employed facts and figures to back up his claim; and, Chief Awolowo's skill and obsession with facts and figures was second to none.

Secondly, Chief Awolowo was arguing from a position of strength: he had the full weight of the Region's economic

and financial prosperity behind him. He could, and did, boast of the vitality of the people of the Western Region in business and agriculture, in literacy and political awareness. It was easy for him to juxtapose the progress of the West against the relative backwardness of the North, for instance. Unlike Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Awolowo was not begging for the allocation of revenue that did not properly belong to his Region. Rather, all he was demanding was the return to the West of money belonging to, or derived from it; and there was nothing shameful about it.

While still talking about 'strength' perhaps we should add a third factor, which is the political clout which Chief Awolowo and the Action Group acquired in 1953 through the self-government motion'. One should be careful in stretching this controversial point. But it is clear that the Action Group endeared itself to many freedom-loving Nigerians, even members of parties opposed to the Action Group. Indeed, the infamous, short-lived Action Group - NCNC working accord was hinged on this new position of the Action Group as the champion of the agitation for Nigerian independence. Thus, many members of the delegations at the London Constitutional Conferences of 1953 who were not immediately aware of the split in the Action Group - NCNC accord supported Chief Awolowo's argument for derivation. The split eventually came into the open over the question of the status of Lagos as federal capital.<sup>46</sup> But, by this time, the issue of revenue allocation and derivation principle had been concluded.

Fourthly, the controversy was in the spirit of Regional politics, and Chief Awolowo was about the greatest political philosopher of 'Regionalism' Nigeria has produced. Much earlier than his rivals, he had decoded the workings of the British mind and strategy about the transfer of power to Nigerians; and much earlier than anyone, he had loudly called for the adoption of federalism in Nigeria. He understood perfectly what federalism and regionalism meant in practice in Nigeria; and, with this understanding, he was

placed in a better position to expound the theory at the London Conference in 1953 that only derivation was compatible with federalism – the Nigerian style. Political scientists have come to share this thinking. For instance, Dennis Worrall has pointed out that the decision to adopt 'derivation' and abandon 'needs' and 'national interest' was clearly in line with federalism of the new Constitution.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, Chief Awolowo's rivals were persuaded to accept derivation because of the prospects of fiscal self-sufficiency which rising commodity prices offered in the preceding three years. The Korean War, 1950–53, had increased the demand for agricultural goods from Africa, and Nigeria received quite a good share of the demand. Perhaps we should state that this point (originally suggested by B. J. Dudley to explain the adoption of Federal Government in Nigeria<sup>48</sup>) could be stretched further. The North was not really 'opposed' to derivation, but would prefer 'population'; and both the Northern and Eastern delegations were hopeful that their Regional finances would be improved if the trend of increased demand for primary products continued at the end of the Korean War.

#### UTILISING ALLOCATED REVENUE: 'LIFE MORE ABUNDANT' IN WESTERN NIGERIA

As we have shown in Table I, the revenue allocation system adopted was favourable to the Western Region and this had the result of improving the financial and economic position of the Region considerably. The impact which this new financial situation had on the government and people of the Region fell into two categories. This first was the benefit to the members of the ruling class, and this is discussed in the next section. The second was contained in the Action Group party's programme of 'Life more abundant' which was inaugurated at the inception of the Federal constitution in 1954, and advanced at the attainment of regional autonomy in 1957. This is discussed here.

The controversial 'life more abundant' programme was

embodied in the Western Regional Government's Five Year Development Plan, 1955-60. The overall objective of the plan was 'to increase production in the Region, both agricultural and industrial, so as to bring about a steady rise in income and standard of living.'<sup>49</sup> Four principles were articulated by the Plan. The first was that the Region would need certain social services and a network of communication 'without which private entrepreneurship could not flourish. The second principle expressed the belief that the productive capacity of the economy should bring substantial increase in per head income and subsequently in Government revenue. The areas to be emphasised, therefore were agriculture, forestry, industry and cooperatives. Thirdly, the new level of recurrent expenditure must be such as could be accommodated within recurrent revenue. And finally, increased use of community development spirit should be encouraged as a means of fostering economic development.'<sup>50</sup>

Under the Plan, various projects were introduced. The most daring, and equally controversial, of these was the free Universal Primary Education scheme. According to an appraisal of the programme published in 1961,<sup>51</sup> the educational programme was successfully executed. Primary School population exceeded 1 million in 1960, and over 16 per cent of the primary school leavers had been placed in secondary modern and Grammar Schools. In addition, about 1,188 post-secondary scholarships were awarded during the period, tenable in Nigeria and overseas.<sup>52</sup> By 1960, there were 159 secondary schools, and 8 commercial secondary schools in the Region, financed by Government.

*Tables II and III* show the amount expended on various aspects of the Plan. As could be seen, recurrent expenditure on the Plan was almost double the capital expenditure. A total of £97.231 million had been spent by 1960, out of which £30,023 million went into the educational aspects. The revenue for financing the Plan was derived mainly from the improved financial condition which the Region enjoyed as a result of the adoption of the Chick revenue allocation

system. In addition, the regionalisation of the Marketing Boards assisted the region's financial position and provided loans for some of the programmes. There were also levies, especially the controversial education levy. In 1955, the formulators of the Development Plan estimated that the Region's total recurrent revenue would be £74 million throughout the plan period. The revenue allocation system provided increased revenue and, accordingly, actual Regional recurrent revenue rose to £81.86 million. Even though this exceeded the projected figure by up to £6 million, and though the projected expenditure on the Plan fell by about £6 million, this actual revenue could not cover the actual expenditure of £97.231 million. The balance was met through loans which the Government negotiated not only with the Marketing Board but also with many other financial institutions. The Region's public debt was £1 million in April 1955. By 1960 it had risen to £11 million.<sup>53</sup>

#### 'MILKING' ALLOCATED REVENUE: PROPERTY ACCUMULATION AMONG WESTERN REGIONAL ELITES

Elsewhere, I have identified the connection between revenue allocation and the accumulation of property and wealth among members of the ruling class in Nigeria.<sup>54</sup> In this section, therefore, I will only briefly outline some of the benefits that accrued to the leaders in the Western Region as a result of the Region's increased revenue base. In other words, the ways in which the elites milked the Regional Government in the 1950's will be examined.

Perhaps it should be pointed out that not all the means to property accumulation among the bourgeoning class were illegal. Indeed, the first way by which the elites benefited from the Government's financial and economic boom was in their remuneration. In another paper, I have discussed the fantastic nature of the salaries and allowances of Regional

and Federal Government officials, legislators and party leaders.<sup>55</sup> In 1953, for instance, the Western Region was paying its legislators in the Regional House £420 per annum (p. a.).<sup>56</sup> At this time, many workers in the country did not earn £20 p.a. Members of the House of Representatives (formerly Legislative Council) in the same period earned a £400 p.a. allowance in addition to their basic allowances as members of the Regional House. Those among them who made it up to the ministerial level in Lagos were earning £2,920 p. a. made up of £2,500 minimum salary for ministers and the £420 allowance payable to legislators from the Western Region.

In 1955, when the full impact of the new Constitution and the new revenue allocation system began to be felt, the Western Regional House of Assembly increased the allowance of members from £420 to £600 p.a. retrospective from 1 April 1954. In addition, the Regional Government thenceforth assumed complete financial responsibility for the quarters, electricity use, water supply, maintenance of garden, salaries of drivers and domestic servants of all Regional ministers. Furthermore, the salaries of ministers were hiked from £2,000 to £2,450 p.a. also retrospective from 1 April 1954. This meant that each minister would receive £450 arrears. We have no information on the Premier's earnings. But we know that his entertainment allowance alone was £750 p.a.

In addition to these allowances, there was another legitimate means by which Regional elites milked the allocated revenue. This was government loans.<sup>57</sup> In 1949, Regional loans Boards were created out of the defunct Nigeria Local Development Board (NLDB). Between 1949 and 1954 when these boards were allowed to operate, the Western Regional Development Board (WRDB) made a total of 161 loans costing £610,483.<sup>58</sup> The Board started off some businessmen, politicians and professionals in their ventures. It is necessary to point out that most of the beneficiaries were either Action Group party members or their close relations and

business friends. The Corporations, which replaced the Boards continued the work of extending government finance to key supporters of the Action Group party.

In order to enrich themselves further, members of the ruling class in the Western Region tried their hands on corrupt means too. Cases of embezzlement, abuse of office, peculation and other forms of corrupt practices were a general and widespread occurrence in the period. The Western Region had its own share of this. The most sensationalised of the cases in the Region was that investigated by the Coker Commission which alleged in its conclusions that Chief Awolowo used his position and the Marketing Board funds to create an empire for himself. Although the Commission failed to trace any funds to Chief Awolowo directly, they felt that he knew about the diversion of funds by the four principal actors.<sup>59</sup> Fortunately, Chief Awolowo had commented on these charges before his death. For our purpose here, we affirm that corrupt practices represented one of the key methods by which the Regional elites milked the Regional revenue. We seek to add also, that the issue of official corruption and graft was not peculiar to the Western Region.

#### CONCLUSION

The buoyant economic condition of Western Nigeria in the 1950's owed a lot to the market conditions of the Region's principal primary products. But the conducive financial condition of the Regional Government owed much to the relentless effort of Chief Awolowo and other members of the political elite group in the Region who engaged in fierce, truculent battle with their rivals over the method of allocating centrally collected revenue.

There is no doubt that the government and people of the Region benefited from the economic and financial boom indirectly or directly through the various programmes em-

barked upon by the Action Group party. But, as we have shown, more than any other group the ruling class in the Region enjoyed the plums of office.

It is necessary to straighten out one misconception which may arise from the preceding discussions: neither Chief Awolowo nor his opponents should be blamed for causing or engaging in the 'battle.' Rather, the battle itself was the product of a wider and more encompassing phenomenon – the struggle for political power among the emergent Nigerian elites. Indeed, a study of the role played by any of the other two leaders in any national issue would come to similar conclusions. To the leaders of the Western Region, especially Chief Awolowo, revenue allocation was one of the key issues in the prevalent politics of regional and ethnic particularism; and no holds were barred to fight the Region's cause.

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4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
9. The others who spoke on revenue allocation were Mallam Sanni Dingyadi, Mallam Shehu Ahmadu, Hon. Iro Katsina, Hon. Niakaman Bida, Mallam Muhammadu (Wali of Borno), The Saradauna of Sokoto, Shettima Kazim, Hon. Bello Kano, Alhaji Usman Nagogo (Emir of Katsina), Hon. Sulemonu (Emir of Abuja) and Alhaji Abdulmaliki Igbirra.

10. Nigeria, Proceedings of the General Conference, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
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22. J. R. Hicks and S. Phillipson, *op. cit.*, para 46, p. 64-5.
23. *Daily Service*, 13 April, 1951, p. 2.
24. Members of the Committee of Sixteen were Mallams Ahmadu Bello, Muhammadu Wali of Borno, Muhammadu Kibadu, Sanni Dinyadi, Hon. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, A Obisesan, Adeleke Adedoyin, Messrs. S. O. Awokoya, M. A. Ajasin, A. F. Prest, Rev. I. O. Ransome-Kuti, M.W. Ubani, Hons, L.N. Mbanefo, E.E. Anwan, Bouwari Brown and Dr. E. M. L. Edeley.
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26. J. R. Hicks and S. Phillipson, *op. cit.*, para. 61.
27. *Ibid.*, para. 55, 64.
28. *Ibid.*, para. 65.
29. *Ibid.*, para. 83.
30. NC(54)7 - Commentary, *op. cit.*, para. 44.
31. *Ibid.*, para. 46.
32. *Ibid.*, para 47.
33. J. R. Hicks and S. Phillipson, *op. cit.*, para. 104.
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39. *Ibid.*, para. 78–80
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## Awolowo's Economic Thought and the Future of Nigeria

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J.C. ANYAWU

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### INTRODUCTION

Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1909 - 1987), fondly called Awo by his numerous admirers, can be regarded as a compendium of many disciplines since he was a politician, economist, jurist, administrator, philosopher, mystic, author and what have you. The circumstances of his birth, life, utterances, beliefs, teachings, fortunes, predicaments and aspirations had a lot in common with many past great men, viz: Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Friedrich Hegel, V.I. Lenin, Rene Descartes, Mahatma Ghandi, Francis Bacon, John Locke, Plato, and Aristotle, just to mention a few.

Awo's economic thought has been as far-reaching as his political thought. This economic thought is seen as a body of economic knowledge and ideas as expounded and advocated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. It involves a set of propositions systematically related, one to the other - a set of statements inferences, assumptions and judgements with respect to key prevailing circumstances. Its structure includes the need purposes, motives, objects instruments, and results. A dialectical interconnection of Awo's economic theory and practice is a crucial principle of "Awonomics" as it is of Marxism - Leninism (Anyanwu, 1987a).

We can examine the economic thought of any given writer in a variety of ways. We can concern ourselves with the sort of assumptions he made, or with the judgements he made, or

relate his assumptions and judgements to the prevailing circumstances of his time and thereafter, or both. Whichever approach we take we cannot fully appreciate the thought of any economic thinker unless we sketch a biographic perspective. And it is with this perspective that we will begin in examining the economic thought of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Nigeria's economic future.

#### CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLowo - A BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was born on March 6, 1909 in Ikenne, Ijebu Remo, in the former Western State of Nigeria (now Ogun State). As an entirely self-made man, after his education at Wesley College, Ibadan, he had a brief spell as a teacher (1928 - 1929); stenographer (1930 - 34); reporter-in-training, with the Daily Times, 1934; transporter and produce buyer (1936 - 44).

In 1943, he bagged the Bachelor of Commerce (Hons.) degree of the University of London as an external candidate. In the same year, he became a founding member of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), and edited *The Nigerian Worker's and Journal* (Development Outlook, 1987). On November 18, 1946, he was called to the Bar, Inner Temple, London, having bagged the LL.B Degree of the University of London that year.

Having returned to Nigeria in 1947 as a legal practitioner, he founded in 1949, the Nigerian Tribune Newspapers in Ibadan. In the same year (1949) he became the co-founder and General Secretary of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. (1949 - 66) On April 28, 1951, his political party, the Action Group of Nigeria, was inaugurated and he was elected its first President.

He became member, Western House of Assembly, Ibadan (1951 - 59); Leader of Government Business, Western Nigeria, Minister of Local Government and Finance, (1951 - 54); Premier of the Western Region (1954 - 59); and later, member, Federal House of Representatives and Leader of the opposition (1960 - 62). In 1962, he founded the University of Ife which has been renamed after him posthumously as

Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU).

In 1962, with courage and defiance, Chiet Awolowo went into a spell of political wilderness from where he was released in 1966 by Yakubu Gowon and appointed the Federal Commissioner for Finance and vice chairman, Federal Executive Council. In 1971, he resigned the appointment and returned to private legal practice. Within this period he was appointed the first Chancellor of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), and Chancellor Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1975 - 78).

With the lifting of the ban on politics, Chief Awolowo founded the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) in 1978 and led it until 1983 when all political parties were banned. The four cardinal principles of the party then were free education at all levels, free medical services, integrated rural development and free employment for all. His party controlled Bendel, Oyo, Ogun and Lagos States in 1979, adding Kwara State but losing Bendel to the defunct National Party of Nigeria in 1983. Though he lost the 1979 and 1983 Presidential Elections his views often prevailed in the end with regard to national and international issues.

As a brilliant scholar, his academic awards include an honorary LL.D of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (1961), honorary D.sc. of the Obafemi Awolowo University (1967), honorary LL.D. of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana (1967), honorary D.Litt. of the University of Lagos (1968), and honorary LL.D. of the University of Ibadan.

His Chieftancy titles includes, the Ashiwaju of Ijebu-Remo, Losi of Ikenne, Lisa of Ijeun and Odole of Ife. The Chief's published works include 17 books, viz: *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (Faber and Faber, 1947); *Awo: The autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (Cambridge University Press, 1960); *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (Oxford University Press, 1966); *My Early Life* (John West, 1968); *The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria* (Macmillan, 1970); *Financing of the Nigerian Civil War* (Pacific Printers, 1970); *The Problem of Africa: The need for*

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It is also worthy of note that in 1971 Awo was honoured with the Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) reserved only for distinguished legal practitioners in the country. In 1983, he was awarded the Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR), the highest national award in the country.

On March 6, 1987, the sage clocked 78 years and celebrated what he himself described as the "imminence of my transition of eternal life". May 9, 1987 saw Awo commencing the "life-after-death". On June 6, 1987 he was finally laid to rest in a glass tomb at his home town, Ikenne, as a national hero following burial celebrations yet to be paralleled in the nation's history.

AWOLOWO'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NIGERIA

#### *On Economic Problems Of Nigeria*

Awolowo (1981) opined that Nigeria's economic problems can be summed up as inefficiency and inadequacy. On a more specific note such problems include, economic underdevelopment, with all its myriad ramifications and the multifarious frictional impacts to which they are susceptible - infant and inchoate stages of secondary and tertiary industries, inefficient and inadequate social amenities, and communications, conspicuous consumption, primitive and neglected agriculture, widespread endemic diseases, economic exploitation and "under-developed subjective phase of the mind" - lack of individual freedom and sovereignty, debt problems, inter-ethnic fears and tension, and the problem of unity.

These are aggravated by internally and externally generated inflation; unemployment and under-employment; malnutrition and misdirection of resources; and the inter-play of ideological conflicts. This is not only characteristic of Nigeria but also the whole of the African Continent (Awolowo, 1977). Another major problem is economic maladjustment of supply of goods to demand, of supply of money to available good, and of savings and investment.

### *On The Objectives Of His Economic Thought*

Like every other economic thinker, Chief Awolowo had clear vision of his socio-economic objectives. The economic objectives include, full employment; payment of unemployment relief allowances; introduction of national minimum wage; elimination of discrimination in employment; raising of retiring age to between 65 and 75 years. Others are modernization of agriculture; economic freedom; modernization of transport systems; rationalization of remuneration; integration and assimilation of salaries; rationalization of enterprises; Nigerianization of productive activities; and progressives and rapid socialization of primary, manufacturing and transport, banking and insurance occupations. The social objectives are free education at all levels; free and compulsory primary education; free and compulsory adult education; free preventive and curative health services for all; comprehensive and compulsory social insurance scheme for all; schemes for the care and rehabilitation of the infirm, orphans, the mentally deranged, and the disabled; and the encouragement of art and culture, and of sports and athletics.

For the achievement of the afore-mentioned socio-economic objectives, there must be communes; local governments; state governments; and a Federal Government. There must also exist and Electoral Commission; Public Service Commission; Judicial Service Commission; Armed Forces Service Commission; Police Service Commission; Prisons

Service Commission; National Planning Commission; Fiscal and Monetary Commission; Allocation of Revenue Commission; Nigerianization Commission; National Education Commission; Institute of National Guidance, State Planning Boards; National Development Council; Departments of Statistics, Survey, and Geological Investigation (Awolowo, 1985).

### *General Principles Of Awolowo's Economic Thought*

To Chief Awolowo, "man is the prime mover in every economy" and "the central problem of man is economic: all other problems whatsoever, are ancillary". His panacea to this is the central principle, philosophy and ideology; democratic socialism - as opposed to revolutionary socialism or communism.

The basic concepts on which the ideological synthesis - democratic socialism - hinges on include the oneness of man, public ownership of land and of the means of production, and from each according to his deed. Other concepts are economic freedom, rationalization, socialization, Nigerianization, planning, social discipline, democracy, federalism and egalitarianism.

Conceptually, democratic socialism can be regarded as a brand of socialism which applies democratic principles to economic and other areas of human relations (Azikiwe, 1979). It stands in sharp contradiction both to capitalist planning and to every form of totalitarian planning; these exclude public control of production and a fair distribution of its results (Lowenthal, 1951). The conflict between democratic socialism and communism no longer appears as a disagreement about the means to a common end, but as a conflict of fundamental ends between the adherents of a democratically controlled economy and the defenders of the despotism of a managerial bureaucracy. As in Germany, democratic socialism abhors adhoc measurers hence its party is a "programme party" which attaches the greatest

importance to basing its policy on a solid system of principles laid down in a fixed programme rather than merely on the urgent issues of the moment - any political or economic action that is intended to influence and transform society must be based on an analysis of that society (Allemann, 1960). In general terms, the essence of democratic socialism is to strive to attain greater happiness, justice and dignity and the fullest possible chance of self-expression for the human being. In so doing, it avoids totalitarian forms of government and methods of mass coercion.

To Ebenstein (1964) democratic socialism's aims include, to create more opportunity for the under-privileged class; to end inequality based on birth rather than service; to open the horizons of education to all the people; to eliminate discriminatory practices based on sex, religion, race or social class; to regulate and reorganize the economy for the benefit of the whole community; to maintain full employment, to provide adequate social security for the sick, unemployed, and aged; to replan the layout of towns and cities; to tear down the slums and build new houses; to provide medical facilities for everybody irrespective of the size of his purse; and to rebuild society on the foundation of co-operation in lieu of competition, incentive, and profit.

Thus, eight days before Nigeria's independence the Action Group Bureau (1960) published a manifesto to which it advocated democratic socialism for an independent Nigeria. It stated inter alia:

'We wish to build a democratic socialist society founded on the three principles of national greatness, the well-being of the individual, and international brotherhood. To achieve this socialist society, we must release the latent creative energy of our entire people. We must get rid of the dead-weight feudalism, aristocracy and privilege. We must overcome the wastefulness and distraction of tribalism and social injustice. We must remove the crippling effect of a backward and over-dependent economy. We must go forward into the mainstream of modern civilization and world knowledge'

Since politics is a clash of economic interest, the party went on to say, that a scientific formulation of party political programme must start with a careful examination of the economic interests of the various classes and groups that make up the society. In this direction, socialism can be achieved only through democracy and democracy can be fully realized only through socialism.

Summing up Marx and Engels, Hacker (1961 p.550) aptly put revolutionary socialism as follows:

Every real revolution is a social one, in that it brings a new class to power and allows it to remodel society in its own image.

The old ruling class will not give up its power peacefully or voluntarily, especially when it knows that it will have no privileged status in the new society. If change is to be significant, then bloodshed will be the rule rather than the exception.

"Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one". Only by civil war will the proletariat be able to wrest control over the instruments from the bourgeoisie'.

However, Chief Awolowo did not see these characteristics, as portrayed by Marx and Engels, as inseparable concomitants of socialism. To him, for the time being, Black Africa, unlike USSR, Eastern Europe and China, has no emperors, no absolute monarchs, no opulent aristocrats, no big land-owners, no war lords and no capitalists with vast financial empires, whose positions, wealth and excessive acts can provoke extremities of violent reaction from the masses of the people and who will fight to the last ditch to defend those positions and wealth. Awo also added that the likelihood of such men emerging in the near future does not exist. He went further to refer to Bacon's statement that rebellions are caused by two things: much poverty, much discontent; rebellion of the belly is the worst. But, to Awo, though the

conditions of the masses in Nigeria are bad the ideals of socialism can be realized by waging a battle of words and wits rather than by engaging in a clash of steel and an exchange of bullets.

While socialism *per se* emphasizes the oneness of man, public ownership of factors of production and the payment of each according to his need, capitalism, on the other hand, emphasises private property, freedom of choice (a hollow concept), equality (an utterly false concept), and egoistic altruism. It is no wonder, therefore, that Awo saw capitalism as anarchic, satanic, iniquitous, evil and cannibalistic apart from breeding "tribalism, naked self-interest, unabashed group loyalty and destructive antagonism under the cloak of business competition" (Awolowo 1966).

Though Chief Awolowo supported the Hegelian dialectics as well as Marx's and Engels' condemnation of capitalism, he parts ways with them regarding his advocacy of affluence. To Awo, socialism does not advocate poverty or wretchedness for its aim is to raise the people's status. (Enahoro, 1981).

The only means to achieve social justice - socialism's aim - is the nationalization, public ownership, or socialization of the means of production, exchange and distribution. Rationalization and nationalization should go side by side with socialization for there is no antithesis of any kind among them; they are even also mutually complementary, in our quest for economic freedom or self-reliance.

To Awo, all the evils of capitalism and of unbridled monopoly and oligopoly - waste, misutilization and under-utilization of resources, misdirected output, artificial scarcity, incessant economic crises, and the paradox of starvation in the midst of plenty - can be prevented by means of central planning, central control, and central co-ordination of economic activities. The sage's socialist orientation also emphasized patriotism, altruism, love, discipline (social regeneration and justice), hardwork and self-confidence.

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and socialism; and if we have at the same time, a leadership that possesses mental magnitude (Awolowo, 1968).

The socialist alternative he advocated is concerned with establishing the standards for economic behaviour and social objectives. With natural resources belonging to all members of the community equally, and the products of land and labour appropriated to labour and all gradations and skills through the media of good wages, abolition of unemployment, free provision of social amenities such as education, health and others, a respectable standards of living will be attained.

To Awo, there should be the abolition of rent, profit, interest and inheritance. There should be the legal elimination of the rentier class (the absentee investors), and the recognition that all able-bodied citizens of the state are skilled and unskilled workers entitled to remuneration. In this regard, consumption must be regulated by legislative acts while restitution, restoration and prohibition should be enjoined by legislative acts on all those who already own the means of production or are about to own them. From time to time, swift and positive steps should be taken by the state to forbid and stamp out any venture or undertaking which is motivated by greed, and is capable of generating hatred, bitterness, and undue and widespread dissatisfaction.

#### ON INDUSTRIALIZATION

To Chief Awo there should be the nationalization, public ownership, or socialization of the means of production, exchange, and distribution. In fact, there should be immediate rationalization of certain categories of industrial and commercial undertakings in order to eliminate wastes arising from unnecessary duplication or multiplication of efforts, selfish and cut-throat competition, and lack of co-ordination on the part of the productive agents in given industries and enterprises. Thus, the two antecedent stages to complete socialization are rationalization and Nigerianization. Rational

lization involves study and identification of efficient, less efficient, inefficient and sub-marginal firms in each industry or enterprise and determine the higher optimum size requisite for a firm in each industry enterprise to enable it to enjoy all the advantages of economies of scale such that the less efficient, the inefficient and the sub-marginal firms will have to be shut down and their interests transferred to and combined with those of the most efficient ones. Fair compensation must be paid by the government to firms compelled to wind operations while displaced workers will be absorbed in the newly reconstructed and reconstituted industries enterprises in the hands of the private sector until such industries are fully socialized.

Nigerianization connotes economic self-reliance, self-sufficiency or voluntary interdependence not only in the supply of material goods but also in the provision of qualified, competent, and disciplined manpower at all levels and in all spheres of human endeavour. To achieve this, there should be immediate introduction of training schemes designed to ensure the total Nigerianization of the management and control of all productive activities in Nigeria. In doing this, 'undoubted competence', 'thoroughness', and 'moral-discipline' must be our watch-words. Thus, Chief Awolowo advocated the early socialization of mining and manufacturing, transport, communications, banking, insurance, and other financial and quasi-financial institutions in Nigeria. In distributive occupations, the government should first compel the immediate Nigerianization of giant stores, second, progressively and in every way possible, assist associations of co-operative suppliers and consumers to take them over.

#### ON AGRICULTURE

In view of the immense contributions of agriculture to the nation's economic development, there is the urgent need to modernize that sector as well as the storage, transportation, and marketing of farm products. Farmers must be educated

on modern farming techniques while higher yielding grains and seeds; more effective control of pests, insects, and plant disease, and the use of fertilizers where necessary; intensification of extension work; and the attraction of educated persons to farming occupation, are imperative. This will be unrealistic under the present primitive system of cultivation.

The surplus labour force released from agricultural modernization must be absorbed in the expanded five other occupations, viz: manufacturing, transport, distributive, banking and infrastructural occupations.

Assistance to farmers under a modernized system should include, technical aid; education in the techniques and management of farming, storage and marketing; monetary advances on crops, and subsidy. Thus conscientious cooperative farmers need no longer be burdened with loans either from government institutions or from money lenders and hence existing abuses in loan scheme would be things of the past.

#### ON FULL EMPLOYMENT

To avoid the frustration, demoralization, and humiliation emanating from unemployment, five course of action must be undertaken. These include making a comprehensive survey of the unemployed and underemployed; conducting an inquiry with a view to determining and declaring a minimum standard of living which must be guaranteed to every citizen in a state of full employment; the Government must see to it that enough investment is created to maintain full employment at national minimum wage (by exploiting to the fullest both the fiscal (not borrowing) and monetary sources compatible with sound economic and financial management, intelligent and purposive planning); the appropriate location of industries, and planned direction and the mobility of certain classes of labour. In addition, unemployment relief should be paid, a national minimum wage established, discrimination in employment abolished while retiring age should be raised.

## ON REVENUE ALLOCATION

In simple terms, Chief Awolowo's recipe for revenue allocation in Nigeria to each state should be equal to full "derivation" minus "national interest" minus "even progress" minus "need". Unearned income, like premium, rent, and royalty on mines and minerals, should be discounted in calculating the full revenue derived from each state. Thus, residual allocation to each state should be made on the basis of derivation after adequate financial resources have been provided to the Federal Government to discharge its responsibilities taking cognizance of national interest, even progress, and need.

## AWO'S ECONOMIC PARADIGM

There have been recent attempts by some writers (Akpaka, A., Ibeji, I. and Ayoola, A., 1987) to pigeon-hole Chief Awolowo into a universally accepted economic school of thought - Keynesian Economics - named after its originator, John Maynard Keynes, a famous British economist of the 1930s; it is a branch of Western macro-economic theory focusing on the determination of aggregate income and employment in an advanced capitalist, market economy. But this appears a curious and spurious classification for, as Awo himself pointed out, Keynes in the messiah of full employment is a capitalist economy where employment can only increase *pari passu* with an increase in investment. Here investment is dependent on the prevailing rate of interest and marginal efficiency of capital. But Chief Awolowo advocated the abolition of interest and the legal elimination of the rentier class. He also believed that the objectives of full employment and social justice are attainable only under a system in which the public sector expands rapidly, and does so inversely with the private sector, until the latter is completely extinguished in all but certain limited spheres. One can see why Chief Awolowo cannot be pigeon-holed into 'Keynesianism'. He was a democratic socialist, short and simple.

Other writers have also dubbed Chief Awolowo a Fiscalist on the grounds of his Nigerian Civil War measures to increase government revenue without borrowing. Fiscalists are those who take an eclectic non-monetarist view hence to them money and monetary policies do not matter. However, Chief Awolowo, methinks, does not fall within this strait-jacket for as the sage himself wrote, we need to forge and wield our fiscal and monetary weapons as to provide and stimulate investments at home to the level of full employment, and of a decent steadily and rapidly growing standard of living for our people. It was against this background that he recommended the establishment of a fiscal and monetary Commission. One can see that Chief Awolowo, like most modern economists, advocates an appropriate mix of fiscal and monetary policies

#### AWOLOWO'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT AND NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE.

Given Nigeria's problems of employment (unemployment and underemployment), inflation, foreign and domestic debt, balance of payments, foreign exchange, dwindling internal revenue, inefficiency, acute shortage of raw materials and spare parts, population explosion, falling *per capita* income and national income, continuous depreciation of the naira, and so on (Anyanwu, 1987b), it is imperative that our leaders make skillful use of the basic principles, and elements of Chief Awolowo's economic thought and apply them in diverse and purposeful theoretical and practical activity.

We know from personal experience and from what obtains in other parts of the capitalist world, how citizens live in want in the midst of plenty. We are also familiar with the evils of revolutionary socialism with its concomittant regimentation, totalitarianism, and bureaucratic inefficiency as well as its fissiparous tendencies.

Democratic socialism (a synthesis) - a pragmatic and eclectic principle, philosophy and ideology - fits Nigeria given our peculiar circumstances and problems. It is even consistent

with our traditional/cultural values and orientations. The Mass Mobilization Campaign for Economic Recovery, Self-Reliance and Social Justice (MAMSER) embarked upon by the Babangida administration could well be a good starting point for the adoption of this ideological synthesis come 1992 - not by "imposition" but by the people's choice.

Industrialization and collectivisation along the lines advocated by Chief Awolowo appear the true route to the socio-economic transformation of the Nigerian nation. However, the current deregulation and privatization programmes (part of the components of the Structural Adjustment (SAP)) appear rather antithetical to the complete socialization of all resources and industries/enterprises necessary for attaining a true socialist democratic nation. A rethinking might be necessary here given the equity and ideological issues involved. Given the data problems involved and lack of adequate expert studies, Rationalization, Nigerianization and Socialization are definitely better alternatives. Acting otherwise will create worse distortions in the economy than those that the measures were designed to correct in the first place (Usman, 1987). In addition, the privatization issue attempts to overlook the fact that there are basic social amenities (public goods) which cannot be left to the private sector and the experience of even the capitalist nations of Europe and America who are imposing these draconian measures on us is instructive since they have all these amenities provided either on a free basis or as part of their social security schemes.

An expert study of the Nigerian Society is seriously advocated such that we, once and for-all, do away with adhoc policy measures.

For the maintenance of our federation, democracy and socialism, we need an enlightened and dedicated leadership with the will to execute popularly enunciated policies. Such a leadership with mental magnitude must emerge through the ballot box (democracy) after full education of the masses such that everyone knows his rights and responsibilities.

To eradicate poverty, we must eradicate ignorance, banish obscurantism, train and discipline the 'have-nots' and transform them into useful and hard digits of a modern industrial community. The youths of Nigeria do not want to be equal throughout life but to have equal opportunities so that those whose ability and whose application are better than the average can become more equal than others.

The National Directorate of Employment launched on 30th January, 1987 (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1987) has "the Agricultural Sector Employment Programme" as one of its five cardinal programmes. One must emphasize that without modernization of Agriculture it will be "idle and unrealistic in the extreme to expect educated persons to embark on a farming career". Moreover, without further expansion of the productive sectors to absorb surplus labour to be released from the land we shall be exacerbating the already chronic unemployment problem in the country. Here, we also need to check population explosion, rural-urban migration, alien influx, premature retirements/retrenchments, and effective implementation of the 6-3-3-4 education system (Anyanwu, 1985).

It is also hoped that the issue of social security benefits already set in motion will yield positive dividends in line with Awo's thinking. No effort should be spared in reducing the misery of the Nigerian populace and this is attainable given proper resource mobilization, planning and management. There is also no-gain-saying the fact that the abolition of rent and inheritance will go a long way in encouraging enterprise and channelling resources and energies to real productive activities.

Nigeria needs to embark on a road to reorganization, using greater openness and democracy. There is no doubt that we shall feel such a great support which has been unknown for decades. Presently, the Nigerian society faces the need for qualitative changes in everything: in the development of productive forces and production relations, in the radical democratisation of the socio-economic *cum* political and

humanitarian spheres, in the intensification of cultural and intellectual progress and in the reassertion of man being of prime importance. These are tenets attainable only through the economic thought of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

One might point out that democratic socialism alone is not a panacea. No society as complex as Nigeria can find a two-word solution to all its problems. Democratic socialism without social conscience is not an attractive prospect anywhere. But democratic socialism as the motive force for development, prosperity, social peace and freedom is proving itself in country after country.

The question then becomes whether Nigeria is ready for democratic socialism. Only Nigerians, in the spirit of democracy, can answer that. But the most certain thing is that we wouldn't know until we try. Though death has snatched Awo from our hands, it cannot snatch his economic thought from our hearts and deeds. In practicalizing this, we must be guided by the call for endurance - "try, try again" and "never say fail".

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# **Part Four**

## **Politics and Administration**

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## The Political Thought of Awolowo

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KUNLE AMUWO

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In a 1985 piece, C.B. Okolo writes, somewhat authoritatively, that "there are no more debates on whether or not there is such a thing as African philosophy".<sup>1</sup> But this has not always been so. In fact, were this essay written some twenty years ago, or even less, one would have been hard put to it, to claim that an African philosophy, properly so-called, exists. As already well-known, for two major reasons - "the popular Western and European conception of Africa" and the form and character of Western philosophy as "an academic and dehumanized philosophy"<sup>2</sup> - African philosophy was declared non-existent. At best, there is philosophy *in* and *on* Africa, not African philosophy.<sup>3</sup>

As late as 1974, E.A. Ruch has argued that there is no such thing like African philosophy in the same way one can speak of European or Western philosophy. This is because, for him, while the European or Western mind is 'rational and philosophic', the African is 'anthropologic', if not outrightly 'mythical'.<sup>4</sup> Of course, this is absurd to the extent that the art of philosophizing, as Innocent Onyewueyi reminds us, is a universal experience.<sup>5</sup> It is also a "rational activity, a systematic and ordered inquiry concerning the nature of the Universe and man's place in it".<sup>6</sup>

Thus, any where there is a reasoned thought about the environment and man's place in it, anywhere there are

ideas or thoughts about man's reality and his understanding or otherwise of that reality which is systematically and coherently probed or researched into, we can reasonably talk of philosophy. Conceived this way, African philosophy does exist. While "it places emphasis on the African, his world, history, values and on the significance these have for him",<sup>7</sup> it is ultimately meant

to establish or get hold of the truth of the African and his world, to rescue the African (and his world) from all sorts of distortion and falsehood which, for instance, followed in the wake of colonialism and slavery.<sup>8</sup>

From this perspective, it can well be argued that since Chief Obafemi Awolowo rationally, coherently and consistently explored the full development of Man, the Nigerian man within a socialist state and a Federal political set up, his is in the mainstream of African political philosophy. It is around these two major strands of thought as well as the mythology of Awolowo's philosophy that I write what follows.

What this paper therefore sets out to do is to discuss the main themes of Awolowo's political thought and thereafter attempt a critical appraisal. In so doing, we veer away from sheer sloganeering and hagiographic Awoism. Rather, we propose a critical and scholarly treatment of Awolowo's political thought and its inherent application to contemporary Nigerian and African political society.

#### BACKGROUND TO CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

It is often asserted by knowledgeable writers on African politics that Chief Awolowo was a product of his day, his age and of his circumstances, extant during and after his birth. Not only his tough and painstaking, albeit short-lived, upbringing particularly, on education, but also his father's, grandfather's positive influence and, *a fortiori*, his wrestling prowess made him at once tough, fearless and defiant. From his own account of his early life, one gleans the beginnings of his legendary audacity and stubbornness.<sup>9</sup>

Again, the strict discipline he underwent at the Presbyterian Wesley College - for which he had initial disdain - was later to be given his imprimatur for all those who "aspire to a position of leadership in any sphere of life".<sup>10</sup>

His well-known spartan self-discipline, his regime of mental magnitude theory and his Christianity-as-Philosophy, - all these are derivatives of his early life, training and multifaceted experiences. Undoubtedly, such circumstances helped in fashioning his political philosophy. Also of utmost significance is the bastardizing colonial experience of his time. His intermittent adulation of colonial government notwithstanding - he, for instance, regarded it as being, in some respects, "efficient and orderly"<sup>12</sup> - he was a consistent defender of the rights of the colonial peoples to assert their own political and economic independence as well as their inalienable and God-given right to rule themselves.

Since he lived under the abjectly exploitative colonial system and thereby saw the evils and inequities of imperialism, he appreciated the need to fight for political freedom and the betterment of life for the common man. It can be argued that the seeds of his political credo - the disentangling of man from the shackles of ignorance, poverty and British rule were sown under the latter. His obsession for Man's Liberty or Freedom was well encapsulated in his Action Group's aims and objectives. "Freedom for All, Life More Abundant, Freedom from British Rule, Freedom from Ignorance, Freedom from disease and Freedom from want".<sup>13</sup> Nor were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)'s four cardinal programmes of Free Education, Free Health services, Integrated Rural Development and Full employment, a departure from this tradition. It is this apparent concern for the welfare of the masses practically demonstrated during his Premiership of the defunct Western Region and by the intermediary of some of his five state governors during the Second Republic (Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Bendel and Oyo states) that is at the core of his 'democratic' or 'pragmatic' socialism.<sup>14</sup>

*Awolowo's "Etatist" Socialist Thought*

Awolowo believed that the major stumbling blocks towards the achievement of a socialist state are mainly the evils of imperialism in all its ramifications. He identified, following Jean-Jacque Rousseau, the "chains" with which man is bound: the imperialism of ignorance, disease and wants; the imperialism of local Ceasars or indigenous elites or what he also called "native tyranny";<sup>15</sup> the imperialism of capitalism and the imperialism of what Kant called "the tyranny of the flesh". He saw the latter as the worst form of tyrannies known to man. His task, as he conceived it, was to build the state free from all these variants of imperialism.

In his *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, he talked about the liquidation of the first identified form of imperialism. For him, the rule of one nation by another "cannot be justified by any standard of morality".<sup>16</sup> In this respect, the legal termination of colonial rule does not amount to freedom *par excellence* without an accompanying economic freedom. A better and qualitatively superior state is one in which the citizens are massively educated, enjoy adequate medical care and are therefore less susceptible to "dictatorship, oligarchy and feudal autocracy".

His abhorrence for capitalism is anchored on the premise that capitalism is a system which not only permits a few to flourish at the expense of the many, but more significantly, "legalizes stealing and thieving ....It is a system which puts a premium on the worst vices of man and discriminates against the best virtues".<sup>17</sup> Since his Platonian philosopher-king already has good health and education - "essential preconditions of mental magnitude"<sup>18</sup> - such factors ought to be made available to the masses in order to facilitate 'efficient production and higher productivity'.

Now, in proposing socialism as a better welfarist strategy vis-a-vis capitalism, Awolowo argued that it is in the "best interests of Nigerians themselves that a permanently mixed

socialist - capitalist economy for Nigeria should be resolutely avoided".<sup>19</sup> Yet, enmeshed within his conception of 'democratic' or 'pragmatic' socialism is the notion of philosopher-king which does not quite tally with the former. Witness:

the educated minority in each ethnical group are the people who are *qualified by natural rights* to lead their fellow nationals into higher political development.<sup>20</sup>

We may well infer that this principle, technocratically benevolent, holds at post-independence.

There are, for him, three basic ways of achieving his ideal socialist state or what he was wont to refer to as 'social justice and equality'. These are (a) Regulation of consumption by legislative acts with a view to separating basic needs from luxurious wants; (b) Control of means of production by the State with legislative acts enjoining private owners of such means to retribute or restore; (c) Periodic state-inspired "swift and positive steps" to forestall capitalist as against socialist and welfarist practices and such actions as are "capable of generating hatred, bitterness and undue and widespread dissatisfaction".<sup>21</sup>

But these modalities can come to fruition only when state goals or objectives are clearly and unambiguously enunciated and the technique and methodology carefully worked out. Again, his socialism-by-legislation finds full expression in his idea on the Nigerian example. Consequently, if the Nigerian state aims at "the attainment of economic freedom and prosperity for all its citizens, at a comparatively early date", it has only one choice: "it must forthwith adopt the socialist approach to all its social problems".<sup>22</sup>

What the foregoing boils down to is that Awolowo did not subscribe to the theory of inevitability of violent revolution. In fact, Awolowo laboured much in his writings to distance himself from at once communist theory of state and Marxist Socialism. For instance, while agreeing like Marx, Lenin *et al.* that socialism would inevitably establish both social and

economic democracy, he rejected Marxist stateless community. For him,

....the state is an absolute necessity in human evolution it is only within the state that man can enjoy personal freedom and live a full and happy life...<sup>23</sup>

He also held that since Africa's past is different from the easily class-structured European society, Africa's socialism could be attained via-non-violent means. Thus, his submission:

For Africa ... socialism can be introduced by democratic processes and the excesses of the budding African capitalists as well as the social control of the means of production can respectively be checked and brought about by laws enacted by the people's elected Parliaments.<sup>24</sup>

his democratic or legalistic route to socialism is operative only within the context of a multiparty state. The latter, he argued, is the only one which is consistent with democracy. Put differently, his socialist state is anchored in the ideals of participatory or liberal democracy, where the doctrine of separation of powers is religiously observed; where fundamental human rights of the citizens are diligently maintained and where provisions are made for the establishment and preservation of representative bodies whose members are not only accountable to the people, but also seek to further the interests of the latter.

Awolowo also underlined the indispensability of good leadership in maintaining and running his ideal socialist state. As he puts it "Nigerian political leaders (must) possess and hold, respectively, certain attributes and attitudes of mind; guide and lead the entire masses of their people to cultivate or at least to strive perseveringly to cultivate them".<sup>25</sup> Lacking good leadership that can deliver the goods, all attempts at establishing and consolidating a Socialist state predicated on egalitarianism -- as against elitism -- would be fruitless and would be in vain.

In Summary, Awolowo's socialism is paternalistic, ever if

technocratic: Plato's 'Guardians', naturally selected, would lead the masses, the led, those who are merely fit to vote but not voted for, to the Promised Land, namely, 'Life More Abundant' and the 'Good Things of Life'.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE UNIVERSAL MIND AND FUNDAMENTAL LAW

We have already argued that Awolowo's political philosophy is non-abstract. It is largely empirical much in the image of his contributions, as a professional politician, to the upliftment of man. Even his treatise on the Universal Mind or Spirit is essentially utilitarian, predicated, as already adverted, on man, variously seen as "the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature"; "the prime mover in every economy".<sup>27</sup>

To say this, however, is not to gloss over the fact that Awolowo's political philosophy is equally abstract and, perforce, unfathomable. Perhaps nowhere are these traits best manifested than in his thoughts on the Universal Mind and Fundamental Law of Nature. The latter show clearly more than in other segments of his philosophy, the pervasive influence of pietist Christian faith and cosmic science - which he came to embrace after a short-lived excursion into the realm of agnosticism.

Awolowo's Universal Mind is God; the Almighty who "permeates and pervades all things".<sup>28</sup> Whereas the Universal Mind permits all that is good and beautiful in Man, its law is against evil such that, via its ultimate intervention, "a greedy, corrupt and evil regime will wither away".<sup>29</sup> In the same vein, the Immutable Law can do only good; it does not brook any evil thought or action. As he puts it "The Immutable Law, under the agency of man, will do every good and desirable thing we want provided always that our technique is correct". Consequently,

Whatever thought we hold dear, entertain and cherish will manifest itself in concrete forms whether we like it or not. The Fundamental Law is that thought, is the cause and the

material world is only an effect. If we persistently think and cherish good thoughts, good will result, if evil, evil will result.<sup>30</sup>

Relatedly, the theist in Awolowo finds expression, too naturally and expectedly, in rigidity. The Law of Nature and the most enduring principles of the great religions not only find their vehicle of conveyance in Awolowo, they are also proffered as principles of state organization — a Socialist state. Thus, for him,

anything which is selfish; hateful and evil will produce selfish, hateful and evil results. Similarly, anything which is other regarding, altruistic, loving and good will produce other-regarding, altruistic, loving, and good results.<sup>31</sup>

In a very profound sense, Awolowo's philosophy is spiced with heavy religious juices. Man, he reasoned in his 1977 *Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Lectures*, is "dual in nature: part animal, part God; part conscious, part subconscious, part body, part mind..."<sup>32</sup> It is therefore difficult to separate the attainment of a Socialist state from the ubiquitous Universal Mind. In fact, the latter is destined, in Awolowo's thought, to bring to fruition the Socialist State. For, once the objectives and methods of approach are "good, constructive and beneficial to all", leaders and experts with "unflagging socialist orientation"<sup>33</sup> need not bother themselves. The Universal Mind, he contended, will surely aid in the accomplishment of stated goals. In intervening, the Universal Mind determines modes of accomplishment "which may or may not necessarily bring about the use of force or violence"<sup>34</sup>

Again while Awolowo did not cite a single state which has achieved socialism by democratic and legal means, he believed that "... the Universal Mind which is omnipotent, omniscient and omni-present is not bound by precedents". He continues,

whatever good and beneficial ideas are held in the minds of men, especially in the minds of the vast majority of the

people and cherished by them will materialize sooner or later, provided the people concerned remain constant and faithful in cherishing the ideals and in devising constructive means for their achievement.<sup>35</sup>

Hegelian to the core, he sees God, the Idea, the Ideal, the Human Mind as important and indispensable agencies of Man to transform his wishes or thoughts into concreteness. But such reality as occurs is as simplistic as it is reductionist: a religious adherence to the Christian 'Golden Rule', the Law and the prophets coupled with a sustained and painstaking cultivation of the regime of mental magnitude will equate to good, to proper and correct virtues. And once the Mind can sustain itself in its goodness, evil will automatically be forced out of man's inner recesses. Or as Awolowo put it,

....and as good and evil cannot coexist in the same mind, our existing maladies will, *ipso facto*, disappear.<sup>36</sup>

Now, Awolowo disposed that it is only those who have acquired mental magnitude through a vigorous and rigid application of the Inner Man; those who are free from Kant's monumental "tyranny of the flesh" in form of the negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy, selfishness; those who have overcome not only indulgence in the wrong types of food and drink, but also in ostentatious consumption; those who are not given to excessive or immoral craving for sex - these are the only ones who can lead their fellow men. In short, it is only those who are "properly and eminently equipped with a considerable measure of intellectual comprehension and cognition, insight and spiritual illumination"<sup>37</sup>, who are qualified to champion the cause of the down-trodden and deliver them from the shackles of poverty, disease, ignorance and want. It is the Universal Mind that, undeniably, permits the realization of this admittedly lofty vision.

#### THOUGHTS ON POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: HIS FEDERALIST VIEWS

The renowned 'grand theorist' on Federalism or Federal Political arrangement, Kenneth C. Wheare, opines that federalism is highly incompatible with autocracy or totalitarian rule

since it, *inter alia*, sets limits on the central government.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in an essentially multi-ethnic or multi-lingual/multi-national political corpus, federalism is the best antidote to perennial bickering and antagonism amongst differing ethnic and/or ethnic-linguistic groups. It is this principle of political organization which L. Adele Jinadu views as "a form of governmental and institutional structure, deliberately designed by political "architects" to cope with the twin but difficult task of maintaining unity while also preserving diversity."<sup>39</sup>

While Awolowo conceded that multi-ethnicity and multi-nationality inherited from colonialism is a useful heritage, he vigorously contested the view that such states could be kept politically stable by the same or similar constitutional structures and devices – basically unitarian – put in place by the departing imperial colonialists.<sup>40</sup> It can, in fact be said, without excess of language, that federalism constitutes more than a recurring theme in Awolowo's political philosophy: it is a creeping obsession, one to which he constantly returned in virtually all his essays. If, as he stated, "with me, federalism and the creation of more states is an article of faith",<sup>41</sup> there is an impelling logic for this in the specific Nigerian situation. It also constitutes, for him, a bold political blue print or recipe for political stability, a value of which Africa's foremost country is much bereft.

Consequently, in his 1966's *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Awolowo proffered the country's immense diversity in area, population, multiethnicity and lingualism, differing cultural patterns, religious interferences and so on as a compelling rationale for a federalist arrangement; for, in short, union rather than unity.<sup>42</sup> Such diversities cannot be wished away for they are

natural and automatic generators of centrifugal forces and tendencies. They tend to induce in the ethnic groups concerned a strong and burning desire for separate existence from one another.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, federalism is proposed as a bulwark against political instability and national disharmony and dislocation. It

becomes a national desideratum. To leave this undone, is to invite disaster, for a unitary arrangement beset with divergences of language and nationality, "is always a source of bitterness and hostility on the part of linguistic or national minority groups".<sup>44</sup> So fundamental is federalism as a national objective that in his scale of preference or hierarchy of national wants, democracy, good leadership and socialism are ranked, in that order, after federalism.<sup>45</sup>

Awolowo also asserted that his federalist thoughts, Indian-inspired, which made him a convinced federalist at twenty-four and compelled the adoption, in 1951, of the slogan "Unity through Federalism" by Action Group, the party he founded and led, could be adequately addressed by appropriate constitutional engineering. The latter is anchored on four main principles. These principles which Awolowo also referred to as "laws" of constitution-making were arrived at, he claimed, after a careful perusal of all Constitutions in the world. In so doing, Awolowo argued that since language is the most basic identific characteristic of a nation, the Constitution of a state whose people speak different languages must be federal while constituent units ought to be organized on a linguistic basis. This, for him, is crucial to the Nigerian situation.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, on the basis of the foregoing, Chief Obafemi Awolowo proposed four "laws" of Constitution-making.

(i) If a country is uni-lingual and uni-national, the Constitution must be unitary. Examples are France, Italy, Portugal, and others.

(ii) If a country is uni-lingual or bilingual or multi-lingual and also consists of communities which, though belonging to the same nation or linguistic group, have over a period of years, developed some important cultural divergences as well as autonomous geographical separateness, the Constitution must be federal and the constituent states must be organized on the dual basis of language and geographical separateness. Examples are USA, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Austria, and others.

(iii) If a country is bi-lingual or multi-lingual, the Consti-

ation must be federal, and the constituent states must be organized on a linguistic basis. Examples are Canada, Mexico, China, USSR, and others which belong to the group.

(iv) Any experiment with a Unitary Constitution in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual country must fail in the long run. Examples are: the United Kingdom or Great Britain and Ireland, Belgium, Cyprus all of which have for sometime been experiencing incessant turmoil and violence, because, though they are either bi-lingual or multi-lingual, they stubbornly insist on operating a Unitary Constitution.<sup>47</sup>

His frame of reference for a federal arrangement in Nigeria is the Constitution of ethnic groups into "a separate Province or a number of provinces".<sup>48</sup> The guiding idea is the revision of provincial boundaries along linguistic lines. In fact, he argued that Nigeria ought to have as many provinces, zones, regions or states as there are linguistic or ethnic groups. He also believed that each region should have a Legislature and government of its own. There would be a Central Parliament and government in which the various linguistic groupings in the country would be represented. The utility of this approach is immense. Hear him:

... the division of the country into regions along ethnic lines would enable each ethnic group not only to develop its own peculiar culture and institutions but to move forward at its own pace, without being unnecessarily pushed or annoyingly slowed by the others.<sup>49</sup>

To do otherwise, that is, to unscientifically and stubbornly subscribe to a unitary Constitution with only one central government is to, perhaps unwittingly, invite frustration into the rank and file of the more pushful and more dynamic ethnic groups. But the regional dismemberment of the country should not be arbitrarily effected; it ought to be subject to certain specific rational criteria. His suggested criteria are carried over from the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM's) Federalist blue print, to wit (a) ethnic classification; (b) cultural affinity; (c) common problems and, perhaps, (d)

administrative convenience.<sup>50</sup> It is only in a Federation where linguistic and ethnic differences are adequately protected and preserved that linguistic and ethnic groups can advance their culture as they wish. It is also within this constitutional, if not sociological, framework that the "solidarity and devotion exhibited within the ranks of ethnic groups" can be sublimated to the cause of the nation-state thereby ensuring the federal unity of Nigeria in diversity.<sup>51</sup>

Awolowo's federalist thought may not have stemmed solely from the now proverbial Indian influence; it appears to have also been a reaction, if only circumstantial and contextual, to the views of Northern Nigerian politicians and Emirs of the colonial and immediate post-colonial era. These "leaders of thought" seemed to have seen religion — Islamism — as the most appropriate paradigm for state organization. Witness the Emir's comment to a West African Students' Union (WASU)'s letter in 1942, after the Conference of the Northern chiefs: "Holding this country together is not possible except by means of the religion of the Prophet. . . . if they want political unity, let them follow our religion."<sup>52</sup>

#### ATTEMPT OF A CRITIQUE

What we have done in the foregoing sections is to present the main themes in Chief Awolowo's political thought, namely "Etatist" Socialism, Universal Mind and Fundamental Law and Federalism. In doing this, however, one is not unaware of a school of thought led by Professor Billy J. Dudley which hardly sees anything good or thoughtful in Awolowo's thought. "Much of It", writes Dudley in 1969, "is non-thought" This is because found in Awolowo's writings "is the growing rigidity and dogmatism of thought" such that "most of his suggestions have taken on a more definitive form, a finality which brooks no challenges".<sup>53</sup> A careful reading of Awolowo's philosophy, particularly of the ubiquitous Universal Mind and Fundamental Law and their pervasive influence on much of Awolowo's thought, unmistakably shows B.J. Dudley's observation as unmisplaced.

Focusing his criticism on his 1968 publication, *The People's Republic*, Dudley takes Awolowo to task on his idea of fundamental law which, as already adverted, states, in part "...if we persistently think and cherish good thoughts, good will result, if evil, evil will result" (cf. supra). This, for Dudley, is at once absurd and simplistic. Flowing from this is the logic that if a peasant has the "thought" that he will become and is a millionaire, then he will be one. Again the mere fact that some Nigerians "consciously or unconsciously" put up the notion of a Nigerian nation, then, by the fundamental law, this must surely exist. At a ridiculous extent, Dudley is arguing, one can opine that Awolowo himself had been cherishing bad thought since a Nigerian nation was never a reality for him.<sup>54</sup>

To say the foregoing is not to say that Awolowo's ideas do not form a "thought" or that they do not internally cohere. What perhaps Dudley inadvertently left out in his critique is that Awolowo's ideas, especially on his Socialist state, leaves much, in its realization, to the Universal mind. This is the metaphysical or cosmic segment of his thinking which does not and can scarcely be intelligible to critical minds. One knows fully well that nowhere in the world has any group of people achieved a self-reliant economy, political stability and an enduring, viable political culture by merely chattering away, folding their arms and wishing same to happen. Awolowo's thinking here is a victim of a *prioristic* assumption, namely that once your "objectives", "approach", and "strategies" are "good", constructive" and "beneficial" to all, then you are assured of a successful concretization. Not even the most utopian of contemporary socialists would believe that the socialist state can be brought about by mere wishful thinking. To be sure, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

One may even like to challenge what, in certain respects, amounts to socialist pretensions in Awolowo's writings. To begin with, his reading of Nigeria's endemic and inherent economic and socio-political problems appears excessively

and simplistically superstructural. Writing specifically on the First Republic, he asserted that

. . .the underlying causes of the maladies which afflicted Nigeria under the First Republic are, indulgence in sex and alcoholic beverage, addiction to greed and subjection to fear.<sup>55</sup>

Nor can his Socialism be said to be far-reaching enough. Even though he started embracing socialism after the 1962 Action Group crisis and consistently thereafter reiterated that a socialist state should evolve gradually, his thoughts and pronouncements tend, in diverse places, to put a veneer of doubt on the sincerity of his Socialism. There is, for instance, a muddleness of thought which points in one breath, to "a planned (national) economy in which foreign interests would play a decreasingly important part", a position congruent with AG's 'mixed socialist economy' and which, in another, cautions against a dubious amalgam of socialism and capitalism (cf. *supra*).

Again, his socialist thought seems to "ignore the relationship between extensive accumulation and meaningful social change"<sup>56</sup> This explains why he persistently called for a mere reordering, as against a revolutionizing, of the country's neo-colonial socio-economic formation. In this respect, there is a school of thought that tenaciously holds that both the AG and the UPN Awolowo led, respectively during the First and Second Republics, were little more than purveyors of 'defensive radicalism', as seen in form of what Falola and Ihonvbere call "radical sloganeering, productive capitalism, discipline and efficiency"<sup>57</sup> Perhaps, an admixture of British Constitutional Law, capitalist economics and Christian ethics could scarcely have produced a different result.<sup>58</sup>

Had it won the Presidency either in 1979 or 1983, the UPN would have, in all probability, fulfilled its 1978 electoral promise to actively encourage foreign capital investment which ultimate result might be a humane, even if dependent, economic and social order. I, however, hasten to add that

UPN and, by the play of logic, Awolowo's presidency would have been a more efficient, productive and effective Socialist capitalism or "democratic welfarism" in Nigeria. The country would have, again, in all probability, pushed millions of Nigerians above the poverty datum line via its welfarist socialism. Admittedly, the foregoing is little more than what the learned chief would himself have called a *counter-factual hypothesis*.

Following Akin Omoboriowo's hagiographic work *Awoism: Select Themes on the Complex Ideology of Chief O. Awolowo*<sup>59</sup> and his litany of Awolowo's rejections; Marxism, class struggle, violence, bloodshed, dialectical materialism and what have you, Awolowo's socialist views appear to be more pro-capitalist than "of the Left, even of the most confused".<sup>60</sup> At any rate, even if Awolowo can be said to be a socialist at the political level, as seen in his advocacy of transference of political power to the people he is hardly one at the economic level since there is scarcely anything in his work indicating the necessity of seizure of economic power from the ruling class and the *nouveaux-riches*.

Moreover, the AG's mixed socialist economic paradigm is, to say the least confusing. To be severe and critical, it is as selfish as it is naive. For how can a mixed economy be at the same time socialist in content, orientation and direction? The only concession one can give the AG here is that this view was expressed in the wake of the country's nominal or legal independence. Perhaps the mood of that time influenced their thinking. Yet over time, neither Awolowo nor his political parties, AG and UPN, could substantially and significantly depart from this dubious amalgam. It may well be due to the fact that Awolowo was more of a 'calculating realist' than an 'idealistic universalist'.<sup>61</sup>

On his thought on federalism, Awolowo's linguistic and ethnic principle would appear to have been arbitrarily chosen. What criterion or criteria did he apply? Why language? Why not religion, for instance? At least that is what obtains, *inter alia*, in Mouamar Ghaddafi's Libya, in Syad Barre's

Somalia, in Saudi Arabia and in Iran of the Ayatollahs'. Again, ethnographers say Nigeria has 250 languages: should she then have 250 states, following Awolowo's linguistic logic?

Even his other critical variables or factors in the division of the federal political corpus into states regions appear confusing and ambiguous. What, for instance, is meant by "common problems"? Can it not be said, without any fear of contradiction, that the problems of colonialism, economic backwardness, wretchedness of the mass of our people and so on, are common to the Yoruba, Ibo, Efik, Ijaw, Igala much in the same way they are to the Hausa, Fulani, Edo, Idoma and Tiv? Or perhaps Awolowo is talking about centrifugal forces within a given cultural area which constitute problems only within that ethnic land-area.

Again, his criterion of "administrative convenience" can easily be misunderstood. Does this refer to convenience for the local/regional/state or federal government. Moreover, if his "scientific principle" of constitutional-engineering based of course, on language, is anything to go by, one can direct the Chief's attention to Belgium where there are two languages and Switzerland where four languages are spoken and yet these states fall in the category of politically stable polities. They are anything but unstable. In other words, the mere fact that many languages are spoken in a country does not necessarily mean that there are no other basis for political union.

The least one can say about his scientific principle is that there would be too many small or miniscule states which would be neither economically viable nor administratively well-organized. There is already too much administrative opacity in the 21-state structure to give room for comfort. Neither would such small states be able to achieve, without great difficulty, Awolowo's dream of "sublimating the solidarity and devotion exhibited within their ranks to the cause of the nation and federal unity of Nigeria". At any rate, there is hardly any iota of demonstration on how this sublimation

exercise could be realized. In Dudleyean language, it is difficult, given the country's ethnic political arithmetic, for a 'second-order political allegiance' to supercede or override 'more primary, first-order attachments'.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, if Nigeria's chequered political history is anything to go by, the creation of more states rather than fostering national or federal unity, makes for more loyalty and devotion being concentrated to the cause of states at the expense of the Centre. What is increasingly manifestable is analogous to Canning's famous expression "everyone for himself, God for us all". Nigerians tend, as it were, to think more of their respective states than the country as a whole. The prediction is that the more states we have, the more the tendency to see what divides us, rather than what the factors for unity are; a negation of Chief Awolowo's political vision.

A final word: it is pertinent to say that however one looks at Awolowo's political philosophy, his is undeniably, an invaluable contribution not only to the growth of an African political philosophy, but also to the question of political organization and philosophy of governance. It can, in fact, be said that more than any of his contemporaries who, for decades, moved like a bestriding colossus on the country's political landscape, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was as thorough in normative politics as he was competent in the art of governance.

In a country, even continent, where sheer mediocrity materialism and brazen opportunism have been perfected into an art in form of piecemeal or adhoc and ever-shifting political thinking, Awolowo stands out poles ahead of the writings of several of his peers whose writings, hardly a body of thought, pass for 'African political thought'. It can therefore be surmised, following Omoregbe Nwanwene, that since the 'Leader of the Yoruba' gave much food for thought to students of Nigerian and African politics, his works deserve "our serious consideration, attention and study".<sup>63</sup>

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- 37 Awolowo, *People's Republic*, *loc. cit*: 230.

- 38 K.C. Wheare, *Federal Government*, 4th ed. London, O.U.P., 1963.
- 39 L. Adele Jinadu, "A Note on the Theory of Federalism", in A. Bolaji Akinyemi, et al (eds.), *Readings on Federalism*, NIIA, Lagos, 1979: 15.
- 40 Cf Awolowo, *Problems of Africa*, loc. cit., 37.
- 41 Awo, *The Autobiography*, loc., cit: 199.
- 42 Cf C. F. Strong, *Modern Political Constitutions*, (Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1951): 17-29; 43-55.
- 43 Awolowo, *Thoughts.....*, loc., cit: 25.
- 44 *Ibid*: 48 of *Problems of Africa*, loc. cit: 57.
- 45 *Thoughts*, loc. cit: 162, "Our Objectives are now Clear and unmistakable: Federalism; Democracy; Good Leadership; Socialism — These Four. But the Most Urgent of Them is — Federalism".
- 46 Cf Awolowo's address as Chancellor to the University of Ife Congregation on April 11, 1970 for his unequivocal declaration; "I believe in the division of the country into states based on ethnic or linguistic affinity", *Pacific Printers. Yaba, Nigeria*, 1970: 10.
- 47 See virtually all Awolowo's major works: *Problems of Africa*: 37, 55-6, 71-2; *Thoughts*, 48-9; *People's Republic*, 90-1.
- 48 *Path.....*, 55 *The Autobiography*: 160-84.
- 49 *The Autobiography....*: 164-5.
- 50 *Ibid*: 177.
- 51 *Thoughts*: 165-6.
- 52 *Path....*: 51.
- 53 B.J. Dudley, "Thoughts and Non-Thoughts", in *Nigerian Opinion*, Ibadan, 5, 3-4, March-April, 1969: 411-4.
- 54 *Ibid*.
- 55 *Thoughts....*: 158-9.
- 56 See Toyin Falola and Julius Ihonvbere, *The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-84*. Zed Books, London, 1985: 57.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Awoism*, Evans Bros, Ibadan, 1982.

60 Falola and Ihonvbere, *loc. cit.*: 60.

61 B.J. Dudley, "The Political Theory" ..., *loc. cit.*: 202.

62 *Ibid.*: 206.

63 O. Nwanwene, *loc. cit.*

# Understanding Awolowo's Socio-political Thoughts and Ideological Themes in the Light of the Sociology of Knowledge

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## I. ONI

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### INTRODUCTION

There are diverse possible approaches to critically appraising a theory, a body of ideological themes, or some socio-political philosophy. One of such possible approaches is to examine the relationship or elective affinity between social and historical situations in which the author is located and the nature and content of the intellectual products; and this takes us to the field of the sociology of knowledge. Sociology of knowledge is the field of the sociological enterprise that seeks to establish logical connections between theories, philosophies and ideas in general, and the concrete social structures in which they emerge; hence, this branch of sociology is concerned with the social and existential conditioning of knowledge and ideas. One opines that the adoption of this approach in appraising the socio-political thoughts and ideas of Obafemi Awolowo would greatly enhance an illumination and understanding of their strong points and relevance, as well as their weaknesses and limitations in the context of political and economic development in Africa.

### THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Although various sociologists such as Durkheim (1954), Veblen (1919, 1934), Mead (1934), Sorokin (1943) and

Znaniecki (1968) have in their general works certain themes that are relevant to, and that make suggestive leads to the sociology of knowledge, it is the works of Marx (1962, 1964) and Mannheim (1936, 1952) that have made monumental contributions to the evolution of the sociology of knowledge as a distinct branch of study in sociology.

Coser (1977) observes that in an attempt to dissociate himself from the panlogical system of his former master, Hegel, as well as from the philosophy of his erstwhile Young Hegelian friends, Karl Marx undertook in some of his early writings to establish a connection between philosophies and ideas, and the social structures in which they emerged. This programmatic orientation once established, Marx proceeded to analyse the ways in which systems of ideas appeared to depend on the social positions, particularly the class positions of their proponents. In opposing the dominant ideas of his time, Marx was led to a resolute relativisation of those ideas. According to Marx, the eternal verities of dominant thought appeared upon inspection to be only the direct or indirect expression of the class interests of their exponents. We must go astray, he believed, "if we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence; ...without paying attention to the conditions of production, and the producers of these ideas, and if we thus ignore the individuals and the world conditions which are the source of these ideas" (1964:79-80).

In Marx's analysis, it is with revolutionary ideas as it is with conservative ideas. According to him, the existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular age presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class. "The ruling ideas of each age have never been the ideas of the ruling class. When people speak of ideas that revolutionise society, they do but express the fact that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence" (1962:52). Marx was willing to concede, however reluctantly, that the ideologists and the political repre-

representatives of a class need not share in all the material characteristics of that class, but that they share and express the overall cast of mind. Moreover, Marx granted that particular individuals might not always think in terms of class interests, but that categories of people, as distinct from individuals, are so influenced. (1964: 202).

Despite some apparent inconsistencies in his work, Karl Mannheim easily stands out as the doyen of modern sociology of knowledge. And although Karl Mannheim's searching mind made contributions to many areas of sociological inquiry, it seems to be generally accepted that his sociology of knowledge is the most valuable and enduring part of his work. Mannheim transformed what to Marx had been mainly a tool of polemical attack against his bourgeois adversaries into a general instrument of analysis that could be used effectively for the study of Marxism as for any other system of thought. In the Marxian analysis, attention was called to the functions of ideas for the defence of class privileges, and to the distortion and falsification of ideas that derived from the privileged positions of bourgeois thinkers. In contrast to this interpretation of bourgeois ideology, Marx's own ideas were accepted by the Marxists to be true and unbiased by virtue of their being an expression of a class, the proletariat, that had no privileged interests to defend.

Mannheim would not concede to such distinction between various systems of ideas. Rather, he allows for the probability that all ideas, even "truths" were related to, and hence influenced by the social and historical situations from which they emerged. The very fact that each thinker is affiliated with particular groups in society, that he occupies a certain status and enacts certain social roles, affect his intellectual outlook. Men "do not confront the objects of the world from the abstract levels of contemplating mind as such, nor do they do so exclusively as solitary beings. On the contrary, they act with and against one another in diversely organised groups, and while doing so, they think with and against each other". (Mannheim, 1936:3). To him all knowledge and all

ideas are bound to a location, though to different degrees, within the social structure and historical process, so that thoughts and ideas are inevitably perspectivistic. Thus, the process of thinking and knowing does not actually develop intrinsically in accordance with 'imminent laws', that it does not follow only from the 'nature of things' or from 'pure logical possibilities', but that it is influenced decisively by extra-theoretical, existential factors.

Mannheim's theoretical contribution to the sociology of knowledge falls into 2 parts; First substantive contributions involving empirical investigation, description and structural analysis of the ways in which social relationships appear to influence thought; and second, epistemological inquiring concerned with the bearing of this inter-relationship upon the problem of validity (Mannheim, 1934:239). As Coser (1977) has observed, it would seem that he was considerably more successful in the first endeavour than he was in the second. On epistemological questions regarding the truth value or validity of propositions and theories, Mannheim's positions were frequently muddled up, and thus made himself an easy target of criticism in this respect. Critics soon point out that to hold the position that all thought necessarily has an ideological character draws one close to universal epistemological relativism and nihilism.

Various attempts made by Mannheim to respond to this line of criticism did not appear successful. At times, he argued that the validity of a proposition depended on its adaptability to the requirements of particular historical situation. It is however clear that the judgement as to what ideas are adaptable to the requirements of particular historical situation is bound to be subjective, normative and *ex post facto*. When the criterion of adaptability of a theory to historical situation came under attack, Mannheim came up with the idea that, at least, the 'socially unattached intelligentsia' were capable of undistorted and valid thought. This, he said, was because intellectuals have cut themselves loose from their original roots and, moreover, that they engage in

other, there by sloughing off traces of their original biases. Here it may suffice to note that, going by historical realities, intellectuals are by no means immune from the prejudices and slanting perspectives of their time. Although individual intellectuals are by no means immune from the prejudices and slanting perspectives of their time. Although individual intellectuals may indeed at times manage to attain critical detachment intellectuals as a category are not so immune.

Thus the weakness of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge lies in the fact that if stretched too far it forecloses the possibility of the attainment of valid, sincere and relevant theories and ideas. Secondly, it ignores the possibility that other forces such as personal research and other idiosyncratic factors may also influence thoughts and ideas. Hence, scepticism, driven to extremes defeats itself by becoming self-refuting. But moderate and guarded scepticism, when it leads to inquiry on the possible sources of prejudice, bias, and distortion, can be a thoroughly liberating endeavour, contributing positively to the perennial quest of man to know himself and his social environment better. *In applying the above discourse to the appraisal of Awolowo's ideological themes, we propose to examine to what extent Awolowo's thoughts are socially, historically and existentially conditioned, to what extent this affects the validity, relevance and internal consistency of his body of ideas and what other factors probably did affect his socio-political thoughts, autonomously from his social and existential conditions.*

#### THEMES IN AWOLOWO'S SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHTS.

The selected themes in Awolowo's socio-political thoughts that we wish to examine here fall under the following categories:

- (a) His theory of social evolution, social stratification and class relations in society.
- (b) His critique of capitalism and his democratic socialism.

- (c) His dialectics, and dynamics of social change and development.

These are briefly treated in turn:

- (a) *Awolowo's theory of social Evolution, Social Stratification and class Relations;*

Going through the works of Awolowo, one hardly finds a precise definition of society. Awolowo however propounds some doctrines of society which are of sociological significance. Like Comte, Awolowo sees the society as the union or aggregation of families. Thus, the family rather than the individual, is considered as the minimum irreducible unit of society. For Awolowo, the origin and source of society derive from two principles; the natural principle, and the utilitarian principle. Man form society, first, because he is naturally a social animal; and second, because of historical and economic necessity. According to him, "there is abundant and incontrovertible empirical evidence to the effect that families live in community not for the love of one another, but because of a clear realisation by them of the economic, social and political advantages as well as the collective security which such living together can impart on the constituent families" (1981a:55). In this sense, Awolowo fails to make a distinction between the evolution of the state and that of the society; both are virtually treated as one in this respect.

Awolowo's society is hierarchical in nature and based on the principle of innate differentials. Individuals, he says, differentiate among themselves according to inborn powers and abilities. While some are more intelligent, others are more suited and adapted to do certain jobs efficiently; some are naturally endowed with leadership qualities over others. There are also those who use their given talents and skills, and who are consequently very successful in life, while others are lazy and indolent and remain poor. Thus, his theory of social stratification is similar to the functionalist theory of social stratification propounded by Davies and Moore.

In Awolowo's scheme, just as one can rank individual intelligence and skill by using certain criteria, so too did he believe that natural groups differ in characteristics, achievement and development, with the result that one could claim that some peoples and races have attained a "higher level" of culture and civilisation than others (1947:49). According to him, the greatest harm any government can perpetuate against any society is to imagine that individuals in a group have the same capacities and are equal in achievement rates, or to embark on a policy of even development which might have retarding effects on the more ambitious and progressive elements and groups in the society. For this reason, Awolowo was bitter and cried against the British unwillingness in granting self-rule to the peoples of southern Nigeria in the 1940s when they asked for it (1947:49-51). Awolowo however refuses to acknowledge that such a position can be employed as a basis or justification for racial and ethnic domination, and for colonial subjugation. According to him, "the conquest of one nation by another in an unprovoked act of aggression cannot be justified by any standard of morality" (1947:24), nor can the domination of one ethnic group over the others in a multiethnic state.

The terminologies employed by Awolowo in describing social classes are very fluid. They did change according to the vagaries in the social, historical, and politico-economic development of Nigeria. In 1947, he wrote that three classes could be identified distinctly in Nigeria. "First, the educated classes of the professional men and women, teachers and clerks; second, the enlightened classes consisting mainly of traders and artisans; and third, the ignorant masses" (1947: 31). In 1966, however, Awolowo could see just two socio-economic classes, which were antagonistic against each other; these were the 'haves' and 'have nots' or the privileged and the down-trodden. The politicians and public servants constituted the former while the latter was constituted by the farmers, self-employed artisans and the unestablished government employees. It should be clear that Awolowo's categori-

sation in his class analysis is quite arbitrary and open to criticisms, which one would not want to confront here.

Awolowo submits that in all societies in general, and in the Nigerian society in particular, the rich men are few and in the minority while the vast majority constitute the poor masses. Awolowo recognises that the poor majority are exploited, oppressed and enslaved by the greedy rich class, such that the poor are not even allowed to enjoy the simple things of life. Naturally, this is resented after a while and, occasionally, too, the dominant class wants to continue to maintain their selfish objectives by seeking to preserve the *status-quo*. "In the midst of these counter-vailing and counter-acting objectives on the part of the dominant and suppressed group, the seeds of class struggle and class hatred were sown" (1976:12).

Awolowo however does not, like Marx, believe that human history is that of class struggles, or that class relations as described above result in revolutionary conflicts that eventually brings in the socialist order. He acknowledges that social unrests exist here and there, but that they are rather irregular and limited that they could not result in revolution as Marx envisaged. He also opines that class struggles in Africa could not eventuate in revolutions first because the capitalist system of production is still underdeveloped in the African states and also because Africans do not have the misfortune of having uncontrollable rich landed private property members who would so mistreat their poor and misfortunate citizens as in our Russia, and therefore that there is no need for class warfare as such within the African states.

Besides, Awolowo is against Marx on the dynamic of social change and development in society. According to Awolowo, it is not violence or conflicts that produce social development. War and violence, says Awolowo, consume and neutralise human efforts; they breed more hatred in man and dehumanise him. Peace and good relations on the other hand foster progress in the community. Awolowo also observes

that, to prevent violence and revolutionary conflict, the dominant class has developed mechanisms for manipulating and subjugating the poor classes, and thereby preserve the *status quo*. These include, among others, festivals, carnivals, sport competitions, military parades which are supposed to boost national pride and patriotism among citizens. These programmes, says Awolowo, are deliberately funded by the dominant class to divert the attention of the poor from the serious economic and political issues in the country while they continue to loot and enjoy their wealth.

*(b) Capitalism and Democratic – Socialism in Awolowo's Thought;*

Awolowo traces the evolution of capitalism from the feudal system in the west and its link with the industrial revolution. However, capitalism, to Awolowo, is not just a mode of productive organisation; it is basically an attitude of mind which 'had its origin and genesis in that epoch in the dim past when man developed the vices of greed and self-interest' (1968:ix-xii). Awolowo submits that colonialism and imperialism are essentially a mere overseas extension of Western capitalism. For in order to ensure for themselves the availability of raw materials like cotton, palm kernels for their factories as well as stable market for their products, capitalist Western countries decided to enslave completely other lands and peoples through colonialism. Capitalism was thus imported to Africa in its underdeveloped form, with the cooperation and collaborations of veritable agent of capitalism in the underdeveloped countries.

Awolowo points to the failure of capitalism, the political and economic instability, and the exploitation and oppression which it breeds nationally and internationally. According to him, the failure of the capitalist system is not to be attributed to the lack of knowledge and understanding of the economic forces on the part of man. It is rather to be imputed to the will: "our deliberate refusal to do what is scientifically manifest, socially equitable and morally fair

and just" (1968: 117). He argues that capitalism negates and offends, in its essence and intrinsicity, against the principles of dialectics, moral goodness and love. Because of this, Awolowo posits, like Marx, that it will surely perish by itself. "Since greed, selfishness or naked self-interest is the predominant motivation of capitalism, the system is bound to generate secular social disequilibrium in the society in which it is operative, and to diminish and degenerate through time until it suffers total extinction" (1968: 189). According to him, another system which approximates the idea of love will sooner or later take the place of capitalism. This other system is democratic socialism.

Awolowo avers that there are various brands of socialism. In his opinion, it is not that these brands differ in goal, which is the search for a just society where everyone is catered for without distinction or discrimination by reason of birth, status, race or sex, a society where everyone is fulfilled, realised and happy. Where they diverge is in the proffered means and method of achieving this goal. In Awolowo's view, there are two socialist schools: revolutionary socialism and democratic socialism. The aims of revolutionary socialism are said to be the same as those of democratic socialism. But the orientation of the communist is different from that of the democratic socialist. This difference in orientation consists in the divergent methods of approach to the realisation of socialist ideals. According to Awolowo, the essential attributes of revolutionary or marxist socialism are, among others; the inevitability of the use of force in the extermination of the bourgeoisie and in the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat; the abolition of the state; and the introduction of materialistic atheism. For his rejection of these propositions on which marxism is based, he disclaimed and disassociated himself from Marxism as he submitted, "I am not a Marxist myself" (1981b: 187).

As Ogunmodede (1986) observes, Awolowo's rejection of the marxist method stems from his objection to any form

of dictatorship, force and violence. The use of force or violence as a means of achieving justice and welfare, says Awolowo, is not only negative and immoral, but also counter-productive. Also, he believes that the proletariat, by exterminating the bourgeoisie and instituting its own dictatorship, have shown that they in turn are discriminative and represent only a class interest and have negated, *ipso facto*, the whole purpose and end of socialism, namely the common good and welfare of all in the state.

As a professed christian and a spiritualist, Awolowo disowns marxist socialism which ignores the principles of love and rejects the being and sovereignty of God and the practice of religion by man in society. Awolowo's socialism and marxism are, as it were, antithetical to each other at critical points. For Awolowo, socialism accommodates the compatibility, co-existence and cooperation between socialism and religion. For, as he says, socialism does not only have the same objectives as all the great religions such as christianity and Islam, but that socialism derives its roots in the teachings of religion through the ages.

Also, Awolowo believes that, contrary to the postulation of orthodox Marxism, the state cannot wither away or be done away with within the modern society. As far as he was concerned, anyone seeking the welfare of the masses cannot but reckon with, and use the organs of, the state. He therefore submitted that, "we believe that it is only within the state that man can enjoy personal freedom and live a full and happy life". (1968:192).

The objectives of Awolowo's democratic socialism are analytically outlined as follows:-

- (1) to harmonise the activities and interests of the producers and consumers, and establish an absolute and permanent complementariness among them,
- (2) to ensure that each of the agents of production is given equal opportunity to give of the best that it is capable

of, and that it is rewarded in accordance with its contribution to the aggregate national product.

- (3) to replace the blind forces of supply and demand with a conscious and scientific referee who, among other things, will see to it that there is premium on abundance rather than on scarcity, and,
- (4) to cater to the needs of those members of society who for reasons of age or infirmity or unemployment, are unable to participate in the acts of production, and are therefore unable to fend for themselves. (Awolowo, 1970a).

The principles on which Awolowo's socialism are based are also outlined in the Manifesto of the Action Group of the First Republic: "It is the resolution of our party to build a democratic socialist society founded on the three principles of national greatness; the well-being of the individual, and international brotherhood" For four cardinal programmes of the socialist party include free education, free medical care, integrated rural development through the concept of "optimum communities" (OPTICOMS), and full employment. Certain processes are also outlined for the achievement of these objectives. These include; Scientific Planning and Rationalism (Awolowo, 1981b:75), Nigerianisation or Indigenisation of the economy (1970b:34) and Nationalisation or Socialisation (1968:327; 1981b:56).

Ogunmodede (1986) observes however that at some point in the 1970s, new developments have occurred in Awolowo's ideological themes. There has been a shift in emphasis from Nationalisation to Liberalisation and Privatisation. It is this shift in emphasis that characterised Awolowo's approach to socialism in his later years. This shift started around the period just before the campaign for election in preparation for return to civil rule in 1979 started. Awolowo adduced this change to the fact that Nigeria's experience with the nationalisation programmes of the government

in the 1970s had been negative. That, in an attempt to protect the growth of its own companies, the government began to interfere with and inhibited flourishing trade and commerce, and that the result was bureaucracy, inefficiency, dwindling productivity and corruption in government-owned companies. The solution to such trend, in Awolowo's scheme, lies in the allowance of private-owned industries, and especially of small scale industries (1981: 81).

In his new programme, taxation, rather than nationalisation, will be the instrument through which his socialist programme will be executed. According to Awolowo, Nigerians and foreigners should be encouraged by the government to establish business in the country, but that each one will have to be taxed annually on the dividends and incomes realised. Through the money realised from taxation, Awolowo believes that the government could carry out its welfare programmes in Education, Health, Agriculture and Full Employment. That is, Awolowo's democratic socialism, the economic commonwealth in which the needs of all, regardless of birth and station in life, as opposed to and distinct from the profit-making desires of some, will be satisfied and were the actualisation and development of the physical, mental and spiritual capacities and potentials of each individual will be enhanced.

*(c) Awolowo's Dialectics and Dynamics of Social Change:*

While generally accepting the dialectical method of explaining social dynamics and social development in Marxism, Awolowo rejects the Hegelian and Marxian versions of dialects. Hegelian dialectic is an ingenious analysis of the logical thought process and life of the Absolute Spirit or Idea. Hegel maintained that the life of the Absolute Spirit is that of inner contradictions and conflicts which resolve themselves at higher stages. What results from the contradictions, conflicts and their resolution at higher levels is movement

and change from lower to higher forms, from part to whole, from the indeterminate to the determinate.

Although Marx also admits dialectics as the law of nature, dialectics with him takes a new turn. The conflict and negation element remain, while its interpretation and application changed in form and outlook. In his critique of Hegel's dialectic, Marx castigated his idealist position which proffered that the real is the Absolute Spirit or Idea, and that the material world is its external form and manifestation. In Hegelian scheme, the ideational essence is seen as the substructure rather than the material essence, as it is in the Marxian dialectics. Besides, through its mystification and intellectual abstraction, Hegelian dialectics, according to Marx, neglect the real issues of life, namely: the problem of socio-economic class and stratification between rich and poor, the problem of injustice, inequality, perennial yearnings for change, development and the improvement of the life conditions of the individuals in society. It is to these issues that Marx directed his dialectic, as the process whereby society and history are set in motion, that by it we understand that before the triumph of socialism all the preceding modes of production contain the internal contradictions that eventuate in their destructions and successive negation. Hence the three main principles of Marxian dialectics are the unity of opposites, the transformation of quantity to quality, and the negation of the negation.

Awolowo differs radically with both Hegel and Marx on the issue of what constitutes the motor and force of development, evolution and dialectics. For Hegel and Marx, the law and principles of dialectics are contradictions, conflicts, negations and change. For Awolowo, the 'true' dialectic is the dialectic devoid of hatred, conflicts and violence, but which is full of goodness and love, and which promotes the well-being of the whole man, individually and collectively. His is the dialectic of love and ethical behaviourism. It is this, according to Awolowo, that ensures the destruction of evil (including an evil system such as capitalism) and brings the

good such as socialism. For "whilst the good seed, in spite of the stiffest obstruction and opposition proliferates and flourishes, and transcends itself in quality, through the passage of time, the bad seed, in spite of the most generous encouragement, tends through time, though sometimes imperceptibly to diminish in quantity and degenerate in quality until suddenly it suffers total extinction.....Good shall surely though often sometimes slowly and imperceptibly wane in strength and finally perish" (1968:188).

In that spirit he condemned the weapons of violence, destruction and negating; and non-cooperation and political boycott as also a counsel for destruction and despair. Awolowo's socialism is to be achieved by the peaceful democratic process through the existing constitutional set-up. By democratic process, he refers to the choice of socialism as a way of life by the people, a choice that will be voluntarily and explicitly expressed through the electoral process which will result gallantly in victory for the political party that champions the social objectives of socialism. When an oppressive capitalist government is in power, he recommends as means of expressing political dissent and of achieving social and political change the weapon of constructive and constitutional agitation. He later added the weapons of inflexibility and non-compromise with the oppressor; logical, incisive and pungent articulation of one's position in words and writing; the application of concentrated and deep thought to the end that good, morality and justice shall prevail over immorality, corruption and evil; and the weapon of prayer (1960:298; 1983:20-22). This, then, is the way in which Awolowo expects his dialectics to supplant capitalism and bring in the people's socialist democratic republic.

#### **SOME CRITICAL APPRAISAL**

In critically appraising the socio-political philosophy and thoughts of Awolowo as presented above, we discuss what

we consider as the strong points relevance and logicity, as well as the perceived weaknesses, loopholes and internal inconsistencies within the context of our theoretical orientation of the sociology of knowledge

First, it is significant that Awolowo stands out among the few African thinkers and leaders who have attempted to advance a body of socio-political ideas which are meant to inform and direct social relations and political and economic development. It is apparent that one of the banes of African states and their leaders is their lack of clear objectives and positive ideological direction. In this respect Awolowo made painstaking attempts to present his positions and theories on various aspects of social, economic and political life.

One also has the impression, after perusing Awolowo's works, that his central motif is a concern for the total well-being, realisation and happiness of man in the society. This goal led him into the critical analysis of the perennial African problems of underdevelopment, dependency, exploitation, oppression, poverty and political instability. His socialist model of development constitutes his panacea for these chronic problems. This is of epistemological importance; Awolowo seemed to be reacting intellectually to the conditions in his social environment — the imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, underdevelopment and class oppression.

It is also of sociological importance that Awolowo developed his own model of democratic socialism in an attempt to develop a body of ideological themes that is not just borrowed or imported in-to-to. The issue of social and historical relevance of ideologies and theories have lately started to agitate the minds of African scholars. It is argued that ideologies and theories develop from the more or less unique socio-cultural and historical conditions of the particular society, and that they are attempts to cope with such conditions. (Akiwowo, 1985; Alatas; 1974; Mazrui, 1978). It is thus argued that a theory or ideology may need some modification or adaptation if it is to be relevant and useful in a diffe-

rent socio-cultural and historical context. This again is of epistemological significance. It would seem that while Awolowo recognised the need for some definite transformation in the Nigerian economic and political formation, he is wary of exercising the thoughts of violence, revolution, totalitarianism and particularly of materialistic atheism in the deeply religious and sometimes superstitious Nigerian society, as of other African societies. Awolowo probably felt that the conditions that led to such propositions and taxonomies are not exactly reproduced in Africa. He might also have doubted the possibility that such ideas would gain acceptance rather than resistance among the populace. Hence, this ability to be situationally, culturally and historically relevant is significant in Awolowo's socio-political thought.

Finally, at the level of personality and idiosyncrasy (a level at which the sociology of knowledge may have very little to proffer), the sincerity, moral excellence and organisational acumen of Awolowo is easily acknowledged even among many of his critics. For instance, Falola and Ihonvbere describe Awolowo as a man who "could be very painstaking in his analysis, thorough in his presentation and honest in his articulation" (Falola and Ihonvbere, 1985:60). This last point, coupled with his concern for the poor and his welfare programmes and goals, explains why he won the hearts of many Nigerians, particularly among people in the western region, whom he had led and governed. All the above factors also explain why many people feel that if he had been opportuned to lead the country, he could possibly have pulled the nation out of the lurch and set it on the path of development, glory and general welfare.

In our assessment, however, Awolowo's socio-political philosophy and ideological themes are fraught with many lapses, inherent contradictions and sometimes of sublime mystification. This, we believe, is due to factors such as oversight, irreconcilability of the antagonistic social, existential and idiosyncratic forces with which he was beset, and the complex requirements of political diplomacy in an hetero-

ogenous polity such as Nigeria.

By social science standard, Awolowo did not employ a clear, consistent and empirically relevant methodology in his social analyses. Also many of his concepts, such as society, state, socialism, and welfarism are not lucidly and distinctly defined: His ideological themes are somewhat loose and inchoate, such that one gets wary to assert that Awolowo has an ideology or theory which could direct political action on a comprehensive and sustained basis. It appears that it is critics and commentators that have attempted to put his scattered ideas in a neat piece.

Awolowo consistently referred to himself as a socialist, and one would not deny this, since one can call any set of ideas by any tag or concept that one chooses. Besides, socialism predates Marxism, which Awolowo disclaimed and from which he dissociated himself. Awolowo's socialism compared with the utopian socialism of Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owens, who, having criticised the politico-economic system of their times as unjust and oppressive, believed that a new and just order would arrive gradually and peacefully as a matter of course. For instance, St-Simon's socialism was to be a system in which poverty and oppression would be abolished, and in which universal harmony and mutual understanding would prevail. This system was to be attained by convincing every person of the advantages of the new order, which would benefit the rich as well as the poor, and then it would come of its own accord. Awolowo's democratic socialism is akin to such utopian socialism.

There are clear contradictions and inconsistencies in Awolowo's class analysis and the proposed dynamics of change and transformation into his new socialist order. Awolowo acknowledges the fact of class cleavages, class contradictions and conflicts, and the determination of the dominant class to want to resist the supplanting of the *status quo*. At the same time he holds that the new order would come gradually and democratically through his 'dialectics of love and harmony'. This sounds clearly illogical and

implicitly contradictory. Orthodox marxism logically postulates the virtual inevitability of revolutionary conflict before the establishment of socialism because the dominant bourgeois class would resist change and desperately seek to preserve the *status quo* for the protection of their vested interests. Such a condition precludes a peaceful and harmonious transition to a new order if that new order is to be radically different from the decadent old order. Awolowo's thought appears to be muddled up in this respect; at one point he denies the possibility of a revolution as though he knew that the objective historical conditions in African societies would preclude this from happening. At another time, he attacks revolutionary struggle at a subjective and normative level because it is evil, destructive and undesirable.

In respect of his dialectics, one wonders what remains of a dialectic that disclaims contradictions, negations, conflicts and qualitative transformation. One also wonders what is dialectical about love and harmony. One expects that Awolowo would have framed another concept for the idea that he had in mind. Because he underplayed the primacy of material conditions, power and interest in social relations in modern societies, he asserts that love, moral preachment and brotherhood can form the basis for social relations and socio-economic development. Morality takes a precise meaning within Awolowo's socio-political philosophy. It is his means of development, change, social justice and general welfare in society. He proposes what he calls the regime of mental magnitude. This is the state of moral perfection in which we are properly and eminently equipped with a considerable measure of intellectual comprehension and cognition, insight and spiritual illumination (Omoboriowo, 1982). And he sought to apply his moral doctrine not just to leadership in the political scene, but to leadership and social relations at every level of society. This line of thought is provocative in many respects. It ignores or refuses to acknowledge the fact that what determines the nature and process of social relations, particularly in the political and

economic sense, have not been love and brotherhood, but interest, power and competition. Thus a given social order is often maintained through some form of coercion, authority and law since we cannot blankly trust that people would know and do what is fair and just to all. Awolowo himself should have realised this when he posited that, unlike the family, society did not emerge because men love one another but because they were forced into the union by circumstances beyond their control. According to him, "...there is abundant and incontrovertible evidence to the effect that families live in community for the love of one another, but because of a clear realisation of the economic, social and political advantages as well as the collective security which such living together can impart on the constituent families" (1981a: 155). This profound submission is not pursued to its logical conclusion in Awolowo's thought, otherwise he should have seen its inconsistency with his 'dialectic of love'.

It is also clear that Awolowo, with his political philosophy and ideology, did not plan or promise to usher in a radically new socio-economic and political order. At best, the goal was an improvement in general welfare and not egalitarianism; it was reformism and not a radical transformation in the mode and relations of production. And one must concede that, as a sincere politician and articulate planner, he could probably have made life better for the common man, and that was it. In fact, whatever was left of his socialism suffered atrophy when he recanted his earlier professed belief in socialisation and nationalisation, in favour of free enterprise and privatisation.

According to Seleznev and Fetisov (1985), the causes of the continued existence of the capitalist system are diverse. First of all, that the polarisation of social classes and political forces is not simple or straight-forward. Within the classes and social groups which objectively oppose the monopolies there are divisions due to their socially heterogeneous make up, divergent economic interests, differences in ideological and political views, and traditional loyalty to various political

parties. And with the help of reformist policies and ideological manipulations, the monopoly bourgeoisie creates its own system of social alliances, which provide the basis for domination. Lenin, in a resolute stand against right-wing reformism, emphasised the qualitative distinction, the antithesis between reform and revolution; "Reforms are concessions obtained from a ruling class that retains its rule. Revolution is the overthrow of the ruling class" (Lenin, 1977: 515). Seleznev and Fetisov however note that the record of the working people's struggle shows that reforms can have a dual effect: they can either slow down or accelerate the transition to revolutionary transformations. The depth and social consequences of the reforms depend on whether it is the ruling class that carries them out in order to preserve the existing system, or whether these reforms are carried out under pressure from the working classes. In the first instance, the ruling class uses the reforms to fight the working class movement. In the second instance, the reforms are democratic, being the result of an upsurge in the working class movement, or "pressure from below" in spite of open resistance by the ruling classes.

One is led to view Awolowo's proposed reformism as falling under the first category. This realisation led Falola and Ihonvbere to the rather sharp and devastating criticism of the 'radical' parties of the Second Republic which were committed to social democratic reformism which was based on the belief that the existing legal and constitutional systems could be used to effect radical changes and, if possible, re-organise the structure of power. They argue that the faith of such a party was misplaced "since it underrated the power of the established bourgeoisie and ignored the fact that it is difficult to liberate a people from oppression, feudalism and imperialism by a gradual, constitutional, peaceful process" (Falola and Ihonvbere, 1985:65) Commenting specifically on the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) which was led by Awolowo in the Second Republic, they submit that, "it was impossible for the UPN to plan any

revolution or take immediate steps towards socialism because its membership was dominated by a bourgeoisie with a firm base in industry and commerce. Its bourgeoisie was, however, more enlightened and more efficient than that of the NPN. In addition, unlike the others, it understood the need for defensive radicalism, especially radical sloganeering, productive capitalism, discipline and efficiency. But these strong points made it a much more dangerous party than the others, since it was deeply entrenched in capitalist production but more efficient and adroit in the defence of capitalism (like the others Falola and Ihonvbere, 1985:57-58).

Finally, in the context of the theoretical base of our discussion, it is necessary to briefly examine some of the social, existential and personality forces which possibly conditioned and influenced the thoughts and ideas of Awolowo. The somewhat positive aspects of his work; his desire for reform and his concern for the downtrodden and oppressed masses are possibly influenced by his own lowly background, his experience of, and detest for, the oppression that characterise imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, but also by other forces that have to do with his personality inclination, his charisma and perhaps by other spiritual and religious influences.

Given the constellation of political forces and the dynamics of politics in Nigeria, he probably recognised that the ability to be balanced and temperate in his political views would be of advantage to his quest for power. Hence, he adopted a relatively progressive and reformist stance which appeared to be mass oriented, while at the same time rejecting the idea of confrontation, violence and strife which would have foreclosed the possibility of his gaining power through partisan politics.

His religious and mystical life clearly reflected in his ideological themes and political philosophy. It was no secret that he was a professed christian as well as a highly placed member of the Rosicrucian Order. This Order is said to be composed of men and women devoted to investigation,

study and practical application of the higher principles of life, generally referred to as cosmic principles for the attainment of health, happiness and peace.\* It is apparent that it was from here that Awolowo derived his "regime of mental magnitude" which he integrated into his socio-political philosophy.

Although Awolowo died a professed christian and in fact rejected atheistic materialism on the basis of his faith, Ogunmodede (1986) avers that Awolowo experienced religious crisis in his life which was closely related with the crisis in his economic and material conditions. In the 1930s Awolowo was said to have had incessant economic misfortunes which climaxed in the auctioning of his property in 1939 to pay for his debts. As Omoleye reports, "the chief refused to be on speaking terms with God, contending that the God whose line he was trying to toe should not have opened wide his eyes and allowed his whole property disappear in Auction sales while he felt unconcerned". (Omoleye, 1982:25). This phase of Awolowo's life was said to have been characterised by a rationalistic criticism of religious faith and dogma. It is apparent that when God turned back to Awolowo and improved his economic and material conditions, Awolowo also turned back to God. This again appears to be another pointer to the relationship between ideas and existential conditions, and of the primacy of material conditions in determining philosophy and thought.

In the 1970s Awolowo recanted his earlier belief in nationalisation and socialisation of the means of production, in favour of liberalisation and privatisation. This revisionism appeared to be logically functional for his political ambition. As he prepared for his return into politics for the Second Republic, he was sure to lose the support of the powerful men except he promised the liberalisation of commerce and production rather than socialisation. But more importantly in this respect it is unlikely that this multi-millionaire would have continued to support nationalisation. As the African Guardian observed, "the size of the Awolowo

family business. empire transcends ample quantitative analysis. But the identity of the founding father and guiding spirit cannot be debated. It was Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The family business revolves round four core companies: Dideolu Estates Limited, Industrial Promotions and Consultancy Limited, Sopolu Investment and Services Limited and, most recently, Liberty Press Limited. These companies have a combined annual turnover running into several millions of naira. In fact, in 1983, Government demanded taxes to the tune of ₦1,847,498.01k from the operations of this large business chain".\* Since it did not appear that the Chief was ready to commit class suicide, one is bound to agree with Falola and Ihonvbere that it was impossible for the UPN (led by Awolowo) to plan any revolution or take immediate steps towards socialism because its membership was dominated by a bourgeoisie with a firm in industry and commerce.

Awolowo was also unsuccessful in his attempt to reconcile the contradiction in his submission that some people are naturally born to rule, and his apparent belief in racial ranking on the one hand, and his attack of imperialism, racism and ethnic dominance on the other. This is another instance in which the opposing forces of his existential condition appears to have introduced some inconsistencies and contradictions to his thought.

#### CONCLUSION

Within the context of the sociology of knowledge, our analysis of Awolowo's socio-political thought and ideological themes gives one the inescapable impression that the social, historical, cultural and existential conditions of Awolowo's society influenced his thoughts and ideas in many respects. While such influences are positive in some respects, enhancing responsiveness, adaptability and situational relevance of theory and ideology to social conditions, they appear to have had great deleterious influences on Awolowo's thought in some other dimensions. Such influences appear to have warped his perspective, introducing inconsistencies, contra-

dictions and revisionism into his socio-political and ideological thoughts. The adoption of the sociology of knowledge as our theoretical framework in critiquing Awolowo's socio-political and ideological thoughts is of great intellectual significance. For, once one recognises that men do not confront the objects of the world from the abstract level of a contemplating mind, nor as solitary being, but that the processes of theorising and existence are inextricably intertwined, the intellectual forum becomes a threshing floor. In this threshing floor, theories, ideas and philosophies are critically analysed in order to strip them of their masks, their pretensions and contradictions, while their gems are selectively and positively adapted to objective social conditions.

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## Conflict and Democracy in the Thought of Awolowo

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A. AYENI-AKEKE

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### INTRODUCTION

In the allocution he delivered before he was convicted for treasonable felony in 1963, Chief Awolowo declared firmly that he had

with others, fought British imperialism with all my might...I am the most unyielding advocate of a federal constitution for Nigeria...I have fought with special and relentless vigour for the eradication of federal oligarchy in the North.. In short, I have always fought for what I believe, without relent and regardless of consequences to myself.... Naturally in the course of my long political activities, I have attracted to myself a sizeable crop of detractors and adversaries .

Awolowo saw himself and his supporters as locked in a zero-sum battle with his adversaries. The battle was for him between the protagonists of democracy, freedom, equality and progress and those of conservatism, privilege, domination and oppression. Some of the most violent political conflicts Nigeria has witnessed in the last four decades are direct concomitants of this struggle. These include such upsurges as the 1953 independence motion which led to the Kano riots, the intra-Action Group wranglings which culminated in the *wet e* violence and ultimately the civil war, and even the post 1983 election violence in some states. In all

these conflicts, Awolowo's name featured prominently. These are aside from the acrimonious controversies, like the dispute which ultimately wrecked the Nigerian Youth Movement, the treasonable felony trials, Coker Commission of inquiry and the census, which polarised political discussion between pro and anti Awo elements for about four decades.

Given these conflicts and incessant controversies, it is not surprising that his political adversaries came to regard Awolowo as a self-seeking malevolent, trouble-maker. As a renegade who decamped from his party put it in 1962.

if Chief Awolowo can not have what he wants, whether or not he is entitled to it, he will do his utmost to destroy it. <sup>2</sup>

Twenty years later another political opponent accused Awolowo of being the only Nigerian who had done so much to wreck and destroy the country.<sup>3</sup> Awo denied these allegations. As a democrat, he consistently argued, that he was fundamentally opposed to "political violence or any form of violence"<sup>4</sup> Yet in many of his writings and pronouncements he not only made statements which some people have interpreted as incendiary, he often portrayed himself as a fighter.<sup>5</sup> These tend to reinforce his adversaries allegations against him than support his professed democratic beliefs. On the general misunderstanding of Awo's views on conflict, President Shagari once commented to him that "If it is not quite true that you incite people, people nevertheless give other meanings to certain statements you make....."<sup>6</sup> Awo's views on democracy and conflict remain one of the most controversial issues in his politics. This derives largely from the fact that there is none of his works in which he analyses the relationship between both at a theoretical level. The objective of this paper is to systematise his sparse and seemingly variegated comments on this subject, with a view to elucidating the assumptions and principles from which his ideas were derived. In order to do this there is need to put these ideas in the proper historical perspective.

## SOURCES AND MEANING OF CONFLICT IN AWO'S THOUGHT

There are three discernible influences to which Awo's views on democracy and conflict can be attributed. These are his childhood and adolescent formative experiences, his training as a lawyer and the colonial environment in which he had to operate as a young political activist.

By his own admission his earliest attitude toward conflict was highly influenced by his father and the still traditional Ikenne environment in which physical prowess was the mark of masculinity among children. Despite his utmost devotion and care for the well being of his children, Awolowo's father encouraged a fighting spirit in his son. As Awo recounts in his memoir:

As a boy I loved wrestling, which was a very popular sport in Ikenne. Father encouraged me in it, and always complimented me most warmly anytime I had worsted other contenders.....

Father always warned me against entering into any quarell; but once in it with any of my age group... I was expected to fight until I had either worsted the other fellow, or had been so worsted myself that I could no longer stir a limb in my own defense..... As a result of father's and granny's encouragement, I became very tough, fearless and defiant as a boy. I always stood my ground against anyone even if he was older than I.<sup>7</sup>

Awo also recounts other lessons which he learnt from his father, which were to shape his future attitude. According to him, he was taught to be honest, respectful and resolute. However, his fathers tutelage did not last. His father died while Awo was still too young to fend for himself. He was thrown into destitution by relatives who shared and appropriated his fathers estate. His father's death not only terminated the close relationship between them, but much more important it terminated his ambition of entering secondary school. Awo now had to scrounge around for a living and education. He tells of his long and often traumatic struggle

to equip himself for life. He served as a houseboy under four different masters, worked as a porter, wood-seller, letter-writer, shorthand-typist, journalists, trade unionist, journalist, transporter and other odd jobs to pay for his education. During these struggles he learnt the lesson of perseverance, self-reliance and fortitude.

Awo went to Britain to train as a lawyer in the late forties. From his legal training he acquired a certain attitude toward the problem of the inevitable differences which crop up in any social setting. According to him it was from his legal training that he learnt to "engage, without bitterness or animosity in the fiercest contention; to cultivate the habit of always examining both sides of a problem and to present the side you espouse with forensic forcefulness and assuredness..... to take part in fostering the cause of justice and equity in their total impartiality....."<sup>8</sup>

These early influences, which obviously built on one another were complemented by his experiences in the colonial environment of Nigeria and that of post-war Britain to which he went to study. Like many of his educated contemporaries growing up in colonial Nigeria. Awolowo could not countenance, the anomalous colonial arrangement which was characterised by the political domination and exploitation of an unwilling people by another group. For him

The conquest of one nation by another in an unprovoked act of aggression cannot be justified by any standard of morality

Thus he was naturally attracted to the nascent nationalist movement which was agitating for Freedom. But he became dissatisfied with the lackadaisical methods and opportunistic orientation of his contemporaries' agitation which was characterised by sporadic and intermittent, vitriolic denunciation of colonialism. In his opinion it was thoughtless

"For them to think that colonialism could be terminated by bitter denunciation of imperialism, or sweeping generalisations about oppression, exploitation and the like."<sup>9</sup>

Awo saw resort to sudden bursts of anger and use of violent language instead of careful planning and organisation toward terminating British rule as evidence of lack of constructive and sustained thinking.

Awo wrote the book in which he recorded these observations in 1945, a year after he arrived in Britain, from Nigeria, as a student. The influences on the book should be seen as partly Nigerian and partly British. As Dudley has argued, the post-war Britain to which Awo went not only had a Labour Government, but had a government, more specifically with a social conscience and committed to an egalitarian ethic "which was opposed to the domination and exploitation of one nation by another".<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the dominant political ethic in Britain then provided a receptive milieu for anti-colonial nationalist agitation. But it was an ethic having its fountain in Labour Party's liberal democratic commitment.

Liberal politics is based on the belief that politics is not civil war conducted by other means. It, therefore, completely rejects violent confrontation in favour of peaceful and non-disruptive application of pressure. It posits that conflict is better managed and resolved through accommodation, reasoning, and bargaining on the basis of accepted procedures by parties to issue.<sup>11</sup> Awo was greatly influenced by this reasoning. The extent to which his views on conflict tallies with the foregoing is exemplified by a speech he delivered to his party which is worth quoting at some length. In the speech, he decried fellow nationalists who were advocating violence and non-cooperation and declared that:

Throughout the period of our political subjection we have wisely and quite rightly eschewed violence as a suitable weapon for the redemption of our lost freedom..... We of the Action Group have pledged ourselves, as a matter of fundamental principle, to employ the weapon alone, in our fight for political liberation. This is the weapon of

spoken and written words in the service of a just and noble cause..... It is a weapon which requires considerable thought, planning, organisation and careful timing. But its advantages are tremendous. You achieve the same political objectives of political liberation whilst you maintain at home orderly progress and increased prosperity..... It is, above all a weapon of peace, a weapon of love.....<sup>12</sup>

It is clear from this quote that Awo understood conflict to mean any struggle, be it competition, agitation, rivalry legally sanctioned or backed by institutionalised norms which specify what rivals or opponents can do to each other in the course of striving to achieve their respective goals. Extra-legal measures which intentionally cause injury to opponents or prevent stable interaction among citizens, Awo would regard, as violence.

#### ON THE MUTUAL EXCLUSIVITY OF DEMOCRACY AND CONFLICT

Awo described his political ideology as democratic socialism. By this he meant that he was democratic by nature and a socialist by conviction. "For him, socialism was the end and democracy the means. Awo substantially agreed with the premise and goals of Marxist socialism, but he completely rejected its advocacy of revolution as the means of attaining these goals. He believed that the ends of socialism can be attained by democratic means."<sup>13</sup> Democracy for him embraces the establishment of certain institutions, and even pursuance of certain ends. In order to fully appreciate what he means by democracy there is need to analyse his views about man and the state.

At the core of his philosophy is man who he described as the sole creative and purposive dynamic in nature. Primeval man, for him, was very much like Hobbes man in the state of nature, except that he was not solitary. Society in which he lived was, therefore, characterised by internecine violence, fear and chaos. This condition was engendered by the fact

that man is by nature aggressive, and also, the fact that the quest for power is a universal and fundamental drive in man. Man's aggressiveness derives from his natural desire for survival which compels him to fight, and if need be, eliminate whatever impediment that might stand between him and his goal. The strongest desire in man is the desire for power, and

OF ALL THE CATEGORIES OF POWER, THE DESIRE FOR POWER OVER ONES FELLOWMEN IS THE STRONGEST. <sup>15</sup>

In the universal struggle for survival and domination, man

trampled upon his fellowmen with undisguised, unashamed and unmitigated savagery for the promotion of his self-interest and greed. <sup>16</sup>

The general insecurity of life and property which ensued was the reason for the establishment of the state. The state is, therefore, neither natural nor due to an act of love for one another by embattled individuals and families in the state of nature. It was created by them due to the realisation of the economic and socio-political advantages which living together in peace can impart on the constituent units of the collectivity.

The actual mode by which the state came into existence is not clear. Awo attributes it, in his writing, to two dissimilar initiatives. In the first he explains that the state was created due to the antagonistic relationship between a wealthy, ascendant minority and the dominated majority. In the ruthless and savage struggle for power and resources which characterised the state of nature, some people were more successful than others in appropriating resources, but their personal safety and freedom to enjoy their wealth was not sure. Hence this minority devised the state, and instituted an ideology rationalising their dominance.<sup>17</sup> In the second, Awo takes a contractualist view of the origin of the state of collectivity whose members have come together voluntarily or otherwise. As he explain it,

which ever way they have come together there is always an implied social contract among the families, not only between/among the aggregating families but between the population of the state and its government<sup>-18</sup>

Between the two origins of the state, the latter appeared to have been favoured by Awo for two reasons. The first is that, in his view, it is more able to contain conflict by transferring its legitimate use into political activity or sublimating violent conflict into civilised rivalry. Secondly it conforms with the socio-political equality of individuals and voluntaristic nature of political obligation assumed by representative liberal democracy which Awo extols as the best form of government, in contradistinction to others like oligarchy and autocracy. He holds, as a matter of faith, that democracy is the only means of promoting "civilised, dynamic, free and stable society."<sup>19</sup>

Apart from allowing full participation of the entire populace in the affairs of their government without the latter loosing in functional despatch and effectiveness, he argues that it minimises potential for violent conflict. It is in this light that he disagrees with Plato and Aristotle's criticism that democracy would engender mob rule, lawlessness, violence and degradation of civilised standards. It is also on this basis that he debunks Marx's revolutionary socialism as a negation of democratic ideals.<sup>20</sup>

Awo's understanding of democracy is very broad. It involves an institutional arrangement for allowing people to participate in the articulation and implementation of policies and election of representatives who will carry out their will. The fact that they choose their representatives logically implies that they retain (and should exercise) the right to remove or re-elect them.<sup>21</sup> Between a representative and the citizenry, Awo explains, there is a kind of "social contract. In my view the terms must be precise. There should be no ambiguity, and no deliberate deception"<sup>22</sup> It is the right of the

electorate to remove or re-elect a representative depending on their judgement on his performance. Awo was particularly concerned with adherence to democratic procedure and legality. In fact his trenchant denunciation of his political inquisition which he details in *The Travails of Democracy and Rule of Law*, is based on this. The bedrock of democracy, he argues, is adherence to legal procedures, rigid observance of rule of law, independence of the judiciary from all forms of interference in order for it to dispense justice on the basis of equality of all and fairness. Even though he did not believe in the natural equality of all citizens, Awo was a restless advocate of their socio-political equality. In his various works, he never missed an opportunity to defend the fundamental, inalienable rights of citizens in a democracy to liberty, speech, association opinion and particularly, choice.

Freedom of opinion and choice compel allowance of many associations and parties as necessary adjuncts of democracy. To the extent that every society is made up of unique individuals with peculiar needs and interests, opportunity must exist for these diverse interests and needs to be expressed within the law. Several views must be permitted to contend. Not to tolerate rivalry, even unhealthy one's is a sure way of facilitating violent conflict in society. Rivalry he asserts, is the "soul of development and progress. And you cannot suppress unhealthy rivalry without suppressing the instinct of contest which is inborn, and ingrained in every one of us. In this connexion, we would like to warn that a repressed instinct is sure, sooner or later, to burst the dam which holds back its natural outlet, and normal expression. When it does, it will cause devastating havoc to all those who block its passage. It is safer and wiser to cure unhealthy rivalry than to suppress it".<sup>23</sup>

Democracy, in Awo's view is a means of weakening the aggressive propensities of human beings. The *raison d'être* of the state and politics is to sublimate the savage and bestial instincts of man into civilised competition according to mutually accepted rules and procedures. Democracy, he

also asserts forcefully, posits a pluralist social system that can accommodate a multiplicity of projects and viewpoints both at individual and group levels. In this connection opportunity should not only be created for political parties, pressure groups, association and other centres of power to proliferate, the state structure must also be made to reflect the social structure. It is largely on this basis that he posits his ethnolinguistic principle as a categorical democratic imperative which must be taken into cognizance if acrimony or rancorous hostility is to be mitigated in a democratic state. As he explains it, it is imperative that a multi-ethnic or multi-linguistic state adopts a federal constitution, while a homogeneous one must have a unitary constitution. Through such constitution "engineering" Awo believed that factors making for conflict can be devitalised and democratic ideals promoted.<sup>24</sup>

#### POLITICAL CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Even though Awo was a widely read and eclectic intellectual, his encyclopaedic writings were informed by the Nigerian experience. As one writer has appropriately observed,

whatever universal arguments Awo might have debated, one proposition is never in doubt: the locus of his intellectualism was Nigeria, indeed his anthropocentric MAN was and is a Nigerian.<sup>25</sup>

Awo saw Nigeria as providing an ideal setting for the establishment of a liberal democratic order. The large, dynamic and highly heterogeneous population according to him, constitute the natural and formidable factors in favour of democracy.<sup>26</sup> It is in the quest of how to facilitate democracy in Nigeria that he arrived at his ethno-linguistic principle. Federalism and democracy, he contends are the only factors that can save Nigeria from political violence, and instability. In his view, the Nigerian political system has been violently unstable due to the prevalence of anti-democratic attitude, particularly within the ranks of the leadership. These include: the non-fulfilment of the terms of the social contract between the people and the government by the leadership, lack

of properly articulated and Justiciable socio-economic objectives, denial of fundamental human rights, promotion of ethno-hegemonic interests, violation of the principles of rule of law, deliberate and vigorously sustained persecution of political opponents and above all the manipulation of the judicial process for partisan political interests.<sup>27</sup>

These factors to which he attributes political violence and instability in Nigeria were informed by his reminiscence on the politics of the first republic. His *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* was written with a view to contributing to the search for how these anti-democratic tendencies could be mitigated. He succeeded in part; to the extent that a substantial number of institutions and processes prescribed by the second republican constitution tallied with those he recommended in his book. But as in the first republic these did not abate political and judicial jobbery, intolerance and violation of the principles of rule of law and other similar practices which engendered violent conflicts. Yet Awo continued to maintain that there could be no satisfactory alternative to democracy. However, he warned that it may never flourish here unless an enlightened community, led by a group of people who have imbibed the values of human equality and dignity, tolerance and socio-economic justice, is created.

#### CONCLUSION

There are so many aspects of Awo's views on democracy and conflict which can be critically taken up. Such issues include his perception of the relationship between politics and conflict; practicability of his classical liberal democratic politics in a heterogeneous and poverty ridden dependent state like Nigeria, the conflict between Awo the theorist and the politician and so on. But as we explained in the introduction, criticism is not part of the objective of this paper. Our aim has been to systematically elucidate an important aspect of his philosophy which will continue to be relevant, at least, in the foreseeable future.

It is therefore clear, for Awo, democracy and conflict are not compatible. In fact he would contend that they are not only in bad terms, they are mutually exclusive. One thrives where the other is absent.

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## Awolowo and the Paradox of Politicking and Institution Building

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OLUFEMI A. AKINOLA

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### INTRODUCTION

A commentary on the defunct Action Group (AG), written by Richard Sklar, runs thus:

The Action Group of Nigeria (AG) .... is the best organised, best financed, and most effectively run political party in Nigeria. With respect to effective central direction, (it) ranks with such well organised and highly disciplined parties as the Convention People's Party of Ghana, the Democratic Party of Guinea and the Malian Party of African Federation. It differs from the latter parties in its relative de-emphasis of personalised leadership, and it adheres rigorously to rules of democratic procedure.<sup>1</sup>

In a prefatory remark to my unpublished "Dynamics of Organisational Conflict ...."<sup>2</sup>, I also commented thus on the defunct Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN):

Of all political parties which existed during Nigeria's second democratic experiment, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) is widely acknowledged as an epitome of internal cohesion and discipline .... Its leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, enjoyed very wide personal respect ... among its members and sympathisers alike .... Throughout its first year of existence, when the original Nigerian People's

Party had broken into two – the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) and the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) – over the sharing of party and elective posts, and when other parties had experienced significant threats to their (then emerging) corporate existence for not too dissimilar reasons, the UPN maintained an outlook of a relatively well organised, coherent and unified organisation.

With the benefit of hindsight, one may now disagree with certain parts of the foregoing commentaries, especially as the AG, then the UPN, became victims of the same forces that had sapped the energies of their respective counterparts. Nonetheless, late Obafemi Awolowo “differed from the average (man) in his great energy and efficacy as a party organiser...”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, he was “a consummate organiser and planner” who clearly recognised “the value and priority of organisation in whatever (he did)”<sup>4</sup> and consistently recommended same to whoever came across him.

The personal basis<sup>5</sup> of Awolowo’s politics is therefore clear enough to the inquiring mind. In Abraham Maslow’s terms, his was the search for self-esteem and self-actualisation at the gladiatorial level<sup>6</sup> of the hierarchy of political participation. Accordingly, real politik, for him, was “a series of exciting and interesting adventures (whose) ultimate aim... (was) the attainment of power.”<sup>7</sup> He thus sought power and high political office by fashioning appropriate policy and organisational platforms.

Yet, as argued hereunder, the simultaneous performance, by a single individual of both roles of party builder and politician could be germane to contradictions. Indeed, in the case under review, the environment was such that the two roles were mutually antagonistic but also co-existent. However, we must first attempt a conceptualisation of the central problem of the paper.

#### CONCEPTUAL ISSUES: POLITICAL POWER AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING

For the purposes of this paper, politicking refers to practical

politics and encompasses such activities as are classified 'gladiatorial' by Lester Milbrath. These include "attending a caucus or strategy meeting, being a candidate for office, and holding public and party office(s)."<sup>8</sup> These roles are the most inclusive, most involving and most costly, and are therefore typically those of the professional politician who has the required resources and is willing to invest them for profits (or losses) measurable in terms of the attainment (or loss) of political power. While the mode of attaining power differs between societies, or between different epochs in the same society, it often involves one form or another of institutional mechanisms.

Institutions, like organisations, are persistent or recurring modes of behaviour based on a clearly defined structure of formal roles (or authority relationships) and 'standard operating procedures'. As such, they impose impersonal rights (or 'enablements'), duties and responsibilities (or 'constraints'), and hence, assume the status of objective social facts. In other words, an institution can exist independently of its members, role actors or functionaries, and of their personal interests. As Geoffrey Vickers remarks, an institution "represents the claims of all, as against the claim of the individual, .... of tomorrow as against today."<sup>9</sup> Institutionalised life revolves around shared perceptions, attitudes and symbols, or reciprocal behavioural expectations, on the part of all members. Examples are the judiciary, the civil service, the University system and political parties.

Institution-building, or institutionalisation, therefore refers to the processes of inducing members of a relevant group or social system to imbibe an "organisational culture." In Pfeffer's words, this translates to

the tendency for ways of doing things in *the* organisation, patterns of authority, and standard operating procedures to... become defined... and accepted by participants in the organisation as a natural part of their membership in that particular social system.<sup>10</sup>

The foregoing implies, among other things that

- i) particular institutions correspond to particular values and interests;
- ii) institution-building involves the superordination of certain values and interests over others;
- iii) at the level of social aggregates, institutionalisation involves the processes of assimilation and alienation;
- iv) ultimately, successful institutionalisation imposes, on certain categories of the systemic membership, a shift of perceptions and allegiances, and a modification of ideals and of methods.<sup>11</sup>

The initiatives for new institutions might be those of an invading army or agents of an external body, an established traditional oligarchy, a modernising elite, revolutionary classes or a combination of some of these groups. They might even spring from the collective wisdom of a society under the threats of invasion from outside, or internal challenge to the *status quo*. Whichever is the case, the role of leadership cannot be over-emphasised.

The institution-builder, or institution-proponent is in a particularly powerful position. His authority might derive from customary rules and practices, his personal 'gift of grace' or from rational-legal sources. Whichever it is, he has legitimate authority to define social objectives, set goals, determine the nature of regulative and constitutive rules, assign authority and corresponding responsibility, and monitor the process to ensure that individual efforts are well co-ordinated and geared towards attaining set goals. In short, he symbolises and protects the 'institutional culture' and as such, defends 'public interests'.<sup>12</sup>

However, the institution-builder is equally an individual, and as such might easily employ institutional resources to advance or consolidate personal interests. For example, he occupies a political position and cannot but face opposition from competing elite groups or individuals from within or without the organisation or social system over

the way rights, powers and duties are distributed between different posts.... about who holds these posts, especially the top one... how they are appointed... (and) the wisdom and humanity of the orders given.<sup>13</sup>

These queries are normal accompaniments of organisational life, for they call attention to the inadequacies or weaknesses of existing practices and as such, make continuous adjustment and adaptation imperative, and institutional stability possible. The institution-builder is therefore supposed to encourage such queries. However, they equally question his legitimacy and incumbency and therefore threaten his personal interests. If he takes steps to defend or protect these interests, he inevitably weakens the institution(s) he's supposed to protect. A conflict of interest situation thus emerges in his relationship to the institution.

This is precisely the paradox which confronts the politician who has additional responsibility for creating appropriate conditions for the sustenance and growth of institutional mechanisms or practices. On the one hand, his desire for political power cannot be fulfilled without the facility of appropriate institutions. He thus promotes and protects their cause. On the other hand, he must limit his immediate goals to enable the institution(s) survive. Moreover, successful institutionalisation circumscribes the influence he can exert on the environment as an individual.<sup>14</sup> In the circumstance, the pertinent question is, whose claims, the institutional or the personal, take precedence over the other?

This paper addresses this question in relation to late Obafemi Awolowo's experience as National President and Presidential candidate of the defunct UPN from 1978 to 1983.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT OF AWOLOWO'S POLITICS

By environment is meant the totality of forces, internal and external, whose influence on the behaviour of a particular subject of analysis can be shown, even if only in analytic

terms. Accordingly, this section identifies certain elements of Awolowo's micro. (e.g. Yoruba) and macro (e.g. Nigerian) environments which informed his perception and articulation of politics up to the end of the First Republic.

By way of background, it is important to note that Obafemi Awolowo was born a few years after Britain assumed formal political control over the disparate social formations that became Nigeria in 1914. By the time he started to lay his "political foundation"<sup>15</sup> that is, to identify with the symbols of, and create an image of his political self within, the macro political system, his society had recovered enough from the trauma of an externally induced, violent change to respond to the demands of the new colonial order.<sup>16</sup>

One such demand concerned general conceptions of authority and legitimacy. Traditional, customary patterns of attaining, retaining and losing power had become obsolete with the advent of colonialism; yet the rational-legal form most desired by the new overlords could hardly be established by the force of arms alone.<sup>17</sup> This vacuum was to be filled by elements of a new *assimilado*, for whom indirect rule had meant effective alienation from the perquisites of colonial politics. In the pursuit of the latter, this group of elite "collaborators"<sup>18</sup> opted for continuous reform of alien rule through the expansion of civil liberties for the colonised by legal opposition rather than the 'rabid nationalism' and armed confrontation of the first generation of patriots.<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, the elective principle was introduced for Lagos and Calabar by the Clifford's Constitution. In 1923, Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) emerged as Nigeria's first political organisation to take up the gauntlet, but it had logistic and operational difficulties. The Lagos Youth Movement metamorphosed into the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938, and thus became the first nationalist organisation with membership drawn from all parts of the country. However, it soon fell victim to intra-elite squabbles over its leadership. The consequent break up of the Nigerian Youth Movement is widely

believed to be responsible for the emergence and nature of Azikiwe's National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and also for the advent of ethnicity in Nigerian politics.<sup>20</sup>

The Richard's Constitution of 1946, and Macpherson's of 1951 subsequently elevated ethnicity to the level of praxis by respectively formalising and consolidating a correspondence of sorts between ethno-geographical and politico-administrative boundaries.<sup>21</sup> The latter also expanded the franchise, thus making available increased opportunities for political participation by the new elite. Its effective participation however, presupposed the existence of political organisations through which the masses could be mobilised and their opinions channeled to electoral ends desired by the elite.

By contrast, the institutional landscape comprised of some nationalist groupings rather than party organisations. For example, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons was a holding company made up of cultural organisations whose primary objectives revolved around the amelioration of alienation and the prevention of anomie in colonial centres, and the provision of educational and social services to members.<sup>22</sup> The same is true of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. In turn, the NNDP was a Lagos affair, and as such, could not have been expected to awaken the interests of the newly enfranchised citizen in the countryside.

It is against this background of relative institution-lessness that the Action Group emerged in 1951 as a Party organisation intent on capturing political power in Western Region. The initiatives were unquestionably Awolowo's.<sup>23</sup> Having watched the activities of other nationalist groups, especially the NCNC, and of Zik's group of newspapers,<sup>24</sup> he got the caucus of the new party to decide, in terms not unlike those employed in Lenin's vanguard theory, that it (the party) would be founded on a well-defined programme of action, "discipline, and consensus of minds on fundamental principles" and methods, and secrecy, especially among founding

members and leaders.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, the structure of the party gave the leadership extensive power and influence on lower-level organs and functionaries.<sup>26</sup> Initial differences of opinion over goals and methods were easily resolved through informal meetings and also through the mediation of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. These measures eventually became inadequate for containing conflict within the Party.

Its commitment to the objectives of democratisation, a welfare system and a truly federal constitution, and the consequent desire of the party leadership to expand its (party's) 'strategic orientation' by re-defining its 'value orientation'<sup>27</sup> were to pitch it against traditional elites and conservative socio-economic groups within and without Western Region. Two antagonistic camps formed around Obafemi Awolowo, Federal President of the Party and Opposition Leader in the House of Representatives, and S.L. Akintola, Deputy Leader of the Party and Western Region Premier. The issues detailed in, and the course of the conflict are well documented and need not to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the democratic dispensation which the Action Group preached and symbolised was sacrificed by both leaders in their respective bids for more or less personal power.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Nigeria knew no peace until the military took over the political system on 15th January, 1966. When, twelve years later, partisan politics was again allowed, the Action Group literally 'resurrected', but it had to take a new name.

#### AWOLowo AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA<sup>29</sup>

The birth of the UPN was announced barely twenty-four hours after the ban on partisan politics was lifted by the military in September, 1978. Again, the person of Awolowo loomed large on its showing, and critics are wont to assert that it was Awolowo writ large. At any rate it stormed the political scene fully prepared for the rigour of electioneering. However, it had to contend not only with the problems of cultu-

ral engineering in a plural society, but also with elaborate constitutional provisions<sup>30</sup> which, among other things, implied that:

- i) its name, emblem and activities must transcend etho-geographical boundaries, or reflect the federal character of the Nigerian society;
- ii) its functionaries must be periodically and democratically elected, and
- iii) it must have an effective, and better still, centralised leadership.

Accordingly, the UPN pledged itself to the promotion of the unity of Nigeria, the implementation of its cardinal programmes and other policies, and the maintenance and fostering of representative democracy and the observance of the rule of law in Nigeria (Article 4(3)).<sup>31</sup> Membership was open to all Nigerians of 18 years or more of age (Article 5).

The Unity Party of Nigeria was administered at local, state and federal levels, with authority and responsibility increasing in that order. The most basic unit was the Ward, to which every member belonged (Article 6(3) and (6)). A number of Ward Units constituted a constituency or Local Government branch. At each of these levels, meetings were to be held regularly to discuss party matters, select delegates to higher-level Party meetings and nominate candidates for general and bye-elections (Articles 19 and 20). The exercise of the functions of each organ between its meetings devolved on an Executive Committee appointed by it (Article 21).

Three organs shared the burden of party administration at state level. These were: the State Conference, the State Executive Council and the State Assembly Council. The State Conference was established by Article 14 (1) of the Party Constitution. It consisted of:

- (a) Five representatives from each state constituency selected from amongst its members - themselves representatives of different Ward units;
- (b) All Party members who were members of the respective State House of Assembly;
- (c) All state officers of the Party;
- (d) All Party members who were serving as Commissioners in the State Government, and
- (e) Not more than five other members appointed by the National President of the Party (Article 14(2)).

The State Conference made policies for the state branch of the Party and also examined "the policies pursued by the State Government to ensure that they were "in accordance with the principles, policies, programmes, aims and objectives of the Party". In a state which the Party did not control, conference examined government policies and, along with reports from constituencies, took positions and measures to protect the interests of the party. Conference also had responsibility for ensuring the electoral success of the party's flagbearers, provided that its Chairman was also gubernatorial candidate. All powers of Conference were to be exercised "within the guidelines provided by congress" and subject to its (congress) overriding authority (Article 15).

The State Executive Council was established by Article 16 and comprised of ten (10) officers<sup>3 2</sup> and fifteen (15) other members, all of whom were to be elected by the State conference (Articles 16(2) and 17(1)). It exercised all powers delegated to it by the latter, 'subject to Congress approval (Article 16(2)). It was also responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Party and for implementing the directives of Congress, the National President and the State Conference. Its meetings were presided over by the Chairman of (the) State Conference (Article 26(4)).

The State Assembly Council was a local equivalent of the National Parliamentary Council and was established by Article 3 of the Second Schedule to the Party Constitution. It comprised of all Party members of the State Assembly.

and all Commissioners in the State Government. The latter participated as *ex-officio*. It was set up primarily to reconcile differences of opinion and thus facilitate consensus on public and party matters among Legislators and members of the executive arm of government. (Article 5 of the Second Schedule).

The national party organisation consisted of the National Congress and the National Executive Council (NEC). Congress was the most supreme authority of the Party, and as such, had plenary powers (Article 11). Its membership included the National President, all members of the Party in the National Assembly, Governors and their Deputies and one representative from each State Constituency selected from among its members (Article 10 (1 - 8).) Its powers and functions were similar to those of a State Conference, but they extended over all state and federal organs of the party (see Article 11(2) (i-x)).

The size of Congress made it unsuitable for the conduct of any business other than to lay down broad guidelines for policy. Accordingly, the National Executive Council formulated and implemented party policies and programmes in their specifics. A smaller group, known as the National Working Committee (NWC), and appointed by it, discharged the functions of Council between its meetings. The full Council consisted of at least ten (10) national officers, all State Conference Chairmen and forty-five (45) other members, all of whom were elected by Congress (Article 12).

In theory therefore, the government of the Party was democratic, since power was formally vested in its representative organs. In addition, the Third Schedule to the Constitution of the Party contains elaborate rules of procedure designed to govern the conduct of all party meetings. In real terms however, two principles which seem to have informed the structural grid made the Party highly centralised and hierarchical, and eroded its claim of being democratic.

The first is an abiding concern for the supremacy of the Party in all matters between it and its members and/or

elected or appointed officers in government. According to Article 7 of the Second Schedule to the Constitution of the Party,

The President of the Party, the Chairman of the State Conference, and the Parliamentary and Assembly Leaders of the Party in the National Assembly and the State Assembly respectively shall be responsible to the National Executive Council and the Congress of the Party in the implementation at Federal and State levels of the policies and programmes which may from time to time be laid down by the Party.

In more specific terms, Article 11(iv) empowered Congress to "examine the policies pursued by (a) State Government (controlled by the Unity Party of Nigeria)... in order to determine that (they were) in accord... with the principles, policies, programmes, aims and objects of the Party." In addition, Articles 15 and 16 imposed an obligation on a State Conference and its (State) Executive Council to exercise their respective powers "within the guidelines provided by Congress" and "subject to Congress approval".

However, Congress was a large body and was therefore grossly unsuitable for discussing crucial matters of policy. It also met once in a year under normal circumstances. In between its meetings, its powers devolved on the National Executive Council (Article 12(5)(11) where Governors and representatives of their states constituted a minority (Article (12)(1)). In turn, the National Working Committee exercised the powers and functions of the National Executive Council, but it comprised only national officers of the Party "and such other members of the Federal (i.e. National) Executive Council as may be appointed by the National President" (Article 12 (5)(ii)). In a nutshell, the National President was *de facto* repository of the powers of Congress and other federal agencies of the Party.

The matter did not end here. The appointive power of the National President extended very well beyond the National Executive Council to Congress (Article 10(9), State Conferences (Article 14(2)(v)) and—delegates thereof (Article 17(2)(4)). In addition, he must be privy to any decision of a State Conference to create new offices and staff them (Article 17(2)). These were complemented by his right to “give directives to all officers and Agencies whether Federal or State” (Article 26(1)). He prescribed the venue and time of the National Executive Council through the National Secretary of the Party (Article 12(2)). Furthermore, he had interventionist powers, and as such, could “appoint ad hoc Committees of the Party on any subject” (Article 26(1)) as well as co-opt any member or members into any Party meeting (Article 24(1)). Finally, he presided over all meetings of the three federal organs of the Party, and could do the same with regard to State Conferences and Executive Councils. (Article 26(4)).

The second principle derives from the first and relates to the allocation of dual roles to certain functionaries of the Party. In other words, the Constitution of the Party created a network of ‘interlocking directorates’ by allowing certain individual officers to perform two or more strategic roles simultaneously. In this regard, State Conference Chairmen doubled as gubernatorial candidates (or Governors, as the case might be) and so took full charge of party and government matters at state level. At the national level, the President of the Party was also Presidential candidate (Article 11(2)(vi)).

These arrangements were designed to ensure automatic government backing for all party decisions wherever the party was in power, and therefore, to facilitate effective co-ordination of party and government by the leadership. They also sought to avoid a recurrence of the Action Group experience by assuring a formal role for Awolowo in the Party, irrespective of his electoral fortunes. However, party

supremacy, especially of the order which the Unity Party of Nigeria structure implied, is an anachronism in a presidential system. The duality of roles also made the incumbents too powerful for effective checks by other Party organs, and as such, created oligarchic tendencies. Accordingly, they generated so much in-fighting between Governors, and Deputy Governors (who doubled as State Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Party respectively, and between the executive and the legislative arms of government.<sup>33</sup>

At the national level, the conflict of interests was not so much between the President and the Vice Presidents, but between the demands of the two roles which the former occupied. As the next two sections show, the incumbent experienced the contradictions inherent in simultaneously symbolising a democratic organisation and also fostering personal political interests.

#### AWOLowo AND THE NOMINATION OF UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA CANDIDATES

The mode of nominating candidates for elective offices had up to 1979, remained characteristically peculiar to individual political parties in Nigeria. This can be explained by the relatively underdeveloped state of Nigeria's democratic dispensation, the consequent absence of a sophisticated electorate, elite manipulation of the instruments of propaganda and the party system that was in vogue during the First Republic. The Action Group, for example, craftily returned urban-based educated elites to their respective villages or communities, got the latter to award them honorary titles and thereafter adopted them as electoral candidates.<sup>34</sup> Although the party recorded tremendous electoral successes therefrom, the process was such that powerful individuals within and without the party could (and did) impose their favourites on the electorate, and by so doing, undermine the growth of popular democracy in the country.<sup>35</sup>

Although the American presidential system was adopted for the Second Republic, the accompanying feature of direct

primary elections did not immediately become part of Nigeria's adaptation of that model. Existent caucus tendencies within parties of the First Republic, especially the Action Group were ironically, strengthened by the ban on overt political activities and the intermittent undertakings by different military administrations, between 1966 and 1975, to return power to elected civilians. Moreover, nothing in either the Electoral Act of 1977 (as amended in 1982) or the 1979 Constitution<sup>36</sup> prescribed a particular mode of candidate nomination. As such, the Constitution of the Unity Party of Nigeria simply gave the leadership of the Party wide discretionary powers in respect of candidate selection. Accordingly, before the ban partisan politics was lifted,

the Committee of Friends led by Papa Obafemi Awolowo had prepared itself ready for the return to normal democratic rule... Candidates for various elective positions in the Country had also been assembled...<sup>37</sup>

The resultant teams looked coherent and promising throughout the period of electioneering. A short while after October 1979, they broke up into antagonistic camps over the distribution of power and other spoils of office. It then became clear that some of the teams comprised strange bed-fellows and that the primary consideration for selection was loyalty to the leadership of the Party. There was a seemingly unofficial policy of the Party to award exalted party and public offices to old party faithfuls whom Awolowo could trust and work with. Among other things, this implied that most candidates were imposed on their respective constituencies. In the case of Governorship candidates and their associates, it also implied that such considerations as compatibility and *consensus adidem* were not part of the calculus.

For example, in Ondo State, M.A. Ajasin won the race for

the party flag in 1978 because he had been a standing Awo faithful, and so deserved some compensation. To ease his way to power, Ayo Fasanmi, then the most visible contender for the party flag, had to be neutralised. An opportunity came in Akin Omoboriowo who, under Awolowo's prodding, accepted to participate in the race as Ajasin's associate. Omoboriowo is from the same (old) Ekiti Division as Fasanmi, and it was reckoned, quite correctly, that he would reduce the level of support that was available for Fasanmi. On the day appointed for the selection proper, Omoboriowo's nomination as candidate for Deputy Governor was announced before voting started, and before his principal was 'known'<sup>38</sup> In Oyo State, it is widely believed that Awolowo preferred another old reliable, Archdeacon E.A. Alayande as flagbearer, and that Bola Ige won only because he kept Awolowo in the dark about his strategies. Awolowo did not even accept Ige's candidature until he had won the contest for the second time. But for Awolowo, Josiah Olawoyin and Lateef Jakande would have probably lost the race. It is doubtful if former Bendel State Governor, Professor Ambrose Alli, ever saw eye to eye with his Deputy, Demas Akpore, for one month after 1st October, 1979. In at least three of the five states<sup>39</sup> which the UPN controlled from 1979 to 1983, Deputy Governors became champions of direct primaries.

Primary elections enable party members to participate directly in the choice of its candidates and as such constitute a pre-election gauge of the acceptability of candidates to the electorate. They also generate voter attachment and seek to "make the instruments of mass democracy, the political parties, themselves democratically controlled."<sup>40</sup> However, they also generate and facilitate factionalism and internal schisms and enable 'anti-organisation' or reform candidates to win nomination at the expense of favourites of the party establishment.<sup>41</sup>

In spite of claims by the Deputy Governors that they represented a sizeable portion of the party's membership

in their respective states, and that they had individual political clout independently of their principals, the party leadership stoutly defended the caucus system. In its bid to maintain the *status quo*, it tried to blackmail, suppress and finally, neutralise the major proponents of direct primaries.

First, they were blackmailed and painted as agents of instability who sought to divert the attention of the party and its functionaries from implementing its programmes. For example, in his Presidential address to the fourth annual Congress of the Party, Awolowo paid tribute to "the entire members of the UPN.... in the National Assembly who, on the whole, have distinguished themselves as patriots and incorruptible public men". The Party, he went on, also owed its Governors "an enormous debt of gratitude... because (they) have discharged their onerous and historic assignments with distinction, dedication and unblemished loyalty."<sup>42</sup> Only 'ambitious' party members who cared less about party cohesion and the need for the party to consolidate its gains and improve on them would dare seek to oust such 'ambassadors' from their offices.

Second, attempts were made to suppress them. Awolowo caused a Special Congress meeting to be held in Lagos from 25th to 27th October, 1982 to reconcile the Deputy Governors and their sympathisers to automatic renomination. When he made a plea that the proposal be approved, he was rebuffed with a special Yoruba song which runs thus:

Awolowo a o fe  
No automatic

This literally translates to

Awolowo, we do not accept  
automatic renomination

The Party leadership had no choice but to give in to pressures in favour of primary elections. However, it took certain measures which neutralised some of the proponents of the exercise. For example, the National Executive Council directed all Deputy Governors who sought nomination as gubernatorial candidates to resign their jobs by 3rd Novem-

ber 1982. They complied, and were therefore denied the advantages which incumbency confers. In contrast, M.A. Ajasin made two donations of ₦10,000.00 each to Ifaki and Igogo communities (Ero constituencies III and V respectively) as government's contribution to their hospital projects which were being funded communally. The gesture was highly suspect, especially as it came a few days to the beginning of the preliminaries.

The exercise itself was badly organised. In Ondo State for instance, there were allegations of illegal printing of party cards, of abrupt shift of venues, of disenfranchisement and figure juggling.<sup>43</sup> At the end of it all, all incumbents were renominated,<sup>44</sup> but the UPN did havoc to its claim of promoting democracy. In addition, its leadership failed to obtain the political pay-offs it so badly wanted.<sup>45</sup>

#### AWOLOWO AND THE FREE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Awolowo had, since the days of Action Group, been an unrelenting advocate of free education. As Premier of Western Region, he implemented the programme at primary school level and its spectacular successes earned him and the Action Group enormous political capital. However, the bill was huge: it rose from £2.2 million in 1954 to a whopping £5.4 million in 1955. By 1960, it cost the regional government 41% of its revenue.<sup>46</sup> Earlier on, in 1953, government had tried to improve its finances by imposing a special levy of ₦1.50 (then 15s.) per tax payer, but had got violent protests and a poor electoral showing for it.<sup>47</sup> The lesson is clear enough: political expediency and economic feasibility do not always go together. However, Awolowo and free education had come to mean the same thing.

Hence in 1978, free education was one of the most crucial platforms on which the UPN based its campaigns for the 1979 elections. The Party, it was reckoned, would control the federal government, and the latter would fund the implementation of the programme adequately. However,

the party lost the presidential election and the question became whether or not the party should implement the programme in the states under its control. The ensuing debate created two non-mutually exclusive groups within the Party.

The 'Statists' wanted the Party to drop the programme. They foresaw the NPN sabotaging the programme either by starving UPN states of funds, or by simply being unsympathetic to their cause. Even if statutory allocations from the Federation Account were forthcoming, and the machinery for collecting internal revenue was invigorated, the sums derivable from both sources cannot, in some states, amount to anything vis-a-vis what would be required. The quality of the programme, and its products would be drastically affected, as would the party's future electoral fortunes. In the end, the electorate might feel betrayed by the Party and opt for another.

The 'Federalists' saw wisdom in implementing the programme irrespective of the level of resource availability. By so doing, UPN states can be set up as models and the party can then look up to greener electoral pastures. The target states included Kwara, Imo, Anambra and other eastern states.

Once again, Awblowo won the debate, and free education was pursued by UPN states. Admittedly, there was a large increase in the number of schools and in student/pupil enrolment. In Lagos State alone, primary and secondary schools which numbered 604 and 79 in 1979, went up to 954 and 180 in 1980 – an increase of 58% and 128% respectively. Student enrolment in Secondary Schools also recorded a modest 20% rise, from 89,854 in 1979 to 107,835 in 1980. By 1983, this number had more than doubled (231,365, 157% increase).<sup>48</sup> These were, by all standards, impressive figures, and the fact that free education became a programme on the list of all parties during campaigns for 1983 lends credence to its desirability.

However, the result was a mixed bag of spectacular success

and utter failure. Lagos State funded the programme easily, while Ogun and Oyo had slight difficulties. Ondo State piled up arrears of salary payments due to Teachers and Civil servants, while school children in Bendel State had to carry furniture to their schools on a daily basis. The financial strains were such that very little or no attention was given to other areas of state responsibility. The products of the programme had to graduate into unemployment. As was the case with primary elections, the party establishment had its way, but the UPN as an institution suffered a loss of reputation, and it can be imagined how the party will have fared had there been no *coup d'etat* on 31 December, 1983.

#### OBAFEMI AWOLowo, END OF AN ERA?

When societies first come to birth,  
it is the leaders that produce the republic  
Later, it is the institution that produce  
the leader<sup>4 9</sup>

In the preceding pages, an attempt has been made to examine the relationship between political power and institution building. We also tried to show how, in the case of Awolowo, conceptions of power and of political institutions, and the relationship between the two, were influenced by a variety of environmental factors. In all known cases of organised life, the personal or group interests of the powerful are easily juxtaposed with those of the collectivity.

However, in highly institutionalised settings, the short-term interests of particular leaders can hardly steer institutions away from their accepted aims and objectives which would, most probably, have evolved over the years. As such, the institutions are so autonomous and so complex that their corporate interests will, ultimately, prevail in situations of conflict with their functionaries'. The resilience of democracy in the United States in spite of Watergate is a case in point here.

By contrast, in African countries such as Nigeria, certain existent or desirable institutions, like political parties, are

rec... creations. In a number of cases too, their creators or... generation of leaders still preside over them, either directly otherwise. In situations of conflict between the creator and his object, the odds are, not unusually, in favour of the former.

The story of Awolowo, especially as told here, is the story of a charismatic personality who clearly conceptualised his interests and designed appropriate measures to facilitate their advancement. Therefore, it is also the story of a highly efficient organiser of men. Since a clear formulation of his interests preceded their organisation, the latter became relevant only within the context of the former. However, the boundaries of his organisations naturally transcended his personal interests, and conflict ensued between the demands of the two non-mutually exclusive situations. In deed, Awolowo was a master of his environment who refused to be mastered, and therefore, evoked extremes of passion and hostility.

Nigeria may never again produce men who are endowed with such personal characteristics and organisational capabilities as will enable them infect society with ideas and processes motivated by personal desires, at least in the first instance. To this extent, Awolowo's transition heralds the end of an era.

However, Awolowo, in my view left for Nigeria at least two important legacies, yiz:

- (i) Problems are never solved by consciously avoiding them; rather, an unsuccessful bid at confronting or resolving them must animate fresh moves towards attaining the same ends; and
- (ii) Desired objectives can be attained only through persistent attempts, with a resolve informed by a willingness to learn from previous mistakes.

The Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria, severally and jointly, represent Awolowo's concrete attempts at grappling with the problems of his society as he perceived them. To the extent that these experiences inform and enrich

Nigeria's search for stability and progress, to that extent Awolowo can never die.

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\*This paper is partly inspired by "The Dynamics of Organisational Conflict: Ondo State UPN, 1978-83", an unpublished B.Sc. Honours Essay which I submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Benin, Benin-City in 1985. I hereby gratefully acknowledge the contributions of my respondents and informants, and of my teachers, colleagues and friends both at Benin-City and Ago-Iwoye.

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10. Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Power in Organisations*, Mass, Pitman, 1981, pp. 288-289. Emphasis added.
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20. See James Coleman, *Nigeria. Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1958, Kalu Ezera, *Constitutional Development in Nigeria* London, Frank Cass, 1960, Sklar, *op.cit.* and O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, Enugu FDP, 1980.
21. See Ezera, *op.cit.*, chps. IV and VI and Sklar, *Op.cit.*, chp. III.
22. See Sklar, *ibid.*, pp. 392-393.
23. See Awolowo, *Autobiography*, chp. 14 and Sklar, *op.cit.*, pp. 274 ff.
24. Awolowo *Autobiography*, chp. 11.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 218. Cf. Sklar *op.cit.*, p. 278.
26. See *ibid.*, pp. 422 ff for the formal structure of the AG.
27. B.J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order*, Ibadan, IUP, 1973, pp. 72-73.
28. It is interesting to note that neither faction preferred the option of referring the conflict to the electorate by accepting a dissolution of the Regional Legislature. The reasons are obvious enough: Akintola was not that popular with the region's electorate. If he presided over an election, Awolowo and his supporters must have reasoned, he would have used the machinery of government against them. Ironically, Awolowo's account of the period is titled *The Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law*, Ibadan, Evans, 1987. Cf. Tony Enahoro on p. 82: "The Western Region has had eight region-wide elections in ten years.... Is it unreasonable for a Governor to hold that a ninth election in the same tenth year is unreasonable?"
29. This section is based on chp. 4 of my "Dynamics...", especially pp. 73-82.
30. See Sections 201 to 209 of the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, (1979). Section 1(1) of the Electoral Act (1977) also required political parties to publish audited accounts at stated intervals.

31. This and similar, subsequent references are to the *Constitution of the Unity Party of Nigeria* (as amended).
32. The following party offices existed at State level: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Legal Adviser, Assistant Legal Adviser, Publicity Secretary and Assistant Publicity Secretary. With appropriate terminological modifications, equivalent offices existed at the federal level.
33. For details, see my "Dynamics...", chp. 4
34. Sklar, *op.cit.*, pp. 436-438.
35. Awolowo himself confessed, in *Travails*, p. 135 and p. 137, to having personally influenced the adoption of Abiodun Akerele (Oyo Constituency) and Ayo Rosiji (Egba East) as AG candidates in 1951 and 1954 respectively. It is reasonable to conjecture that the practice was widespread, especially in view of the circumstances which led to the disclosure.
36. Section 203(1)(a) of the 1979 *Constitution* prescribed periodic and democratic elections for "the principal officers and members of the executive committee or other governing body" of political parties rather than candidates for elective offices.
37. Unity Party of Nigeria, "The Akin Omoboriowo Story" UPN Directorate of Organisation, n.d., p. 1.
38. It is alleged that, among other things, Awolowo pleaded with Omoboriowo to allow Ajasin taste power for "once", thereby implying that the party flag would automatically pass to Omoboriowo in 1983. The veracity of this claim cannot be vouched, but having assured himself of Ajasin's success, Omoboriowo set out early to present Fasanmi as the stumbling block in Ekiti Division's bid to produce civilian Governor of Ondo State by 1983.
39. These States were Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Bendel and Oyo. Deputy Governors in the last three were particularly active in the debate.
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42. Quoted in Akinola, "Dynamics...", p. 118.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 128-132.
44. The exercise was repeated twice in Oyo State and once in Kwara State before Bola Ige and C.O. Adebayo were adopted as the Party's candidates. The latter defeated the State Chairman of the Party, Josiah Olawoyin.
45. The Party lost control of Bendel and Oyo States to the rival National Party of Nigerian, but regained Ondo State through legal action.
46. Ade Adefuye. "Awo and Free Education", *Thisweek*. Vol. 4 No. 12. 15 June 1987, p. 29 and Ray Ekpu, "That You May be Free", *Awo*, Lagos. Newswatch Communications, 1987, p. 17.

47. In the elections to the House of Representatives held in the region in 1954, the AG obtained only 35% of the votes and 18 seats against the NCNC's 53% of the vote and 23 seats. 1 seat and 12% of the vote went to anti-levy candidates. Nnoli, *op.cit.*, p. 206
48. Adefuye, *loc.cit.*
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## Awolowo and Nigerian Federalism

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EGHOSA E. OSAGHAE

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### INTRODUCTION

Although the most prominent characteristic of the political thought of African statesmen and 'thinkers' is that it is fluid and intermittent,<sup>1</sup> Obafemi Awolowo clearly belonged to the class of the few consistent 'thinkers' who steadfastly held on to their ideas and beliefs as sacrosanct. In all of his writings, this was arguably truest of his views on federalism, specifically his conviction that the federal constitution is the best suited for Nigeria because of the country's enormous multilingual and multinational nature. This conviction was borne out of certain universal principles of constitution-making which he said, held that the best and the most stable constitution for any multilingual country is the federal one. In essence, this was the kernel of Awolowo's federal thought and the basis on which he analysed the process and organisation of federal government. This essay is a critical examination of these thoughts on federalism in general, and the Nigerian federalism in particular, though it would be found that most of these thoughts have a Nigerian specificity. This is understandable, considering that Nigeria was the primary problem which he sought to deal with, and consequently, that most of his more general views on federalism were meant to validate and justify his prescriptions for solving the Nigerian problem.

## CONCEPTUAL LIGHTS: LEADERSHIP AND FEDERALISM

A convenient startpoint for our analysis is to examine the place of leadership in federalism because, of all systems of government, the federal one probably needs committed leaders most. This is largely because, as federalism is a golden mean between the desire to be separate and to be united on the part of the constituent units, it requires a will and commitment to federalism on the part of the leaders to make the unity of opposites workable. Indeed, from their study of factors making for the success of federal systems, Thomas Frank *et al* have stressed the importance of "a self-sufficient political-ideological commitment" to the primary value of federation itself by the leaders. Where this is absent, they argue, federal success is improbable if not impossible"<sup>2</sup> A similar point has been made by many federalist students notably K.C. Wheare, Ronald Watts, Geoffrey Sawer, and Amitai Etzioni though, for the most part, they emphasize the role of leadership when the federation is to come into being and during its fledging period.<sup>3</sup> In particular, Etzioni distinguishes between 'internal' and 'external' leadership in union formation.<sup>4</sup> This distinction is highly relevant in considering federations like Nigeria which emerged from colonial situations in which the colonizing authorities and the indigenous nationalist elite combined in the bargains that produced the eventual federal unions. Here, it is important that both the internal and external leaders are committed to federalism for the Union to come into being; after this time, the success of the union comes to rest squarely on the internal leaders.

The importance of leadership in the emergence and survival of federal systems then, need not be over-emphasized. Empirical evidences lend ample support for this contention. It took the federalist commitment of John Jay, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton (these three combined to write *The Federalist Papers*)<sup>5</sup>, Benjamin Franklin, James Wilson and the charisma of George Washington to bring American federation to fruition and to weather the initial

turbulence, including a civil war.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the fatherly figure of Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel as well as the popularity of the Congress Party, contributed immensely to the emergence and survival of the Indian federal union, notwithstanding the 'Pakistanization' problem the Union had to contend with at the independence.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of Nigeria which is my Primary concern, the federation owed its origin to the belief by virtually all the leaders that it was the most viable arrangement. It was especially attractive to them because, at the time, considering the uneven rates of development among the regions of the country which they led, it guaranteed that every region could progress at its own pace. As early as 1943, Nnamdi Azikiwe, had proposed a 'commonwealth, of Nigeria, a kind of federal arrangement with eight constituent units which he called protectorates.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, Awolowo has described him as "a believer in federalism who, at the 1953 London Constitutional Conference argued that "Federalism is imperative in Nigeria".<sup>9</sup> Ahmadu Bello also supported federation on the grounds that "this is the only guarantee that the country will progress evenly all over, for we can spend the money we receive, the money we raise, in the direction best suited to us."<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Tafawa Balewa argued in 1948: "Nigeria's political future may only lie in federation because, so far as the rate of regional progress concerned, some of the other regions appear to be more developed than others, and I think that no region should be denied self-government because others are not prepared for it".<sup>11</sup> Finally, Dennis Osadebey affirmed that "for a Nigerian Constitution to succeed, it must have to be federal or confederal so that, while the diverse peoples were kept together in one country, each group would have as much autonomy as possible".<sup>12</sup>

Of all the Nigerian leaders however, Awolowo was arguably the most avowed and systematic. His advocacy of a federal solution to the peculiarities of the Nigerian situation was a logical consequence of his personal beliefs and con-

tions and certain "scientific", historical and universal evidences and principle to the effect that a federal constitution is the best suited for any multinational country:

Experts can propound learned thesis as to why people having different languages and cultural backgrounds are unable to live together under a democratic unitary constitution. But the empirical facts of history are enough guide to us. It has been shown beyond all doubt that the best constitution for such diverse peoples is a federal constitution.<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, he argued,

The constitution of Nigeria must be federal .... any other constitution will be unsuitable and will generate ever-recurring instability which may eventually lead to the complete disappearance of the Nigeria state.<sup>14</sup>

Awolowo's views on federalism were certainly the most profound and copious of all made by Nigerian leaders, and came closest to an approximate "theory" of federalism. From his first book *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, to his *Strategy and Tactics of the Peoples Republic*, all of which dealt extensively with the best system of government for Nigeria, he was unwavering in his federalist stance. In what follows in this essay, I examine the different strands of his federal thought.

#### AWOLOWO'S FEDERAL THEORY

In the study of federalism, there is no universal theory to which students agree. What exists are 'partial' theories which are actually approaches to and perspectives of, federalism.<sup>15</sup> What we find in Awolowo however, is an attempt to formulate a "scientific theory" of federalism based on certain law-like generalisations and principles which in a typical lawyer's fashion, "define more or less by fiat (typically to make it easier to prove a case) and expects that definition to be authoritative because it is enforced by the weight of law or force."<sup>16</sup> But in the end, as we shall find out

Awolowo's "theory" amounts to no more than what are self-evident prescriptions based on what Dudley has called "ad hoc generalisations used to explain and justify Awolowo's own political prejudices".<sup>17</sup> Extreme as Dudley's assessment may appear, the point remains that Awolowo's collection of principles are too partial and reductionist to qualify to be called a grand theory of federalism. It nevertheless remains an important theoretical perspective, especially in the study of Nigerian federalism. We accept it as such.

Essentially, Awolowo's conception of federalism belongs to the formalistic legal-constitutional perspective championed by K.C. Wheare.<sup>18</sup> Like Wheare, he regards certain inviolable federal principles as the essence of federalism. In other words, he assesses the federal nature of a country by the principles which are embodied in the constitution and, strictly on this basis classifies a country as truly federal, quasi-federal or non federal. For him, to qualify to be called federal, a constitution must be written, and must provide, *inter alia* that (1) there must be a division of power between a central government and regional or state governments which must be coordinate and independent of one another in the exercise of their respective powers; (2) the regional or state governments must have jurisdiction over residual matters i.e subjects not defined as belonging to the executive legislative list of the central government or the concurrent list of both the central and state governments; (3) no one or two constituent units should be large enough to dominate the federation; (4) the central government should not have powers to suspend state powers and functions; (5) there must be a separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary and the judiciary must be independent; and (6) every state government must be viable, i.e. every state must have the financial and administrative wherewithal to discharge the functions allocated to it.<sup>19</sup>

The major problem with this kind of formalistic emphasis is that it almost totally ignores the operation of the consti-

tutional form and hence, the nature of the society which it serves because, as William Livingston has argued:

The nature of the political society can be examined only by observing how the institution works in the context of the society. It is the operation, not the form that is important, and it is the forces that determine the operation that are more important still.<sup>20</sup>

The point in this argument is that a federal constitution could be operated in a unitary manner and vice-versa. To this extent, it cannot be true, as Awolowo would have us believe, that unitary and federal systems are mutually exclusive.<sup>21</sup> Today, many federal systems have become so centralized that constitutional federalists like Awolowo would scarcely call them federal. Even with regards to constitutional forms *per se*, Ivo Duckacek points out that Crossbreed Constitutions which combine unitary and federal arrangements are not a rarity as is often assumed.<sup>22</sup> The way out of this conceptual problem is to agree that although the essence of federalism is that there is an irrevocable division of power between a central and state governments, there is a wide variety in the forms which it takes. These range from the fully centralized to fully non-centralised which could yet approximate unitary and confederal/systems respectively but remain nevertheless federal because of the irrevocable division of power.<sup>23</sup>

What Awolowo loses in his formalistic conception he compensates for by insisting that, to be properly understood, the federal system must be related to the nature of the society it is expected to serve. Specifically, he believes that federalism is only suited to certain kinds of societies because, as he himself argued, "suitability is ... of the essence of a constitution."<sup>24</sup> In this regard, his federal theory approximates the sociological approach championed by Livingston.<sup>25</sup> The basis of Awolowo's sociological insight is that:

It is possible to discern political principles or laws of universal application which must determine the type of constitution best suited to a given country. It is also possible, in the face of such general principles, to declare and predict that any wide departure from them in identical cases and circumstances is bound to come to grief sooner or later . . . It is incumbent upon us therefore, in making a choice between a unitary and federal constitution, to endeavour to discover, from the empirical facts which political history supplies, and from the conclusions which Political Scientists and analysts have reached, whether there are any patent and well-established political principles by which our action can be guided.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, on the basis of his consideration of all federal systems and conditions making for them, he arrives at four universal principles or "laws" of Constitution-making.<sup>27</sup>

- 1) If a country is unilingual and uninational, the Constitution must be unitary.
- 2) If it is unilingual or bilingual or multilingual but has over the years developed divergent nationalities, the constitution must be federal and the constituent units must be organised on the basis of language and nationality.
- 3) If it is bilingual or multilingual, the Constitution must be federal, and the constituent units must be organised on the basis of the linguistic group.
- 4) If it is bilingual or multilingual, but adopts a unitary constitution, the constitution must fail in the long run.

Awolowo believes that any deviation from these "immutable" principles will result in political instability. Rather obviously however, they do not seem to recognise that not all multilingual and multinational countries are federal plausibly because as I pointed out earlier, Awolowo took federal and unitary systems to be mutually exclusive. But, as we discovered, hybrid constitutions are not rare, and this explains why a unitarist state like the United Kingdom has

"federal trappings". In fact, an official British publication has it that the relationship and powers of Northern Ireland compared with that in London, "are in many ways similar to those existing between a state capital and the federal government in the United States."<sup>29</sup> To this extent, the principles enunciated by Awolowo should be seen as practical guides rather than immutable principles. Be this as it may, he takes federalism to be a solution to the problems of governing a multinational state, a point to which many authors seem to agree.<sup>30</sup>

To the extent that a federation in Awolowo's view is necessarily multilingual and multinational, the delineation of the constituent units must be based on the linguistic principle so that, as much as possible, the federation is a perfect lingo-territorial one in which the units are coterminous with the linguistic diversities.<sup>31</sup> Three important considerations underlie this principle. First he believes that "In the main, language lay at the root of racial differences, be they differences in cultures and custom, in philosophy of life and political institutions, in national characteristics and social concepts and practices".<sup>32</sup> Indeed, he argues,

. . . . of all the cultural equipment of a people, language is the most formidable, the most irrepressible, and the most resistant to diffusion, not to talk of fusion. It lies at the base of all human divisions and divergencies. And historical evidences of an irrefutable nature have shown that *you can unite but never succeed in unifying peoples whom Language has set distinctly apart from one another.*<sup>33</sup> (emphasis original).

In point of emphasis, this is similar to Isaac George's assertion that language is the most crucial element which separates groups because it "is a magnetic force, binding a speech community together, since it provides a means of identifying its members as belonging to a specific group."<sup>34</sup> Even though one agrees that language is a crucial determinant of group separation and, in fact, is the major criterion for distinguish-

shing between ethnic groups in Africa,<sup>35</sup> the point must nevertheless be made that an undue emphasis on it alone is over-stressed and could be misleading. Is the ethnic group coterminous with the linguistic group? Awolowo does not believe so, and indeed attempts to distinguish between the ethnic group as an all-inclusive group which could comprise more than one language, and a linguistic group, as a more restricted group.<sup>36</sup> This distinction amounts to a mere semantic differentiation because we are unlikely to find an ethnic group separate from its corresponding language and furthermore, the delineation of constituent units on linguistic basis would probably result in an unwieldy number of units than would the ethnic criterion, if we are to accept Awolowo's distinction. Happily however, he appears to recognise these difficulties and so, uses the linguistic group and the ethnic group as synonymous.<sup>37</sup> This is more realistic, considering Nnoli's assertion that, in Africa, language is clearly the most important attribute of the ethnic group.<sup>38</sup>

The second consideration which underlies Awolowo's linguistic principle is that federalism, as a system of opportunity which affords every group autonomy and progress at its own pace, should treat all groups equally:

Under a true federal constitution.... each group however small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other group, however large. Opportunity must be afforded to each to evolve its own peculiar political institution. Each group must be autonomous in regard to its internal affairs.<sup>39</sup>

Only a strict adherence to the linguistic principle can ensure that this is so. Awolowo believed firmly in the right of all groups to self determination, arguing that the constitution of every group is its "domestic affairs" into which other groups should not poke-nose.<sup>40</sup> If this is what federation entails, then it must be what Dudley has called a "primitive international system" in which 'separate' states exist.<sup>41</sup> But,

this is not the gist of federalism, even though orthodox and classical definitions tend to suggest that federalism entails a dualism in which the two levels of government are "independent".<sup>42</sup> Rather than a dualism, federalism involves cooperation, and coordination between the two levels of government, as well as among the constituent states because at least, both levels of government act directly upon the citizens and the policies of any state government often have implications for other states in the federation.<sup>43</sup> States in the federation then, cannot be as separate and independent as Awolowo asserts though federal practices instruct that they should have some measure of autonomy. Be this as it may, the essence of Awolowo's insistence on group rights and autonomy lies in the fact that he sees federalism as an enabling system for healthy competition among the constituent units in the push for development.<sup>44</sup> This is especially so because the constituent units usually have uneven rates of, and capacity for, development. Federalism provides the framework for competitive development which is to the collective advantage of all the units because as he proffers, "Rivalry is the soul of development and progress. And you cannot suppress healthy rivalry without repressing the instinct of contest which is inborn".<sup>45</sup> Federalism guarantees that this instinct will not be suppressed and, the more so, if the constituent units are coterminous with the major diversities.

The third, and perhaps the most important consideration of all, is that Awolowo believed that a federation should be built upon a consolidation of the existing diversities rather than their elimination. In other words, he did not believe in a transfer of allegiances from one's primary group (nationality) to an "artificial" entity which a federation most often is.<sup>46</sup> To this extent, Awolowo was clearly a Burkean nationalist as he subscribed to the hierarchy of loyalties philosophy. As Edmund Burke put it:

Not all human loyalties were to be absorbed into a supreme loyalty to the democratic national state. On the contrary,...

(There is) a hierarchy of loyalties, each supreme in its own sphere..... a man is, and should be loyal to his family ..... (and) to his locality or region; regionalism is traditional and hence natural, and the nation should respect and foster it as a necessary preliminary to love of an extreme country or nationality.<sup>47</sup>

This viewpoint however raises the question of whether federalism is an end in itself, or a means to an end. This question is highly relevant in the case of federations like Nigeria and India where sub-national loyalties have been recognised to be a potent source of political instability. Should a federation (or any system of government for that matter) consolidate these divisive loyalties or eliminate them? While Awolowo's views would tend to support the former,<sup>48</sup> the latter is obviously more desirable. One understands that Awolowo's point is to strengthen his group autonomy which is in conformity with his dualistic conception of federalism. But we have argued that cooperative rather than dual federalism is the reality and, to the extent that cooperation requires some 'we' feeling, the unity of a federation can only be strengthened by underplaying the centrifugal forces. The question of 'unity for who, and for what' therefore becomes irrelevant if we agree that rather than be an end in itself, federalism is a means to an end which is time and again, the greater unity of the constituent units.

On the grounds of the foregoing considerations, Awolowo argues that the constituent units of a federation must be organized according to the linguistic principle. Where this is not the case, he says, there is bound to be political instability.<sup>49</sup> Even so, he recognised that it is impossible to have a perfect lingo-territorial federation at least because not every linguistic group would constitute a viable state and the distribution of linguistic groups often assumes a marble-cake pattern.<sup>50</sup> To this extent, in delineating minorities states which, expectedly would be composed of numerous minority groups, Awolowo advocated the criteria of viability,

administrative efficiency and convenience.<sup>5 1</sup> Viability for Awolowo however, "is essentially a question of administrative relativity and not as popular notion has it, primarily a financial or population problem ... Granting administrative competence, ..... any constituent state will manage to eke out some sort of existence",<sup>5 2</sup> Interpreted thus, Dudley says,

Viability is construed to mean administrative viability, the possession of technico-administrative capability adequate to the purposes of running the affairs of the unit. Should there be a unit not viable in these terms, then rules could be introduced to permit the unviable unit to subordinate itself to a viable unit for administrative purposes, at least for as long as is required to enable the unviable unit develop the requisite skills.<sup>5 3</sup>

As such, it is clear that Awolowo does not deviate entirely from his linguistic principle. What he proposes is that every group, no matter how small, is potentially a viable state; what is required is a period of "apprenticeship" under a viable unit until the unviable one becomes viable. It is however difficult to divest viability of such indices like size and population which would still render administratively viable states unviable. Awolowo's definition of viability as only administrative competence therefore is too simplistic.

To bring our considerations in this section to a close, a summary of Awolowo's federal theory is necessary. He is primarily a formalistic federalist for whom the constitutional form, perhaps more than the practice, is the essence of federalism. More than this however, he conceives of federalism as a sociological imperative which is best suited only for those countries which present federal qualities, namely, multilingualism and multinationality. In other words, it is a solution to the problems of accommodating and governing the diversities in a heterogeneous state. This being so, the organisation of the federation must reflect these diversities by delineating the constituent units as much as possible,

in accordance with the principle of linguistic affinities. This principle serves the important purposes of guaranteeing every group internal autonomy and equality with others, as well as enabling these groups to engage in healthy competition by which the federation as a whole can progress. In essence, his federal theory is a conjunction of the legal constitutional and sociological approaches.

In the remaining parts of this paper, I will concentrate on the Nigerian context of Awolowo's views because, as we pointed out in the introductory parts of this essay, Nigeria was his primary concern. The more specific subjects of his federalist thought will be examined accordingly.

#### AWOLOWO AND NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

Our stand on this matter is well known. We belong to the federalist school"<sup>54</sup>

In 1951 when the controversy on the form of Nigeria's constitution began, I had already been, for more than eighteen years, a convinced federalist,<sup>55</sup>

When we turn to consider Awolowo's views on Nigerian federation, we find that his "theory" which we analysed above is actually a framework to justify his views on, and prescriptions for, the Nigerian case. What I shall do in this section then, is to situate as it were, his theory in the Nigerian context along the lines of the major themes which I present below.

#### THE CASE FOR FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

In all of his writings, Awolowo insisted that, because Nigeria is multilingual and multinational, its constitution must be federal. In addition, he argued that "the sheer territorial size of Nigeria necessitated the adoption of a federal form of constitution and hence the division of the country into regions, even if the inhabitants... were linguistically or ethnically homogenous".<sup>56</sup> The factors which, for him, made federalism imperative in Nigeria can however be classified

into the sociological and the historical-administrative which I shall examine accordingly.

### *Social Imperatives*

In *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Awolowo lists five sociological imperatives for Nigerian federation:<sup>57</sup> (1) Large size (Nigeria is the ninth largest country in the world) containing enormous diversities; (2) Ethnic diversity, with about 250 groups (though he sees ten of these as major), which differ in language, cultural, political, social and customary practices; (3) geographical diversities; (4) religious diversities; the major one being the cleavage between a dominantly muslim north and a dominantly christian south; and (5) before 1946, Nigerians developed particularistic tendencies under the Native Authority System which were later enlarged and consolidated by regionalism.

"All these factors", Awolowo argued, "are natural and automative generators of centrifugal forces and tendencies. They tend to induce in the ethnic groups concerned, a strong and burning desire for separate existence..."<sup>58</sup> He however recognized that these latent antecedents could not, on their own, engender federalism, except they are articulated and mobilized to serve as bases for unity and separateness.<sup>59</sup> In this regard, he says the factors would have led to the emergence of several independent sovereign states "if they had not been restrained and skillfully canalized by the British". The British were therefore responsible for the federal impetus:

It was they .... who created Nigeria out of a welter of independent and warring villages, towns and communities, and imbued the various Nigerian national groups with an overriding desire for the unity of the entire-federation. In other words, it was our erstwhile British overlords who so organised and administered our affairs that while the ethnic groups still yearn passionately for independence in certain matters, they nonetheless realize the tremendous

and priceless advantages of remaining together as one nation.<sup>60</sup>

This would seem to suggest that the British were solely responsible for the emergence of the Nigerian federation because, as he points out, by 1940, Nigerian leaders were complacent about the desirable constitutional form, and were satisfied with, and desired to fit into, whatever framework the British introduced.<sup>61</sup> But this is only partially correct because the actual adoption of a federal constitution in 1954 was virtually a Nigerian affair, as Nigerian leaders had since 1950 been unanimous in their preference for a federal system. Awolowo however recognises this, and actually blamed the British for attempting to impose a unitary system. The point he is making, which is a valid one, is that the British laid the requisite infrastructure for the emergence of federalism which made it almost impossible for Nigerian leaders to demand anything but a federal system.

Of all the sociological antecedents, the most crucial in Awolowo's view, is the fact that Nigeria is multilingual and multinational. The implication of this is that a common Nigerian nationality is at best "a complete misnomer" because it is an amalgam of nations rather than a nation itself. As he argues in *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not"<sup>52</sup> The differences among the Nigerian nationalities he says, are as great as those between Germans, English, Russians and Turks. This being so, following his hierarchy of loyalties thesis, the only appropriate constitution is a federal one which operates on a recognition and consolidation of existing loyalties, rather than their elimination. As he says, the incompatibilities between the nationalities are "real, not imaginary obstacles. Those who place these groups under the same constitution

ignore them at their peril.... It has been shown beyond all doubt that the best constitution for such diverse peoples is a federal constitution."<sup>63</sup> Apart from the objective fact of multinationality, federalism was also imperative because the various nationalities had different levels of development; as such, only federalism could guarantee that the more progressive groups would not be slowed down by the limitations of the others.<sup>64</sup>

.....there were differing standards of civilisation as well as uneven stages in the adoption of Western education and the emulation of Western civilisation. A unitary constitution with only one central government would only result in frustration to the more powerful and more dynamic ethnic groups, whereas the division of the country into regions along ethnic lines would enable each linguistic group not only to develop its own peculiar culture and institutions but to move forward at its own pace without being unnecessarily pushed down or annoyingly slowed down by the others<sup>64</sup>

#### *Historical-Administrative Imperatives.*

Here, Awolowo says four factors are important.<sup>65</sup> First, between 1900 and 1951, Nigeria was administered as a unitary state only for five-and-half years (1946–51) when, for the first time, under the Richards constitution, the entire country had only one "supreme" legislative authority. Before now, even with amalgamation of the formerly separate Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, the North continued to be ruled by the proclamations of the Governor while the South had a legislative council. Furthermore, although the Richards constitution was essentially "unitarist", it gave at least a "paper recognition" to Nigeria's federal character by creating three regions and regional assemblies. From this beginning, the federal movement started, with the Macpherson (1951) constitution being "a wretched compromise" between unitarism and federalism and finally resulted in the federal constitution of 1954 which gave the regions enormous autonomy.

Secondly, between 1900 and 1951, the British who ruled the country never conceived of it as "one organic entity". Indeed, "they left no one in any doubt that, to them, Nigeria was at best an aggregation of different distinct organic units which were striving. ... for permanent political union".<sup>66</sup> This is vividly reflected in official British policy (at least up till 1946) which as stated by Governor Hugh Clifford, is clearly informed by the Burkean philosophy:

It is the consistent policy of the government of Nigeria to maintain and to support the Local tribal institutions and the indigenous forms of government....which are to be regarded as the natural expressions of (African) political genius. I am entirely convinced of the right, for example, of the people of Egbaland.....(or) of any of the great Emirates of the North.....to maintain that each one of them is, in a very real sense, a nation.....It is the task of the government of Nigeria to fortify these national institutions.<sup>67</sup>

Thirdly, the British realized that, for administrative efficiency and, considering the dearth of administrators, all powers should not be concentrated in Lagos, hence they disaggregated the country into more or less autonomous regions. Fourthly, when Nigerians were offered the opportunity to choose which system of government they preferred during the consultations at various levels for the Macpherson constitution, they unanimously favoured a federal system. One of the questions asked at the various conferences was:

Do we wish to see a fully centralized system with all legislative and executive power concentrated at the centre, or do we wish to develop a federal system under which each different region of the country would exercise a measure of internal autonomy?<sup>68</sup>

The unequivocal opinion was for a federal system. In addition to this, the fact must be remembered that the major Nigerian leaders at the time strongly advocated a federal system.

The conjunction of the foregoing sociological, historical and administrative factors, in Awolowo's view, made federalism imperative in Nigeria. This means that federalism was not imposed, either by the British colonialists or by the Nigerian leaders; it was a self evident and logical imperative of Nigeria's peculiar circumstance.

#### FEDERAL STRUCTURE

Having established the forces which made federalism inevitable in Nigeria, and that it is the only suitable system for Nigeria, Awolowo proceeded to analyse the organisation of the federal system placing emphasis on the determination of the constituent units and the criteria for doing so, as well as the effects of these in the areas of minorities problems and unevenness of the constituent units. These matters, which students of federalism refer to as the core of federal structure<sup>6,9</sup> are what I examine under the headings below.

#### *Determination of Constituent Units*

Following the principles which Awolowo enunciated and which we examined under his theory, he consistently argued that Nigeria's constituent units should be delineated on the basis of ethno-linguistic affinities. For this reason, he criticised the regions created by the Richards constitution and which remained, in essence, till 1966 (the creation of the Mid-West region in 1963 was the only change). He argued that these regions were artificial, based largely on administrative convenience and argued that, for the Nigerian federation to be truly so, they needed to be realigned along ethnic lines.<sup>7,0</sup> This definitely entailed the creation of many more states. In making a case for the linguistic principle, he rejected other criteria for creating states like differences in origin, ethnicity, political institutions, religion, and geographical features on five grounds;<sup>7,1</sup> 1) they never formed the basis for demands for states; 2) most differences between communities in linguistic groups have been eliminated through the

unifying efforts of the elites; 3) there are no precedents for these factors; 4) they all exacerbate and complicate the problem; and 5) Fulanis cannot be separated from Hausas and they do not have contiguous territory. But, in arguing for a strict application of the linguistic principle, Awolowo realized that this will not solve all the problems; "I hasten to add, however, that we advocate ethnical grouping only as the ultimate objective. We realise that if this basis is strictly adhered to, some states would emerge which would be totally incapable of finding money to run their own affairs. In such cases as we found out earlier on, the unviable unit would have to be constituted into a sort of trustee territory under a larger state until such a time when it would become sufficiently viable. But we have also pointed out that even where a unit is viable in such term, it may still be too small in size and population to be viable. To this extent, Awolowo himself recognises, as we shall find out shortly, that minorities would have to be amalgamated to form states.

What emerges from the analysis so far is that because of its enormous linguistic diversities, Nigeria requires a large number of states, a variant of the sufficient federating units thesis propounded by McWhinney, Watts, and Sawyer.<sup>73</sup> Awolowo was probably the greatest advocate of the creation of more states, in Nigeria because, as we have seen, he was vehemently opposed to the three-regional structure. He opined that as many as 30-40 states in Nigeria should not be considered alarming because Switzerland which is about one-sixth of Nigeria's size, and Canada, about half of the size have 22 cantons and 9 provinces respectively.<sup>74</sup> At another point however, he considered a proposal for 17 states in Nigeria unrealistic, saying it would make nonsense of federalism because the states would be so weak that they would merely be "glorified local governments".<sup>75</sup> This inconsistency could be explained by the fact that the 17-state proposal was made by a rival political party and the fact that, at the time, the demands for states were not up to 17. Be this as it may, he strongly advocated the creation of more states.

In 1947, he proposed the creation of 10–12 states and, in his later writings, increased the number to 17 and 18.<sup>76</sup> In the latter case, 10 (and 11) of the states were to be on the basis of strict linguistic affinities, representing the 10 major ethno-linguistic groups which constituted 90 per cent of the total Nigerian population. The remaining 7 (8) states were to be amalgams of minorities which could not individually constitute states, and were delineated on the criteria of viability and administrative convenience and efficiency. (See appendix). To ameliorate the problems in the minorities states, he recommended five guiding factors;<sup>77</sup> 1) no minor linguistic group should be in the same state with any major group; 2) no one or two linguistic groups should be in a position to dominate the state; 3) every linguistic group should be, as much as possible undivided into two or more states; 4) the states must be territorially contiguous; and 5) the states must be large enough to effectively discharge the functions allocated to them. In addition, he proposed three constitutional safeguards;<sup>78</sup> 1) every linguistic group, no matter how small, should have a minimum number of seats in the state legislature in addition to the normal representation based on population; 2) each linguistic group should have a local government area; and 3) every linguistic group should be able to have its own state in future. Finally he believed that although the creation of minorities states would create new minorities, the latter would at least be “consenting minorities”, who would be given a choice of what state to belong.<sup>79</sup>

Awolowo's proposals indicate that his application of the linguistic principle is not as strict as he would want us to believe. If, as we have been told, there are about 250 distinct linguistic groups in Nigeria,<sup>80</sup> then a strict application of the principle would give a lot more than 17 or 18 states. From the ethno-linguistic composition of the states he proposes, Awolowo is really enunciating the more all-inclusive ethnic criterion rather than a simply linguistic one. This has to be the case because groups like the Edo, Yoruba, Ibo, even

procedure which made the creation of any new state unlikely.<sup>93</sup> He nevertheless remained a foremost advocate of minorities states after independence though, in 1963, when the Mid-West region was to be created from his Western region, he was opposed to the injustice involved.

The creation of 12 states in 1967, particularly of minorities states, seemingly responded to the views of federalists like Awolowo. The 1976 exercise which increased the number to 19 further reinforced this response though, in this case, the ethno-linguistic principle was rejected on the grounds that there could be no greater disruptive force than adherence to this principle.<sup>94</sup> The Irikefe panel which recommended the 19-state structure also rejected the viability principle.<sup>95</sup> The major consequence of the 1976 exercise was the reduction of the minority factor in the creation of states such that today, although minorities continue to exist, states are no longer demanded simply on the strength of the minority argument but, amongst others, on the need to bring government nearer to the people, even and balanced development, and grassroots democracy.<sup>96</sup> An examination of the as many as 51 demands made for new states in the Second Republic (1979-83) indicates this change in emphasis, even while it is clear that ethno-linguistic incompatibilities remain the crucial generators of separatist feelings.<sup>97</sup> It remains to be seen however, how, in the name of the emergent more "national" criteria, the ethno-linguistic principle can be discounted. This is the challenge of Awolowo's views.

#### *The Mill's "Law" of Federal Instability.*

The final aspect of Awolowo's views on the federal structure in Nigeria was his belief in the J.S. Mill's "law" of federal instability which states that:

There should not be any one state so much more powerful than the rest as to capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such a one and only one, it will insist on being master of the joint deliberations...<sup>98</sup>

In accordance with this law, Awolowo preferred two "basic principles" for determining the constituent units of a federation;<sup>99</sup> 1) no one or two states shall be so large in size and population as to be able to overrule the other states and bend the will of the federal government to its own; and 2) no state shall be so small as to be unable to maintain its independence within the sphere of functions allotted to it.

On account of the foregoing, Awolowo like many others, recognised the threat posed to the survival of the Nigerian federation by the abnormal imbalance in the three-regional structure, precisely, the preponderant size and population of the Northern region.<sup>100</sup> The real danger here was that the region was guaranteed, in a democratic setting, of perpetual domination if its ruling party was able to secure all the seats allocated to the region in Parliament. This danger was particularly real because the political parties which existed at the time were regional and ethnic-based. In the extreme possibility, although "the heterogeneous character of Nigeria is, in itself, a potential check on the emergence of a totalitarian form of government", Awolowo believed that "if a Northern leader were to emerge who had.....the whole of the Northern region under his heel, (Nigeria's diverse nature) will not.....be an effective enough deterrent to an attempt on his part to tyrannise over the remaining lesser half of the federation".<sup>101</sup> The only effective check, Awolowo believed, was a dismemberment of the region by, at least, splitting it into two states. It was largely for this reason that he ardently supported the demand for a Middle-Belt state, and criticised the Willink Commission report for not recommending any solution to the anomalous condition.<sup>102</sup>

Awolowo argues that one major reason for the collapse of the First Republic was "the open threat by a major political party that it was going to rule Nigeria for ever".<sup>103</sup> Many students of Nigerian government and politics agree on this point but, the question is, has the splitting of the erstwhile Northern region into as many as ten states today succeeded in allaying the fears of Northern domination? Empirical

evidence would not seem to suggest so, as the idea of a North, vis-a-vis a south remains sacrosanct and, within this framework, the North continues to "dominate" power in the federation.<sup>104</sup> In fact, at the close of the Second Republic, and immediately after, when it appeared that there was no stopping Northern domination, some Southern leaders called for a Confederation.<sup>105</sup> What this suggests is that the panacea to the threat of Northern domination does not lie in states creation but in what, elsewhere, I have called federalism consociationalism.<sup>106</sup> This involves non-statist measures which can be provided for in the constitution, like balancing principles for composing governments. Awolowo also recognised such non-statist measures. In *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, he identified sectional parties as the structural basis for the fears of domination.<sup>107</sup> To overcome these fears, he proposed that only parties which are national in membership, character and operation should be registered.<sup>108</sup> One way of ensuring that parties are actually national, he preferred, is to insist that every party should field candidates for elections in at least three-quarters of all the constituencies in the country. Furthermore, to ensure that those who rule the country have national rather than sectional support, he recommended that the Head of government should be directly elected by all voters in the federation. Finally, he proposed that independent candidates should not be allowed to contest elections because they encourage sectionalism, and that any Nigerian desiring to contest elections should be able to do so in any part of the country.

Most of these lofty proposals, especially those relating to national parties, were copiously embodied in the 1979 constitution. But they proved inadequate to forestall the re-emergence of sectional parties and fears of domination. What this suggests is that Awolowo's formalistic concern with constitutional provisions alone, with little or no cognisance of the nature and dynamics of politics, is inadequate. To the extent that federalism is an essentially dynamic system of government for any perspective of it to be ade-

quate, it must consider the dynamic aspects of the political society which alone can determine the required instrumentalities at any point in time. This is the missing link in Awolowo's prescriptions for solving the problems of Nigeria's anomalous federal structure.

#### DEMOCRACY, PARTY POLITICS AND FEDERALISM

Democracy has often been associated with federalism.<sup>110</sup> As Duchacek proffers, "while democracy can prosper without federalism, federalism cannot exist without democratic pluralism ...."<sup>111</sup> Democracy in this regard requires the existence of more than one political party:

Dictatorship with its one-party government and its denial of free election is incompatible with the working of the federal principle. Federalism demands forms of government which have the characteristics usually associated with democracy or free government. There is a wide variety in the forms which such government may take, but the main essentials are free elections and a party system with its guarantee of a responsible opposition.<sup>112</sup>

Although Awolowo did not formulate a direct relationship between democracy and federalism, the fact that he was an "unrepentant democrat" had far-reaching implications for his federalism. As he said, "I fervently prefer the inconveniences of democracy to the inarticulate and fearful material comfort of a dictatorship..."<sup>113</sup> His institutional requirements for democracy included the separation of power, independent judiciary, bicameral federal legislature and multipartism.<sup>114</sup> But it is the last which immediately concerns me here: In his practice of politics however, being one of the foremost party leaders Nigeria ever had, Awolowo seemed to contradict his democratic belief that "The Unity of Nigeria, as a democracy, will depend to a very

large extent on the emergence and continued existence and growth of a strong-wide party system".<sup>115</sup> In practice, Awolowo willy-nilly was a champion of sectional and ethnic-based parties, precisely a Western-Yoruba party. This brand of democratic practice, it has been pointed out, is dangerous for federal practice;

One type of multiparty system represents a deadly threat to the federal formula. This is so when competing parties with highly centralised and autocratic internal structure are based on territorial, ethnic, lingual, religious, tribal and radical interests... Their demands for federal recognition are often a first step toward the ultimate goal of secession.<sup>116</sup>

From all that has been analysed so far, it is clear that Awolowo recognised the dangers of sectional parties. This much he does in explaining the collapse of the first Republic:

If a country-wide political party had been in charge at the centre instead of an alliance of regionally and tribally based parties, the government of the First Republic would have been much more confident. It is therefore one of the paramount duties of the constitution to encourage the emergence, and foster the growth, of nation-wide political parties.<sup>117</sup>

Why then did he lead sectional parties? First, in the period 1951-66, the AG was basically a Yoruba-based western regional party and, in the Second Republic, tried as he did, his party, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) ended up being a return of the AG written large as reflected by the party's campaign strategies and its pattern of support. Why was there a gulf between his 'theory' and 'practice'? First, it would seem that his party organisation was consistent with his belief in the hierarchy of allegiances. As he argued, the Unity of the federation could only be assured through the unity of its constituent units. It was for this reason that he founded the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* and the AG, since the other major ethnic groups and regions were uniting through "tribal" unions and parties. At the time, he says, the west lacked

concerted programmes and effective leadership. Therefore, he continues, "I thought it would be a tragedy if the Western region which, like other regions, was going to have its own parliament and ministerial system of government were to enter the dispensation in its.... unorganized and undisciplined state"<sup>118</sup>

The dispensation to which he refers was the provision for regional elections in the Macpherson constitution, a development which suited his designs. The AG therefore, was supposed to be an organisation of the western peoples "so that they may be able to play an influential and effective role in the affairs of Nigeria under the new constitution."<sup>119</sup> Its motto, "Unity through Federation" aptly reflected Awolowo's beliefs. All this is not to suggest however that Awolowo or his party members never made attempts to make his parties national. In the case of the AG, after its formation, it was organized on a federal basis and, through its support for the minorities demands for separate states, it was able to extend its frontiers beyond the Western region. Indeed, it has been pointed out that one of the reasons for the split in the AG leadership between Awolowo and Akin-tola, his lieutenant was Awolowo's insistence that the AG should be national to which Akintola was opposed.<sup>120</sup> In the case of the UPN, though it retained a solid Western base (in fact more solid than it was for the AG),<sup>121</sup> the constitutional requirements that all recognised parties had to be national in addition to the effort of the party leaders gave it a national appearance. Probably then, it would be more correct to say that Awolowo believed in having a solid home base as a launching pad to the national arena rather than that he believed strictly in ethno-regional parties. As far as he was concerned, one had to have control of one's ethnical/regional homeland as a key credential to laying claim to national leadership. As he put it in an interview:

I pity the ignorance of those who believe that I can become a leader of Nigeira only if I renounce my leadership of the

Yorubas..... I could not become a leader of the country if I were rejected by those among whom I was born. What would be my credentials for ruling the whole country with all its ethnic diversities if I failed. with a small group?<sup>122</sup>

The second reason that could be proffered for the gulf between Awolowo's theory and practice of party politics is to found in the nature of Nigerian politics, because his organisational approach had to be in consonance with the approach(es) prevalent in the country. As the political climate was in the country by 1950, for example, given the regional groupings of Easterners and Northerners, it would have been unrealistic for Awolowo to have anything but a regional party.<sup>123</sup> In the Second Republic, the political associations from which political parties later emerged retained this regional character. The National Movement from which the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) hatched was Northern based, and Club 400 which was the core of the later Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) was initially a minorities front.<sup>124</sup> In forming his Committee of friends, the core of the UPN therefore, Awolowo could not be oblivious of these developments.<sup>125</sup> In addition to this, his strict political tactics did not find favour with the Northern oligarchy and his civil war activities as federal Commissioner for finance, estranged him from the Ibos. Hamstrung on many fronts, it would have been surprising, if Awolowo was ever able to organise a truly national party.

Awolowo then, it should be said, cherished democracy for as long as it allowed the constituent groups to strengthen their unities. It was only after this was done that a "national" party system could be attained. But, if every group so consolidated, would it be possible to have national politics? The fact that Awolowo himself found it difficult to organise a truly national party must mean that the answer is no.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that Awolowo was an unwavering federalist. His federalism however, belonged to the prescriptive genre as he sought to apply certain immutable and universal principles deduced from experiences elsewhere to the Nigerian situation. In the process, he held the Nigerian society to be constant, almost mechanically constant, and expected his prescriptions to work in Nigeria because they worked successfully elsewhere. This way, he did not seek to properly analyse, even understand, the nature of the Nigerian society. This fact, more than any other, adequately explains why there were certain gaps between his theory and his practice.

Whatever shortcomings Awolowo's federal thought may have had, the point cannot be overemphasized that he made a very copious contribution to federal theory in general, and Nigerian federalism in particular. He certainly posed many challenges to federal practice in Nigeria in his writings, as we tried to analyse in this essay and even if they were sometimes overstressed and unduly rigid, they represent an indelible contribution to the search for a viable political system in Nigeria.

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2. T. Franck, "Why Federations Fail", in his (ed), *Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federalism* New York, The University Press, 1968. pp. 171-173.
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8. See N. Azikiwe, *Political Blueprint of Nigeria*, Lagos, Africa Book Company, 1943.
9. O. Awolowo, *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* Cambridge, The University Press, 1960. p. 181.
10. A. Bello, *My Life: An Autobiography*, Cambridge, The University Press, 1962 p. 1818.
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12. D. Osadebey, *Building a Nation: An Autobiography*, Lagos, Macmillan, 1978. p. 45.
13. O. Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, London, Faber and Faber, 1947. p. 50.
14. O. Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1966.
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16. W. Riker, "Federalism" in F.J. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby (eds.), *Governmental Institutions and Processes* Reading, Mass; Addison-Wesley, 1975, p. 99.
17. B.J. Dudley, "The Political Theory of Awolowo and Azikiwe" in Otiye (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 211 - 212.
18. For the main insights of this approach, see K.C. Wheare *Op. Cit.*..
19. See thoughts on Nigerian Constitution, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-12; 26-28, and 63ff.
20. W. Livingston, "A Note on the Nature of Federalism" *Political Studies Quarterly*. Vol. Lx11, No 2. 1952, p. 88.
21. As Awolowo proffers, "unitarism and federalism" are contradictory and mutually exclusive. . . while there are different kinds of unitary or federal constitution, you cannot, strictly speaking, have a constitution which is, at the same time, unitary and federal". See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, *Op. cit.*, p. 26. This view as we argue, is too inflexible.
22. L. Duchacek, *Power Maps: Comparative Politics of Constitutions*, Santa Barbara, ABC Incorporated, 1973. P. 101.
23. This is particularly important because we cannot divest federalism of its legal constitutional context. As Riker says, "Even by Common usage, federalism is a juristic concept of sorts". See Riker *op. cit.*, p. 106.
24. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution, op.cit.*, p. 29.
25. See Livingston, *op. cit.* Also see his *Federalism and Constitutional Change*. Oxford, The University Press, 1956, and R.O. Dikshit, *The Political Geography of Federalism*, Delhi, Macmillan, 1975.

26. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 27
27. *Ibid.* pp. 48–49. These same principles are repeated in *The Peoples Republic*, Ibadan, Oxford, University Press, 1968.
28. See Duchacek, *op. cit.*,
29. British Record. Political and Economic Notes issued by British Information Services, Supplement No 18, December 18, 1963 p. 1.
30. Cf, I Duchacek, "Antagonistic Cooperation: Territorial and Ethnic Communities", *Publius*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1977; C. Enloe, "Internal Colonialism, Federalism, and Alternative State Development Strategies", *Publius, Ibid.*; N. Glazee, "Federalism and Ethnicity: The Experience of the United States", *Publius, Ibid.*; and H. Glass, "Ethnic Diversity, Elite Accommodation and Federalism in Switzerland", *Publius, Ibid.*
31. See Duchacek, "Antagonistic Cooperation", *op. cit.*, pp. 20 – 21.
32. Awo: *Autobiography*, *op. cit.*, p. 163. In *the Peoples Republic* (pp 88–89), he goes further to argue that "Language differences breed suspicion and generate an unconscious over-powering urge for seperateness and exclusiveness".
33. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 54.
34. I. George, "Linguistic Aspects of Ethnic Relations" in A.O. Sanda (ed). *Ethnic Relations in Nigeria* Ibadan, Dept. of Sociology, University of Ibadan, 1976. p. 40.
35. Nnoli points out that, in Africa, language has clearly been the most crucial variable for differentiating ethnic groups. See O. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* Enugu, Fourth Dimension, 1978. p. 5.
36. See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 97–98.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, p. 54.
40. *Ibid.* p. 53
41. B.J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, Ibadan, The University Press. 1973. p. 149.
42. This is borne out of the famous judgement of Justice Tarney of the USA, that "The powers of the general (central) government and the state, although both exist and are exercised within the same territorial limits, are yet seperate and distinct sovereignties, acting *seperately and independently* of each other within their respective spheres". See Justice Tarney in Ablemen V. Booth, cited in D. Elazar, "Federal State Collaboration in the 19th Century United States", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 79, 1964. p. 133. But in practice, no dual federation has ever existed.
43. See R. Dikshit, *op cit.*. Also see W.P. Maddox, "The Political Basis of Federation", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 35, No. 6, 1941.
44. It is largely for this reason that he stressed meritocracy as the main criterion for organizing government. He believed in an efficient civil service for which he proposed minimum entry requirements and standards. See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 74.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

46. See Dudley, "The Political Thought of Awolowo and Azikiwe," *Op. Cit.* p. 206.
47. Quoted in J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Benin City: Katrineholm, 1986 p. 321.
48. He justifies this position on the ground that "the making of a Constitution is not an end in itself. It is a means to the welfare and happiness of the people". See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 28.
49. *Ibid.* p. 27.
50. These are similar to the reasons proffered by Duchacek to explain the rarity of perfect "ethnoregional federalism". See his "Antagonistic Cooperation", *op. cit.*, Pp. 18-19.
51. See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 102-4.
52. *The Peoples Republic*, p. 239.
53. Dudley, "The Political Thought of Awolowo and Azikiwe," *op. cit.*, p. 211.
54. *Thoughts On Nigerian Constitution*, p. 29.
55. *Autobiography*, p. 160.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
57. Pp. 23 - 25.
58. *Ibid.* p. 25.
59. For a distinction between Federal 'antecedents' and federal 'mobilizers', see my "Ethnicity and Federalism in Nigeria", Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Ibadan, 1984 pp. 134 ff.
60. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 25.
61. *Autobiography*, p. 162. At the time, he points out, the type of constitution the country was to have was not at all an issue in the country's politics.
62. pp. 47-48.
63. *Ibid.* pp. 49-50.
64. In particular, he loathed the negative effects of "forcing together" for such "alert and ambitious" groups like the Yoruba. See *Autobiography*, pp. 164-5 and *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, p. 49.
65. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 9-11.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
67. Quoted in J.S. Coleman *op. cit.*, p. 194.
68. See Legislative Council Debates, March 11, 1949. p.320.
69. Cf. Riker, *op. cit.*, and R. Dikshit, *op. cit.*.
70. Cf., *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, pp. 98-99.
71. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 98-99.
72. This was part of foreword of an *Egbe Omo Olofinwa* memorandum which he wrote. Quoted in *Autobiography*, p. 176.
73. See E. McWhinney, *Federal Constitution Making for a Multinational World* Leydent, A.W. Sijthoff, 1966; R. Watts, *New Federations*, *op. cit.*, and G. Sawyer, *Modern Federalism*, *op. cit.*. The thesis argues that there should be a sufficient number of federating units, to prevent continuous face-to-face conflict of one or two potentially rival units.

74. Cf. *Autobiography* p. 209 and *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, p. 54.
75. Apart from the fact of his party's (AG) rivalry with the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which proposed the states, Awolowo said that considering the existing economic, financial and administrative conditions at the time, it was both impossible and undesirable to create as many as 17 states. See *Autobiography*, p. 190.
76. See *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, p. 55, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* pp 100-104, and *The Peoples Republic*, pp. 241-243, respectively.
77. See *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 102-104, and *The Peoples Republic*, p. 242.
78. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 104.
79. *Autobiography*, p. 209.
80. According to Coleman, there are approximately 248 distinct languages within the boundaries of Nigeria, See his *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 15. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene however puts the number at 400. See his "The Peoples of Nigeria", *African Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 262, 1967, p. 4.
81. For a detailed examination of these matters, see My "On the Concept of the Ethnic Group in Africa: A Nigerian case", *Plural Societies*, Vol. 16, 1986, pp. 161-173.
82. Even 'Mature' and 'advanced' federations like the USA, Australia, and the USSR continue to face minorities problems.
83. For a brilliant analysis of the origins and character of the minority problems in Nigeria, See U. Okpu, *Ethnic Minority Problems in Nigeria Politics* Uppsala; Acta Universitatis, Upsaliensis, 1977.
84. See *Autobiography*, p. 184.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.
86. See Nigeria (Willink Commission), *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying them*. London: HMSO, 1958.
87. *Autobiography*, p. 197.
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90. *Autobiography*, p. 201.
91. O. Arikpo, *The Development of Modern Nigeria* Baltimore: Penguin, 1967 p. 91.
92. *Autobiography*, pp. 202 and 207.
93. See Nigeria (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1960: Second schedule, chapter I, S. 4 (5),
94. See Nigeria (Irikefe Panel,) *Federal Military Government's views on the Report of the Panel on the Creation of More States*, Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, 1976 p. 12.
95. *Ibid.* Its argument was that no state is, and would not be expected to exist as a self-contained or self-sufficient unit.
96. See my "The Creation of States" in D.A. Otubanjo (ed), *Issues in Nigerian Politics*, Ibadan, New Horn and Heinemann, forthcoming.

97. *Ibid.*
98. J.S. Mill, *Representative Government*, New York, Everyman's Edition, 1948 pp. 367-368.
99. *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution*, p. 63.
100. For the many other authors who recognised this danger, see B.J. Dudley, "Federalism and the Balance of Political Power in Nigeria", *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 4, 1966; and J.P. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics* London, Allen and Unwin, 1966. Also see my "Political Parties, the Creation of more states, and Federal Stability in Nigeria" in J.A. Atanda and A.Y. Aliu (eds) *Proceedings of the National Conference of Nigeria Since Independence, Vol. 1: Political Development*, Zaria, Gaskiya Press, 1985.
101. *Autobiography*, pp. 206-207.
102. *Ibid.* pp. 199-200.
103. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 85.
104. See my "Do Ethnic Minorities Still Exist in Nigeria?" *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 24, 2, July 1986. pp. 151-168.
105. The major ground for the confederation calls, according to Olabisi Onabanjo, then UPN Governor of Ogun State was the "rapacious ambition" of the Northern "Cabal of Native imperialism" to lord it over other Nigerians. For the various calls and the debate which this generated, see my *Considerations on the Recent Confederation Debate in Nigeria* (Mimeo).
106. Nigerian Federalism in Transition: Issues and Problems, paper presented at the 1987 Annual Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association held at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, May 1987. pp. 85-89.
107. *Ibid.*
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*
110. Cf. Duchacek, "Antagonistic Cooperation", *op. cit.*, and K.C. Wheare, *op. cit.*
111. Duchacek, "Antagonistic Cooperation", *op. cit.*, p. 14.
112. K.C. Wheare, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
113. *Autobiography*, pp. 270-271.
114. For democracy to be fully enhanced however, the people must be educated because he believed that "A truly educated citizenry is.... one of the most powerful deterrents to dictatorship, Oligarchy and feudal aristocracy". See *Autobiography*, p. 268. For the other institutional guarantees of democracy, see *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, pp. 72-80.
115. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 87.
116. Duchacek, *Power Maps, op. cit.*, 132.
117. *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, p. 87.
118. *Autobiography*, p. 215. It is for this reason however that Nnoli has described the AG as "the first party of the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie to be inspired by, founded on, and nourished by ethnic chauvinism and regional parochialism", see Nnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
119. *Autobiography*, p. 214.

120. For example, see Dudley, *Instability and Political Order*, Pp. 72 – 73.
121. Throughout the period of its existence, the AG was never able to have total control of the Western region as almost 'traditionally', the party lost elections in Ibadan, Ilesha, and the Mid-West areas. But the UPN was able to secure control of all the five states— Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo and Bendel which made up the former Western region.
122. Interview with *Africa Now*, December 1981.
123. As Awolowo himself puts it, "in view of the then existing political situation, it would have been crass folly for me to attempt to bring leaders of the other regions into the fold of the AG at the early stages". But, in the long run, "If we won elections in the West, and there was still no countrywide political party we believed we would have no alternative but to launch the AG in the Eastern and Northern regions". By 1960 however, he could describe the party as "a truly nation-wide organisation with branches in practically every town, village and hamlet in the country". At least, in addition to controlling the Western region, it was in opposition at the centre and in the Eastern and Western regions. See *Autobiography*, pp. 247–248
124. See O. Oyediran, "Political Parties. Formation and Candidate Selection" in his (ed.) *The Nigerian 1979 Elections* London, Macmillan, 1981 and B.J. Dudley, *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics* London, Macmillan, 1982 pp. 185ff. Also see O.Omoruyi, "The Party System and Federal Character in the Second Republic" in P.P. Ekeh and E.E. Osaghae (ed), *Federal Character and Nigerian Federalism*, Ibadan, Heinemann, forthcoming.
125. See Oyediran, *op. cit.*

## APPENDIX

## AWOLOWO'S PROPOSED STATES BASED ON THE LINGUISTIC PRINCIPLE.

1947		1966/69	
STATE	ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUP	STATE	ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUP
Hausa	Hausa	Northern State	Hausa
Ibo	Ibo	Western	Yoruba
Yoruba	Yoruba	Eastern	Ibo
Fulani	Fulani	Southern	Calabar (Efik)
Kanuri	Kanuri	North-Eastern	Kanuri
Ibibio	Ibibio	Mid-Northern	Tiv
Munshin	Munshin	Lagos*	Yoruba
Edo	Edo	Delta	Ijaw
Nupe	Nupe	Upper Delta	Urhobo
Ijaw	Ijaw	Niger	Nupe
		Mid-Western	Edo
		Benue	Minorities
		Central	Minorities
		Lower Niger	"
		Upper Niger	"
		Mid-Southern	"
		South Eastern	"
		North Central	"

\*In his 1969 proposal, Awolowo joined Lagos state to the Western state.

\*\*The 'States' as presented here, are actually the 'major' ethnic groups in the country.

## Awolowo: The Legacy of Party Organisation

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O. IKELEGBE

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### INTRODUCTION

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's enduring political stewardship to Nigeria was not just his formal political and administrative services as premier or federal commissioner, both of which had geographic and temporal limitations, but his consistent and enduring contributions to political development through his role in party formation, organization and activities. It is my firm belief that Awo's place and future in Nigeria is not in the temporal formal duties but his considerable contribution to Nigeria's political development. It is also my view that a substantial portion of this contribution was through his activities as a party man, either in the Action Group or the Unity Party of Nigeria. This paper owes its place to the importance of political parties in our national political development. Awo's contribution to the development of political parties in Nigeria is quite considerable. That is why a thorough assessment of that contribution is necessary.

A political party is generally conceptualised as formal associations whose primary purpose is to gain and maintain control over the machinery and policy of government either singly or in coalition.<sup>1</sup> Political parties have made significant contributions to Nigeria's political development.

They have been significant platforms for the unification of the differing sectional, religious, geographic and other social cleavages through their mobilisation for common political purposes and goals. Infact the party is a significant platform for mobilisation towards critical national goals in a diverse, heterogenous society as ours. The party programmes or manifestoes have been a major source of societal articulation and aggregations of demands, policy formation, presentation of viable policy choices and alternative to existing policy, and attempts at solutions to critical problems. The party in any polity, is a major mobilizational force towards national policies and alternatives. Nigerian political parties have also contributed to the creation of political awareness, interest and knowledge through their campaigns, rallies, meetings and other groupings. They have provided enormous opportunities for political participation and meaningful input in the political process and have provided the linkage between the political leadership and the people. Finally they have been the major agency of political recruitment.

Party organization itself is significant for party and political development, governmental and systemic capacity and performance. Parties are established for particular goals the major being public mobilization towards electoral victory and support for government when in control. Party organization for goal attainment is therefore important to us because of their consequences for political development, governmental performance and systemic stability.

Party organization is usually conceptualised in terms of origin and internal structure. In party theory, two possible origins of political parties have been postulated. These are the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary.<sup>3</sup> The first derive their source and base from representative bodies and as such the base is wide. The later derive their base in a strong centre outside representative bodies, from where it is decentralised. The internal structure involve the hierachical structure of authority, the allocation of duties and responsibilities, the structure

of decision making, general pattern of mobilisation for party goals, the system of rewards and punishment et cetera.

The internal structure or organization of a party is determined among others by party goals.<sup>3</sup> Since the major goal is electoral victory, the structural organisation tend to reflect or revolves around the different centres of power such as local, state and central governments. Thus, the parties horizontal, geographic structure tend to revolve around the administrative of local, state and central divisions of the government.

The origin and structure of parties tend to be related. The origin tend to inform the structure in terms of centralisation, or hierachical flow of authority, discipline and control. Duverger, for example, has postulated that parties of extra-parliamentary origin tend to be characterised by more centralisation, discipline, control, ideological orientation and an extra parliamentary source of control.<sup>4</sup> This is because its establishment structure is based on a centralised group from where the units derive their formation and form. There is therefore more control from the centre and more discipline.

The question of party strength is also related to organization. Strength is determined to large extent by effectiveness of the organisational structures and process. Again Duverger postulated three measures of party strength, membership, voters and legislative seats.<sup>5</sup> To this list can be added geographic spread, especially in Federal systems where representation in unit areas may become important. The measure of membership is not a potent one because of the fluidity in definitions of membership by political parties.

From the foregoing certain issues stand out in the consideration of Awo's legacy in party organization. These are the origin, the internal structure or organisation such

as the level of centralisation, control, cohesion and discipline, the level of mobilisation for party goals, and party strength in terms of voters, legislative seats and geographic spread. Chief Obafemi Awolowo established, along with his lieutenants, the Action Group in the first Republic and the UPN in the Second Republic.

#### ORIGIN OF THE ACTION GROUP AND THE UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA.

Chief Awolowo's debut in the nationalist movement was in the 1930's through the Nigerian Youth Movement. As a result of his businesses and trade union participation, Awo was already not just a prominent Ijebu Yoruba by the late 1930's but also a leading member of the new and rising class upon whom the onus of nationalism and leadership rested. Thus Awo was a strong member of NYM, its Ibadan Secretary and Western Provincial secretary in the late 1930s.<sup>6</sup> Awo's nationalism however at this time embraced the mobilisation of the different ethnic nationalities which he saw as the basis for regional demarcation and administration. In line with this belief, Awo and others founded the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* first in London in 1945 and later in Nigeria in 1948. It is doubtful however whether the *Egbe* at this time was formed for the purpose of giving birth to an ethnic and regional party when the need arose. Certain facts however stood out.

Awo as an advocate of ethnic nationalities as the basis for units in a federal system, was also a leading advocate for Yoruba unity.

There was a compelling force towards pan Yoruba elite unity and organisation not only for the future political roles in the Nigerian nation, but also because of Pan-Ibo organizations and Nnamdi Azikiwe's meteoric rise to national influence<sup>7</sup>. Chief Awo as a prominent member of the new Yoruba elite became a pivot for such Pan-Ethnic unity.

Chief Awolowo was therefore the brain behind the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. His political and mobilizational acumen became first evident through the *Egbe* which became the

listing of prominent Yoruba elites and traditional rulership who acted as patrons. The *Egbe's* leadership became the powerful political and economic elites who performed mediational and other functions among the Yorubas.

The catalyst for the metamorphosis of the A.G. out of the *Egbe* was the constitutional advance following the Ibadan General Conference of 1950, which introduced party government. Thus the inaugural meeting of the AG was in Awo's residence, and it was said to be the political adjunct or wing of the *Egbe* whose main objective was to win electoral control of the Western Region.<sup>8</sup> Chief Awo-owo was therefore the pivot of both the *Egbe* and the AG. The two worked in close cooperation, with a considerable coincidence in membership and support. Thus the founding of the AG was extra parliamentary. In fact its foundation was a Pan Cultural organisation.

The establishment of the Unity Party of Nigeria was also extra-parliamentary. Again the Chief was the pivot. Infact the formation of the UPN devolved more solely on him. The UPN had its origin in the Committee of Friends, which was a meeting of Awo's lieutenants in various groups during the years of military rule. These lieutenants consisting of former AG leaders, remained cohesive because of their persecution complex in the later years of the first Republic. The release of the Chief from prison, his eminence as leader of the Yorubas, and member of the Federal Executive Council, and the hope, after 1970, of a return democratic politics served as the impetus for their organisation in various centres to discuss various issues and to plan ahead. These centres included Lagos led by Chief Jakande, Ibadan led by Bola Ige, Ondo State led by Akin Omoboriowo, D.O. Oke, A. Fasanmi and M.A. Ajasin and others, Bendel by Alfred Rewane and Eddy Osifo, and Gongola by G. Gilama.<sup>9</sup>

The meetings and cohesiveness of the Committee groups gathered more momentum with the political programme of October 1975. The Constitution Drafting Committee and its consequent debates provided the impetus for the first nation-

al meeting of the various groups in Ibadan in 1975, with Awo as chairman.<sup>10</sup> Thereafter the committee, witnessed more activity in terms of discussions, the wooing of other politicians and plans towards its transformation to a national political party. As a result of the level of organisation and discussions, the UPN structure, programme, and strategies were so ready that the party was launched within 24 hours of the lift on the ban of party politics in 1978.

The UPN therefore like the AG was not just extra parliamentary, but owed its formation, and existence to Chief Awo. In fact the UPN owed its emergence to a single personality.<sup>11</sup> It was formed around him. In this sense, the UPN owed more to Awo than the AG. Thus Awo, established a political party in each of the two Republics. It is pertinent to note here the Chief's acumen in the formation of political parties. The AG which was largely in planning throughout 1950 had by 1951 galvanised so much support among the rising and traditional elites, and among the *Egbe*. Within a year, the party had become the dominant party of the elites in the region, and was in control of the Western regional government. In the case of the UPN, this acumen was even more demonstrated. The party which was solely organised around him scored so many firsts in terms of inauguration, manifesto, officers and national convention. Within two weeks of the lift on the ban on political parties, the parties national convention was held in Lagos, with three delegates representing each of the nations 449 federal constituencies.<sup>12</sup>

#### PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of the AG and the UPN reveal high centralisation. In both parties, Chief Awo was the main personality and builder. As a result, he was the centre, with no doubts nor questions over his leadership. He was the **pinnacle** of the leadership hierarchy. Hardly was his position of leadership subjected to elections. Thus party power and authority were first and foremost centred around him.

The Central Executive Committee (AG) and National Executive Committee (UPN) exercised primary authority over party policy and affairs. The executive consisted mainly of principal officers of the party and representatives of the regions/states. At the regions or states, there was also a chairman and state executive. There were party executives and chairman at the senatorial, local government, constituency and ward levels. Each of these levels had their own party secretariat or offices and staff. The national congress and state/regional conferences held once annually were the highest decision making organs in both the AG and UPN. Representatives were selected from lower hierarchies of the party. However, they merely promulgated policies rather than made them. The party chairman or leaders were also the premier, or shadow premier or leader of opposition as the case may be in the AG. In the UPN, the party president or chairman also became presidential or gubernatorial candidates or subsequently governors.

Apart from this organizational frame which largely coincided with administrative divisions were the parliamentary/legislative councils. In the case of the AG the councils existed in every legislature where the party had members. The councils consisted of the ministers and shadow ministers and the party leader either at national or regional levels. In the UPN, there were legislative councils at both state and federal levels.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of the councils in both the AG and UPN was to ensure that members adopted agreed lines of action in legislative matters and followed them. The leadership of the councils were responsible to the UPN's N.E.C. and the party congress.

The organizational approach adopted by the two parties was the grass root approach. This was because of the party's goal of mass followership and support. The grass root approach was complemented by the parties masses oriented public policies. In the case of the AG the approach was necessary given the party competition and electoral situation in the region and the need to accelerate the decolonization process.

In the UPN, the approach was necessary because of the lack of political heavy weights, compared to the other parties. The parties' grassroots approach had greater consequences for the participation and awareness of the electorate. The AG and UPN more than most other parties of their times, paid more attention to party organization at the lower levels and mobilization of the electorate through the party organization. The goal of mass parties and followership envisaged and created by both parties was unique in the Nigerian system.

The organizational structure of the AG and UPN reveal several tendencies. There was a high level of centralisation of authority and a clear cut hierarchy and control. There was a high level of concentration of powers in the national leader or president and state chairmen or leaders.<sup>14</sup> The concentration was also reflected in the combinations of party and political posts.

There was also a clear cut hierarchy and control. This flowed from the president or leader through the national party executive, the regional/state chairmen/leaders and executive down to the lower levels of party organization. The two parties were also characterised by a system of tight controls. The control over finances, subordinate offices, party affairs, nominations, party policies and others were stringent. The level of discipline was therefore very high and the parties were perhaps the most cohesive, closely knit and monolithic among Nigerian parties. There was laid down policy or regulations in almost every aspect of party policy or activity. These strict rules and procedures were kept to the letter. Parliamentarians discipline and adherence to party lines for example were ensured through their councils. The parties national and regional secretariat exercised strict control over party affairs and ensured strict compliance to party regulations and procedures.<sup>15</sup>

The organization structures of the parties were therefore such that the parties were characterised by a high level of efficiency, central direction, discipline, control, cohesion

and unity. They were not usually subjected to the bickerings and divisions that characterised other parties. For example, whereas nominations and party posts rocked most parties in 1979, they were smooth exercises in the UPN. The 1983 conflicts were mainly the results of disagreements by contestants with party policy.

Sklar has infact noted that the AG was

the best organized, best financed and most efficiently run political party in Nigeria. With respect to effective central direction, the Action Group ranks with such well organised and highly disciplined parties as the Convention Peoples party of Ghana, the Democratic Party of Guinea and the Malian Party of African Federation.<sup>16</sup>

The same could be said of the UPN

The efficient and disciplined organization of the parties could be largely attributed to Awo. The two parties owed much to him. Infact, the extra parliamentary centre of formation was Awo. He therefore had tremendous influence on the party organizational structure, its programmes, strategies its electoral and other performance. This perhaps accounts for the high concentration of powers. With his powers and influence, he was largely responsible for the strict control, discipline, diligence in planning and organization of the party secretariats. The extra parliamentary origin and the chiefs penchant for discipline, organization, planning and performance could have created the tendencies for strict control, discipline and cohesion among party leaders and the rank and file. In other words, Awo's administrative acumen as reflected in his political, administrative and party stewardship gave Nigeria, the best organized, efficient and disciplined parties she had ever known.

#### MOBILIZATION FOR PARTY GOALS:

The Action Group initial major goal was the control of the Western Regional government. Later this goal was extended to national expansion and control of the Federal Government.

In the case of the UPN, the goal was electoral victory and control of as many state governments and of the Federal Government.

There were several strategies for the realisation of these goals. Apart from party organization the others in both parties were: the courting and control of traditional rulers (more peculiar to Action Group); the courting of the masses through welfarist policies; the strategy of individual and mass membership; the wooing of minorities through state creation and alliances and the socialist and populist identity. The courting of traditional rulers started with the *Egbe*. At this time, the strategy was for traditional support as a means of mobilising the people to support the leadership of the rising political elites.

As early as 1945 Awo saw chieftaincy support as

“the most effective means ready to hand for organizing the masses for rapid political advancement.”<sup>17</sup>

This strategy was persistent throughout the life of the AG. The machineries of control were varied but the ultimate was that of appointment and deposition of chiefs.<sup>18</sup>

The second strategy common to both parties was welfarist policies. The formal inaugural announcement of the AG stated inter-alia the belief of the party in opportunities of comfortable living, medical attention, and free education for all people in the West.<sup>19</sup> Chief Awolowo a few days after the Western House convened for its first budget session stated that

“As far as possible, expenditure on services which tends to the welfare, health and education of the people should be increased at the expense of any other expenditure....”<sup>20</sup>

By 1952, the free education and health policy to be implemented from 1955 were already spelt out. The medical programme included free medical care for children under 18 years old. The other welfare policies implemented included the minimum wage policy, farm settlement scheme and

extensive programme of loans to farmers.<sup>21</sup>

These mass policies did not yield initial dividends mainly because of the protests and politicisation of the education and health levy. Thus the performance of the AG was poor in the 1954 federal election. However with the implementation of the policies, the level of public support for the party and its programmes rose remarkably, not only offsetting the initial setback but overwhelmingly, as reflected in the performance in the regional elections of 1956. While it won only 42.86% of the seats in the 1954 elections, it won 60% in the 1956 elections and 64.75% in the 1960 regional elections. As Abernethy has noted concerning the 1956 elections

"No single issue was dominant in this election but public satisfaction with the Action Groups welfare policies was doubtless an important factor in that party's victory."<sup>22</sup>

The UPN came out with its cardinal programmes right from her inauguration. These were the provision of Free Education at all levels, free medical services, integrated rural development and full employment. These mass programmes similar to the AGs were also meant to mobilize the people and galvanize electoral support. The programmes were a major source of electoral support, for the party.<sup>23</sup> The free education programme was particularly a major asset in the electoral fortunes of the party.<sup>24</sup>

The Action Group unlike the other parties of its time stressed individual membership from its origin. Individuals rather than groups were the emphasis in qualification for membership. The party's goal was that of a mass party with mass appeal and followership. The welfare policies were designed to win popular appeal and followership. In line with this strategy was that of a socialist and populist identity. In the Action Group there was actually a shift from conservatism to more radical and socialist identity. Chief Awo again was largely responsible for fashioning the ideological tendencies in the Action Group in order to ensure a wider appeal. The Action Group was ideologically diffuse consisting of the conservative bourgeoisie the dominant centrists cum

radicals and the radical left. Though the ideological diffuseness made clear ideological lines impolitic, the ideology fluctuated between social welfare capitalism and fabian socialism.<sup>25</sup> The ideological tendencies towards socialism in the Action Group were mainly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and was mainly party of the national expansion, and federal opposition strategy.

The UPN had the advantage of a clear ideological inclination towards socialism, aimed at mass support right from its formation. Right at the party's inauguration, Chief Awolowo declared that the goal of the party was socialism.<sup>26</sup> The party was thus associated or identified with socialism during the election campaigns.<sup>27</sup>

The parties socialist and progressive policies were in furtherances of a populist and mass identity. The two parties wanted to be identified with the problems and aspirations of the commoners, and wanted to mobilize them. As Sklar has noted

"No party in Nigeria has undertaken as systematic an effort to organise the peasantry as the Action Group"<sup>28</sup>

The other strategy more peculiar to the Action Group was that of wooing the minorities through state creation, and the formation of party alliances. With political and constitutional developments, the importance of the control of the centre became more glaring and thus the parties began to seek to expand beyond the regions and to evolve more national strategies towards electoral victory at the centre. Since the three major parties were based respectively on the dominant ethnic groups in each region, the major object of expansion of the Action Group was the minorities who were wooed by supporting their clamours for state creation. Thus the Action Groups supported the United Middle Belt Congress and the Calabar Ogoja Rivers State Movement. The Action Group formed an alliance with the UMBC, and absorbed as its Eastern wing, the COR State Movement and its political adjunct, the United National Independence

Party.<sup>29</sup> The Action Group also absorbed the Nigerian Youth Movement as its Lagos branch in 1951.<sup>30</sup> Between 1952 and 1953 the Action Group attempted unsuccessfully to forge a working agreement with the Northern People Congress.<sup>31</sup> In the case of the Action Group, these strategies were aimed at massive expansion outside the Western Region.

In the UPN, the strategy of alliances was also used for the purpose of electoral victory at the federal level. The first attempt at an alliance was in 1979 during the elections with the parties other than the NPN, with the purpose of securing electoral victory at the electoral college. This failed when the NPP and PRP failed to cooperate. The second attempt was through the Progressive Parties Alliance, and again this failed to produce a single slate or a concrete working agreement during the 1983 elections.<sup>32</sup> While this strategy failed in relation to the UPN, it was very successful with the Action Group. The Action Group won a third of the Middle Belt seats in the 1959 elections. In the East, the Action Group won 3 of the 14 non Ibo seats in the 1954 federal elections, and 13 of the 30 in the 1957 Regional elections. In fact 39 of the 74 Action Group seats in the 1959 election were won outside the Western Region.<sup>33</sup> The Action Group became the opposition in the East and in the North through support for the minorities. According to Sklar

the Action Group in particular was transformed into a genuine national party... through the medium of its fight for the cause of the ethnic minorities in the Eastern and Northern regions...<sup>34</sup>

These strategies combined with the high mobilizational capacity increased the strength of the parties. The two parties demonstrated a tremendous capacity to mobilize towards party goals based on the aforementioned strategies. The techniques of mobilization were varied. In the Action Group for example, no office holder was permitted to stand aloof from the chore work of the organisation.<sup>35</sup> Party duties were considered to be very important. The Action Group

held party leaders and parliamentarians to be responsible for the growth and welfare of the party in their areas and the party organising secretaries strictly ensured that they contributed to party growth through visits, tours and campaigns.<sup>36</sup> The Action Group party leaders were mobilized to tour the Western region in the wake of anti-tax feelings between 1953 and 1955. In fact Action Group leaders spent most of 1953 and 1954 touring the region.<sup>37</sup> In both the Action Group and the UPN the parliamentary councils and its leadership ensured that party lines were given unalloyed support. Legislators, party officers, and others were given the charge of selling the party programmes to the people. Every level of the parties' organisations were therefore mobilised towards achieving party programmes.

This was particularly true of electoral campaigns in the parties. The Action Group campaigned vigorously in the North in 1959, the first of such campaigns.<sup>38</sup> Both the Action Group and UPN's campaigns, particularly Awo's campaigns have been known to have visited remote villages where no political leader had ever reached. Awo's campaign helicopter in both the Action Group and Unity Party of Nigeria campaigns were ubiquitous. In 1979, Awo travelled more than 24,000 km in an extensive campaign tour.<sup>39</sup> The two parties are known for the most vigorous and extensive campaigns of their times.

As a result of the considerable mobilization capacity, the party made a considerable success in its campaigns, its national expansion programme and its policy programmes. The Action Group witnessed considerable expansion in voters and legislative seats between 1951 and 1962. Its percentage of seats in the Western region rose from 42.86% in 1954 to 60% in 1960 regional elections the percentage was 64.75%. Thus from the shaky control of the Western region in 1954 and the Action Action Group grew and consolidated its electoral control. The goal of national expansion was even more achieved. In the Eastern region, the Action Group won only 4 seats (9.52%) in 1954 federal

elections but by 1959 federal elections, the number increased to 14 (19.18%). In the regional elections of 1957, the party won 13 seats (15.48%). In the Northern region, the party won only one seat in the 1954 federal elections but by 1959, through her alliance with UMBC, it had 25 seats (14.37%). In the 1956 regional elections, the party won 4 seats (3.05%) and 9 seats (5.4%) in the 1961 regional elections. Thus by 1959, the Action Group was a truly national party.

In the case of the UPN, the party's programmes and the personality of Awo were key factors in the national electoral performance. The campaigns revolved around Awo. The party won 333 seats out of the 1,347 in the State House of Assembly, 111 seats of the house of representative (24.7%); 28 of the Senate seats (29.5%) and 29.2% of the votes in the presidential elections. It won the gubernatorial election in five of the 19 states. This performance was only surpassed by the NPN.

The parties' mobilization capacity and the high capacity to attain party goals was also reflected in the implementation of their party programmes. In 1955, the Action Group embarked upon the free education scheme which was the most administratively complex, demanding, financially burdensome, most widely publicised and most politically controversial task undertaken by governments in the first republic.<sup>40</sup> The party made a considerable success of the party's implementation as evidenced by the tremendous expansion of educational facilities and enrolment, and the high level of public reception and support. The policy was implemented alongside other programmes such as the Medical Programme, Farm Settlement Scheme, and Minimum Wage Policy. The Eastern Regions attempt at Free Education failed. In the case of the UPN, the cardinal programmes of free education at all levels was implemented from October 1, 1979. Only a party as the UPN with high organizational and mobilizational capacity could have attempted such.

Chief Awolowo was again the key factor in the fashioning of the parties strategies. He was the key advocate of the courting of traditional rulers, the national expansion of the Action Group through wooing of the minorities, the ideological fashioning towards social welfarism and socialism and the formulation of the social welfare policies. Awo was also the major force in the high mobilizational capacities of the two parties towards their goals. His vigorous campaigns, his forceful and efficient implementation of the welfarist programmes as premier of the Western Region and his mobilization of the party machineries and tremendous support for the UPN cardinal programmes were significant in the performance of the Action Group and Unity Party of Nigeria. Infact the capacities of the Action Group and Unity Party of Nigeria either as organizations, in mobilization towards party goals, and the parties' strength could be largely attributed to Chief Awolowo.

Thus Chief Awolowo made tremendous contributions to the development of parties in each of Nigeria's first and second republics. He was the key personality in each of the parties either in their formation, their organization, their programmes, ideologies, their strength in voters, membership and legislative seats, their performance or effectiveness in achieving their goals and programmes, and in their governance. As a result of his tremendous influence, the parties reflected his administrative and organizational acumen, his penchant for planning, efficiency, discipline and control, his desire for mass appeal, followership and mobilization of the masses, and his belief in social welfare policies.

Consequently, the parties were the best organised, most disciplined, most cohesive, most efficiently run and best financed in each of the two republics. The parties had the best programmes and the best strategies. They were most concerned with social welfare and the mobilization of the peasantry. They were most effective in the mobilization to attain party goals and as a result were most effective in achieving their programmes.

Awo therefore made one of his greatest contributions in the area of party organisation and development. Given the consequences of political parties for political recruitment, political participation, political socialisation, political integration and for the articulation and aggregation of national demands, policy and ideological alternatives, Awo made a tremendous contribution to Nigeria's political development.

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## Awolowo's Contribution to Nigerian Politics and Administration

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DELE OLOWU

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### INTRODUCTION

Since Chief Obafemi Awolowo spent the better part of his life in the arena of Nigerian politics, a full description and analysis of his contribution to Nigerian politics and administration will require a full-scale over-view of the man's life. That is not the objective of this paper.

Rather, what we want to focus are Chief Awolowo's contributions to the fundamental ideas which undergird the structure of Nigerian politics and administration. I have argued elsewhere that three great political ideas constitute the essence of Nigerian present political and administrative structure. These are *democracy*, *federalism* and *mixed economy*. Chief Awolowo as one of Nigeria's founding fathers made a tremendous contribution to articulating each of these ideals in his several books written when he was both within and outside the corridors of power. A study of his defence and articulation of each of these three political philosophies will require one to do a comprehensive review of his writings and speeches. For the purpose of our discussion however, we intend to focus on Chief Awolowo's contribution to one of these three concepts federalism. There are three reasons we picked on his contribution to federalism in contrast to the other two. First, Chief Awolowo's defence of federalism and its promotion is poorly understood and

recognised, even among the intelligentsia, a situation that has often led him to be dubbed a tribalist or an antinationalist. Second, the importance of federalism to Nigeria's unity and development as a modern nation is also generally poorly appreciated. In particular, since the entry of the military into Nigerian politics, the case for federalism has become severely circumscribed. Finally, while there is a general consensus on Nigeria's mixed economic system and popular democracy, no such consensus exists on the federal system. There are still confederalists and unitarists among us as well as diverse schools of federalism. Moreover, while occasionally a few administrative issues (such as revenue allocation; federal character) receive considerable attention in popular debate the relationship between Nigeria's federal political system and the consequent administrative system is yet to be fully adumbrated.

This paper proceeds with its task in three successive steps. First, Chief Awolowo's case for the suitability (and indeed necessity) of federalism in Nigeria is examined. Second, we attempt a critique of Chief Awolowo's ideas on the Nigerian federal system. Finally, we examine the extent to which the Nigerian political and administrative system has been impacted by the late chief's ideas.

#### THE CASE FOR FEDERALISM

Chief Awolowo's argument for the suitability of federalism in Nigeria rested on three tripods. These can be styled as the *linguistic*, the *historical* and the *management* arguments. It was the linguistic argument that he extensively articulated and defended. Though the historical and management argument loomed large and suggested the need for a federal solution, it was the linguistic argument which provided him with essential intellectual tools derived from comparative constitutions for promoting the cause of federalism in Nigeria. In a chapter titled, 'The Evolution of federalism' in his own autobiography; this position is clearly articulated. We quote

him *in extenso* to prove this point:

In 1951, when the controversy on the form of Nigeria's Constitution began, I had already been for more than eighteen years a convinced federalist. In the early thirties, I was a fanatical admirer of the Indian National Congress, and of three of its illustrious leaders — Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, and Subha Bose. My acquaintance with the Congress and its leaders was first made through the pages of the *Lagos Daily News* in 1928. This acquaintance was deepened through other media. By the time I returned to Wesley College as its clerk my knowledge of Indian politics had become fairly wide and my mental acquaintance with Gandhi, Nehru and Bose had grown into hero worship. One of the pronouncements of the Indian leaders which struck the right cord in me was the one relating to the revision of provincial boundaries along linguistic lines, in the reframing of the Country's Constitution.... I tried to apply this proposal of the Indian leaders to Nigeria and became convinced that our protectorate boundaries were arbitrarily drawn... Though I knew the answers to the questions which the Indian Congress proposal stirred up in my mind, yet I did not feel myself qualified enough to say them aloud.

On the other hand, I was not sure if the application to Nigeria of the proposed Indian constitution was an urgent proposition. There was no communal strife in Nigeria as there was then in India... What the country needed, I thought, for the immediate present and for quite a while to come was that Western education should spread widely enough to enable easier contact and understanding amongst the entire peoples of Nigeria. The issue of what constitution was best suited to the country would (then) be settled by Nigerians in their own good time. When the time arrived, I had no doubt on which side I would be — the federalist side (Awolowo 1960 160–161).

Even though these ideas were not well received even by the Chief's own friends, he lost no time in articulating the case to all who would listen. He directed a lot of his energies to the realisation of this objective.

He tried to use the platform of the Nigerian Youth Movement to moot this federalist position without success, until that organisation demised in 1945. Yet, the unfolding of events in the country seemed to confirm the Chief in his convictions. Witness the deliberate efforts made by the British colonial administrators to 'protect' the North from more educated Southerners and the manner in which the enlightened Northerner looked down on the 'Southerners' as Kalferis (unbelievers). Both the uneven stages of exposure to Western civilisation among the diverse ethnic groups as well as the attitudes of the ethnic groups to one another seemed to dictate in Chief Awolowo's view a federal rather than a unitary constitution.

A unitary constitution with only one central government would only result in frustration to the more pushful and more dynamic ethnic groups, whereas the division of the country into regions along ethnic lines would enable each linguistic group not only to develop its own peculiar culture and institutions but to move forward at its own pace, without being unnecessarily pushed or annoyingly slowed down by the others. (Awolowo 1960: 164-165).

The emergence of ethnic Unions (notably the Ibo Federal Union and the Ibibio Union) made the formation of a Yoruba Union imperative. After a series of subterranean moves between 1944 and 1945, Chief Awolowo formed *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (EOO) in London as a counterpart of the Ibo Federal Union. In spite of initial discouragements, the Nigerian Chapter was established three years later (1948).

During the debate of the new Macpherson Constitution in 1950, the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* which Chief Awolowo represented submitted a memorandum to the Chief Secretary. In that memorandum, the EOO argued:

We advocate the grouping of Nigeria with various autonomous states or regions, purely on ethnic basis. Experience of other countries show that this basis is more natural, and invariably more satisfactory than any other basis. (Awolowo 1960: 176)

By this time a consensus had developed among Nigerian political leaders concerning the wisdom of constituting Nigeria as a federal state. The predominant view was however not in favour of ethnicity as a basis for the federal system. Rather they weighed heavily in favour of the other two arguments.

In *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966) written in the prison, the Chief explicates more on the linguistic ethnic argument for federalism. After reviewing virtually the constitution of every independent country in the world, Chief Awolowo concluded with four principles:

- One: If a country is unilingual and uni-national, the constitution must be unitary.
- Two: If a country is unilingual or bilingual or multilingual, and also consists of communities which over a period of years, have developed divergent nationalities, the constitution must be federal, and the constituent states must be organised on the dual basis of language and nationality.
- Three: If a country is bilingual or multilingual, the constitution must be federal, and the constituent states must be organised on a linguistic basis.
- Four: Any experiment with a unitary constitution in a bilingual country must fail, in the long-run. (Awolowo 1966; pp 48-49)

On the basis of these important 'discoveries' only a federal constitution is, in his opinion suitable for Nigeria.

The other two arguments are not developed in great lengths compared to the linguistic principle.

The managerial argument is predicated on the size of Nigeria. The size-problem is not just one of physical structure (924,000km<sup>2</sup>) or population (approximately 100 million, ninth largest country in the world and a fifth of African population) but also in terms of diverse cultures, ethnic groupings and religious beliefs. Each of these pose managerial problems for one single mind and dictate a federal solution:

the work of government in Nigeria under a unitary constitution is bound to become unduly complex, inextricably tangled, extremely unwieldy and wasteful, and productive of disharmony and discontent amongst the people. Unless you have a veritable superman at the helm of affairs, the administrative machinery would eventually disintegrate and break down under the crushing weight of bureaucratic centralism. (Awolowo 1966: 10)

A unitary constitution would have the effect of repressing healthy rivalry among the different regions, yet 'rivalry in Chief Awolowo's view, is the soul of development and progress' (1966: 57). A unitary constitution would thus undermine the very engine for development and locomotion.

Chief Awolowo premised the historical argument on colonial and pre-colonial development in Nigeria. Chief Awolowo's notes the fact that there was no Nigeria before 1900. It was in this sense he conceives Nigeria as a geographical entity in search of nation-hood. The diverse peoples of Nigeria ruled themselves in diverse ways, during the pre-colonial period.

A unitary government is unreliable under these circumstances. However, since 1900 when Nigeria was incorporated as a British colony protectorate, Chief Awolowo contends that Nigeria was ruled as a unitary state only for five-and-a-half years (1946-1951) under the Richards Constitution. Neither did Nigeria's colonial governors perceive her as one organic whole. He appeals also to the people's preference for a federal constitution the only time the colonial government sought their opinion in 1950 though the regional national Conferences on the Constitution.

Chief Awolowo joins the historical and managerial arguments at this point:

In spite of their undisputed power over the country, and of their traditional and surpassing skill in administration, the British ruler recognised the inescapable limit to the managerial or supervisory competence of any one man or any one group of men. In other words, they realised out of the abundance of their wealth of experience, that no

one man or group of men operating from Lagos, or any one place in the country for that matter, could manage or conduct the affairs of a country the size and heterogeneous character of Nigeria with efficiency and reasonable success (Awolowo 1966: 10)

While even it may be thinkable to administer a country the size of Nigeria in a unitary fashion so long as administrators concentrated on the maintenance of law and order, such was impossible when government was responsible for an increasing array of socio-economic goods and services.

#### A CRITIQUE OF CHIEF AWOLOWO'S IDEAS ON NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

This section will attempt a critique of Chief Awolowo's ideas on Nigerian federalism briefly. The first point that needs be made is that Chief Awolowo's articulation of the case for a federalist constitution is highly well-informed and perceptive. Even though, it is possible to read some elements of self-interest and self-justification to his political activities aimed at the realisation of this federalist objective, the pertinence of his arguments to the Nigerian milieu can hardly be contested. Most of the standard arguments in favour of federalism are also very carefully reviewed in Chief Awolowo's writings.

Chief Awolowo believed genuinely in the contribution of federalism to Nigeria's unity and development. He distanced himself from both the confederalist and dismemberment schools. On the other hand he contends with those with unitary persuasions point by point especially in his *Thoughts on the Nigerian Constitution* (1966). Moreover, Chief Awolowo was not impressed with nominal federalism. He was all for a federal system in which the states were able to effectively discharge responsibilities allocated to them under the constitution. From this viewpoint, he regarded the division of powers and responsibilities between the federal and state governments under the 1963 constitution generally as adequate. Even though he was for linguistic-based states, no state should be created which was not able to 'maintain its inde-

pendence within the sphere of functions allocated to it (1966: 97): Moreover, he was against giving powers of suspension of state governments to the federal government and of local governments to the state government. According to him:

In all the instances to which one could point, when a regional government had been suspended, or a local government council had been suspended or dissolved, it will be seen that, on the whole far more mis-chief and inconvenience had been brought on the people than would have been the case if the regional government or local council had been left severely alone till the next election. (Awolowo 1966: 152)

The implication of these position will be examined further in the next section. Suffice to point out here that Chief Awolowo's concern for balance in the federal system is an important point which has ramifications for the politics and administration of the Nigerian Federal System today.

There is one final positive point which deserves to be underscored concerning Chief Awolowo's position. This is his quarrel with the use of the word 'tribe' to describe ethnic solidarity in Africa when other more neutral concepts are used to define the same phenomenon elsewhere: nationalism, ethnicity, and others.

Having said these in the Chief's favour, it must be pointed out that there are problems with his formulation. There is some conceptual ambiguity with respect to the Chief's linguistic/ethnicity principle. There is often a tendency to confuse 'ethnic' with 'linguistic' distinctions. Moreover, he himself concedes that the linguistic principle alone cannot adequately constitute the basis for constituting state units in Nigeria, hence there is a resort to a number of other factors. Chief Awolowo's linguistic principle produces only eleven states, but there are seven other states which are constituted according to other principles because of the smallness of the state units that would have been produced by the linguistic/ethnic principle in those areas. In other words, the linguistic/ethnic principle cannot produce the adequate

numbers of states to sustain the Nigerian federal system, even according to the Chief's own calculations.

A second major flaw in Chief Awolowo's conception of Nigerian federalism is its inadequate attention to what is referred to in the literature as the prerequisites to the success of the federalist arrangement. Three of these are regularly mentioned in the literature: mass education of the people, existence and general awareness of common needs and absence of war. (Tocqueville 1935: 163-170).

Mass education is regarded as necessary for the success of federalism because of the abstract and complex nature of the federal arrangement. Even though Chief Awolowo was one of the greatest champions of free education in Nigeria, no direct and immediate connection was made between the cause of federalism and popular education.

A federal system is premised on contending centrifugal and centripetal forces. It is however necessary that these forces be at least equally balanced for the federalist experiment to succeed. There is a general tendency in Chief Awolowo's writings to emphasise the centrifugal forces. A civil war of the scale fought between 1967 and 1970 in Nigeria is not at all anticipated in Chief Awolowo's system.

Finally, during a period of war the neat checks and balances imposed between the federal and state governments collapsed because of the need for dramatic action. Even K.C. Wheare, the leading jurist on federalism, concedes the point that the world wars compromised federal principles in favour of the central government in the countries which he regarded as operating classic federal systems (Wheare 1963: 205). In the case of Nigeria, the civil war (1967-70) tilted the balance of the federal system steeply in favour of the federal government. But without a civil strife of this nature, the struggle for development is regarded in most developing countries as moral equivalent of war which requires the full mobilisation of resources by the national government. On this basis alone federalism has had a chequered experience in most Third World countries whether one thinks of India,

Mexico or Nigeria (Olowu 1985). The type of balance which Chief Awolowo's federal system advocates seems therefore to be at variance with the reality of Third World conditions.

The above stated position is however contestable on all points and even though Chief Awolowo never drew the inference in his writings, it is one that he will most probably have contested point by point. First, it is contestable whether the desire for development should be equated with war. The analogy, while relevant in part, has its contradictions. Wars are dreaded by all citizens-and most countries will avoid them if they can. Wars are fought as a last resort when all other possibilities have been fore-closed. As a result, all of a nation's resources are mobilised to ensure its *survival*. There is therefore always a prospect that it will be a short experience. On the other hand, development does not raise a problem of survival but rather of enhanced prosperity. The enemy (regarded in the literature vicariously as unemployment, disease, illiteracy and poverty) is not as real as combat-enemy that a nation at war faces. The level of resource mobilisation is thus lower. Moreover, the development 'war' is not one which can be won. Every country (no matter how industrialised or developed) is striving for even a better development of its potential.

Secondly, it can also be countered that most of the development wars that have been fought thus far have produced immense opportunities for some few to take advantage of others, the very eventuality that the federal system seeks to obviate. Rather, as Chief Awolowo has argued elsewhere, rivalry amongst diverse groups constitute the engine for socio-economic development within a federal system.

In the final section we shall examine the extent of which Chief Awolowo's ideas have informed the Nigerian federal system.

#### IMPACT OF CHIEF AWOLOWO'S IDEAS ON NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

Chief Awolowo's ideas have had both direct and indirect impact on the nation's federal system. We shall not dwell

at length on the indirect effects for instance of Chief Awolowo's advocacy for popular, state-sponsored education for the federal system. Rather, we shall focus on the direct effects.

In this respect, it is striking that Chief Awolowo advocated an 18-state federal system in 1966 and today we have a 19-state structure. Table 1 contrasts Chief Awolowo's proposals with the state structure as it exists today. It should be underscored here that Chief Awolowo gave considerable support towards minority demands for self-governance within the Nigerian federal system. In that sense then he is one of the great architects of the Nigerian federal system.

Chief Awolowo not only argued for the break-up of the three regional system but also had a clear perception of the conditions for harmonious and healthy relationships between component units. These conditions; are those of ethnic affinity, parity among units and functional viability of each state unit. A close reading of the development that led to the evolution of Nigerian present 19-state structure as well as the 1979 constitution shows that these issues have been paramount (Elaigwu and Olorunsola 1983, Olowu 1987).

It is also note-worthy that there has been a commitment to federalism in Nigeria by all of Nigeria's governors since independence, including the military. The only exception was in 1967 when General Aguiyi-Ironsi promulgated Decree 34 which purportedly jettisoned the federal system for a unitary system. The hostile reaction to these developments among Nigerian elites and the violence which followed underscore the veracity of the federalist position of Chief Awolowo, as the only means of sustaining Nigeria's unity and development. The fact that all of the four constitutions adopted since the Macpherson constitution of 1951 have been federal is instructive. Equally instructive is that even though Nigeria's military administrators have generally tended towards centralisation of the nation's economic and social system, each of them has styled itself as a 'federal military government'.

Where there has been a divorce of practice from Chief Awolowo's ideas has mainly been with respect to the balance between the centre and the regions. Chief Awolowo, as already argued above, believed that for the full benefits of the federal system to be realised, it must be adopted in its 'pure' form. Resources and responsibilities between the centre and the states must be so allotted such that the two can be independent in their own spheres. He echoes classical political science thinking by arguing that if this is not done, the level of government which is poorly resourced (in terms of fiscal resources or responsibility) becomes a glorified local government and it is not able to attract the key resources—political and administrative leadership to make the system work. In his view therefore, but for a few minor changes that he recommends to the Republican constitution, it was considered adequate.

Both the practice of government in Nigeria since 1966 as well as the adopted (1979) constitution have of course gone in the direction of making the central government super-powerful (in terms of responsibilities and resources) vis-a-vis the states. The result is high level of dependency of both the state and local governments on the federal revenue sources to activate their responsibilities. In the circumstance, unitarism and all the arguments that have been raised against it in a country of Nigeria's size have raised their heads. These include: excessive competition for power and position at the federal level (both for political and administrative posts), the demand for more states and local governments as a way of sharing from the nation's revenues, an undermining of state competitiveness, and a tendency for the state to encroach on local government resources (mostly passed out from the centre) to meet their own responsibilities.

It is unfortunate that the current review of the constitution failed to address these issues broadly. It made bold recommendation for a redistribution of resources within the federation account, but it failed to raise fundamental question at

the heart of the federal compact - the need for a balance of responsibilities and resources between the centre and constituent units.

With the exit of a man we have regarded here as the chief protagonist of Nigerian federalism, it is doubtful if there are leaders of similar calibre who are sufficiently informed, articulate and committed enough to fulfil that role.

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## **Awolowo and the Western Nigeria Civil Service, 1952-59**

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M. FASEKE

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was certainly a man of many parts -- a philosopher, a politician, a prolific writer, a businessman, a legal luminary and an administrator. This paper does not however look at Awolowo as an individual, rather it aims at highlighting the contributions of Awolowo to the evolution of the Western Civil Service. This is by no means an easy task for many reasons. Firstly, there is dearth of materials on the practices of civil servants mainly because scholars prefer to give attention to the problems of power and the wielders of power which provide an exciting story. Secondly, civil servants themselves, for unknown reasons, write less about their activities. Finally and most importantly, in a parliamentary democracy of the type adopted by Nigeria leadership is both in theory and no less than in practice, collective. These difficulties are not enough to deter us from examining some of Chief Awolowo's activities in respect of the civil service.

For the reason of space, it is not possible to examine all the aspects of the Civil Service. However, two very important aspects viz, structure and role will be examined.

There are three main sections in this paper. The first gives a definition of the term civil service. The second looks at the colonial setting as a background against which to

measure Awolowo's contributions to the service while the third part evaluates his contributions to the service.

#### DEFINITION OF TERM

The term 'civil service' has remained imprecise. This is not surprising because even in Britain from where the concept was introduced into Nigeria the term has not been comprehensively defined. The imprecise nature of the term in the view of Peter Kellner and Lord Crowther Hunt, reflects the undefined and dynamic nature of the British Constitution itself. They concluded:

there is a special sense in which the civil service reflects the British Constitution. Neither is clearly defined in writing. Both evolved and changed with mood and circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

C. O. Lawson, Head of Service and Secretary to the Federal Military Government of Nigeria between 1966 and 1979, like S.L. Adu, the first head of service of independent Ghana, defines the civil service as follows:

the civil service comprises all servants of the state other than holders of political or judicial offices who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid wholly and directly out of money voted by parliament.<sup>2</sup>

This definition cannot be applied to the civil service in the heyday of colonialism for obvious reasons. Under the colonial setting, there were no holders of political offices as such.

Institutions as is widely acclaimed are never static but change with changing circumstances. In the colonial period, the civil service meant a body of full time officials employed in the state with the exception of the armed forces. Indeed, in the official records, the terms 'civil service' and 'public service' were used as synonyms. The Governor was not a political appointee but a civil servant. For the purpose of this paper the civil service is used to cover all government employees other than the police, the judicial personnel and teachers.

## THE COLONIAL CIVIL SERVICE: AN OVERVIEW

The beginning of a modern public service in Nigeria started in Lagos in 1861. It was set up with the objective of promoting trade — the main purpose for British presence in West Africa. It was within the broad framework of commerce that government departments were set up, viz: Governor's Office, Colonial Surgeon (later, Medical Department), Colonial Secretary, Customs, Harbour Masters Department (later, Marine) Surveyors General (later styled Public Works Department), Treasury, Post Office, Goal Department (Prison), Judicial Department, Liberated African Department, Government Printers Office and Audit.<sup>3</sup>

Similar departments were set up in South Eastern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria. In 1906, the administrative units in Lagos and its hinterland were merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1914 the two protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated into a single administrative unit.<sup>4</sup> In spite of the amalgamation, not all the departments common to the two provinces were merged. Thus, some departments such as Education and Prison had to wait until the 1920s.

The civil service was structured in a way to reflect the status of the country. The Governor was himself a civil servant responsible to the Secretary of State in London who in turn was responsible to the British electorates. Unlike the practice in Whitehall, there were no ministries but departments headed not by administrators but by professionals. Thus, the head of the Medical Department was a Medical Doctor, the PWD, an Engineer, Education Department, an Educationist and so on. The heads of departments can not but initiate policies, participate in legislation and supervise the execution of enacted bills and approved policies.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of organisation, it may be necessary to distinguish between a purely technical department such as the PWD, Agriculture and Forestry and an administrative department such as the Treasury, Audit, Governor's Office,

and the rest of them; while the former required the services of professions such as surveyors, engineers as well as technicians such as draughtsmen, foremen of works, the latter could make do with the services of generalist and ex-servicemen. While the heads of technical departments operated from the central secretariat in Lagos, their subordinates were in charge of field offices. So far as field administration was concerned, the key service was the administrative service, made up of Residents and the activities of these officers were co-ordinated by the Colonial Secretary, (later styled Chief Secretary) who was next in rank to the Governor.

One feature of the civil service structure was that all officers were graded and authority was in a hierarchical order. At the bottom of the departmental structure were the clerical, messengerial and the labourers grades. At the apex of the departmental ladder were the heads. The civil service lacked a middle grade. In other words, there were no equivalents of the modern day executive class.

The civil service was sharply classified along racial lines, viz; European and Native staff. The latter was a derogatory term used for staff of African parentage. The higher echelon of the service was dominated by Europeans while the junior staff were predominantly African. This is not surprising given the status of the country. In a colonial setting, the colonised were regarded as inferior. As A. E. M. Gibson put it:

We hold our position overseas by being the dominant race and if we admit equality with the inferior races we shall lose the power which gives us our predominance.<sup>6</sup>

By and large, this was the broad framework within which the civil service had to operate. The executive council in Lagos was responsible for the discipline of the higher civil servants. Yet, not only was the council predominantly white, its proceedings were strictly confidential. The exclusion of Africans from responsible positions in the civil service in the heyday of colonialism has been adequately dealt with by scholars<sup>7</sup> and needs to repetition here.<sup>8</sup> The discrimination

against Africans had many results. First, it discouraged Africans from taking up those professions which would make them look up to the colonial administration for employment. This was why the professions of law and medicine were popular in Nigeria in the colonial era. This would partly explain why Awolowo had to study law.<sup>9</sup> Because of the exclusion of Africans from responsible positions, African civil servants did not develop a sense of belonging to the service. It was regarded as British. J. J. Marinho, one time Chairman of the Public Service Commission of Western Region would appear to be expressing this feeling when he said that the civil service "was an organisation in which the indigenous participator regarded himself and perhaps correctly so in the scheme of things as then prevailed not as owners of, nor monthly cash payment as the only motivation to work and as the only connecting link, a very tenuous one between him and those he professed to serve. In many quarters then the approach to the civil service was characterised by the old saying that whether the business prospers or not, the labourer must be paid their wages in full. In short, there was not much feeling of belonging. This generally speaking has been the way in which the public service has been conceived".<sup>10</sup>

In short, although the civil service had been established in what later became known as Nigeria by 1861, a Nigerian civil service had not come into being. This fact is manifested in various ways. Within the upper stratum of the service the few Africans were the obedient servants' of the British. It was therefore not surprising that the senior African civil servants both by training and by orientation did not see themselves as 'servants' of the Nigerian peoples, majority of whom were illiterates. At the lower rungs of the ladder where Africans predominated, the attitude of the junior staff was at best nonchalance

This attitude is reflected in Annual Reports throughout the Colonial Administration. In his Annual Report, P. L. H. Archer, the Post Master General regretted "the lack of efficiency shown by members of the native staff which

impede the progress of the department'.<sup>11</sup> Reports such as this were fairly common. One could in fact argue that the lack of efficiency on the part of some members of the junior staff was a deliberate attempt at thwarting the efforts of the colonial administrators. This was, in the scheme of things, regarded as an act of patriotism. This would partially explain the delay that characterised government business during this period. For, the junior staff supportive and important functions within the system. Thus the docketing, filing and searching of files were carried out by this category of staff. The speed with which a file got to the Chief Secretary was most times dictated by the junior staff. Inefficiency on their part had many implications, the most important was that the senior staff had to do the job of the junior staff to avert too much delay. Under this situation, the top, though light, had a heavy work load.

The working of any institution is a function of its organisation. The civil service is a bureaucracy in which communication flows through the hierarchy. The delay in government business could not be avoided in a situation in which correspondence had to pass through the retinue of officers within the hierarchy. In this setting, the role of the messenger becomes the more crucial. Yet, because of the discriminatory policy and the unwillingness of the colonial masters to invest in the development of Nigerian human resources, the messenger and the others in this category were given no training. In essence, the structure of the service was designed to suit a colonial situation.

The scope of the civil service was extremely limited, it was restricted to the maintenance of law and order and for building the infrastructure of roads and railways for the economic development of the metropolis. The Agricultural Department focused attention on cash crops, so also was the Co-operative Department. The exclusive attention to cash crops must have in part contributed to the shortage of food crops in the Western Provinces in 1950. It was not until 1945 that a department was created to promote industrial-

zation and research. Even so, the Department was beset with many problems such as the shortage of funds and personnel. There was no department of commerce until 1945, trade being 'free' under the British *Laissez faire* policy. The point to stress is that the civil service was not geared towards the economic development of the Nigerian peoples, talk less of their welfare.

However, during the second world war, due to some well known factors, the British became somewhat concerned for the Nigerian peoples in particular and Africa in general. The end of the war therefore saw the beginning of the working out of various development programmes. The forerunner of Development plans was the Ten Year Development Plan. Although the programme had to be reviewed mid-way to make her more meaningful, development of certain projects such as the University College Hospital, the College of Arts and Science at Ibadan, Enugu and Zaria were some of the products of the plan.

Because of the need for more hands, coupled with the fact that the British needed its manpower for developments in Britain, more Africans had to be admitted into higher echelons of the service. The policy of replacing British with Nigerians, popularly known as Nigerianization had to be pursued. Some Commissions were in due course set up to effect the scheme. Although more Africans were admitted into the service, the service was still essentially British.

#### AWOLOWO'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EVOLUTION OF THE WESTERN NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE

Although this paper does not deal with the civil service in the context of existing statutory and legal prescriptionist, it is still pertinent to point out the significant role played by Chief Awolowo and some of his ministers<sup>12</sup> to the constitution review between 1951 and 54<sup>13</sup> in respect of the civil service. Since they had had some grounding

(by virtue of their education) in British Constitution, they held this up as their model. It was therefore not surprising that they advocated changes in the Nigerian civil service along British lines.<sup>14</sup> They were in particular critical of the system of appointment and discipline in the civil service which at that time rested squarely on civil servants themselves. Awolowo and the others pressed for an independent body that would be saddled with such responsibility. They were thus instrumental to the establishment of a Public Service Commission under the Nigerian (Constitution) Order in Council 1954. That Constitution also made Nigeria a Federal State, thus, the unitary civil service in Nigeria was split into four; Federal, Eastern, Northern and Western Civil Services.

The Public Service Commission was a body whose sole purpose was to ensure that appointments to the service, promotions, and disciplinary control in respect of inefficiency or misconduct were dealt with on a continuing standard of detached impartiality and fairness uninfluenced by *political changes or pressure*<sup>15</sup>. The Western Region Public Service Commission consisted of a Chairman, L. G. Coke-Wallio, a retired official of the Indian Civil Service, Mr. S. Ade Ojo a veteran civil servant and later Speaker of the Western House of Assembly, and Professor Oladele A. Ajose of the University College (part time Commissioner), and stenographic and clerical staff who supported them. The operation of the Commission was quite simple. Meetings were held twice a week, although matters could be discussed in between meetings.<sup>16</sup> Relevant papers of cases pending were circulated to commissioners who in turn, would record their recommendations in writing. If the views and recommendations of members were not unanimous, the matter would be put on the agenda for the next meeting.<sup>17</sup> The point to emphasise is that premium was placed on the unanimity of members on any issue.

On disciplinary matters, the initiative for action against an erring officer was left to the Heads of Departments. The

latter were responsible for investigating and reporting cases of discipline to the Public Service Commission, indicating suggested actions against the officer concerned. The Commission would therefore consider the facts of the cases submitted to it and decide whether charges should be preferred and if so, whether action against the officers should proceed under the regulation which stipulated the procedure for offences punishable with penalties other than dismissal, or under the regulation for which the penalty was dismissal.<sup>18</sup> If under the first regulation the commission decided on the report of the Head of Department, it could order for full details if these were inadequate in the original submission. If under the latter regulation, then the Commissioner would set up a committee usually of three members to conduct full investigations and report to them through the Head of Department who had initiated the investigation. As in the first procedure, the Commission would then decide the capability or otherwise of the officers concerned.<sup>19</sup>

From the description of the working of the Commission in respect of disciplinary matter, it is clear that senior civil servants still had much hand in it. This, no doubt, might have been credited to the Commission. For obvious reasons, it has not been possible to look into the proceedings of the Commission to determine its performance. However, based on the Commission's composition and operation with its emphasis on unanimity of members,<sup>20</sup> it could be safely assumed that the Commission performed creditably well. As foreigners, the Chairman and secretary were less attached to Nigerians and therefore highly impartial.

Besides his contribution to the review of the Nigerian Constitution by which the Western Nigerian Public Service and the Regional Public Service Commission were born, Awolowo's eight years in office as leader of government business were the most remarkable in the annals of the civil service. On his assumption of duty in 1952, his first duty was to pass a budget which had been prepared by officials long before the Action Group, the ruling political

party in the region, assumed office. Money, the sinew of administration. At least, three principles guided such consideration. The first principle was made in case of those departments which catered for the educational, economic, health and social needs of the people that there should be no increase in establishment. The second principle was that, wherever practicable, increase in establishment should be governed by the policy of Nigerianization. The third principle was that as far as possible expenditure on services which tended to the welfare, health and education of the people should be increased at the expense of any expenditure that did not answer to the same test.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the largest items in the 1952 estimates were: Education with an estimate of £1,022,210; Medical services £675,290; Public Works £273,670 and Police £536,580 out of a total expenditure of £4,671,070.<sup>22</sup>

In the interest of economy, he rejected those items of expenditure considered wasteful. In this connection, he froze the inducement allowance attached to the basic salary of overseas officers. Every post in the civil service in the estimates had 'expatriation pay' attached to it. If a Nigerian was appointed to the post he did not draw this pay, but if any overseas officer was appointed, he did. Awolowo froze 'expatriation pay' in respect of new posts and all vacant posts. This policy, popularly called 'frigidaire policy' was no less important in its economic effect than its social implication. The government was able to realise an estimated surplus of £28,000<sup>23</sup> as a result of the policy. The policy enhanced the prestige of Chief Awolowo and his party. It has to be remembered that appointment into the civil service was not yet under the control of politicians and that the service was still unitary. By freezing 'expatriation pay' Awolowo was taking a bold step towards the Nigerianization of the civil service prior to which time, the service was discriminatory against Nigerians. In 1952 there were 7,000 Nigerian officers in the Western Nigeria Civil Service out of which 283<sup>24</sup> were in the upper echelons. The policy led to

an annual increase in the number of Nigerians in the higher rungs of the service as shown by the table below.

The frigidaire policy did not however provide all the answers to the acceleration of the Nigerianization process in Western Nigeria. At the Resumed Conference on the Constitution held in Lagos in January 1954,<sup>25</sup> the leaders of the Nigerian Delegation had agreed that on the attainment of Regional self government by any Region, it would be necessary for the Government of that Region to introduce and accept financial responsibility for a lump sum.<sup>26</sup> There were those who felt that the lump sum would involve the country in heavy sum of money, so strong were their views that Chief Awolowo as Premier had to issue a press release justifying his stand on the matter. He argued that the decision was taken to follow the precedent and by other colonial territories. He cited the examples of India, Malay and Burma. He believed that although the amount was heavy, reaching a maximum of £9,000 per officer, it was part of the price of self government which had to be paid.<sup>27</sup>

The significant point here was that the lump sum compensation was available not only to officers whose career was compulsorily terminated but to any officers who chose to give the normal notice of retirement.<sup>28</sup> The amount of compensation varied according to the length of service. The scheme would have led to a mass exodus of expatriate civil servants but for some measures which were quickly introduced.<sup>29</sup> Realising that a lump sum payment of the magnitude provided for in the lump sum was not something which the average civil servant could ignore. A consideration was however given to measures of countering the attractions of the scheme. Following the precedent of other countries, it was agreed that officers should be induced for three years by guaranteeing that, those of them whose compensation would normally decrease in amount during the period, would be granted an amount equal to the maximum compensation to which they might be entitled at any time during the period. The other inducement measure was that proposed by the

Secretary of State by which a special list of officers who would be regarded as servants of Her Majesty's Government but seconded to a Nigerian Government was created.<sup>30</sup> The inducement schemes had limited effect. In essence there was an exodus of expatriate officers from the service which was most severe in the Administrative class.

The Western Nigerian lead in the Nigerianization scheme was not just because of the early contact of the peoples of the Region to Western education and colonial administration but also and most importantly because of the frigidaire policy and the lump sum scheme. As a staunch nationalist, Awolowo was determined to wrest power from the British. As an eye-witness of white domination of the civil service, he was bent on turning the tables in Nigerians' favour. It was not surprising therefore that he pursued the Nigerianization scheme with great vigour. It was to liberate Nigerians from British yoke and make the civil service an instrument of development that made him concentrate attention on the civil service structure.

In these and other regards, Awolowo had able lieutenants, the most important of whom was S. O. Adebó,<sup>31</sup> the first Head of Service in the West.

With the exodus of expatriate officers, particularly in the administrative class, some efforts were made to fill the gaps of the departing officers. One such effort was a crash training programme to produce Nigerian Permanent Secretaries. Under the programme, six trainees,<sup>32</sup> specially selected for their brilliance, were appointed as Supernumerary Senior Assistant Secretaries and posted one to each of six ministries where they would have to learn administrative work of the ministry as much as they could there after understudying the substantive Assistant Secretary. The Governor did not approve of the plan and vehemently opposed it but the Premier and his colleagues were not only for it, they were enthusiastic about it.<sup>33</sup>

After the inevitable tussle in the Executive Council between the Premier and the Governor, the scheme was approved. One

modification that the Governor insisted upon was that the trainees must have had five years experience in the post of Assistant Secretary or its equivalent, outside the Administrative service. The posts were duly advertised in the press and the selection was made by the Public Service Commission. However, not all the appointees fulfilled the conditions of minimum previous service. One applicant from the Federal Ministry of Finance, Mr. H. A. Egieyitchie had only had three and a half years of the stipulated service experience. The other, Dr. F.A. Ajayi, a distinguished lawyer, whose qualifications included a doctorate degree, had none at all.<sup>34</sup> The Nigerianization scheme, as pointed out earlier, was further most in the Western Region. The manpower situation from the point of view of Nigerianization given above is important for it serves to highlight not only the constraints of the nascent Regional Service but also the accomplishments of the Regional Government under Awolowo.

Awolowo and his lieutenants' contribution to the civil service structure was not limited to the substitution of blacks with whites. They were also concerned with the component units of the civil service. In view of the increased duties that would fall on the Federal and the Regional governments with the advancement towards self-government, Mr. L. M. Gorsuch was appointed by the Federal Government to advise on a possible revision of the structure of the civil service and the scale of remuneration that should be attached to the different categories of those various appointments.

During his investigation, Gorsuch perceived some defects in the civil service structure. 'The most negotiable defect, he wrote, was the lack of an educated middle part. 'The normal organization of a civil service', he argued, is pyramidal in structure; the pyramid of posts which make up the structure is also a pyramid of gradually increasing duties and responsibilities. We feel that in Nigeria the pattern of organisation militates against too often instead of being pyramid of gradually increasing duties and responsibilities. We feel that in Nigeria, the pattern of organisation militates

against this. Too often, instead of being pyramidal, it is like an Hour-glass, broad at the bottom, narrow in the middle and broad again at the top.<sup>35</sup> In effect, Gorsuch discovered that senior civil servants (mostly expatriates) were performing duties which from the view point of economy and efficiency should have been carried out by officers in the middle grade. It was in the light of this consideration that he recommended the introduction of the middle class with its equivalent, the technical grade.

Gorsuch's Report was not swallowed hook, line and sinker without a thorough investigation. The Western Nigerian government under the Premiership of Awolowo set up a grading team to study and implement Gorsuch's Report. In a Department by Department assessment of the need for executive posts, the Grading Team<sup>36</sup> found room in the civil service structure for seven Senior Executive Officers, seventy-two Higher Executive Officers and twenty Executive Officers. The grading team was quick to recognise the difficulties involved in introducing the structural innovation, the greatest of which was that the right calibre of officers would for some time not exist in sufficient number. While about one hundred of the new posts were filled by assimilation, the rest were direct entry from candidates with Advanced Level Certificates.<sup>37</sup> The introduction of the executive class remains one of the most important developments in the history of the Nigerian civil service.

By adopting and implementing Gorsuch's proposals, a formal base for an efficient civil service was being provided. That the new arrangement made for greater efficiency there can be no question. Executive officers took over the routine but responsible work in the areas of general administration, establishments, accounts and audits, allowing administrative officers to concentrate attention on policy matters. Executive officers performed communication functions, mediation between policy-making officers in the higher echelons and subordinate officers who performed routing duties of day to day administration. As supervisors of junior staff, middle

level officers played key roles in the diffusion of civil service norms by influencing the way the public was treated. In the context of development, these functions are of considerable importance.

One other development of equal magnitude which engaged the attention of the premier as well as Adebo was the integration of department into ministries. In this regard, a commission, the Doherty Commission, was set up by the Western Nigerian Government.<sup>38</sup> The Commission was in addition, saddled with the responsibility of reviewing the General Orders (the main document guiding official business). The latter task did not pose any problem as it merely involved more or less the ejection of certain clauses rooted in colonial mentality from the General Orders. A glimpse of this is the obliteration of the sharp division of civil service along racial lines. The other task of the commission – that of integrating departments into ministries – resulted in complaints and protests from some sections of the civil service.

The reasons for the protests are not far fetched. Under the colonial civil service, government departments were fairly autonomous, each running its own affairs but responsible to the civil secretary in the Government secretariat. The civil secretary was responsible to the Governor for the coordination of the policies and activities of the Administration. Under the new system of integrating departments into ministries related subjects were grouped together. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources comprised: the office of the Minister with the Permanent Secretary as the executive head of the ministry, the Agricultural Department, the Forestry Department, the Veterinary Department and the Produce Inspection Department. The works Department was later substituted with 'Division'.

With the new arrangement, the former Heads of Departments were placed in charge of the new 'Division'. Inevitably the old heads of departments felt that they had been relegated from their prominent position since they now had to submit their paper through the Permanent Secretary. The

feeling of relegation by the professionals was accentuated by the depletion of very senior administrative officers in the civil service. The Nigerianization scheme and the attendant measures referred to earlier in the essay, compounded the situation. The heads of the new 'divisions', some of whom could boast of ten to fifteen years of service, were naturally unwilling to be subordinated to the hurriedly bred Permanent Secretaries.

The Doherty Commission having recommended the integration of departments into ministries along the lines of British system and in the light of the parliamentary system adopted in Nigeria, Adebó felt strongly, in spite of the protest, that there was no question of reverting to the old colonial arrangement. The only option to Adebó and the Public Service Commission was to make to be 'professionals' 'administrators'. While in Britain it would be regarded as most extraordinary for a purely professional officer from outside the administrative class to be appointed Permanent Secretaries, for one thing no distinguished professional officer would care to be considered for the post, but in Western Nigeria, this was not so. It was recommended that wherever a professional officer had shown a sufficient aptitude for administration and he was willing to be considered for transfer to the Administrative class with a view to appointment as Permanent Secretary, he should be so considered.<sup>39</sup> This proposal and others later mentioned were accepted by the Premier. The task at hand was facilitated by the fact that there were professional divisions where work at senior level contained strong administrative element. Such professional divisions included Education and Land. Some of the Permanent Secretaries were heavily drawn from the Education Division. To Education was owed the accession to the ranks of Permanent Secretaries three stalwarts, namely, Chief I. O. Dina, Chief I. O. Ejiwunmi and Chief C. O. Taiwo. John Longe was from Agriculture. The new arrangement did not occasion much resentment from the members

of the professional class since the new Permanent Secretaries not only had initial qualification which would have qualified them for entry into the Administrative class, they were also considered senior and outstanding by their colleagues in the professional class.

However, the fact that some of their members had been appointed Permanent Secretaries did not completely erase the feeling on the part of the professional officer that they were being subordinated to administrative officer. Mention should be made of professional officers who did not care to transfer to the Administrative class and who remained in professional employment, but who insisted that while remaining professional they should be given the status, salary and other privileges of the Permanent Secretary. Accepted by Adebó and the Public Service Commission,<sup>4v</sup> the proposal found favour with the premier. Consequently, certain top posts in certain professional Divisions, notably, Legal, Medical and Engineering in the Ministry of Justice, Public Health and Public Works respectively carried salary not less than that of the Permanent Secretary.

By preserving the morale of the professional officers whose loyalty and efficiency were essential for the task ahead, Awolowo encouraged a new corporate identity amongst civil servants. His solutions to the protests by the professional officers were commendable when considered against the background of the colonial civil service structure in which the professional wielded much authority and influence. The loss of power and influence naturally hurt the pride of the professional officers. Expressing a strong feeling of injustice on the issue, one professional officer wrote: "when in 1943 I entered the civil service as an engineer, the Director of Public Works was a member of the Legislative Council. He participated in the policy making of government; he stood up in the Council to explain and defend the policies of his department. We note here that in our administrative evolution, even in the colonial era, when the maintenance of peace and order was emphasised above the

physical and economic development of the country, the professional officer held a higher status and had a better hearing than he does today, when the emphasis is on physical and economic development in which, quite obviously, the professional officers services were in greater demand.<sup>41</sup>

The new structural arrangement in the civil service brought in its wake, many other problems, principally, civil servants-politicians relationship. Although Permanent Secretaries were the executive heads of ministries, ministers were the political heads and therefore, the bosses of civil servants. In theory and no less than in practice, the minister wielded much power in matters relating to his ministry. He was responsible to the Cabinet and the Legislature for the performance of his ministry. He decided what recommendations should be put to Council on a subject within his portfolio, whatever advice to the contrary he might have received from his permanent secretary. Although recommendations had to be submitted to the Treasury for clearance, whatever went forward as Treasury Comment still had to be endorsed by the minister of finance, so that even at that level, the politician remained the final arbiter.

Once the Executive Council (Cabinet) made a decision, that decision had to be accepted and implemented by civil servants. There was however one area of work in which the Permanent Secretary had much authority in the ministry. He was the Ministry's accounting officer, which meant that he was personally responsible to the Public Accounts Committee for the regularity of all expenditure by or on behalf of the Ministry. In this particular regard, he could not be over ruled by his Minister. No minister would compel a Permanent Secretary to act contrary to the Financial Instructions. But the obvious line of demarcation of authority between the Permanent Secretary and the Politicians would appear not to have been clear to some ministers. This assumption is based on the several reported cases of conflict between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries over what would appear to be the erosion of the Permanent Secretary's authority. One case

will be cited to prove this.

It was a case in which cabinet had approved an experiment for a particular scheme. Disagreement between P.T. Odumosu, the Permanent Secretary, and his minister was over the number of units of equipment to be ordered through a local expatriate firm. Odumosu took the view from the scheme devised for him by professional experts in the Ministry that they would need only fifteen units.<sup>42</sup> For undeclared reasons the Minister placed order for twenty-five. As if this was not enough, the Minister ordered Odumosu to pay the firm irrespective of whether or not the equipment had been received, contrary to the Financial Instructions.<sup>43</sup> Odumosu declined. The Minister stood his ground and so did Odumosu. In the meantime, the deadlock had led to friction between the two, so much so that the case was reported to the Premier. Chief Awolowo explained the legal objection to his colleague, no doubt to the latter's satisfaction since that was the last Adebo heard of the case.

Unhappy relations between civil servants and politicians manifest itself in other ways. Attempts by politicians to interfere in matters pertaining purely to civil service administration were always frowned upon by civil servants. While it was in the interest of efficiency for ministers to have concern for the welfare of civil servants in their ministries by asking who was appointed or promoted, it was an act of politicization if the minister insisted that a particular officer should be promoted or appointed. Chief Awolowo, according to Adebo, discouraged his colleagues from undue interference. Whenever complaints were made to him suggesting that particular officials had been unfairly treated, he would simply refer them to the appropriate responsible authority most commonly the Head of the Establishment, who would after thorough investigation report his finding and the action, if any, that need be taken.<sup>44</sup>

Complaints were sometimes lodged to Adebo by members of the Government party alleging that a certain officer was 'doing politics' by which was meant that the officer in quest-

ion was acting in a manner prejudicial to the complainant party and acting in favour of the other party. Such complaints were often times carefully investigated by Chief Awolowo. Complaints were, in fact, not limited to members of the ruling political party; the Opposition were equally active. In this connection, Chief Awolowo was particularly helpful. He dealt with every case according to its merit and would maintain that what his party wanted from the civil service was efficiency in the discharge of its legitimate duties and that he could deal with the politics of the issues".<sup>45</sup>

Given the experience of Nigerian politicians in parliamentary democracy, one could not but express surprise at Awolowo's perception of the role of the civil service in that system, i.e. that of non politicization of the civil service. To Awolowo, civil servants should not get involved in politics, rather they should devote their time to their legitimate duties for which they earned their pay.

On the role of the civil service, Awolowo did not mince words on the commitment of his party to the social welfare of the people. Efforts were therefore made at making the civil service an instrument of development. Although the input of civil servants in the formulation of policies touching on all aspects of human endeavour was marginal, the implementation of these policies rested more on the civil service than other government agencies. While in Britain, the practice was for ministers to seek and uphold civil service advice on major policy issues, in Western Nigeria this was not so. The reasons for this are not far to seek. For one thing, the statistical data on which the civil service could base their advice was not always there.

The different attitudes of civil servants and politicians in policy matters is another factor. The former, by orientation and to some extent, by training tended to be more conservative and dogmatic than the hurried natured politicians who in a bid to catch votes, formulated attractive and unrealistic policies. Unlike the centre (Federal level) where ministers sought and upheld civil servants' views, ministers in the West

cast their policies in precise terms before turning to civil servants for advice, 'to the embarrassment of the latter'.<sup>46</sup>

Chief Awolowo was proud of his team of ministers which he believed any government in the world would also be proud of. The formidable list of Ministers included among others: Chief S.O. Awokoya, described by Awolowo as 'exceedingly competent and scholarly haughty'; Chief J.F. Odunjo, 'a man with a rigid school master's mentality'; Chief C.D. Akran, Chief M.A. Akinloye and Chief Rotimi Williams. Chief S.O. Awokoya, the Minister in charge of education, together with Chiefs Babalola and Odunjo were until their appointment in 1952, school masters, while the rest, with the exception of Oba C.D. Akran, were legal practitioners. It is thus clear that the ministers not only had enough credentials for their task, they were not likely to regard civil servants as equals in policy matters. This must have contributed to the poor relations between the two.

As events later turned out, it would have been better for the government if the ministers had allowed for more input from civil servants, most especially in respect of statistical data. For instance, the minister for Education had calculated in accordance with the census data compiled in 1953 that only 275,000 children would be eligible for enrolment. But in actual fact, about half a million children enrolled. Although the figures for primary, secondary modern schools and grammar schools were impressive with an increase from 452 in 1952 in the case of primary schools to 6518<sup>47</sup> in 1959, the fact remains that the standard of education was intolerably low.<sup>48</sup> This situation was due largely to the shortage of classrooms and teachers, a situation which could have been averted had the relevant statistical data been available before the policy was made. That said, it would be erroneous to conclude that the Free Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) was a failure. Set against the numerous handicaps aforementioned, one cannot but conclude that its implementation by the Ministry of Education achieved some success in the sense that there were phenomenal increases in the

number of enrolment at all levels.

It will not be possible to outline the projects carried out by the different Ministers. It is enough to say that the ministries concerned with the social welfare of the people, viz., Education, Health, Works and Transport, Information and Social Welfare performed creditably well.

The Ministry of Health played a significant role in implementing government's policy of establishing at least one hospital in every administrative division in the Region. New hospitals were sited at Ikeja, Auchi, Kwale, Okitipupa, Epe, Iddo Ekiti and Ilaro. For the riverine areas, touring launches were provided by the Ministry. In pursuance of government's policy to extend pipe-borne water supplies to as many towns and their adjoining areas as much as resources would permit, the Ministry of Public Works constructed eleven Urban Supplies, namely; Iwo, Cshogbo, Ede, Auchi, Ishan, Agbor, Shagamu, Ijebu-Kemo, Ibadan, Ilesha, Ikalẹ and Efor Alaye all of which were in full operation by 1959. Rural water supplies with limited distribution network were provided at Erin Odo, Erin Oke and Erusu.<sup>49</sup> Tube - wells with hand operated pumps were installed in 200 locations of the Delta Province.<sup>50</sup> Apart from the construction of pumps, the Ministry also constructed roads with bituminous surface which increased in number annually. Although these facilities were not adequate for the entire population they were meant to serve, nevertheless, a good beginning in the provision of modern amenities was set.

In public relations, the Ministry of Information, developed from the punny efforts of the public relations department which the government inherited in 1952, published a weekly paper (Western News) and a monthly illustrated Magazine (Western Nigeria Illustrated). By 1959 there were six cinema barges.<sup>51</sup> Among its outstanding productions was the 8 minute coloured film of the visit of Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal.

From the list of some of the projects executed by civil servants as sketched above, and in the face of some preva

ling difficulties earlier mentioned the inescapable conclusion is that the civil service performed relatively well although one gets the impression that there is some exaggeration in people's assessment of the Western Nigeria civil service. Awolowo in his valedictory service of November 1959 to the House of Assembly said that ".....we have in this Region a civil servant which is exceedingly efficient, absolutely and utterly devoted and unstinting in the discharge of its many and onerous duties"<sup>5 2</sup> When accomplishments are set against targets, one finds how laudatory the above and other remarks are. Using the U.P.E. scheme as an illustration, Government's proposal of constructing a school not more than two kilometres walk from pupils' homes was a dream that did not come true. The planning of the programme left much to be desired.

The relative efficiency of the civil service during the period when Awolowo was in power was due to the unflinching support the Chief gave to Adebo. It appears the choice of Adebo as head of service, from all indications, was a right one. Adebo more than any other Nigerian civil servant had had a long pupilage in the colonial service having joined in 1942 as a Secretariat Assistant. He distinguished himself when two years later he was promoted Assistant Secretary over and above some fifty expatriates. He was in fact more than a match for the expatriates, most of whom, because of his qualities, held him in high esteem.

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## From Neutrality to Active Involvement: Awolowo and The Nigerian Civil War

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SIYAN OYEWESO

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### INTRODUCTION

The civil war record of Chief Obafemi Awolowo deserves an academic study for a number of reasons. First, as the Vice-Chairman of the Federal Executive Council and Federal Commissioner for Finance in the Gowon's war cabinet, Awolowo inescapably contributed a lot to the war efforts and, consequently, the continuance of Nigeria as a single economic and political entity. However, except in passing references or footnote, most of the accounts of the Nigerian Civil War have generally paid very limited attention to his contributions.<sup>1</sup> Second, the role which Awolowo played or was believed to have played during the war years has often evoked controversy and passion not only in some sections of the country but also among scholars. In fact, it is the general impression in some quarters that without Awolowo's covert or overt support for Ojukwu, the civil war could possibly have been avoided. In other words, it has been implanted in the consciousness of some Nigerians that Awolowo goaded Ojukwu to secession but later backed out. Third, it is also believed by some people that Awolowo demonstrated great anti-Igbo feelings during the war years and that his hatred for the Igbo were at the background of the policies he pursued as the Finance Minister. For instance, Awolowo has often been blamed for the mass deaths in Biafra because

of his advocacy of starvation as a legitimate weapon of war.<sup>2</sup> Indeed he is held partly responsible for the collapse of Biafra. Some political analysts and commentators even suggested that he made some political moves towards the creation of an autonomous "Oduduwa Republic" for the Yoruba in the tumultuous situation of 1966-70.<sup>3</sup> And, finally, despite the fact that his actions and utterances during the war angered a section of the country, it is acknowledged by all and sundry that he managed the war economy prudently to the extent that the country was not indebted to any foreign power at the end of the war.<sup>4</sup>

It is against the above background that this paper is set. Precisely, it seeks to explode some of the myths already created in popular literature and consciousness about Awolowo's civil war role. The paper will also examine the economic policies pursued by him to successfully prosecute the war without resorting to external borrowing. But the overall objective is to create a clear and comprehensive account of Awolowo's involvement in the greatest Nigeria's political crisis, a picture that has not always been completely clear from the existing plethora of literature.

#### BACKGROUND TO AWOLOWO'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

The effective beginning of Awolowo's controversial role in the civil war could be dated to August 3, 1966 when he was released from Calabar prison — where he was serving a ten-year term in jail for alleged treasonable felony on the order of Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, the new Head of State, brought to power by the July 29, 1966 military putsch.<sup>5</sup> However, in order to properly appreciate his involvement in the war, we need to locate him in the context of the socio-political situation prevailing in the country in 1966-67 in particular and the sixties in general.

Even the most rabid supporter of British imperialism will agree that some of the problems that plagued Nigeria in the early sixties were a creation of the colonial era. By dividing

the country into three unequal regions and granting power to the foster elite on the basis of the three large and powerful regions, the British sowed the seeds of future trouble. Apart from the fact that the huge size of the Northern Region was a negation of Prof. Wheare's guideline of true federalism which engendered conflict among the factions contending for power, the transfer of power on the basis of the regions also led to a degree of inter-ethnic and inter-regional rivalries.<sup>6</sup> For having acquired power first the regional level politicians sought to consolidate their control over their respective regions and in achieving this, frequent appeals were made to ethnic sensibilities. What, however, further complicated Nigeria's political problems was the way in which politicians conceived and practised politics in Nigeria. In fact, since the partial transfer of power to indigenous elite began in 1951, the ruling class actors had made it clear that they were not ready to obey the rules of game. They were willing to perpetuate electoral fraud at the risk of violence or threaten secession in order to acquire and retain power. Electoral defeat was a suicide pill to them and consequently, they resorted to ethnicity, thuggery, coercion, census figures juggling in order to gain political power and maintain it. As experts have argued, this was because they conceived politics a winner-take-all game; a game where the winners appropriated all the spoils of office. In this kind of game, there could be no compromise.<sup>7</sup> Hence, the opposition party at the region or the centre was not seen as a partner in the administration of the state but as an enemy. Indeed this notion of politics embittered relations between the regional factions contending for power in the fifties but hegemonic and coercive nature of the colonial state did not allow the conflict to break into open. With the arbitrating power of the British to be removed in 1959, the competition for political offices became more tense, bitter and without compromise. Each faction of the ruling elite wanted to secure power at the centre or the region at all cost. This notion of politics has continued to determine the pattern of Nigerian

politics even in the post-independence era and it was at the basis of the political crises; the 1962 AG crisis, 1962-63 census debacle, the 1954 Federal Elections impasse and the massively rigged 1965 Western Region elections that bedevilled the First Republic.

The first open manifestation of the irreconcilable differences among the ruling factions was the Action Group Crisis of 1962 and scholars have rightly referred to the crisis as the "signpost to disaster".<sup>8</sup> Right from the open personality and ideological clash in the Action Group leadership to the resort to lawlessness and arson in the Western House of Assembly, it was clear to all discerning political observers that the politicians had lost control of the affairs of the state. The apparent attempt by the ruling NPC - NCNC coalition government to use the crisis to destroy the opposition and the glaring manipulation of the judicial process during the treasonable felony trial of Chief Awolowo, and his subsequent imprisonment accentuated the political tension in the country. With the large scale manipulation of 1962-63 census figures, the massively rigged 1964 Federal Elections, the 1964 constitutional tussle between the President and the Prime-Minister and the resort to violence in the West sequel to the unpopular verdict of 1965 Western Region elections, it became obvious that military intervention in Nigerian politics was only a question of time. There is the need to stress that the breakdown of law and order in the West was the climax of the struggle for the control of the centre. The West was only the theatre of political combat. The coveted prize to be won at the end of the day was Lagos and the control of the Federal Government.

It is relevant to note that the political and physical incarceration of Chief Awolowo proved to be a costly political move by the Federal Government. In spite of the coercive apparatus of state in support of the unpopular Akintola government, the West exploded into chaos, arson, brigandage and wanton murders of the opponents of Chief Awolowo.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed the chaos was of such magnitude that the Balewa government authorized a large scale military operation to pacify the West.<sup>10</sup> The constant use of the army to suppress politically motivated rebellions, however, had opened the eyes of some members of the armed forces to their potential significance in mediating conflicts among the ruling class factions contending for power and this lesson became actualized in the January 15, 1966 coup d'etat.<sup>11</sup> By this time, the civilian regime had made peaceful change impossible and a violent one inevitable. A fraction of the army was no longer ready to be used to secure forced obedience from the citizenry.

In spite of the recent claims to the contrary by David Ejoor and Samuel Ogbemudia,<sup>12</sup> the January 15 putsh was a justifiable one and was, indeed, largely welcome at the time. Major P.C.K. Nzeogwu and his collaborators became instant heroes but when the details of the operations and the casualties became fairly known, questions began to be asked as regards the professed sincerity of the objectives of the plotters. Both the North and the West lost the cream of their military and political leadership while the East was least touched. The plight of the North was particularly worse as it lost both the Sardauna and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The ethnic origins of the plotters and the selective killings that accompanied the coup d'etat coupled with the emergence of Aguiyi-Ironsi as the new Head of State made the North believe that the exercise was an Igbo nationalist conspiracy. The promulgation of the Unification Decree and the implementation of some pro-Igbo policies by the Ironsi administration tended to confirm the belief and sowed the seeds of the bloodletting of January 29, 1966.

It should also be noted that the main issue involved in the two coup d'etats was the control of the central government. From 1951 to January 15, 1966, the Northern faction of the ruling elite had maintained an effective control of the centre and was, therefore, greatly threatened by the new political reality. Various Northern groups and

individuals felt threatened as the new exercise of power could deprive them of access to decision making. They feared, perhaps genuinely, that nobody would champion or promote their interest under the new political order. Northerners' fear of perpetual political and economic domination seemed real with the promulgation of the Unification Decree in May 1966. Precisely, it threatened the ability of all Northern groups including minorities to protect themselves against unfair competition in education, employment and commerce.

The aftermath of the unhealthy struggle for the centre as evidenced by the 1966 coup d'états was the disruption of the deliberate political equilibrium existing among Nigeria's diverse groups. The July 29 coup d'état, in particular, was revengeful and completely destroyed the nationalistic image of the Nigerian army; a process that had earlier been set in motion by January 15. Concretely, a new consideration determined the political outlook of many Easterners – fear of their physical security. Apart from the massive hunt for Easterners particularly Igbo, the July putsh created a constitutional impasse as it brought a relatively junior officer of Northern extraction, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, to power. In July 1966, Brigadier Ogundipe was the most senior surviving army officer and army's organizational structure dictated that he should assume the mantle of authority. Besides Ogundipe, there were five other senior officers before Gowon – Col. R. A. Adebayo, Lt. Cols. Imo, Effiong, Njoku and Emeka Ojukwu.<sup>13</sup> Although Ogundipe attempted to assert himself, a Northern Corporal reportedly told him that 'I do not take orders from you until my captain comes'.<sup>14</sup> Faced with the breakdown of institutional authority Ogundipe resigned from the army and, consequently, Gowon, an acceptable officer to the plotters, assumed the reins of power.

Despite the much canvassed view by some of the July 29 plotters and scholars that Gowon was a mere helpless victim of circumstance who was brought in after the coup had

taken place,<sup>15</sup> the popular belief in the East is that he was an accomplice.<sup>16</sup> The role which Gowon played or was believed to have played in the planning and execution of the coup d'état only served to exacerbate the political tension and mutual distrust then prevailing in the country. In fact, the Governor of the East, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, refused to recognize Gowon's authority on the grounds that such recognition would amount to legitimizing rebellion in the army.<sup>17</sup> Apart from the question of seniority, Ojukwu felt militarily and intellectually superior to Gowon. Militarily, he rose to the rank of Lt. Colonel some six months before Gowon and, educationally, he attended Nigeria's prestigious school, King's College, Lagos and later bagged M.A. degree in history from Oxford.<sup>18</sup> In the turbulent atmosphere of 1966, however, the real issue was not military command and seniority as such but the ability to assert one's authority over the mutinous troops and restore discipline into the army. Ogunjipe and others on the senior list could not assert themselves but Gowon appeared to be able to do this.

What further complicated the leadership problem was that Gowon was viewed with suspicion in the East. The Igbo, having gone through the harrowing experience of May and July 1966, saw Gowon as the embodiment of "Northern domination" which was considered dangerous to their survival. The West, too, which had been in political disarray and chaos since 1962 and the death of its governor, Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi in the July 29 putsch. In effect, apart from the compelling need to resolve the constitutional imbroglio, Gowon's regime had to seek credibility and acceptability. In order to achieve these set objectives, Gowon sought the support of the First Republic politicians and civil servants. It was in the attempt to restore peace to the country and to "review the issue of our national standing" that Gowon ordered the release of the Federal Opposition Leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and other political prisoners on August 3, 1966.

In the pursuit of a lasting solution to the Nigerian political crisis and a new constitutional framework within which

Nigeria could best be guaranteed, Gowon set up the Ad-hoc Constitutional Conference. Representatives were drawn from the four regions and Chief Awolowo headed the Western Delegation. The Conference failed to resolve the crisis as a result of the mutually exclusive nature of the delegates' proposals and the new waves of killings of Easterners resident in the North and other parts of the country. Indeed, virtually all accounts on the civil war agree that the massacres were horriendous and did much havoc to national unity. They were particularly convinced Easterners that their only option was to return to their region where they could be guaranteed security and safety. On November 17, 1966 the Ad-Hoc Constitutional Conference was adjourned indefinitely.

After November 1966, two other major peace attempts; the Aburi Meeting of January 1967 and the National Conciliation Committee, were made to resolve the national crisis but all to no avail. At Aburi, Lt. Col. Ojukwu seemed to have outsmarted the Federal delegation and manipulated them to agreeing to a very loose political structure. In particular, other members of the Supreme Military Council agreed with him that:

- (a) Force should be renounced as a means of settling the Nigerian crisis.
- (b) The Head of the Military Government should cease being called the Supreme Military Commander but Commander-in-Chief.
- (c) The Supreme Military Council should be the Supreme legislative organ of government and when it was impossible to hold a meeting, "the matter requiring determination must be referred to the military governors for their comments and concurrence".
- (d) A military headquarters in which each region was to be represented to be set up under a Chief of Staff.
- (e) In each region was to be established an Area Command under an Area Commander.

- (f) Military Governors, for the duration of the military government were to have control over Area Commands in their regions for purposes of internal security.

At Aburi, the military leaders also acquiesced in Ojukwu's logic that "it is better we move slightly apart and survive, it is much worse we move together and perish in collision".<sup>19</sup> However, on reaching Lagos the Federal Permanent Secretaries and other interest groups pointed out the far reaching implications of the Aburi Agreements to Gowon. Consequently, Gowon reneged on Aburi and later issued Decree No. 8 (Suspension and Modification Decree of March 17, 1967). With this seemingly double faced attitude, it was clear that the crisis was far from being over. In particular, sections 70 and 71 of the Decree were extraneous to the original version. Whereas the draft of the minutes of the meeting states that the exercise of legislative and executive functions of the Federal Government should be carried out with the concurrence of all military governors, the decree stipulated that this could be done with the consent of at least three of the regional governors. Section 71 also conferred on the SMC the power to declare a state of Emergency in any region with or without the consent of the Regional Governor.<sup>20</sup> The decree also empowered the SMC to take disciplinary action against any region which might attempt to secede from the Federation. This decree also incorporated a change of the 1963 constitution. This clause states no region shall exercise its executive authority in such a manner as "to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive authority of the Federation." The implication of this clause was that it conferred on the Federal Government the power to declare that a regional governor was abusing his power. When all these extraneous provisions are taken together, it became clear that such a decree would never be acceptable to the Eastern Governor. In fact, judging from the mood of the time, it was easy to predict which region was likely to give cause for the declaration of a state of emergency. It was against this background that Ojukwu

insisted that "On Aburi We Stand." With the publication of this decree and the vociferous claim of the Eastern region that the decree could not sufficiently guarantee its security within the Nigerian polity and secession was only a question of time.

On March 31, instead of announcing the long expected secession, Ojukwu took a number of measures including the promulgation of Revenue Collection Edict II of 1966 otherwise known as "survival edicts." The edict states "any revenue from any source whatsoever in Eastern Nigeria and collected in Eastern Nigeria for or on behalf of or payable to the Federal Government ...shall be paid to the Government of Eastern Nigeria." With this edict, Ojukwu declared economic independence from Nigeria while political independence remained a contingency plan. The Legal Education Edict and the Court of Appeal Edict were also passed to give effect to the Eastern version of the Aburi Agreement. These two edicts, without doubt, converted the East into an autonomous legal entity. Indeed from March 31, the relations between the East and the Federal Government deteriorated with the passing of each day and the meeting of the National Conciliation Committee (headed by Chief Awolowo) on May 6-7, 1967 was therefore doomed to failure from the start. On 26th May 1967 Ojukwu gave the East three options:

- (a) Accepting the terms proposed by Gowon and thereby submitting to Northern domination.
  - (b) Continuing the existing stalemate.
  - (c) Asserting the autonomy of "our people".<sup>21</sup>
- On 30th May, 1967, the Republic of Biafra was born.

#### FROM PRISON TO THE AD-HOC CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

Awolowo's release from prison was an astute political move by Gowon. For the release was not only in line with public mood in the West, it was also designed to obtain the support of the region which had been in political turmoil since 1962.<sup>22</sup> It indeed assured the region that the new regime was not against her. To crown this political manoeuvre, Gowon went to the airport to welcome the elder statesman and greeted

him with soothing words:

"The country needs the wealth of your experience."<sup>23</sup> The first attempt at utilizing Awolowo's "wealth of experience" came on the 10th of September 1966 when Gowon invited him, among other leaders, to the Ad-Hoc Constitutional Conference.<sup>24</sup> And at the meeting of the Western "Leaders of Thought" held on 11th of September 1966, Chief Awolowo was unanimously elected as the "Leader of the Yorubas."<sup>25</sup> It was in this way that Awolowo emerged and served as the Leader of the Western Delegation to the Ad-Hoc Conference.

The objective of this conference was to weld the country back together and to fashion out a new constitutional arrangement which would be satisfactory and satisfying to all the groups in the country. It was in this spirit that Gowon enjoined the delegates to the conference to rule out complete break up of the country and unitary system of government from their deliberations. Gowon went as far as proposing:

- (a) a federal system with a weak centre;
- (b) a federal system with a weak central government;
- (c) a confederal form of government;
- (d) a new form of political association yet to be found in any political dictionary in the world but peculiar to Nigeria.<sup>26</sup>

A cursory look at the proposals of the various delegates, at the initial stage, reveals that all the regions except the Mid-West asked for some sort of confederal arrangement which would confer greater autonomy on the regions than had hitherto been enjoyed before 1966. The Northern delegation, for instance, proposed a loose confederation on the ground that the people of this country were different and had only been brought together by accident of history. They argued that since each region had managed to preserve some order and unity within its jurisdiction each region should be constituted into an autonomous state. The North's

proposal also stipulated the "right of self determination" and that right included the right to secede.<sup>27</sup>

The Eastern delegation proposals to the conference were also similar to the North's. While agreeing that the region remained the basis of constitutional arrangements, the East, in addition, advocated that each region should "be free to secede from the Association." It further proposed the right of each region to issue its own currency notes and that each region's currency notes should be legal tender throughout the country. Quite unlike the North, East and West, the Mid-West delegation opted for federalism *per se*. In the words of the delegations' leader, Chief Anthony Enahoro:

.....the answer to Nigeria's problems lies in a federation notwithstanding the situation which has emerged or appears to be emerging at this conference. We believe in Federation, and do not think that because we cannot have a strong Federation, we cannot, therefore have any Federation at all.<sup>28</sup>

The position of the West at the Conference deserves a closer examination not only because the focus of this paper is partly on Awolowo's perception of the Nigerian crisis and the nature of the panacea he proposed but also in view of the fact that some scholars have questioned his commitment to Nigeria's unity at this time.<sup>29</sup> In his first published work, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Chief Awolowo strongly advocated the constitution of any bilingual or multi-lingual country should be federal while the constituents must also be organized on a linguistic basis.<sup>30</sup> In the atmosphere of 1966, Awolowo still advocated federalism for Nigeria since the country was an amalgam of nationalities and linguistic groups. He was, however quick to give certain conditions before that could be done — the immediate creation of more states based on linguistic and ethnic affinities, territorial contiguity and economic viability. The states were also to exercise control over the army and the police. To be precise,

the West put its proposal thus:

We of the Western delegation ... believe very firmly that a true federalism will provide for a united country, a country united and strong in spite of the divergences of tribes and tongues and we set out the minimum conditions for the creation of such a federal system of government.<sup>31</sup>

In the likelihood of the rejection of the proposal, Awolowo put forward another set of proposals. Precisely, he proposed that the federation of Nigeria should now become a "Commonwealth of Nigeria" comprising the existing regions and such other regions as may be created with Lagos forming part of the present Western Nigeria. Awolowo anchored his later proposal on the grounds of strong federalism, as earlier advocated, this could only thrive in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence — a condition which was definitely lacking in September 1966.

These various proposals, no doubt, show the genuineness of the delegations' peace-making efforts. In fact, Dudley's claim that the West call for federal and confederal forms of government was "feint" in an harsh criticism.<sup>32</sup> By proposing a temporary "commonwealth of Nigeria," Chief Awolowo was only taking cognizance of the tension prevailing in the country. The realization of this tension and fear was borne out by the East's demand for the loosest political structure possible. While the North and the West, for instance, were prepared to envisage — at least in principle — a future federation of Nigeria, with more states, the East was not in any mood of any constitutional set up which would detract from the sovereignty of its region. It is also misleading to claim, as Dudley had done, that the Mid-west presented a United front for federalism. For the Mid-West Igbo elite in September 1966 also favoured an independent state which could be merged with the East. In a nutshell, the West's proposals as articulated by Chief Awolowo were realistic proposals when examined against the background of the political situation in the country in 1966 and in relation to other delegates proposals. In fact, when the North called for adjournment,

Awolowo objected because he felt that:

We are being led into a blind alley..... and I have no doubt in my mind. I may be wrong, that this is an attempt to terminate the proceedings of this conference.<sup>33</sup>

After some manoeuvres, the conference adjourned until 20th of September. On 20th September the conference reconvened but between that date and October 3rd, 1966, two significant incidents, which had a profound impact on the outcome of the Conference, occurred. The first was the reversal of the North's original position while the second was the renewed attacks on Easterners in various parts of the country.

The new position of the Northern delegation on the constitutional future of the country stunned other delegations. Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the leader of the Northern Delegation, who had earlier pressed for confederation now demanded "an effective central government to be recognized world-wide as the Government of Nigeria." The secession clause in their constitution was also withdrawn while it also favoured the creation of more states in areas clamouring for them.<sup>34</sup> The Lagos delegation was to follow suit by stating unambiguously that it stood for a "true federal form of government" and creation of states in areas agitating for them including the creation of Lagos State. With the improved political climate and in view of the fact that the North, which had often stood against states creation, was now for more states, Chief Awolowo also opted for federalism. This was, however, with the proviso that new states would be created along linguistic lines with Lagos forming part of the West, otherwise the West and Lagos reserved the right to opt out of the federation that might be created thereafter. Chief Awolowo, later in the Conference, further commented on the grievances of the West:

- (a) they were victims of injustice – the dismemberment of Yoruba territory, the excision of Lagos, Ilorin and Kabba and Akoko-Edo from the Yoruba homeland:

- (b) they were subordinate to other regions in governmental matters;
- (c) they were the victims of the misuse and abuse of power in the first republic and property;
- (d) they were envied by other groups in the federation for their human and natural resources; and
- (e) other groups in the federation feared that the West and Lagos might come to dominate the federation in the future.<sup>35</sup>

Before the delegates could adjourn to meet on the 24th October, news reached them that a fresh wave of genocidal acts were being carried out against Easterners in the North and some other parts of the country. All accounts on the massacres agree that the riots started on September 29 in Makurdi and soon spread like fire to such northern towns as Gboko, Zaria, Gombe, Kaduna, Jos, Sokoto, among others. Madiebo's and Cervenka's accounts also agree that there was a general hunt for Easterners in their places of work and homes.<sup>36</sup> The grave nature of the incident was even attested to by Gowon when he said:

"Gentlemen, I will tell you this; Certainly there has been a great damage."<sup>37</sup>

The Governor of the Northern Region, Hassan Katsina also admitted that "the peace of the region had been disturbed on a large scale."<sup>38</sup> When the Ad-Hoc Constitutional Conference resumed sitting on October 23, 1966, the Eastern delegation did not show up. Although some have argued this was a grand design by Ojukwu to complete his secessionist plan, there is certainly no cause to doubt Professor Eni Njoku, the leader of the Eastern delegation, when he wrote thus:

During and since the first session of the conference, events have taken place which have heightened tension and inten-

sified the fears of the people of Eastern Region about the safety of their delegates to Lagos. If you were able to visit the Eastern Region and see things for yourself, I am sure that you would be convinced that these fears are real. The plain fact is that Eastern Nigerians do not feel secure in any part of the country occupied by Northern troops...<sup>39</sup>

In effects, the massacres were not a pretext for Ojukwu to discontinue sending representatives to the conference. They were more than a sufficient justification.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo also later withdrew from the Western delegation and one of the reasons he gave for his action, in a letter he wrote to the West's Governor, Col. R.A. Adebayo, was the Federal Government's failure to implement the earlier resolution that military personnel should be posted to military barracks within their ethnic base.<sup>40</sup> Among issues, the Meeting of the Representatives of the Regional Governors, August 9, 1966, had so resolved.<sup>40</sup> Although this agreement was carried out in the East, there were uncertainties as regards its implementation in the West. The ostensible reason, according to Gowon, was that there were inadequate soldiers of Western origin in the armed forces. But the real fact was that Gowon was not very sure of the position of the West on the crisis, not to talk of its support. The situation was further worsened by the attitude of both the Northern soldiers stationed in the West and of the Yoruba. In fact a meeting of the West's "Leaders of Thought" in October 1966 adopted a resolution appealing to the Federal Government to remove Northern troops from the West. When this did not receive any response, Chief Awolowo had to lead a four-man delegation to Lt. Col. Gowon on 7th November. Stating the case of the West, Awolowo said:

The consensus of opinion among majority of people in Western Nigeria and Lagos is that northern troops in the two territories constitute an army of occupation, and that their non-removal has virtually reduced the said territories to the status of a "Protectorate."<sup>41</sup>

With the exit of the East and the West from the conference, Gowon was forced to adjourn its proceedings *sine die* on 17th November.

From the foregoing discussion, it seems clear that the conference compelled the various Nigeria's groups to examine their respective stakes in the country. Each delegation came to the conference to bargain for its region. At the conference, Chief Awolowo was only a tool of popular will; he asseverated what the West wanted. The mere fact that Awolowo was elected as the "leader of Yorubas," wanted Northern troops to be removed from the West and proposed both federal and confederal forms of government cannot be interpreted to mean a disguised political move towards the creation of an "Oduduwa" state as B.J. Dudley has suggested.<sup>42</sup> For instance, the continued presence of Northern troops in the West largely resented by the public and Chief Awolowo, consequently, took a firm stand against it. In the same vein, Awolowo's stance at the conference was pragmatic and flexible. At the time when no group was ready to make any sacrifice, Awo proposed "federal and confederal systems" but when the political outlook later changed, he also modified his position. There is, in fact, the need to comment on the Mid-West and North the positions which Dudley seems to have written approvingly of were borne out of self interests. The abrupt change from confederacy to strong central government by the Northern delegation was due to the persuasive argument of the British embassy officials and Northern intelligentsia that an autonomous North would be landlocked. In fact, they canvassed the view that the North would not only have access to the coast in a federal set up, she would also share in the revenue from oil. Moreover, the Mid-Belt, well represented in the army, did not see any future for themselves in an autonomous Northern Republic given their experience with the North since 1929 to date. As regards the Mid-West, the reasons for its persistent demand for any form of federalism has, in fact, been summarised thus by Chief Awolowo:

- (a) they lacked cohesion and were therefore in constant fear of disintegration;
- (b) they were open to assault by the East and therefore threatened with subjugation; and,
- (c) they would be insolvent as an "independent" state and hence depended for their survival on the continuance of the federation.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, besides the October killings, the conference failed to achieve the desired objectives because of self interest and because the participants did not leave room for compromise. The delegates proposals were inflexible — one group's proposal could only prevail at the expense of the others.

#### NOVEMBER 1966 — MAY 1967: AWO ON THE FENCE

Except for his participation at the Ad-hoc Constitutional Conference, Chief Awolowo's attitude to the Nigerian crisis between November 1966 and May 17, 1967 can be described as one of "fence sitting" or "wait and see". Despite the fact that he owed his release from prison to Gowon's grace, Awolowo did not even rush to his warm embrace. In fact from November 17, when the Ad-hoc Conference adjourned to May 1st 1967 when he made the popular "THE FOUR IMPERATIVES" speech, Awolowo maintained his silence and did not commit himself to any side of the conflict. The period was indeed used for a calculating and penetrating analysis of the Nigerian situation. Nonetheless, Chief Awolowo's Address to the meeting of Leaders of Thought on May 1st, 1967 remains the most controversial statement ever made by any Nigerian in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the civil war. In his address, Chief Awolowo rejected the use of force as a solution to the Nigerian crisis. He stressed that if there would be any war, it would be a war between the East and the North and that there would not be any issue at stake except revenge by the East and the consolidation of the existing political domination by the North. In other words, the rest regions would not support any faction of the crisis. In the tense situation of

1966, such statements were seen by the Eastern leaders as indicative of tacit support for them. However, the most controversial statement in the address was imperative number three:

If the Eastern Region is allowed by *acts of omission or commission* to secede or opt out of Nigeria, then the Western Region and Lagos must also stay out of the Federation.<sup>44</sup> (emphasis mine) In the latter part of the address Awolowo further added: Before the Western delegates went to Lagos to attend to the meetings of the Ad-Hoc Committee, they were given a clear mandate that if any region should opt out of the federation of Nigeria, then the federation must be considered to be at an end; and then the Western Region and Lagos should also opt out of it. It should then be open to Western Nigeria and Lagos as an independent sovereign state to enter into association with any of the Nigerian units of its own choosing, and on terms mutually acceptable to them.

We have quoted the above address extensively because of the heat it has often generated among participants in both sides of the civil war and in general discussions on the war. The speech has, in fact, been quoted in many quarters as a direct encouragement for the East to secede. This, at least, is the position taken by Okion Ojigbo and Arthur Nwakwo.<sup>45</sup> Some commentators even omit the important phrase "acts of omission or commission" in order to justify the subsequent declaration of Biafra's Republic. Even in a recent magazine interview, the distinguished Nigerian Novelist, Chinua Achebe, derisively opined:

... But somebody said: If A is allowed to get out of Nigeria I would follow. Do you remember who said that?<sup>46</sup>

Although Awolowo had clearly stated that he never encouraged Ojukwu "in the slightest degree to go to war or to secede", the statement could, as a matter of fact be given various interpretations. First, the statement was an ambivalent one lending weight among the Igbo to the stereotyped notion of Yoruba duplicity. The statement could also mean that the

Federal Government must prevent the secession of the East by all means or else. . . In fact, Awolowo, in the same address, did express the view that the "the Eastern Region must be encouraged to remain part of the Federation." He also stressed that while some of Eastern region's demands were reasonable and designed for healthy association; others were dangerous and inimical to nation building. In a nutshell when we note that Awolowo's threat to pull the West out of the federation includes the phrase "acts of omission or commission" and when this is interpreted in the context of the full speech, it becomes clear that the statement was a conditional one and ought not to be taken as a *carte blanche* for Eastern secession. Besides, the "acts of omission or commission" were to be determined by Awolowo. This issue has, in fact, been recently clarified by Bernard Odogwu, Biafra's Director of Military Intelligence. He categorically states that at no time did Awolowo ask the East to secede and that even without the much quoted May 1st speech, the East would still have seceded.<sup>47</sup>

**MAY 6—MAY 30, 1967: FROM NATIONAL CONCILIATION COMMITTEE TO THE DECLARATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF BIAFRA**

After the May 1st controversial speech, Chief Awolowo was to be involved in the last major peace move to prevent the slide to disaster — National Conciliation Committee. The peace move was the brain-child of the Chief Justice of the Federation, Sir Adetokunbo Ademola. At its meeting held on 5th May at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Chief Awolowo was unanimously elected to lead a delegation to Enugu with the object of persuading Ojukwu to come to the conference table. Other members of the Delegation were Chief J.I.G. Onyla, Chief S.J. Mariere, and Dr. Samuel Aluko.<sup>48</sup> From May 6th to 7th 1967, the Delegation held consultations with the Governor of the East but the talks ended in a fiasco. There is no doubt that Ojukwu was greatly responsible for the failure of the

peace move as he made it clear to the Delegates that he had no confidence in the body. Ojukwu went to the extent of referring to the mediation attempt as an "ill-conceived child" on the grounds that some members of the committee — Okoi Arikpo and Amachree — were not representatives of the Eastern cause and that the Chief Justice could not be a dispassionate arbiter.<sup>49</sup> In fact, a close reading of *Awo on the Civil War*, reveals the recalcitrant and obstinate posture of Ojukwu. Nonetheless a perusal of the memoranda of the meeting between Ojukwu and the delegation reveals that Ojukwu wanted a Southern dominion against the North and Chief Awolowo, to some extent shared similar sentiments. At one point during the meeting, Ojukwu said:

We will keep on trying to keep this way of making general peace open but it would be tragic if the south is caught as it was, unprepared. So our efforts should be on two fronts — the national level and the Southern level — so that if one fails, we can move into another without a very bad disruption.

Chief Awolowo and other members of the committee, however, maintained that any case for Southern dominion should be argued out at a roundtable conference; a view which was not pleasing to Ojukwu. Ojukwu believed that the East had a good case but he lacked the methodical approach, carrying Chief Awolowo, the most popular politician at the time, with him. Apart from the agreement among writers that he treated Awolowo cavalierly,<sup>51</sup> the latter also claimed that, at a point during the meeting, Ojukwu made rude remarks against him.<sup>52</sup> Under this circumstance, it is definitely impossible for anybody to give Ojukwu a mandate to go to war. N. U. Akpan, the Chief Secretary to the Eastern Government, who was also present at the meeting, has however given us the benefit of his usual frankness:

Governor Ojukwu in fact made it clear to Chief Awolowo and others of the National Conciliation Committee . . .

that the place of meeting between the people of the East and those of the North would be the battle field. I do not know whether the visiting team from Lagos grasped the full significance of that ominous statement.<sup>53</sup>

In effect, the claim that Awolowo goaded Ojukwu to secede amounts to inventing a "scape-goat" theory.

With Ojukwu's refusal to come to the conference table it was clear that all political observers that secession of the East was imminent. However, also very relevant to the East's ultimate decision to secede was the definite commitment of "Northern Emirs and Leaders of Thought" to the issue of state creation. The meeting of this body had on May 4, resolved that the North should continue to support a strong federal government with effective centre as the only form of political association suitable for Nigeria. The meeting also gave the mandate that more states should be created in the North whether or not the same exercise would be carried out in other parts of the federation. It also urged the Federal Government to set in motion, immediately, the machinery for the creation of more states.<sup>54</sup> While this decision may be regarded as revolutionary (taking into consideration the traditional conservative posture of the North on states creation), it only succeeded in alienating the East. This was because the East could no longer count on the support of Chief Awolowo, a known supporter of state creation, the proposals were a solid backing to Gowon to dismember the East and contend its claim to embodying "self-determination" for the Eastern minorities.

With these developments (the North's proposals and failure of the meeting of the National Conciliation Committee), it appeared that force, the hand-maiden of authority would be used to resolve the impasse. In fact, Ojukwu, who had earlier promised to re-examine the "Revenue and Survival edicts" if the Federal Government should end its economic sanctions against the East did not honour this pledge when the blockade was lifted on the 20th May. Rather than reciprocate, the East, in the words of Cyprian Ekwensi, received

the news of Federal revocations of sanctions with "contempt, levity and apathy".<sup>55</sup> On the 27th May the Consultative Assembly mandated Ojukwu to declare "at a practicable date, Eastern Nigeria as a free sovereign and independent state by the name of Biafra". In the apparent bid to forestall the actual declaration of secession, Gowon proclaimed a state of emergency throughout Nigeria and decreed, on the same day, the division of Nigeria into twelve states (six in the North, three in the East and one each in the West, Mid-West and Lagos).<sup>56</sup> This was a situation the East would not accept and Ojukwu, accepting the challenge, finally declared the Republic of Biafra on 30th May, 1967. This signified the beginning of the Nigerian civil war since Gowon had made it expressly clear that secession would be resisted by all available means. The first shots of the war were fired on July 6, 1967.

#### THE AWO FACTOR IN THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR

In view of the fact that some critics have tended to persist in their belief that Awolowo goaded the East to secede, it is necessary to examine the place which the Awolowo factor occupies in the East's ultimate decision to secede. From the testimonies of two high-ranking Biafran officials, N. U. Akpan and Bernard Odogwu, it is misleading to argue that Awolowo pushed the East to War. A textual examination of the May 1st speech and the memoranda of the meeting of National Conciliation Committee has also revealed that the whole idea of "a stab in the back" by Awolowo has no basis in reality. In fact, available literature reveals that the decision to secede was taken by Eastern leaders, after they had come to the conclusion that they were not fairing well in the Nigerian federation. Indeed, there is no denying the fact that the wanton destruction of lives and properties of Easterners for the greater part of 1966 created a ripe atmosphere for secession. The massacres, no doubt, brought untold misery on the people and conditioned many to believe

that their future lay outside the federation. Indeed, there is considerable weight in the argument of those writers who opined that the 1966 massacres made the civil war inevitable. However, while acknowledging the fact that public mood favoured secession it seems clear that the Eastern leadership did little to assuage the feelings of the people.

In fact, before the May 1st speech of Chief Awolowo, the Eastern leadership had already committed the region to secession. From Akpan's evidence the irrevocable decision to secede had been taken as early as August 1966 and the position of the Eastern delegation at the Ad-Hoc Conference seems to confirm this. According to him, the Eastern delegation to the meeting was not given a free-hand to discuss but had been, before departure, issued with detailed and specific instructions — instructions which they were told not to compromise on any ground.<sup>57</sup> It should also be recalled that the East adopted the most rigid and uncompromising stand on the issue of states creation. Besides, as early as December 1966, the distinguished African poet and playwright, Christopher Okigbo, declared:

If Ojukwu does not declare secession we will organize 20,000 market women to lynch him.<sup>58</sup>

And, left to Gowon and Ojukwu alone, the civil war could, possibly have been avoided but the irrepressible forces around them would not allow them. On the Federal side, the "hawks" around Gowon forced him to renege on crucial provisions of the agreement. But the crux of the matter is that Aburi, in its undiluted form was unsatisfactory to Ojukwu's hardline supporters. Akpan reports that on Ojukwu's arrival from Aburi, the Governor's arch-adviser's (obviously Mojekwu) response was:

But what you have has not brought us full independence or sovereignty.<sup>59</sup>

A further indication of the East preparedness for secession before May 1st was the interception, at Heathrow Airport,

of an Eastern government official in March 1967 with some specimens of Biafran currency notes.<sup>60</sup> Finally, it is significant to note that Bernard Odogwu admits that by the end of March 1967, the Western Region no longer considered itself to be part of Nigeria.<sup>61</sup>

#### FROM FENCE-SITTING AND VACILATION TO OPEN SUPPORT FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

That Chief Awolowo later abandoned his initial "wait and see" attitude and actively supported the federal cause is, of course, now history. But the issue is that controversy still rages on why he eventually supported the federal government. To John de St. Jorre, the most fundamental factor in Awolowo's decision to support the Federal Government was because he realised that fence sitting was no longer tenable. To B.J. Dudley, Awo was compelled to support the Federal side because other "political heavy weights" like Sir Kashim Ibrahim and Chief Mariere had declared their support for the Federal Government. While neutrality in any civil war could be suicidal (as David Ejoor soon realised), there were still other factors and considerations that eventually determined Awolowo's choice.

First, it should be noted that Chief Awolowo owed his release from prison to Gowon's amnesty. Besides, Gowon had crowned his masterful political skill by treating him courteously and recognizing his place in the pantheon of Nigerian leaders. For this reason, Awolowo owed a debt of gratitude to him. In fact, Gowon's relationship with Awolowo was a sharp contrast with the cavalier treatment the latter received when he met Ojukwu in May 1967.

Second, by May 1967 Chief Awolowo had won over to his side some regional factions of the ruling elite. The Northern faction, for instance, was now in support of federalism and states creation. Chief Awolowo may have seen these as indication that his prescriptions were being put into practice.

Moreover, granted that Chief Awolowo meant to carry out his threat to take the West out of the federation, he could not unilaterally take the decision. Although he was the rallying point for the Yoruba intelligentsia and other political leaders, he had to take into consideration the position of Yoruba officers and the strength of the West in the Nigerian Army. In 1966-67, the strength of the Yoruba men and officers in the army was very low and, to be precise, it was 700 out of 10,000.<sup>62</sup> Apart from this stark reality, senior Yoruba officers like Olusegun Obasanjo and James Oluleye did not even favour the idea. Even when these officers were advised by some members of the Yoruba intelligentsia to desert their posts (as a result of attack on Southerners particularly Igbo in the North) these officers did not yield.<sup>63</sup> In other words, the West did not possess the military capability and common front to take on the Federal Government.

Finally, Yakubu Gowon deliberately sought the support of Chief Awolowo. In his letter to Awolowo on the 27th of May, Gowon stated *inter alia*:

I have now taken the plunge to create some states by decree. It is fraught with dangers, but I am convinced that it is the right start. I need the help of experienced hands to help ensure the continued existence of this country as a political and economic entity. This is where you come in. I am going to ask a number of civilians to join the Federal Executive Council and I am wondering whether you would be interested ....<sup>64</sup>

The above letter was later supplemented orally by Kam Salem, the Inspector General of Police and, after further discussions with Gowon, Chief Awolowo accepted to serve in the Federal Executive Council in the capacity of Vice-Chairman. Two days later, he became Federal Commissioner for Finance as Gowon gave him the freehand to choose whatever portfolio he wanted before allocating the

rest. This offer went a long way in satisfying Awolowo's ambition to serve at the federal level since the fifties; at least it was far better than the uncertain post which an alliance with unpredictable and arrogant Ojukwu could yield.

#### AWO AND THE WAR PROCESS

Officially, the Nigerian Civil War lasted between July 6, 1967 and January 15, 1970. During these war years, Awolowo was one of the key actors in the prosecution of the war especially as he was the Finance Minister and Chairman of the Federal Executive Council. The purpose of this section of the paper, therefore, is to examine his involvement in the various aspects of the war process. However, before that is done, there is the need to examine the substance, if any, of the view that Awolowo still remained consistent to his anti-war policy for a long period after he had accepted to be a member of Gowon's cabinet. In fact, it has been suggested that Awolowo did not show full commitment to opposing Biafra's secession until Biafran troops poured into the Mid-west and entered the West itself in August. Others have then canvassed the view that Awolowo made some covert political moves to overthrow the Federal Government and instal himself as the President.

First, the argument that Awo was still neutral until the Biafrans invaded the Mid-West is a puerile one. As St. Jorre has rightly pointed out:

It is rather like saying that Atlee's decision to Loin Churchill's war cabinet gave him the right to oppose the war with Germany until the Germans stepped on British soil.<sup>65</sup>

By joining Gowon's war cabinet, Awolowo had resolutely committed himself to opposing secession by all conceivable means. And it is relevant to note that Awolowo made his first categorical pro-federal speech on 12th August, well before the Biafran's incursion into the West:

I am personally satisfied that the acts of omission or commission which we have feared had not materialised and that the federal military government acting on the recommendation of the National Conciliation Committee in the closing days of May this year, did all that was possible in the circumstances to placate the Eastern leaders.<sup>66</sup>

The other aspect of the belief that Awo did not show full commitment to the Federal side is the belief, in some quarters, that he was involved in the "Banjo plot." According to this theory, Col. Victor Banjo, the leader of the invading Biafran force was to be given an unhindered access to the West by the grace of Chief Awolowo. The detail of the plot was that having occupied the Mid-West, the "January Revolutionaries" would then attack Biafra and possibly kill Ojukwu, ally with the West and bring the war to an end. Thereafter, the plotters would, with the support of Awolowo, turnover to Gowon, depose him and install the latter as President of the country.

The most articulate exponent of this view is Frederick Forsyth.<sup>67</sup> According to him, the plot was foiled by the Biafran intelligence and Banjo (Alale, Agbam and Ifeajuna) allegedly confessed the above. Forsyth further added that the British Deputy High Commissioner in Benin connived with the plotters by relaying the messages in German to another official of the High Commission in Lagos. Forsyth concludes by stating that Banjo treacherously withdrew from Ore and deliberately yielded Benin and other territories already conquered by the Biafrans in order to achieve the plot earlier stated.

The bulk of the Banjo plot, in the view of this writer, was largely mythical. Since the conclusion of the war, there has been no corroborative evidence to substantiate Forsyth's claim that Banjo or any official of the British mission got in touch with Chief Awolowo. In fact, the alleged confession by Banjo (involving Awolowo) is also a ruse as Nelson Ottah and Bernard Odogwu, two high ranking Biafran officials, have revealed in their works.<sup>68</sup> These officials gave prominence to

the trial of Banjo *et al* in their works and there was no place, in the exhibits tendered before Justice Nkemena Tribunal, where Chief Awolowo was mentioned. Neither did the plaintiff nor the defendants connect Chief Awolowo with the "plot." The hostile reaction of the Yoruba of Ore, as available evidence shows, is also not supportive of Forsyth's claim. Nor is there any evidence for the alleged Banjo's treacherous withdrawal from Ore and the rest of the Mid-West. In fact, existing evidence shows that the battle for the control of Ore was fierce but the Federal side won by sheer military might and because they were fighting on friendly territory.

Nonetheless, the "Banjo plot" was not all myth as there was definitely plan to overthrow Ojukwu by the forces that favoured a negotiated solution with Nigeria.

In examing the war process, our attention will be focused on two issues:

- (a) Awo and the finance of the war.
- (b) Awo and the politics of food.

Perhaps the most appreciable contributions of Awolowo to the war efforts was in the field of finance. Indeed, as the Finance Minister, he had the onerous task of managing the war economy. This task was not an easy one given the depressed state of economy during the war years. For example, between 1966 and 1968, the total exports of the country declined appreciably from ₦566.4 million to ₦410.4 million; oil exports also slumped from 33.1% of total in 1966 to 18.9 in 1968.<sup>69</sup> This decline was sequel to the destruction of the oil wells in the Biafran-held territory and loss of agricultural produce exports from the East. To compound the situation, the country's balance of payments turned from a modest surplus of ₦17.6 in 1968 to a deficit of ₦128.1 million in 1970.

From the above, it is obvious that the realities of the war economy demanded a strict financial policy and Awolowo, assisted by able lieutenants, discharged himself creditably. He presided over three budgets during the period, managed the Federal Government finances prudently and prosecuted the war with about £300 million. More importantly, the Federal Government was not indebted to any foreign country

at the end of the war and the people did not suffer undue deprivation as common in most war situations. How was this rare feat achieved?

In the management of the war economy, Chief Awolowo adopted the fiscalist approach. Like Lord John Keynes, the *guru* of the fiscalists, Awolowo sought to achieve economic stability and growth through the use of fiscal measures (notably tax) in controlling aggregate demand. The fiscalist approach also entail an active participation of the state in allocating resources through bureaucratic controls and regulations. It is opposed to the monetarist approach which lays much premium on money and believes that so long as interest rates are adjusted, market forces would interplay to bring about a desirable situation in the economy. In particular, Awolowo adopted a three-pronged method in financing the war:

- (a) economizing the resources of the Federal Government;
- (b) conserving the badly depleted and scarce foreign exchange; and
- (c) generating additional revenues to compensate the loss accruing from drops in oil and agricultural exports.<sup>70</sup>

The first test of Awolowo's strength of nerve came early in the war - the international currency crisis of 1967. In November, 1967 the British government unilaterally devalued the pound sterling and since Nigeria was a member of the sterling bloc, a decision (to devalue or not to devalue) had to be taken. Awolowo sought the opinion of the country's leading financial experts and eventually decided against devaluation for two reasons. First, he opined that it was not in the best interest of Nigeria during this war time as it would reduce the capacity of the country to buy arms from the international market. Second, he considered the British action as an infringement on the country's independence and sovereignty.

Before taking the decision, Awolowo was under strong pressure from the monetarists like Clement Isong, the Governor of the Central Bank (who preferred devaluation) but he had to put his feet down.<sup>71</sup> With the rejection of

devaluation of the Nigerian pound, its earning power remained stable during the war period.

#### CONSERVATION OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE

One of the measures adopted by Chief Awolowo to conserve the country's scarce foreign exchange was the purchase of arms and ammunitions through raw cash or by barter. Most of the arms obtained from the Soviet Union, for example, were bartered for agricultural produce. Although the Soviets could have insisted on foreign exchange or no deal, they accepted the bargain because they saw the war as an opportunity to score political and diplomatic advantage over Britain; moreso when Britain had vacillated a lot at the beginning of the war.<sup>72</sup> Besides the resort to barter, Awolowo also exercised a tighter control over the disbursement of foreign exchange earnings. This measure became necessary in view of the fact that before his tenure as finance commissioner, commercial banks in the country disposed off their foreign exchange according to their whims and caprices. In fact, the World then was divided into two blocs: the scheduled and non-scheduled areas and the Exchange control Officer had no authority over the transfer of exchange to the scheduled area. This practice was discontinued henceforth. Awolowo not only abolished the arbitrary distinction between scheduled and non-scheduled areas, he also instructed all commercial banks to deposit all their foreign exchange earnings with the Central Bank of Nigeria. In the event, all transactions in foreign exchange were subject to the recommendation and approval of the Exchange Control Officer.<sup>73</sup>

Another measure adopted by Awolowo to conserve foreign exchange was that he regulated the country's imports. Prior to May 1967, little control was exercised over the importation of European manufactured goods and all sort of articles found their way to the Nigerian shores. On noting this dangerous trend, Awolowo put a good number of items on the prohibitive list. It was also to conserve foreign exchange that Awolowo inaugurated a high powered

Import Quota Allocation Committee charged with the responsibility of issuing import licenses to deserving firms.<sup>74</sup>

Finally, Awolowo was quick to discover that Biafrans were hawking Nigeria's pounds at give away rates for foreign exchange. This practice could have a telling blow on Nigeria's economy; more so when the Biafrans now had in their possession unissued currency notes burgled from the Central Bank vaults in Enugu, Benin and Port-Harcourt. This abuse of the Nigerian pound coupled with the dire need to ensure the effectiveness of the trade embargo imposed on the secessionist territory compelled the Ministry of Finance to embark on currency conversion exercise in late 1967. This exercise was given legal and military backing by Decree No. 51 of 1967. The three musketeers: Awolowo, Clement Isong and Abdul Aziz Atta, kept sealed lips on the exercise until its actual execution.<sup>75</sup> This exercise caused a great discomfort

and economic loss in the East as it caught them unawares. The exercise also lowered the morale of the fighting troops as it reduced their earning power to nothingness and, had the war been vigorously prosecuted at this time, the civil war could possibly have ended earlier than it lasted. In fact, Awolowo incurred the wrath of the Igbo for this measure and several still hold this point against him today. That the exercise had a terrible impact on the Biafrans is confirmed by C.O. Dureke:

The first serious blow against them (Biafrans) was the promulgation of the Moratorium Decree which nullified the Biafran currency and rendered nearly all Igbo on the Eastern side of the River Niger impecunious in one fell swoop.<sup>76</sup>

In particular, the exercise crippled them financially and severely curtailed their ability to purchase arms from the international market.

avenue for the international "do-gooders", - dogs of war (mercenaries), missionaries and relief agencies - to practice their professions. It is, in fact, not in doubt that both sides in the conflict employed the services of the mercenaries and that external interests were later actively involved in the war.

Alarmed by the increasing internalization of the war, Chief Awolowo and a number of top civil servants and soldiers advocated the "quick-kill" action. For them, starvation was a legitimate weapon of war. Chief Awolowo, in particular, came out publicly to canvass the view the only way to put a timely end to the war for the Federal Government to effectively blockade Biafra by land, air and sea.<sup>82</sup> Awolowo's logic was that a strict enforcement of the economic blockade, and vigorous pursuit of the war would force Biafra on its knees on time and, consequently, save more lives. Since available records show that the food reliefs meant for the civilian population were always appropriated by the soldiers, Awolowo argued that the war was being unnecessarily prolonged. "You don't feed your enemies," he opined. This statement was cashed on by Ojukwu and the Biafran propagandists and it was interpreted to mean that he wanted to starve the whole Igbo race to death. Although Awolowo had the opportunity to defend himself publicly on the issue, there is no doubt that the concept of starvation made some military sense in the context of the time. Besides, the concept was not new as it had always been employed in warfare since the period of the Greek city - states.<sup>83</sup> There is also the need to stress that the economic blockade was not even whole heartedly enforced by the Gowon administration. Gowon, in fact, preferred a sort of "slow squeeze" action since, according to him, the war was not against the innocent Igbos but designed to win them back to the Federal side. Besides, the Federal Government did not possess the military capability and resources to implement the swift, well-coordinated action advocated by Awolowo. In other words, Gowon had a relief policy of his own and this included permitting international charitable organizations to fly

An equally significant economic measure that Awolowo adopted in the prosecution of the war was the Central Bank Act of 1968. Prior to the outbreak of the war, only commercial banks were authorized by law to finance commodity boards. With the outbreak of the war, however, the Standard Bank (now First Bank) refused to finance the export of the country's export produce because it was unsure of when the war would end and whether it would be possible for her to recover the amount expended. It was against this background that the Central Bank Act of 1968 was promulgated. This act made the Central Bank the sole authority to extend credits to the marketing boards for financing the<sup>79</sup> purchase of export produce.

It was through all these fiscal control measures initiated by Awolowo and adopted by the Federal Executive Council that the Federal Government was able to raise "230.8 million pounds in local currency and 70.8 million pounds in foreign exchange" to prosecute the war.<sup>80</sup> Dr. Clement Isong, the Governor of Central Bank throughout the war years gave Awo a deserved and befitting remark:

He was the most careful commissioner I worked with. Every Monday, he would meet with me and his permanent secretary to review the foreign exchange position of the country.

He was never partisan on issues.<sup>81</sup>

#### AWOLOWO AND THE POLITICS OF FOOD

When Gowon declared "Police Action" against Biafra on July 6, 1967, he envisaged that the operations would be over in a matter of weeks. The Biafran side, too, was optimistic that it would be able to push out the "invaders" out of its territory within a short span of time. By the beginning of 1968, however, both sides had realised the fallacy of their positions. The Federal hope of quick victory had failed woefully as Biafra put up a stout defence while she was, simultaneously, soliciting for international sympathy with the wail of "genocide". Thus, the war of attrition provided a

## INTERNALLY GENERATED REVENUES

As a true fiscalist, Chief Awolowo used fiscal instruments to generate revenue internally. Among the most important were (a) the capital gains tax of about 20% imposed on companies, (b) terminal dues payable by all ships evacuating mineral oil from Nigerian ports; (c) turn over tax imposed on companies regardless of whether they had recorded profit for the year in question or not; (d) a flat levy tax on the categories of pioneer companies. This measure alone yielded the sum of £1.2 million for the Federal Government in the 1968/69 fiscal year. This policy was directed against the Pioneer Industry Ordinance which had, before then, granted a tax holiday of five years to "infant industries;" (e) a super tax imposed on all companies whose taxable income exceeded either £5,000 during the year of assessment or 15% of the company's issued and paid up capital. This tax was initially fixed at two shillings on a pound in 1968 but it was raised to five shillings on a pound in 1969. From this tax alone, statistics showed that the sum of £1.6 million and £2.4 million were collected respectively in the 1968/69 and 1969/70 fiscal years.<sup>77</sup>

Having refused to borrow money from the international money market, Chief Awolowo also modified the status of Treasury Bills and the Way and Means advances. This was to increase the Federal Government capacity to borrow from the Central Bank. Prior to the war, the Federal Government was only allowed to borrow from the Central Bank of Nigeria in proportion to 50% of its budget. This legal limit was amended by Awolowo and the Federal Government could raise loan up to 85% of its estimated revenue in 1968, 100% in 1969 and 150% in 1970. In the same spirit Awolowo had, in May 1968 reduced the rediscount rate from 5% to 4½% and thus allowing for general reduction in interest rates to stimulate domestic production. He also created new borrowing instruments for the government. An example was the Treasury Certificate which initially matured in 90 days but which was now raised to one year.<sup>78</sup>

relief materials in the nights to Biafra. Despite the fact that he knew that the corridors were being used for gun running, Gowon allowed night-flying to Biafra for fifteen months. When this was proving too costly for the Federal war efforts he still allowed day-light flying to Biafra provided the planes would be checked by Federal officials and followed routes of its choice. He also accepted the presence of an international Observer Team to keep a watchful eye on the conduct of the Federal troops and military operations in general. In a nutshell the Gowon's Government (in which Chief Awolowo served more or less as a Prime-Minister) fulfilled the Geneva Conventions and even went some measure beyond it.<sup>84</sup>

Despite this, we note that there was real starvation in Biafra during the war years. Wars generally are terrible things and the Nigerian Civil War was not an exception. For the greater part of the war years, there was acute shortage of essential items - salt, milk, beverages, rice, sugar, drugs, petrol, spare parts etc. The shortage also had the twin effect of hoarding, inflation and high cost of living. The morale of soldiers and civilians later became undermined and there was intense struggle for personal survival. Numerous deaths were recorded through kwashiorkor and marasmus. In fact, grim ugly situation in Biafra has been aptly depicted by Chinua Achebe's *Girls At War* and Cyprian Ekwensi's *Survive the Peace*. There is also much truth in B. Odogwu's claim that, in Biafra, there was no place to hide for "if one did not die in battle, one would probably get killed by a bomb or kwashiorkor"<sup>85</sup>.

While acknowledging all these, we also observe that the major cause of the starvation was not Awolowo's advocacy of starvation as a weapon of war and the Federal sea blockade. The direct causes of famine were lack of foreign exchange, loss of major food producing areas to the Federals, young men joining the army, the general atmosphere of fear and insecurity, and what O.B.C. Nwoliise has called the "inadequacy of mercy flights"<sup>86</sup>. We also acknowledge that the deprivations suffered by the Igbo were not, as claimed

during the heart of Second Republic politics, due to Awolowo's hatred for the Igbos but largely due to the deliberate refusal of the Biafran leadership to alleviate the sufferings of the people. They played an irresponsible political game with food. Available evidence, for instance, reveals that Ojukwu rejected Federal supervision of relief operations. Even as late as September 1969 when Lord Carrington visited Biafra, Ojukwu still rejected the International Committee of Red Cross scheme of daylight flight because of "political reasons mainly".<sup>87</sup> In fact, Ojukwu and his advisers made it clear that they would not accept food supplies unless they came from sources and channels with which the Federal Government has no connection. Even the little relief materials that got to Biafra were believed to be "poisoned" by the masses and Biafran leadership did virtually nothing to dispel the fear. Granted that arbitrary use of land routes could confer some tactical advantages on the Federal troops the merit of a single, internationally supervised land route (well defended at the Biafran end) was also rejected. Besides this, a relief pact with the Federal Government would have solved the problem: at least there wouldn't be any need for mercy flights. But the idea of a relief pact was not considered because the cry of "genocide" and "mass starvation" was being used to covert international involvement which would probably win the war for them or force a settlement. This strategy turned out to be a failure and Biafra collapsed under the weight of famine, starvation, heavy military bombardments and internal crises. In effect, our position is that Ojukwu's acceptance of the terms of the Geneva Conventions would have saved more lives but he preferred to choose short-term political goals. In conclusion, the burden of the sufferings of the Igbo during the war years lay not on Chief Awolowo but squarely on the Biafran leadership. The hall mark of good leadership is the acceptance of the dictum: "The Buck stops Here. No more buck passing."

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

From our discussion so far, it is obvious that Awolowo's civil war record has been largely controversial. Nonetheless the paper has been able to establish that Awolowo neither goaded Ojukwu to secession nor attempted to create a separate state for the Yoruba during the war years. We have also been able to establish that too much fuss has been made of Awolowo's advocacy of starvation as a weapon of war. And if the economic policies he pursued as the Finance Minister had a telling effect on the secessionist enclave, the policies were implemented for the sake of larger Nigerian nation. There should, in fact, be no doubt in any quarter that Awolowo contributed a great deal to the preservation of Nigeria as a single socio-political and economic entity. Indeed the modest epitaph for Awolowo's civil war role is that supplied by Gowon himself:

In the war years, Chief Awolowo ..... worked hand in hand with his most able Permanent Secretary, the late Alhaji Abdul Attah. They were both strong and able men, each with his firmly held opinions and they respected each other. Together, ably assisted by other committed public servants they ensured that *we managed our finances so well that we never lacked the sinews of war. Without their work we could hardly have prevailed.*<sup>88</sup>

(emphasis is mine)

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## Awolowo and the Development of Local Government

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C.O. AYODELE

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It is not the death of Chief Obafemi Awolowo alone that marked the end of an era, his emergence on the political scene also did. This is because his activities and political philosophy did not only threaten, but actually culminated in the termination of the arrangement which made the traditional agents accountable to the British Colonial Administrators, who were out to promote Britain's interests, at the expense of the educated Nigerians and therefore more 'knowledgeable' but non-loyal elites. He understood early enough, the concealed mischief planned and implemented by the colonial masters through the active collaboration of the less discerning traditional rulers, and he was prepared to fight it. He possessed what it required to dislodge the condominium - sound education, discerning power, political articulation, courage of conviction, iron will and uncompromising stance in the face of threat and intimidation. Thus well armed, Chief Awolowo was not prepared to give the unquestioning obedience that the colonial situation demanded from the subjects.

Soon after his University Education in London (1944-46), Awo fully assumed his anti-colonial stance, and was all out to fight against all those colonial policies which he considered revolting to civilized conscience, not minding whosoever this might hurt. In order to achieve this, Awo had to expose the

diabolical and sinister plans of the colonizers in the most vivid and pungent manner. For doing this, he incurred the wrath of the colonizers who saw in him and his like, the end of an era.

Although the colonialists found his scathing criticisms embarrassing, they appreciated he was saying the hidden truth which more and more educated elites were increasingly appreciating and were prepared to fight for. Awo was not a lone voice. To try to suppress the just cause he stood for could therefore mean a signal of invitation to violence.

On the part of the traditional authorities - Obas, Chiefs and councils - Awo's emergence meant exposure of practices that are inconsistent with the demands of modern democratic government hinged on democracy. Chief Obafemi Awolowo realised the gross short-comings of the predominantly illiterate traditional authorities in the face of the complex and challenging administrative bureaucracy. To him, the remedy lies in charging the more suitable educated elites with administrative and legislative functions, leaving the traditional elites (who under the Indirect Rule policy had become power-brokers turned agents) with ceremonial and ritual functions. This was the period when the Obas as Sole Native Authorities or Paramount Chiefs were seriously nursing the hope of regaining their sovereign rights as the decolonisation process progressed and the colonizers gradually abdicated their ruling powers.

The Obas were at the same time scheming arduously to secure for themselves higher pay, high social ranking and recognition vis-a-vis their chiefs.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore obvious that they would resist any attempt on the part of their subjects to abort their schemes, moreover, when this came from the son of a farmer-cum-lumberman,<sup>2</sup> a *nouveau riche*.

From the foregoing, it would be seen that even before assuming the role of a foremost political leader among the Yoruba, Chief Awolowo had incurred the hatred of the two most formidable forces on Nigeria's political scene. The

colonizers had as from 1947 known more about Awolowo's political philosophy, following the publication of his first book, *Path To Nigerian Freedom*.<sup>3</sup>

But Chief Awolowo had a clear vision of his desired goal and knew how to arrive there. In 1945, he founded the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, and made the Yoruba Obas (jointly and severally) the patrons, and the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adesoji Aderemi the grand patron. This secured for him, in later life, the unflinching support of most of the Yoruba Obas.<sup>4</sup> This was a very neat arrangement that did not totally solve the problem of who wields what power.

The *Egbe* as a matter of policy, pledged itself to 'recognise and maintain the monarchical and other similar institutions of Yorubaland; plan for their complete enlightenment and democratisation....'<sup>5</sup> Not many of the Obas fully understood the implication of the *Egbe's* pledge.

Whatever the implication, one thing which is clear is this: the *Egbe* failed to spell out any definite functions expected of the monarchs 'and other similar institutions'. Instead, it planned a complete enlightenment and democratisation of the institution. Could this mean planned obsolescence for the Chief? Events later revealed the answer.

By March 1950, Chief Awolowo came up with a broad, comprehensive and well thought-out twenty-point programme geared towards achieving what he described as 'Freedom for all, life more abundant'.<sup>6</sup> This later became Awolowo's new political party's article of faith.

After completing all necessary ground-work, Awolowo publicly announced the new party - The Action Group<sup>7</sup> - on 26 March 1950. The party was inaugurated in a grand-style at Owo in April 1951. Thereafter, Awolowo became the leader of the AG as well as the pivot of politics in Yorubaland.

Following the introduction of the Macpherson Constitution, Awolowo contested the Western Region Election of that year on the ticket of the AG and won. He consequently

became the leader of the ruling party in the Western Region and Head of Government Business.

The then Lieutenant Governor, Sir Chandos Hoskyns-Abrahall, realising the stuff of man Awolowo was, and knowing well enough that Awolowo would not succumb to further Aryan tutelage and the colonialists' paternalism, no matter how benevolent felt most reluctant inviting him to form a government as the Constitution stipulates.<sup>8</sup> But he had no alternative choice. When he finally did, Chandos earmarked Awolowo for the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.<sup>9</sup> Awolowo promptly and bluntly refused the design. Instead, he chose what later became the most central and most important office as at then the Local Government.

#### CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS IN WESTERN NIGERIA

Chief Obafemi Awolowo realised how deep-rooted the psychological commitment of the Yoruba people to their traditional rulers was as of 1952. As a result, he made the Ooni of Ife, the Oba of Benin, the Alake of Abeokuta, the Odemo of Isara and the Olowo of Owo Ministers without portfolios<sup>10</sup> in addition to their membership of the Western House of Chiefs.<sup>11</sup>

As enunciated in his party programme and political manifesto, Awolowo was prepared among other things to carry out fundamental reforms in the Local Government Councils that would affect all classes in the society - Obas, Chiefs, educated elites, the proletariat, the old and the young. He was also set to regulate succession to chieftaincies, abolish native courts,<sup>12</sup> reform land tenure and to enforce all that would ensure the democratisation of the Local Government Councils.

Between Awolowo and the realisation of these fundamental changes stood the traditional authorities who were 'jealous of and extremely sensitive about their traditional rights and privileges'.<sup>13</sup> But according to Awolowo, 'the traditional

rights and privileges which the Obas and Chiefs wished to preserve were 'antithetical to democratic concepts and to the yearnings and aspirations of the people.'<sup>14</sup> Chief Awolowo realised the enormity of the problem, and confessed that

The problem which faced me therefore was that whilst I must strive to harness the influence of the Obas and Chiefs for our purposes, I must at the same time take the earliest possible steps to modify their rights and abrogate such of their privileges as were considered repugnant, to an extent that both satisfy the commonality and make the Obas and Chiefs feel secure in their traditional offices.<sup>15</sup>

Chief Awolowo was indeed faced with the task of making an omelette without breaking the egg! Making a frontal attack on these rights and privileges would amount to political inexpediency *par excellence*, a signal invitation to disquiet and failure, or as he too put it, 'the surest way of bringing a host of honests about our ears', and 'to compromise with them on the other hand, would mean death to our new party'<sup>16</sup> - the Action Group.

His other major problem was how to adapt the traditional monarchical government of the towns which still looked up to the Obas and Chiefs, age-grades, traditional societies and religious leaders to modern needs. Put differently, how to translate the bureaucratic democracy and 'intellectual revolution' of his dream into reality. This was because in addition to the above problems, were the elders who 'were suspicious and contemptuous of the untried youths.'<sup>17</sup> In spite of odds, however, Awolowo was bent on seeing aristocracy of birth yielding ground to bureaucratic aristocracy or aristocracy based on individual excellence.

The obstacles were formidable, but Awolowo was bent on correcting all such practices that run contrary to modern democratic practice or 'civilized standards'. This was no mean task, but he was resolved. Rather than dampen him, these handicaps had only helped to steel his heart.

Much prudence, diligence and tact was required in carrying

out these reforms. Chief Obafemi Awolowo too realised that an attempt to withdraw the *reality* of power and authority from the Obas and Chiefs while leaving them with perquisites and pageantry was bound to generate friction. The Obas, having suffered diminution in the hands of the foreign conquerors<sup>18</sup> would not brook a second diminution - this time in the hands of their subjects.

The Obas, having assumed 'untraditional' powers over their subjects under the British Indirect Rule system, were hoping to succeed to the white-man's seat. The rise of the educated elite, and the new open economic system that permits free upward social mobility had brought about tremendous and fundamental changes among the Yoruba. It would amount to self-deceit for the traditional authorities to feign ignorance under any guise. The new elites could see beyond the traditional horizon of local communities. Unlike the 'uneducated' traditional rulers, the new elites were sufficiently knowledgeable about the evil, as opposed to the professed philanthropic or paternalistic, designs of the colonialists. These elites were poised to challenge the 'unholy alliance' between the colonialists and the traditional rulers. They were fully prepared to assault the supremacy of the latter, to push them aside, and forward their own views. They were also prepared to introduce new social value system, challenge some age old dogma, moral code, obligations, query ascription and paternalism which the traditional offices had enjoyed for ages.<sup>19</sup> This was the political climate after the World War II.

#### CHIEF AWOLowo ON TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES 1947 - 51

After the World War II, the Obas became apprehensive of the budding educated militant nationalists who were progressively taking over the political scene, pushing the traditional authorities into the lurk. The new elite group on the other hand, were quick in taking advantage of the inadequacies of the traditional rulers especially in the realm of bureaucratic government. Chief Awolowo was foremost among these elites. He in fact decried the traditional Chiefs for being

'more ingratiating but less efficient'.<sup>20</sup> Awolowo consistently regarded them as 'temporary expédients needed to tide over some difficult stages in the administration of Nigeria'.<sup>21</sup> He wanted them scrapped as soon as possible though practical situation as we have already seen, forced him not only to shelve this idea, but to seek their patronage in reaching the rural masses, who still held the Chiefs and Obas in high esteem. Awolowo was also of the view that political leadership is the heritage of the elite and the bourgeoisie, and that power should therefore be concentrated in their hands for as he put it, 'they are *destined* to rule the country'.<sup>22</sup>

As a trained lawyer, he strongly detested the system that had for so long permitted the illiterate, professionally untrained and therefore 'ignorant' Chiefs to adjudicate 'extrajudicially' in the Native Courts. He explains at length, how inefficient, static, chaotic, illogical, dilatory, corrupt and unpopular the Native Authorities were.<sup>23</sup> He also took pains to explain the conditions he expected aspirants to vacant stools to meet, and the qualifications he expected them to possess.<sup>24</sup> As an apostle of bureaucratic democracy, Awo did not believe any one can function profitably without a sound western education.

Again, Awolowo was particularly critical of the Divine Rights of Kings - kings seeing themselves as God's lieutenants upon earth, sitting upon God's throne; or as 'fathers', without who there can be no civil society, no order, peace and progress nothing except anarchy'. In fact, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was privileged to watch the activities of the Yoruba Obas at close quarters, knew their deficiencies,<sup>25</sup> and concluded that 'the chiefs are not the divine creatures that uncivilized mankind thought them,.....'<sup>26</sup> and that in the long 'the machinery of government works much more smoothly and swiftly without them than with them.'<sup>27</sup>

This was Awolowo's mental climate when in 1952 he became opportuned to put his ideas into practice.

## CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS IN WESTERN NIGERIA

As we noted earlier, Awolowo as Head of Government Business and Minister of Local Government in Western Nigeria was confronted with the problem of what to do with the traditional authorities whose support he sought and enjoyed in winning the elections that had just brought him to the corridors of power. During the campaign, he openly proclaimed the Obas to be 'the Keystone which sustains the arch of Local Government'.<sup>27</sup> This sounds like one of the political statements meant to catch more votes. However he was soon faced with the acid test of implementing either what he considered to be politically expedient, or admitting what the people thought to be good - compromising his enlightened view in order to satisfy the electorate. Placed side by side, there is little doubt that one was better than the other. That is better left for history and posterity to judge. What is of interest to us here is that it was this type of problem that haunted the rest of Chief Awolowo's political life - how to make his people and nation buy Awolowo's truly sound and enlightened ideas which are acceptable to only a more enlightened and advanced generation. This perhaps is why many see Awolowo as belonging to a wrong age!

He could afford to be uncompromising in other causes he believed in and espoused; but he could not in the case of the traditional rulers. In order to meet the expectation of the people, he had to take less decisive course - leaving the traditional rulers with nebulous, undefined but sinecure functions. This in a way dented the traditional rulers' armours. They received the reforms with mixed feelings. To the illiterate and conservative among them, Awolowo's emergence represented the dawn of a new era - the son of a poor African (Mekunnu) legislating over Oba Alade (crowned Oba). To the few young educated and 'progressive' Obas, it was acceptable if not desirable. To the former, the change amounted to exchanging white benevolence for black fascism<sup>28</sup> and to the literate Oba, it was an opportuni-

ty to prove his 'superiority' over his illiterate colleague.

There was the need to carry the Obas along in the new scheme of things, just as there was also the need for a transformation from ancient to modern. It is against this background that we can best appreciate the 'epochal' 1952 Local Government Reforms planned and implemented under the aegis of Awolowo's Action Group.

#### AWOLOWO AND THE 1952 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS

Within six months in office, Awolowo's Action Group government passed what he described as 'the epoch-making Local Government Law'.<sup>29</sup> It was, according to Adegoke Adelabu, leader of opposition in the then Western House of Assembly 'a bloodless revolution.'<sup>30</sup> In fact, it marked a radical departure from the colonial Government's gradualist approach to decolonisation. It also marked the change from the colonial Native Authority system to the Local Government administration with the elites forming the majority.

The reform law drafted by Obafemi Awolowo in consultation with Chief F.R.A. Williams, (the then Minister of Justice who in 1954 became the Minister of Justice and Local Government) known as the Western Region Local Government Law, 1952, touched on several vital issues that are of importance to administration. For example, under section 71, the Law spells out the functions of the Local Government covering areas such as Agriculture, Buildings, Education, Forestry, Land, Market, Public Health, Public Order, Registration of persons, roads, streets<sup>31</sup> and others.

From the fore-going, it would be seen that the local Government Councils were to effectively take over services which were hitherto directed by the traditional rulers under the supervision of the A.Os. These include protective services, social services, economic developments as contained in Section 71, subsections 34-35; 58-67 of the W.R.L.G. Law, 1952. Subsections (1) - (6) of the same section empower the Local Government to make bye-laws on a variety of items

which fall outside those covered by the Federal and Regional Governments.

With these developments, the traditional rulers in practical terms ceased to be rulers. They reign, they no longer rule. The traditional rulers constituted just one third of the total membership of the Local Government officials. The Obas were made ceremonial Presidents while the executive powers went to the educated chairman. The Oba, statutorily lost the right to taxation, tributes and all forms of levies not provided for by the law.

The Chairman (not the President) became responsible for the maintenance of law, order and good government, collection of taxes, promotion of community developments, and the general conduct of the affairs of Local Government Councils. The Chairman also became the custodian of Native Laws as well.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the Obas were not included in the Area Councils and the Development Boards which were important agencies of development at the grass-root level.

#### THE NATIVE COURT REFORMS

The acute shortage of Magistrates compelled Awolowo to shelve his plan to abolish the Native Courts which the Chiefs were making claims of ownership over as of right. Chief Awolowo ensured the 'elimination of the concept of Native Courts 'belonging' to anyone in the old concept of Indirect Rule'.<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding the handicap, the reform carried out, largely divested the Native Courts of their juridical rights over criminal offences.

#### THE ACTION GROUP AND THE CHIEFS' LAW

Chief O. Awolowo had as far back as 1945 expressed apprehensions about the traditional practice that assumes that indulgent princes with no appreciable political education and experience could invariably emerge much wiser in political matters than most of his people on assumption of office.<sup>34</sup>

He also found the Yoruba Oba's exercise of 'supreme authority' objectionable. He condemned the colonial administrators for popping the Oba who he argued were very often 'inferior on some vital respects to his own immediate advisers.'<sup>35</sup> In order to make for the inefficiency or deficiency of the Oba, Awolowo with every sense of responsibility advocated the democratisation of the Councils. He also wanted the abolition of sole Native Authorities wherever they still existed.

By 1947, he again expounded on this, and roundly condemned the British Indirect rule policy for encouraging mutual friction and hatred which led to the tension and misgivings between the chiefs and the elites.

It is therefore not surprising that as soon as he became the leader of the ruling party he embarked on the 'systemisation of succession to chieftaincies'<sup>36</sup> and other related issues. In fact, the enactment of the Western Region Chieftaincy Review Law happened to be one of the novel achievements of Chief Awolowo's AG government. The laws as amended in 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1957, provided guidelines on the procedures for the selection of ruling houses and suitable candidates, appointment, suspension and deposition of chiefs; qualifications of candidates for chieftaincy, the powers of the Governor and the Local Government.<sup>37</sup> They also spelt out details about penalty for unlawful installation of chiefs and obstruction of lawful installation; rules and regulations guiding the conduct of minor chiefs<sup>38</sup> and so on.

By 1959, the AG Government passed a law establishing the Council of Obas and chiefs. The council was to handle matters relating to discipline, good conduct and of the enforcement of Regional and Local Government policies at the grass-root level.

The laws had pervasive and decisive effects on the traditional authorities. As at the time Awolowo left for the Federal Legislature in 1960 the task of democratising the Local Government Councils was virtually accomplished. The traditional rulers continued to enjoy the fatherly regard

and respect that tradition accords their esteemed offices, but had lost their administrative functions. They also lost all such rights as were adjudged to be repugnant to democratic (enlightened) government. As the powers of the chiefs waned, they gave way to the new elites whose prestige and power (economic as well as political) equalled and later excelled that of the traditional elite.

The introduction of partisan politics further hamstringed the chiefs, who had during the era of Indirect Rule hoped to succeed the colonial masters and regain their lost powers. As events turned out, it was a disappointed expectation. The post World War II radical nationalism put the 'less-educated' and illiterate chiefs in the cooler. As 'fathers' of their communities, they are expected to demonstrate non-partisanship; but to support the ruling party's policies. This implied insulation from active politics.

The chiefs gained a constitutional rôle with the introduction of the House of Chiefs (Upper House), but performed less duties.

The list of reforms carried out by Awolowo's AG Government during the period 1952-1959 can not be exhausted in a short essay of this nature, but suffice it to note here that they were all geared towards the enhancement of public interests. Some of them did occasion some hurt, some further deprived the chiefs of some of their economic sources. For example, the Communal Land Rights Law of 1958 enabled the Government to appoint Boards of Trustees to manage communal lands<sup>39</sup> and the 1957 Customary Court Law further restricted chiefs' juridical powers. 'The House of Chiefs' as Lloyd noted, 'kept demanding for a clear definition by the Government, the position i.e. the duties, responsibilities and rights of Obas in the new Scheme of things'<sup>40</sup> Politicians coquet Obas when canvassing for votes and when crucial government policies are to be implemented at the grass-root level, and Obas become objects of hostilities when jockeying for political power.

### CONCLUSION

The political life of Chief Obafemi Awolowo meant many things to so many people. In this short write up, we have merely tried to see how his attempt to improve the tone and performance of the Local Government Councils through the injection of new blood resulted in the eclipse of the traditional by the modern educated elite. Chief Obafemi Awolowo consistently placed premium on the sound intellectual training that education provides its beneficiaries. He believed that education begins a gentleman, and performance completes him; and that intellectual training (which Western education provides) and democracy are the twin pillars on which the development and improvement of mankind rest. His gradiose educational programme bears testimony to this.

Under Awolowo's leadership, Western Region of Nigeria tasted the disruptive and the constructive effects of Western education and civilization. Above all others was the question of culture conflict and clash of personality over leadership. Here, Awolowo demonstrated his ability to manage crisis and to lead even in the face of crisis.

If striking at the illiterate, complacent and reactionary conservative traditional rulers who represented the hallmark of colonial rule could bring about desirable changes, he was prepared to do this shrewdly but tactfully. He felt the need to substitute the British fostered Native Authorities designed to 'maintain law and order' with Local Government Councils whose goal is the promotion of community development, freedom for all, life more abundant.

The reforms brought about a swing of the pendulum. It tilted the balance of power in favour of the new elites. Traditional rulers who failed or refused to appreciate or acknowledge this later realised that Awolowo's fez cap was much more powerful than the most ancient and the most beautiful of the crowns. It was indeed the dawn of a new era - Obas and Chiefs became pawns in the politicians' chessboard; enjoying vociferous loyalty during political campaigns.

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10. The hitherto most powerful political Oba among the Yoruba - the Alafin of Oyo - was not included. The non-inclusion of the Alaafin could be explained on the grounds that the incumbent, Oba Adeyemi II (1945-51) was illiterate.
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# **Part Five**

## **Foreign Policy**

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## Continuity and Change in Awolowo's View on Foreign Policy

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TUNDE BABAWALE

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### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that so much pressures and indeed forces influence a nation's foreign policy. While radical scholars of the political economy school do not deny this, they assert that the nature of the state, the relative strength/weakness of the dominant class *vis-a-vis* potent transnational forces and interests, the intensity of class (and other) contradictions as well as the entire process of social reproduction are more significant determinants of a nation's foreign policy<sup>1</sup>. Factors such as regimes, personalities, psychological environment of the decision-makers play nonetheless significant but subordinate role to the already-outlined ones. The historical experience of a particular society and its role and location in the international division of labour exert tremendous influence on the direction of its foreign policy.

In the Nigerian case, the fact of the fragility of the post-colonial state and the alliance between the local dominant classes that captured political power after independence, and foreign capital is very illustrative. The basic pre-occupation of the dominant power-elites therefore was the consolidation of inherited colonial relations and structures, the pacification or intimidation of non-bourgeois forces and the tailoring of the Political Economy towards the direction of private capital accumulation. A specific milieu has therefore

been created for the nature and content of the foreign policy of the country given the outlined realities.

Any analyst who intends to discuss Nigerian Foreign Policy must take cognisance of these fundamental determinants of foreign policy and the given domestic political and economic constraints, without which such an analysis would be hazy and inconclusive. This paper sets out to appraise critically Chief Awolowo's views on Nigerian Foreign Policy generally, and the changes in such views both in the pre and post-independence eras and find probable explanations for such shifts or inconsistencies. It is clear that Chief Awolowo's intellectual weight is no less felt in his discussions of Nigerian Foreign Policy as demonstrated in his ability to handle Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Nevertheless, the dramatic shifts in his discussion of Nigerian Foreign Policy would not just pass for intellectual metamorphosis. This singular realisation has necessitated the dissection of such views which actually revealed not only Awo's felt need and inclination for political expediency or opportunism but an inadequate grasp of the nature of the Nigerian Political economy, most importantly the specific colonial experience of Nigeria, the accumulative base of Nigeria's dominant classes and the role played by the state in the world capitalist system. Often, Awo's analyses rested too much on the leadership which, according to him, must cultivate "a regime of mental magnitude"<sup>2</sup> for it to be forward-looking or in the alternative possess "moral discipline".<sup>3</sup> While one cannot deny the centrality of good leadership to the initiation and execution of good policies, it is necessary to state that a number of other factors, such as the ones already-mentioned can militate against the wishes and efforts of the leadership.

#### AWO ON THE GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Talking about foreign policy, Awo defines it as

the projection abroad, outside the boundaries of the country concerned, of the ideals and aspirations of that country or the projection and demonstration and exhibition abroad of the ideals and aspirations for which the country stands<sup>4</sup>.

No doubt he agrees with the generally-held view of Foreign Policy being an extension of a country's domestic policy. He made it categorically clear that Nigerian Foreign Policy must first be concerned with the national interests of the country, then the interests of the African peoples and lastly the interest of the world in general. This egocentrism in Foreign Policy has gained popular acceptance not only among scholars but among nations as well.

A forceful expression of Chief Awolowo's views on Nigerian Foreign Policy is found in his book *The People's Republic*. Some others are to be found in his collected speeches. Generally speaking, Awo favours a 3-pronged goal for Nigeria in her relationship with the outside world. These are:

- (i) Catering to and promoting the welfare of the people to the end that they may live a full and happy life.
- (ii) Through skillful and 'clean' diplomacy and constructive propaganda, bringing about a state of peaceful co-existence between it and its neighbours.
- (iii) Fostering mutually-beneficial commerce with its neighbours so that it and they may derive obvious advantages from inter-territorial division of labour it must put itself to the knowledge of its neighbours, in such a state of military strength and preparedness as to discourage external aggression or successfully resist such aggression if it comes.<sup>5</sup>

To make these goals realisable, Awo averred that the following determinants needed to exist. These are, a large population, which is enlightened and nationalistic, the possession of natural resources in considerable measure and the intensive exploitation of such resources. He also identified the necessity for the existence of a large pool of master minds or experts in the country as an important determinant. While he admits that Nigeria is deficient in some of these

determinants, he fails to recognise the significance of the orientation of the ruling class, the impact of the colonial experience on policy initiative and action and the need to break the shell of dependence with which Nigeria was coated in the colonial era. Apparently, the subtle but dangerous impact of colonialism is less visible to Awo, hence his tendency to consistently downplay its import. At a broad level too, Awo advocated the respect for the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of all states, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the principle of peaceful co-existence and peaceful settlement of all inter-state disputes. Going further, he advocated for the observance of the principles of the UNO and of the OAU while at the same time, he called for the extermination of apartheid and the termination of inhuman treatment of Black peoples in Africa and elsewhere.

Although Awo suggests the spread of socialism to all parts of the world since according to him, it is "the only economic and social concept which can eliminate greed and self-interest and foster mutual love and altruism among all mankind"<sup>6</sup> he never clearly outlined the modalities by which this could be achieved. Either consciously or unconsciously, the critical question of combating imperialism and international capitalism was noticeably absent in Awo's analysis. Undeniably, imperialism is like a monster that will make the realisation of the foregoing goals impossible. The call for 'world socialism is a post-independence development, which we shall discuss in fuller details later in subsequent sections. It no doubt showed a specific change in Awo's perception of the goal of Nigerian Foreign Policy.

It appears Awo's consistency in not calling for anti-imperialism is deliberate. For instance in his autobiography, he had stated that

Anti-imperialism which is coterminous with negative nationalism, sees nothing good in foreign rule and colla-

boration with the colonial power in any measure, however desirable for the common good, is condemned as an act of treachery<sup>7</sup>.

Alternatively, he called for "constructive nationalism" or constitutional agitation". Clearly, the above citation shows a lack of definite grasp of what imperialism is all about. If not so, how can one explain Awo's admonition that if Nigeria would take off economically, it must create conditions that would be "favourable to the admission of foreign capital and technique"<sup>8</sup>. While it might be said that the acceleration of the development of a newly-independent nation was imperative, the danger lurking around the obsession for foreign capital cannot be wished away. We agree with Gordon Idang's observation that it is wrong to share the view that Nigeria could not develop economically without massive Western economic assistance.<sup>9</sup>

An interesting aspect of Awo's views on the ideal Foreign Policy goal for Nigeria is his call for an economically free, strong and socially stable state that would command international respect and play constructive role in world affairs. Much as Awo sees the idea of a continental union government for Africa as unrealistic, he advocates for economic unity which he describes as an "attainable goal"<sup>10</sup>. His statement that "this is the greatest obligation which Nigeria owes to Africa"<sup>11</sup> can be rightly said to be prophetic in the light of the birth of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975. One cannot deny the leading role played by Nigeria in the formation of this historic regional economic grouping. However, the problems accompanying such moves towards integration were cleverly avoided in Awo's analysis. This if done could have assisted greatly in understanding more the problems associated with moves towards integration in the new nations. It must be mentioned that Awo sees a sound economic base as the bed-rock of an effective Foreign Policy for Nigeria. In his

own words; he sees

...economic freedom and prosperity as the be-all and end-all of Africa's salvation.<sup>12</sup>

He goes further to say that

As long as Africa or most of its states remain underdeveloped and economically subservient, so long will poverty, ignorance and disease persist in the continent, together with their concomitants of colonialism, neo-colonialism, lan-smithism, vorstism and salazarism.<sup>13</sup>

Never mind the fact that this array of 'isms' represents different sides of the same coin i.e. international capitalism. The weak-link in Awo's suggested principles and goals of Nigeria's External Relations is this inability to capture the essence of the dynamics of the operations of international finance capital and the severe limitations that these impose on the ability of new nations to exert some influence in the international system. Here, we do not suggest that Awo in some of his writings did not attempt some analysis of capitalism, rather our position is that, he does not sufficiently tackle its international dimension vis-a-vis the goals and principles of Nigerian Foreign Policy. Although it is also pertinent to point out that Awo's romance with socialism became noticeable only after independence.

The obvious commitment of the Nigerain ruling class (particularly during the Balewa era) to the service of international finance capital is explained away by Awo as merely an indication of "lack of vision, sense of mission and mental magnitude" on the part of the Nigerian ruling class. A new orientation is no doubt required for the Nigerian power elites but this in itself would be meaningless if the essential structures of the conomy laid by colonialism are not demolished. Awo consistently distinguished between foreign policy *per se* and the conduct of foreign affairs. The former he describes as strategy, the latter tactics. This no doubt is an age-long acceptable diplomatic practice. Circumstances and events dictate tactics while the strategy is laid out to-

wards the attainment of specific goals. Tactics are the means to an end while the strategy represents the end in itself!<sup>3</sup>

#### NIGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY: AWO'S VIEWS IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Before 1959, Nigerian political parties and their leaders never saw Foreign Policy as an issue for serious debate. As independence approached leaders of political parties suddenly chose to devote some time to Foreign Policy issues. As for Chief Obafemi Awolowo, he made his mark during this time in his advocacy for total and unqualified alignment of Nigeria with the West on the attainment of independence. For someone who had been an irrepressible nationalist, this was a rather disturbing position, at least in radical parlance. Starting from a denunciation of power politics, Awo argued independent Nigeria to choose the path of 'welfare politics' hinged on sound domestic policies that positively affect the general well-being of Nigerians. In the same breadth, Awo argued most forcefully for a pro-western foreign policy. In his own words:

.....a realistic foreign policy for Nigeria should be governed by a *close* and *conscientious*<sup>14</sup> friendship with Britain (emphasis mine)

Although he proceeded further to justify this advocacy as not precluding independent thought and action by Nigeria, he nevertheless insists that of the two blocs into which the world is divided, Nigeria should stand by one, in this case Britain, because she shared Nigeria's ideals of democracy. Awo roundly condemned Nigeria's professed 'non-alignment' and 'neutrality' describing it variously as 'fraudulent', and having arisen out of "deep-seated prejudices . . . towards some of the countries of the Western democracies"<sup>15</sup>

However, Awo advocated for closer cooperation, particularly in economic and cultural matters in the West African

sub-region. He urged Nigeria to champion fearlessly the cause of the oppressed peoples in Africa. Nigeria, he insisted, should encourage cordial relationship with other nations of the world.

On Pan-Africanism, Awo warned Nigeria not to "labour for the emergence of a political union of African states or even of economic cooperation such as exists in Western Europe". He condemned moves for a continental union government for Africa as being "plainly an ignis Fatuus"<sup>16</sup> It is a bit intriguing that Awo sees the conduct of foreign policy as a moral issue guided by a religious adherence to christian ethics which must be unswervingly pursued. He advises in the concluding section of his very authoritative book, *The People's Republic*, that

.....it is well worth the while of Nigeria to bear in mind always that any country which in international affairs scorns to employ the arts of hypocrisy and exhibits courage for truth at all times will be confident in itself, will never be embarrassed, will reprove with freedom, will be uniformly successful in its endeavours and the constancy of its virtue will crown it with trust-worthiness, respect and honour in the councils of the world.<sup>17</sup>

In an age of power-politics and mutually-competing ideologies, it might amount to self-deceit to suggest that a nation adheres to "truth at all times".

#### AWO'S VOLTE-FACE IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA: THE CONTINUITIES AND THE CHANGES

When Chief Awolowo became the leader of opposition in the Federal Parliament in 1959, he quickly changed his earlier position on a pro-Western alignment. Perhaps after independence in 1960, Balewa, the Prime Minister had been too close to Britain for comfort, in Awo's estimation. Awo criticised Nigeria's signing of the Anglo-Nigerian defence pact, even though he never denied active participation in discussions that led to its consummation in 1960. He also condemned Anglo-American participation in the drafting of Nigeria's

development plan, the open hostility shown to Soviet Russia and the banning of communist literature by the Nigerian government.<sup>18</sup>

In a most dramatic move, Awo the erstwhile advocate of a pro-western leaning for Nigeria, perhaps for the sake of political expediency (as the opposition leader) turned round to condemn Prime Minister Balewa's pro-western sympathies. While in his Autobiography, Awo insisted that an independent Nigeria cannot afford the luxury of 'neutrality' in foreign affairs, but can only realistically thrive on the moistened soil of Western Democracy, with a pro-British leaning. Awo singing a different tune during a lecture in London lamented that Nigeria under Balewa was too pro-Western.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear from the foregoing that major shifts were made in Awo's views on Nigerian Foreign Policy during the post-independence era. In the pre-independence period, Awo appeared as a conservative defender of the *status quo ante* independence, while in the latter, he became more of a radical reformer advocating for structural changes. This seeming inconsistency was noted by another observer when he rightly noted that although Awo cautioned in his autobiography that in the quest for economic and technical assistance, for Nigeria to adopt the policy of wooing the two blocs was both disreputable and dangerous, he later argued that if Nigeria wanted to foster her aspirations scientifically, she must not discriminate against the Eastern bloc countries.<sup>20</sup>

Chief Awolowo's new-found romance with the concept of "world socialism" as a goal of Nigerian Foreign Policy also represents a major change in his views and position. Such a position would have been unfathomable to Awo of the pre-independence-era. These changes in perception have been attributed to a number of factors. Undeniably, political opportunism was one, but so also was Awo's desire to please radicals and left-wing elements of whatever party or organisation and to outsmart his party's archrival, the NCNC.<sup>21</sup> Observers have also attributed this seeming inconsistency to his

disappointment at the results of the 1959 Federal Election. According to Gordon Idang, after 1959, Awo "a disappointed and humiliated politician, turned to new radical and militant policies which irrespective of his earlier position, he felt his party must support in order to win the next Federal Election".<sup>22</sup>

Although Awo's lust for political power cannot be doubted, Idang further attributed these inconsistencies of Chief Awolowo, to "the fact of his exclusion from foreign relations during the colonial period" which probably led him "to develop an unrealistic conception of the operation of the international system".<sup>23</sup>

In spite of these noticeable changes, the continuities in Awo's views are still prominent. Most of his earlier ideals on an egocentric policy for Nigeria, a strong army to deter aggressors, Nigeria's peace-promoting role in world affairs, her peaceful co-existence with neighbours, all remain unchanged. He never deviated from his advocacy for Nigeria's continued membership of the UN, OAU, the Commonwealth and other international institutions for the purpose of fostering international friendship and understanding.<sup>24</sup> Even though Awo often supported most of the general ideals and principles guiding Nigeria's External Relations, he never hid his distance for some specific Foreign Policy actions by successive Nigerian governments. Generally underlying Awo's position is his underestimation or disregard for the influence that the structures, institutions, world-view and relations of power and capital accumulation implanted in the colonial period, exerted on the world-view and perception of Nigerian ruling class as well as on their foreign policy initiatives and actions. In fact, Awo himself suffered largely from this problem. Awo never supported Nigeria's severing of diplomatic ties with Israel. In fact, his party, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) promised in 1978 that if it won the elections, it would open up diplomatic relations with Israel "whose expertise we need badly".<sup>25</sup> This does not show a grasp of the evils of Zionism, and

its close relationship, not only to the growth of apartheid in South Africa but its alliance with international Finance capital.

The same scratching-the-surface approach was evident in the UPN's call for a pull-out of Nigeria from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which to all intents and purposes would have given the western capitalist powers the sledgehammer to deal a fatal blow on the solidarity of oil-producing states which has obstructed their moves to manipulate oil prices in their favour.

As a nationalist fighter, Awo's continued defence of total liberation of Africa is unswerving. As far back as 1960, he had urged the Federal Government to join hands with Malaya to prevent South Africa's readmission into the Commonwealth after its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). In 1961, he canvassed for support for freedom fighters in Kenya, Congo, Algeria and Central African Federation. It is however difficult to understand how Awo who had earlier opposed Nkrumah's continental government for Africa could turn round to suggest a non governmental Pan-African union which he called Organisation of African Community (OAC) in 1961. On a few occasions Awo's analysis often appeared suspect. For instance, in 1982 when Cameroonian gendarmes killed Nigerian soldiers, Awo's reaction was that if he were to be the head of state he would storm Cameroon and overrun it immediately. Although this step might be the ultimate step for a radical government (as a last resort, that is) such an on-the-spot reaction would amount to an impulsive step which nations can ill-afford to take in the present world context.

#### CONCLUSION

In this presentation, we have attempted to analyse Awo's perceptions of an 'ideal' foreign policy for Nigeria. His cardinal principles and goals have been shown. It would be noted that there are occasions in the paper where the mani-

festoes of Awo's parties, Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria were taken for his views. This is due largely to the fact that Awo's books are undeniably 'texts' of his parties since the two parties discuss issues along the same line enunciated in those books. The stamp of Awo's call for democratic socialism or even 'world socialism' is unmistakable. This represents one of Awo's cardinal foreign policy goals.

Though Awo did not explain how world socialism would be achieved, it is known that Awo's brand of socialism excludes class struggle.<sup>26</sup> In essence, his brand of socialism would definitely not come either out of proletarian consciousness or specific class action, rather we see a socialism based largely on christian ethics and humanism. While one supports Awo's call for an egocentric foreign policy for Nigeria, his inconsistencies have revealed a probable predilection for opportunism as 'pragmatism'. Hence the continuities and changes in his views in Nigerian Foreign Policy. As already discussed in the introduction, the contradictions of Awo's ideological perceptions are plausible explanations for these inconsistencies.

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## The Perspective of Awolowo on Nigeria's Foreign Policy

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S. JOHNSON

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There is little doubt that Chief Obafemi Awolowo's contribution to the making and shaping of Nigeria's Foreign Policy will for a long time continue to serve as antithesis to any subjugated and dependent foreign policy that may be formulated by any Nigerian government. For his contributions in and outside government negated all forms of imperialistic machinations which were and still are being perpetrated first against the interests of Nigeria, second African and the third world generally. His perspectives of foreign policy had been logically based upon his experience while in government and also thorough research on operation of many countries - both developed and underdeveloped. The theme of his perspectives in the Foreign Policy of the third world countries was that they (third world countries) were living in a world of Western imperialists and needed to terminate the unequal relationship between the former metropolis power and the former colonies. In sum, imperialism has dominated the third world and must be eradicated. It is thus naturally conclusive for us to explain Awolowo's perspective within the framework of imperialism.

Perhaps, it is very essential to state at the outset that this study on a scholar's and politician's perspectives on Nigeria's Foreign Policy is a formidable and colossal affair just like the person involved - Chief Awolowo. Such a study would

necessitate reading his writings not only on international issues but on exclusively domestic issues. For the line demarcating domestic and foreign policy is very blur. What might be classified as a domestic policy can also be seen as international. An example would do: In 1953, four Ministers - Bode Thomas, S.L. Akintola, Arthur Prest and Adesoji Aderemi - resigned from the Colonial cabinet of Western Region and were to be replaced by new ones contrary to the aspirations and desires of the Action Group that was in the majority at the time, and the Chiefs and Obas of the Region. As a matter of fact, the Action Group led by Awolowo was in favour of the four Ministers to be re-appointed because they (the Ministers) resigned on principles. They resigned because they wanted to back up AG's motion of 'self-rule in 1956.'

Ordinarily, one would have thought it was a domestic issue. In the course of his speech in defence of the dropped Ministers, Chief Awolowo stated that:

The Lieutenant-Governor, in complicity with the Governor, desires to put our much-vaunted solidarity and discipline to the test in the hope that if the test is severe enough, that solidarity may crack to the evil delight of the *imperialists*.<sup>1</sup> Further, there is an unmistakable imputation that the Africans are by nature treacherous, corrupt and selfish; and that if the inducement is big enough, such as offer of a central Ministry, the chances are that they would prove traitors to the cause and seek selfish gains at the expense of national aspirations.<sup>2</sup>

One could see in the quotation above that discussing issues on Ministerial appointment has led Chief Awolowo to hammer imperialism, make a detour of European impression about Africans and finally come back to national aspirations.

In essence, an understanding of Chief Awolowo's perspectives on Nigeria's Foreign Policy calls for a wide reading of his writings on domestic and international issues. As time and space are limited, the author must be forgiven to have dabbled into a very wide topic yet looked constricted if certain

observations are consciously or uncounsciously omitted.

That Chief Awolowo's perspectives on Nigeria's Foreign Policy would be theoretically analysed within the framework of imperialism should not be surprising. All the materials involved in this study comprising mainly Awolowo's writings, speeches and thoughts denounced the vestiges of metropolises powers in all ramifications. Given another chance to speak from his grave, the Chief may probably denounce imperialism before going on to any other thing. But first, what is imperialism?

Claude Ake defines imperialism as "the economic control and exploitation of foreign hands arising from the necessity for counteracting the impediments to the accumulation of capital engendered by the internal contradictions of the domestic capitalist-economy."<sup>3</sup> This definition is in line with other authors of imperialism like Michael Baratt Brown who defines imperialism as

the outward drive of certain peoples .....to build empires - both formal colonies and privileged positions in markets, protected sources of materials and extended opportunities for profitable employment of labour. The concept has thus been associated with an unequal economic relationship between states, not simply the inequality of large and small, rich and poor trading partners but the inequality of political and economic dependence of the latter on the former.<sup>4</sup>

The most vital factor to notice is the linkage between capitalism and imperialism. In essence, imperialism is the unequal relations between a metropole's power and its colony necessitated by the need to expand capitalism from the metropolises power. Such a phenomenon is found between France and the Francophones and also between Britain and Nigeria.

What is meant by imperialism as theoretical framework, one must mention the work of Johan Galtung. He viewed the mechanisms of imperialism from two perspectives: "the interaction relation itself..... and how these relations are put together in a larger interaction structure:

(1) the principle of vertical interaction relation

(2) the principle of feudal interaction structure.”<sup>5</sup>

Unequal exchange of assymmetric interaction occurs and is normally associated with three stages of exploitation namely looting away of raw material first; second, offering something ridiculous in exchange; and thirdly, imposition of culture through exchange. The unequal gap created by the vertical interaction relation is maintained and protected by the feudal interaction structure.

Galtung like Awolowo on various occasions identified types of imperialism as follows:

- (1) economic
- (2) political
- (3) military
- (4) communication
- (5) cultural

Admittedly, the order of presentation is random. It is within this framework that Awolowo's perspectives on Nigeria's foreign policy will be examined. In order to cut out ambiguity and reduce or eliminate being amorphous in our examination of these perspectives, it is just pertinent to understand fully the concepts 'perspectives' and 'foreign policy'.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's of Current English gives three meanings to the word 'perspective', the third of which is relevant to us: "view; prospect". The same Dictionary explains the word 'view' among other meanings as "personal opinion; mental attitude: thought or observation (on a subject)." One's perspective means one's views which actually means that person's opinion or his mental attitudes, thoughts or observation on a matter. In our own case, we refer to Awolowo's views; opinions in writings, speeches, thoughts and behaviours on Nigeria's Foreign Policy. This, as can be seen covers every minute details of opinion expressed or implied from his behaviours or documented materials.

As noted earlier, Awolowo's views on Nigerian foreign policy can be found in every speech of his.— whether domes-

tic, or foreign. Most of his parliamentary speeches cannot but be wrapped in an international comparison. One running iron thread in all his thoughts and writings is the emancipation of Nigerians in particular even after independence. His discussions in shaping Nigerian Foreign Policy clearly shows this. But first what exactly is Foreign Policy.

Foreign Policy has been variously defined by many scholars. It will be time-wasting to juxtapose all definitions of Foreign Policy in a paper of this nature. It will only distract our attention from the real issue. Roy Jones observes that "to begin a study of Foreign Policy with an attempt, at an acceptable, and an acceptably brief definition of the nature of Foreign Policy would be to invite ridicule."<sup>6</sup> For us not to 'invite ridicule', we shall adopt the definition of African Foreign Relations and International Conflict Analysis (AFRICA) Project:

The official, non-routine, deliberate, overt actions of governmental representatives, directed at external actors for the express political purpose of modifying the behaviour of those targets.<sup>7</sup>

This definition is identical with Awolowo's which he put as "the projection abroad, outside the boundaries of the country, or the projection and demonstration and exhibition abroad of the ideals and aspirations for which that country stands."<sup>7a</sup>

These definitions can do for this paper. Awolowo's views and opinions on Nigeria's official, non-routine, deliberate, overt actions on foreign targets would be discussed.

Our modus operandi is to examine Awolowo's perspectives first on Nigeria itself as a Unit in international relations, then Nigeria and her neighbouring countries, followed by Nigeria in Africa, Nigeria within the third world countries. Finally, Nigeria and the rest of the world. This method seems the most appropriate in view of Awolowo's various speeches and writings which normally starts from Nigeria before extending outwards gradually. It has also been noted

that "the locus of his intellectualism was Nigeria, indeed his antropo-centric MAN was and is a Nigerian."<sup>8</sup> Truly, Awolowo believed in Nigeria as a focus and total emancipation of Blacks as the pinnacle. His views had also been described as being in "concentric circles of Awo, friends, relatives, political associates, Western Region, Nigeria and Africa."<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, to put it in a more succinct way is that Awolowo's perspectives are spiral in form. He used to relate Nigeria with neighbouring states within the framework of anti-imperialism and extend it to Africa and further to the rest of the world. Instead of calling it concentric circles as earlier noted, it was spiral because there was no clear break from his thoughts but a continuation of reasoning in wider dimensions. One may now discuss Nigeria as the nucleus of Awolowo's foreign policy analysis.

Awolowo discovered that Nigeria was carved both at Berlin Conference of 1885 and with the small army of Colonel Lugard in Africa. He did not particularly appreciate the butchering of the various sociolinguistic groups into different countries as it happened to the Hausas in the Northern part of West Africa, the Yorubas in the Western part of Nigeria and Eastern part of Benin Republic. However, once he noted that, he worked for the independence and unity of the country' irrespective of the numerous nation within it.

Awo's first book 'Path to Nigerian Freedom' published in 1947, bares his mind on how Nigeria could easily work out the modalities for a truly independent nation. He never believed in flag independence. As far as he was concerned, independence meant political, economic, cultural and linguistic independence: Independence in all its ramifications. Awo once told his listeners in London that:

Politically, the independence of a country can be viewed from two angles: the corporate and the individual angle. A country is said to be free only when it has a qualified control over its internal affairs. On the other hand, a citizen of an independent country enjoys individual free-

dom when he is free to say and do what he likes subject only to laws enacted by the freely elected parliament or the popular legislative assembly of the land..... Furthermore, when the freedom of a country is looked at in its complete functional embodiment, it exhibits two conspicuous and inseparable facets. They are the political and economic facets.....political freedom is meaningless unless it goes hand in hand with economic freedom.<sup>10</sup>

Of equal importance to his advocacy of independence is unity of the numerous nations in Nigeria. Throughout his lifetime, he never subscribed to the idea of dividing Nigeria into smaller countries. He was an active member of the Nigerian Youth Movement that was truly nationalistic and Nigeria conscious until Awo believed it was no good anymore because Azikiwe had started the art of tribalism.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the various nations respecting the wish of their tribal leaders, he championed the cause for making Nigeria a federation. He won. Nigeria got her flag independence as a Federal State.

Throughout his stay in government, he continued to work for the unity of the country. When he was released from the prison by Yakubu Gowon and eventually became the Finance Commissioner of the country, he apart from persuading the rebel leader Odumegwu Ojukwu from going to war, he also managed the war finances in a very prudent manner, giving other strategies of winning the war. Awolowo won – in a sense – the civil war but lost the hearts of many Ibos for not allowing them to secede. He had never regretted it, as throughout his campaign in the second republic, he continuously repeated the need to be united.

Juxtaposed with the Northerners, Awolowo had little to compare with his fellow politicians. His view of them was that they were not ready for the changes the country was ready to undergo. He however, would not want them dismissed or be given up but would want to continue to identify with them because of overall importance of unity. He was identifying with them not because they shared common

values and ideas nor were they particularly committed towards the unity of Nigeria but because he could not imagine a balkanized Nigeria that would forever remain impotent and become pawn in the hands of imperialists.

The economy of Nigeria to be self-sustaining was also of paramount importance to Chief Awolowo. He believed that a nation without economic freedom was a nation still in bondage. And that independence connoted among other things economic independence. For a country to be respected in the international scene, it must take absolute control over its economy excluding the imperialists. In his words, 'economic freedom exists when a political sovereign country, independently of outside control or direction, organizes the exploitation and deployment of its total resources for the benefit of its entire people, under a system in which the forces of supply and demand and of marginal utility are controlled and canalized for the common good.'<sup>12</sup> To achieve economic freedom for Nigeria, or any other under-developed country, there is only one suitable option – socialism. Socialism allows for "mutual love, social justice, the triumph of human dignity and economic freedom for underdeveloped countries."<sup>13</sup>

Basically, Awolowo's Nigeria should have been a socialist Nigeria whose say in the international scene would not have been pushed aside but be respected and revered. This would have been because of the complete unity at home and independent nature of politico-socio economic machinery of the system. The hidden hand of the imperialists would have either disappeared by itself or crushed in the process.

Having attempted the conceptualization of Awolowo's Nigeria, one can now move forward to discuss his perspectives on the foreign policy of his country first with her neighbours. Suffice it to warn that Awolowo's Nigeria is not the same in which he lived. His Nigeria never materialized during his time therefore his perspectives on foreign policy never materialized fully during his time.

In early 1960, before Nigeria got her flag of independence,

the Action Group led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo called for the annexation of Dahomey (now Republic of Benin). The reason for this cannot be far-fetched. It was the belief of the party that Dahomey was a fragile small country that could not possibly be truly independent and therefore can only be used by imperialists against a possibly formidable Nigeria. To make Nigeria safe from the use of smaller States like Dahomey, the best thing was to take over the country. This would be easy because of the common peoples Nigeria and Dahomey shared and are still sharing.<sup>14</sup>

This call created an uncomfortable relations between the two countries. The method of annexation which was by referendum was baffling to the leadership of Dahomey. This culminated in a speech by President Maga of Dahomey, declaring that

Dahomey sees in the understanding with Togo the means for the two countries to resist the territorial appetites of Nigeria.....there had already been a referendum in Dahomey on 28th September, 1958. <sup>15</sup>

President Maga realized that if the Nigerian government should accede to the call of Action Group, Dahomey may find it difficult to resist all by itself and therefore had to solicit for Togo's assistance. However, the issue died down because the Nigeria's Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa declared Nigeria's vow never to alter her boundaries.

Awolowo's territorial appetite was not satisfied, he continuously throughout his lifetime referred to the small countries surrounding Nigeria in the subregion of West Africa as pawns in the hands of imperialists. He abhorred especially the taunting of Nigeria by these nations. His reactions to such taunts were extreme and decisive.

When in 1982, Camerounian gendarmes killed Nigerian soldiers on border patrol, Awolowo had a contrary view to

the government's final decision. He would have preferred Nigeria's immediate retaliation and occupation of a substantial part of Camerounian territory before any negotiation was made. This would have inculcated sense and respect not only to the average Camerounian, be he a soldier or a civilian, but also to the governments of Nigeria's neighbouring countries, Cameroun inclusive. As it turned out, Nigeria settled for a passive speech by the Camerounian leader when he visited Nigeria at the latter's instance.

Would Awolowo's perspectives of Nigeria's neighbourhood be that of a bully or a weakling? No. That would not be correct. What he wanted to correct was the unfair carving of African nations irrespective of the existing societies on ground. He wanted to erase the laid down weak nations which could easily be manipulated by imperialists. Indeed if one critically analysed the small and weak State surrounding Nigeria in the subregion of West Africa, one would discover that the countries in themselves could not effectively be threats to Nigeria but they could be easily used by other countries. Examples abound. During the civil war in Nigeria, Republic of Benin allowed its Airport to be used by Red Cross International aeroplanes which were said to be loaded with arms and ammunitions.<sup>16</sup> Sao Tome and Principe were also used for the same purpose. Thus Awolowo's anxieties were not unrealistic.

Furthermore, Awolowo favoured the economic emancipation of West African countries. He believed that this might partly be achieved by sub-regional economic groupings as found in the now defunct East African Market. He advocated for West African Market when he was the Vice Chairman of the Federal Executive Council. Nigeria, headed by Yakubu Gowon, initiated the diplomatic moves of what eventually became the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS). Again, the dreams of Chief Awolowo was not fully realized along this line. He would have preferred an almost perfect economic community. Even though ECOWAS is called an economic grouping, it is not so in practice for the economic transactions among member-states constitute only

4% while major business transactions are still with the former metropolitan powers.

If the economic grouping in West Africa was to be successful, it was doubtful if former metropolitan powers would let it operate as this would definitely reduce their imperialistic forces. The creation of Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) which was later succeeded by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) formed by 16 European countries, Canada and the United States of America was for this devilish purpose. Awolowo extensively discussed its functions and actions in a series of lectures given in honour of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

He listed the functions of the OECD as follows:

- (1) to encourage and co-ordinate the economic policies of member countries;
- (2) to contribute to the expansion of countries in a State of development whether members or not;
- (3) to facilitate the development of world trade and settle trade problems.

He then used figures and analysis to portray the 'faithfulness' of the OECD which he summarised as follows:

whilst the share of poor countries, including Africa, in world export trade was on the decline, that of the rich countries which had, since 1948, embarked on the various joint ventures already mentioned, was on the increase. <sup>17</sup>

This view does not hold for West African groupings alone but for Africa and perhaps the third world as a whole. This leads one to Awolowo's views and thoughts on Nigeria and the rest of Africa. On the continental scene, Awolowo must be compared with the ilks of Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and Nyerere. He must be differentiated from Ivorian President Houphouet-Boigny who denied ever being a socialist-oriented person before his white mentors and forged ahead to practise all capitalistic tendencies that would make him be supported in power forever by the imperialists.

Awolowo accepted, to a great extent, Nkrumah's type of

African unity where one has to first of all seek political kingdom and allow other things to follow. There is little doubt that if Awolowo had won the Federal Elections of 1959, and became the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Nigeria would have been part of the Casablanca bloc. His idea of what African unity should be is contained in the aims and objectives set out for sincere African nationalists which included among others:

.....To promote and establish a community of interests among all the peoples of Africa, and to this end, to work assiduously for the realisation of the ideal of a political union or confederacy (whichever is practicable in the prevailing circumstances) among all African States; As a first practical step towards the emergence of an All-African political union, to take immediate steps to divide the continent into zones.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike Tafawa Balewa, Awolowo agreed to Nkrumah's African political union which many saw as eroding the new independence of the African States. Awolowo was not sure as to whether the full fusion would work as envisaged by Nkrumah hence the alternative 'confederacy (whichever is practicable in the prevailing circumstances).'

In a somersault however, Awolowo advocated for 'Organisation for African Community' whose membership would be African Political Parties or Nationalist Movements thereby eliminating governments. The reason for excluding governments from its membership was due to the limitation of governments by international law and usage which Parties and movements were not confined to. The functions of the Organisation would be "primarily to devise ways and means of accomplishing (as listed) aims and secondarily to tackle such problems as may from time to time affect the whole or any part of Africa."<sup>19</sup> One wonders how this organisation would have been successful without governments' participation even though the very governments could finance it. He who pays the piper would not dictate the tune in this case.

The practicability is doubtful. Moreso, when Awolowo wanted the political union of Africa which he felt would be "an ideal which was not only worth working for but also one which can be realised."<sup>20</sup>

Supposing there is a political union of Africa, will the proposal for Organisation for African Community still hold water? For the Continent would be one State which would suppose to be indivisible. Probably, Awolowo made this suggestion from the position of opposition leader. If he had been in power, there was the possibility of his faculty to think beyond this. In his characteristic manner, Awolowo asked that any member movement of the Organisation that proved disloyal should be expelled and also ostracised. *Discipline, Awolowo's middle name.* Suffice it to mention that Awolowo favoured armed confrontation against apartheid.

On the economic scene, Awolowo believed that Africa was a "competing beggar-nation".<sup>21</sup> He strongly felt that Africa must be economically independent and self-reliant. He in many writings denounced the integration of European economy into African post independence economy. He supported with caution the formation of regional grouping which must not compete with each other and must thwart the efforts of their counterparts in Europe.

Still on Awolowo's perspectives of Africa, one might delve into his party's stand on one main event in Africa: the Congo crisis. The Congo crisis was on and Nigeria waded in by sending forces to the UN multi-national force called ONUC (Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo) just like Ghana. But unlike Ghana, Nigeria though professed to be cautious on the issue took a liberal position on the side of imperialistic Western countries. On the other hand, Ghana and other countries were against Kasavubu-Mobutu clique because of their ideological differences. At home, the murder of Lumumba was greatly denounced by the opposition in parliament led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Chief Anthony Enahoro castigated the Federal Government and moved an

amendment "that the government's foreign policy lacks dynamism and regrets that the governments' interpretation and conduct thereof is out of step with progressive opinion in Africa."<sup>22</sup> Another opposition member belonging to the Action Group further castigated the Balewa government for taking sides with America and Britain on the Congo crisis.

The Congo crisis helped Nigerian internal politics to precipitate into the 'radicals' and 'reactionaries'. It made Chief Obafemi Awolowo to easily pick the progressiveness in him and other patriotic Africans like Kwame Nkrumah and Guinea's Sekou Toure. However, the political union envisaged by Awolowo and his ilk never materialized partly due to the unseen evil hands of imperialists and partly due to the realities of the day.

The disappointment lingered on in Awolowo to the Non-Alligned Movement. As a starter, Awolowo believed in Mahatma Gandhi, the father of non-alignment. Gandhi was particularly liked because of the introduction of non-violence and non-co-operation in India which yielded result, Awolowo described it as 'constructive agitation' in his autobiography. He accepted the principle of non-alignment as far as military alignment was concerned. He defined 'neutral' in international affairs as "refusal to assist either of two belligerent States or determination to stand aloof from active or passive hostilities, or unwillingness to take sides in any dispute. In the ordinary day-to-day use of that word it means colourlessness, vagueness, indefiniteness and indeterminateness. ....neutrality means hypocrisy, dishonesty, and disreputableness."<sup>23</sup>

Awolowo categorically did not believe in non-alignment except when used in a military context. As far as he was concerned, Nigeria should come out and preach the ideals of the country with all zeals possible and denounce colonialism, neo-colonialism, repressions, imperialism and any other thing that might not be in the interest of Nigeria. The

country should collaborate and co-operate with other countries that have similar ideals, especially ideologies. One should remember that Nigeria never had the same ideology that Awolowo talked about. His analogy of the situation is this:

When a christian goes to the market or when a Mohammedan goes to the market and he wants to sell some goods, he does not go about asking about the faith of the buyer. He sells to the highest bidder, and when he wants to buy, he goes to buy, he goes to the cheapest market. He does not go about asking whether the man he is buying from is a pagan or a christian. That is the position.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, Nigeria should foster relationship with the Eastern bloc countries so as to identify with the ideals which the country believed in. Again, Awolowo's audience which included Northern Nigerians did not particularly believe in the ideals enumerated by Awolowo which were coterminous with those of the Eastern bloc countries.

His belief in neutrality stopped at military attachment. Nigeria should align with the East if possible. This was the position of Chief Awolowo as we looked into Anglo-Nigeria relations.

Britain got Awolowo's anti-imperialistic attitude as early as 1961 when he as the opposition leader started the campaign against Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact. Even though it was widely believed that Awolowo must have known about the Pact before independence, or even part of it while under consideration he nonetheless opposed it until it was discarded.

Tried as the Balewa's Federal Government did to debunk Awolowo's claim to neocolonialism, it could not convince all right thinking Nigerians. Article 1 of the defence pact stipulated that:

The Government of the Federation and the United Kingdom Government each undertake to afford to the other such assistance as may be necessary of mutual defence, and to

consult together on the measures to be taken jointly or separately to ensure the fullest co-operation between them for this purpose.

This, Awolowo believed was beyond 'peradventure'. He contended that "the aim of the two countries Nigeria and Britain, in entering into this Agreement is 'to preserve peace and to provide for their mutual defence.....'"<sup>25</sup> He asserted that "Defence Pacts whether with Britain, Russia or any other country are evil for a country like Nigeria, and should not in any circumstance be entered into."<sup>26</sup> His view was that the policy of Nigeria should be non-involvement in military matters. He condemned the Federal Government's stand as "untenable, indefensible and totally reprehensible and does constitute a betrayal of the peoples trust."<sup>27</sup>

Awolowo did not stop at this. He further denounced other forms of agreement between Nigeria and Britain, one of which was tagged 'International Rights and Obligations' which according to him had drastically reduced the independent status Nigeria had just acquired. He opined that such agreements could only poison the minds of individuals that might lead to souring of Anglo-Nigerian relations.

While Anglo-Nigerian relations never soured during the Balewa regime, the minds of the British leaders must have been poisoned against Awolowo. For Britain enjoyed the scenario of Awolowo's trial in 1962 and beyond. Furthermore, Awolowo's right hand man in the Action Group, Chief Anthony Enahoro who escaped to London was happily returned to Nigeria to face similar charges and conviction.

Irrespective of the way one may look at it, Awolowo's castigation of Britain acted as a brake to the Balewa's fast government's approach towards being a satellite of Britain. The radicals had since taken their cue from Chief Awolowo and had been pressing for more relations with the Eastern bloc. *After the civil war, Gowon allowed the Russian embassy to increase the number of diplomats in its office tenfold. Awolowo's influence cannot be over-ruled.*

It is interesting to note Awolowo's views of the Commonwealth led by Britain. Inexplicably, Awolowo never saw the Commonwealth as an imperialistic tool used against the weak States. Concluding his autobiography, Awolowo declared "we are right now on the threshold of the paradise where we will reign with other members of the Commonwealth of Nations."<sup>28</sup> The Commonwealth continued to enjoy Chief Awolowo's respect even after independence of Nigeria. He once urged that "Nigeria should see to it that South Africa is not readmitted into the Commonwealth' when that country became a republic and applied to remain in the Commonwealth."<sup>29</sup> But it is obvious that rather than alienate the almost inevitable Commonwealth, Awolowo would prefer Nigeria using it as a tool to deal with South Africa and or help in transferring capital equipments to Nigeria. Throughout Awolowo's writings and speeches, he would always call on the government to use the Commonwealth as a tool to achieve an objective.

Awolowo's impressions of the rest of Europe and America was no doubt that of imperialist opportunists that saw virgin Africa to exploit in order to sustain their capitalistic societies to the detriment of the unsuspecting Africans. He saw no need to rely on them except for education and transfer of capital for development which would not subdue the independence of the country in any form. He acknowledged their technological feat but would never allow that to overshadow his sense of equality of all men in a world of inequality.

It is for this reason that Awolowo saw the need to maintain diplomatic relation with Israel without breaking ties with the Arabs. His contention was that there were a lot of things to learn from the Israelis in terms of agriculture, industry and technology. Besides, the argument that Israel had continued operating in apartheid South African was not tenable because United States, France and Britain had been having relations with the undaunted South African evil regime. He therefore saw no need to ostracise Israel in the face of world events. On cost/benefit analysis, Nigeria would gain more by

relating with Israel than by severing relations.

Another argument was that the level of trade between the Nigerian government and Israel was on the increase and that it would be hypocritical to be ignoring governmental relations with Israel. When Golda Meir visited Nigeria, she only discussed with the Premiers of Western and Eastern Regions with a promise to assist and co-operate economically and technologically.

The government of the Northern Region never recognised the existence of Israel<sup>30</sup> talk less of relating with it. This did not allow Balewa government to establish an embassy in Israel even though Israel had one in Nigeria. It was thus easy for Nigeria to follow OAU in its decision to break diplomatic ties with Israel. Even up till date when many African countries surrounding Nigeria are re-establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, powerful lobbies of the Northerners did not allow Nigeria to decide.

It was just as Nigeria was not as decisive in her relations with the Eastern bloc countries. Between independence and 1967 when Nigeria started the civil war, the relations with the East was minimal because of the NPC controlled disposition towards socialism and its natural conservativeness. Even though Awolowo saw the need to align with the East because they portrayed the ideals Nigeria believed in, the government never actually fell deep in relations with the East.

The importance of the Eastern bloc came out when the Russians unlike the British came out openly and decisively to support Nigeria against Biafra. Were it not for Russia, Nigeria would have been balkanized or fragmented today. Russia supplied arms and ammunitions to Nigeria to help win the war. This might have been done partly because of Awolowo's presence in the Military Government and partly because of the possibility of Nigeria going socialist after the war. The Military government of Gowon never considered that alternative but allowed a higher number of Russian diplomats and greater trade volume between the Eastern bloc

and Nigeria.

Awolowo never relented in his firm belief in the socialist stands of Russia and it permeated every speech and writing of his. In a pamphlet by UPN on '20 Reasons why you Must vote for UPN' it was written that the party "will maintain its friendly relations with all peace-loving nations, irrespective of their ideological stands"<sup>31</sup>

Even though Awolowo believed in socialism, he distinguished the Russian type from what may be described as African socialism. He called it *Democratic Socialism*. In his words:

There are two socialisms: "revolutionary socialism and democratic socialism. Revolutionary socialism is what is generally known as communism. Its aims are the same as those of democratic socialism. But the orientation of the communist is different from that of the democratic socialist .... On the other hand the democratic socialist believes and sincerely so, that the ends of socialism can be attained by democratic means."<sup>32</sup>

The love for Russia was manifested in Awolowo's love for socialism. He was never in power to allow Nigeria demonstrate this love towards Russia. Democratic socialism was the Action Group's idology for an independent Nigeria.

The UPN manifesto which to a large extent reflected the leader's views and Chief Awolowo's perspectives of Nigeria's foreign policy states inter alia:

The UPN will pursue most vigorously all political, economic and social programmes which in relation to the rest of the world are calculated to be in Nigeria's national interest. We will consolidate the dynamic African policy which has contributed greatly to the reinforcement of the OAU and the establishment of ECOWAS.

The UPN will encourage the intensification of the liberation struggle in South Africa and will make whatever financial and material contributions that may foster the ultimate success of all righteous crusades in the region.

A UPN government will continue to give support to the UN and to OAU. We shall continue to maintain friendly relations with all countries and refrain from acts likely to undermine our policy of non-alignment.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, Chief Awolowo was never given the chance to execute the lofty ideals above.

Awolowo's UPN anthem never forgot Nigeria as its last stanza shows:

Up Up Nigeria!  
 And take thy rightful place  
 'Tis thy birthright  
 And thy destiny  
 Africa's leading light to be.

He never forgot Nigeria in his dreams, thoughts and speeches either. He wanted to serve NIGERIA with all his might and put the Foreign Policy aright. In his words:

At this juncture in my life,  
 my one and only ambition is to  
 have an opportunity to live the  
 rest of my life for history by }  
 means of selfless and beneficent  
 service to the peoples of Nigeria  
 in particular, and of Africa and  
 the black peoples of the world,  
 in general.<sup>3 4</sup>

But he was given half the chance.

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# **Part Six**

## **Law and Human Rights**

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mon man for freedom from the exercise of privileged power.

In Nigeria, as in the rest of black Africa, the difficulty in establishing the Rule of Law has been compounded by two factors. First, there is little in our traditional jurisprudence to reinforce it. The spirit of the English Law that was introduced into the country in 1863 was not in consonance with the traditional African outlook on Law and Society. The idea of Law as an external, objective entity, with a language and logic of its own, is rather strange to African traditional concept of Law. Traditionally, law was intertwined with socio-cultural and ethical norms, a tool of the ruling elite or those whose duty it was to keep the society harmoniously integrated. Law was conceived as an adjunct of rulership, and not the property of the common man. What Pyong Choon Hahm said of traditional Korea was applicable to pre-colonial African societies:

A legal obligation on the part of a ruler was a contradiction in terms... A moral obligation or perhaps an obligation to Heaven may be said to exist, but never a legal obligation.<sup>7</sup>

Pre-colonial Nigeria, like the rest of black Africa, did not develop what Kiralfy has called a "heritage of legality".<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, Nigeria's colonial rulers, understandably, did little actively to promote the Rule of Law.<sup>9</sup> The exigencies of the colonial situation did not allow a full flourishing of the concept. The English historical experience has shown that a virile legal profession is a pre-requisite for the development of the Rule of Law. In Nigeria the restrictions placed on the practice of the profession (in 1914) were not removed until towards the close of the colonial era in 1943. As for the colonial judiciary, its posture in general, was one of judicial self-restraint underlain by a certain desire to safeguard the interest of the Executive. Themselves products of the Colonial Service, they were apt to be "unwilling collaborators of the Executive, rather than its critics". The independence of outlook which the Rule of Law requires on the part of

the judiciary was not always present in a colonial situation.

Sir Ralph Combe, a colonial judge, did assert in *Rex v. Thomas H. Jackson* (1925)<sup>10</sup> that the Rule of Law was "one of the greatest blessings brought to this country by the British Administration". The assertion is conceded, but what comes out of Nigeria's colonial experience was not a robust legacy of the practice of the Rule of Law, but the idea of it which Nigerians might appreciate, develop, and integrate into their way of life. This paper is concerned with the effort of one Nigerian, Obafemi Awolowo (1909-1987), at nurturing this important legacy, "The Rule of Law", he wrote, "is the lawyer's summing up both of man's triumph over arbitrary use of power, and an ideal for a just society".<sup>11</sup> An earnest pursuit of the ideal of the Rule of Law in Nigeria was one golden thread that ran through his career at the Bar, in politics and his considerable intellectual output. A Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Bola Ajibola, described him as "a man who believed wholeheartedly in the observance of the Rule of Law and the due administration of justice and the creation of a just society".<sup>12</sup> That view is widely shared in legal and political circles in Nigeria.<sup>13</sup>

## II

But first, what made Awolowo, a man of humble beginnings,<sup>14</sup> to be enamoured of a concept that was traditionally strange to his environment, and to preoccupy himself, later in life, with efforts at entrenching it as a way of life in the country? One plausible explanation is that he was, of course, a lawyer and he loved his profession. He had this to say about the attraction the practice of the law had for him:

To engage, without bitterness or animosity, in the fiercest contention; to cultivate the habit of always examining both sides of a problem, and to present the side you espouse with forensic forcefulness and assuredness; to identify yourself with your client and to enter into his feelings as if you were the plaintiff or defendant or the priso-

ner at the Bar; to propound and urge points of law which are sometimes so fine and abstruse that it is not at all easy to distinguish one point from another; to be utterly fearless and unsparing in combat; to acquire an independence of outlook in all things and to enjoy immunity in all you say and do at the Bar so long as it is legitimate and within the bounds of professional etiquette; to take part in fostering the cause of justice and equity in their total impartiality before the very bulwark of the citizens' liberty and individual freedom— all these and more are the inherent and distinctive attributes of a noble profession which I very much love and will for ever cherish.<sup>15</sup>

But this love for the legal profession is inadequate to explain his devotion to the Rule of Law. The basic factor, I submit, was his character. In describing what he regarded as the attractive features of the legal profession, he was, at least in part, reading his character into his own practice of it.

Awolowo has provided sufficient insight, through his writings, into his psychological make-up. Wrote he in his autobiography:

As a result of father's and granny's encouragement, I became very tough; fearless and defiant as a boy, and acquired an Ikenne-wide reputation as such. I always stood my ground against anyone even if he was older than I.<sup>16</sup>

During his short sojourn at Wesley College in 1927 he exhibited an independent, critical and rebellious cast of mind, becoming a crusader against wickedness and oppression of the senior classes of the College.<sup>17</sup>

He carried the same independent, critical outlook into adult life. In the 1940s at least he held traditional rulers in utter contempt, regarding them as "part and parcel of imperial bureaucracy".<sup>18</sup> The so-called "Indirect Rule" system of colonial administration he described in 1942 as "a worthless system of government devised to perpetuate the political subjection of the peoples who come under its sway"<sup>19</sup> A democrat at heart that he had become, Comrade O. Awolowo

lowo, as he then chose to call himself, was by 1945 demanding "An Act of Settlement", embodying an agreed procedure by which the people would have a greater say in the selection of their traditional rulers.<sup>20</sup> Such procedure, he insisted, "must be laid down strictly as a rule of law", and not as a mere administrative arrangement. In the same vein he called for the democratization of the Native Administrative Councils, and the abolition of the Sole Native Authority system wherever it existed in the country. The elected Councils he envisaged for local administration would be vested with the power to appeal to the colonial governor - over the heads of the Resident and the Chief Commissioner - on issues over which they felt strongly.<sup>21</sup> His book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947) was not only an indictment of the colonial system in Nigeria, but also a compendium of his own ideas about government and administration.

The point that is being made is that the concept of the Rule of Law is bound to appeal to a man of Awolowo's character. Defiant and self-assured by nature, he was likely to seize upon the Rule of Law as a veritable instrument for fighting against any form of injustice and oppression. The rebel of Wesley College would find in adult life no satisfaction in any other socio-political arrangement than that everyone should be equal before the law.

In appraising the personality of Obafemi Awolowo and the roots of his predisposition for the Rule of Law, one should not leave out of consideration the impact of his philosophical and mystical studies. A man with some forty years of such studies, Awolowo wrote with mystical touch.<sup>22</sup> He was doing more than stating an economic proposition when he declared that man is "the only dynamic, causative and purposive factor in all productive activities".<sup>23</sup> For he was conscious of the uniqueness of each individual person. He was aware that "the creative process of God (operates) through the spiritual, the only true part of man".<sup>24</sup> Thus his long period of mystical studies would have constrained him to have a deep respect for the dignity of the human

person. Since man is believed to be a part of the cosmic order with an assigned purpose, Awolowo would have believed, with Alan Gewirth, that:

human rights are of supreme importance... because they are rights of every human being to the necessary conditions of human action, that is, those conditions that must be fulfilled if human action is to be possible either at all or with general chances of success in achieving the purposes for which humans act....<sup>25</sup>

At some point in his life time Awolowo must have considered human rights for each individual person – to adopt a favourite phrase of his – a moral “categorical imperative”.

Awolowo's practical involvement in politics must have also accentuated his penchant for the Rule of Law. The competitiveness of the politics of the pre-independence era and the First Republic has received the attention of many scholars.<sup>26</sup> It is common knowledge that Awolowo used the Law like a sword and a shield – to defend himself and his supporters, and to strike at his political enemies. The deep concern for human rights which he showed in the late 1950s could have arisen out of his rather unpleasant political experience (especially in the northern part of the country) which would have strengthened his conviction that a sane political atmosphere and true democracy would only come about in Nigeria through the Rule of Law.

### III

The outline of Awolowo's career at the Bar is well known. He was enrolled on 24 December 1946; practised law actively in the periods 1947–1951 and 1972–1977; reached the pinnacle of the profession in January 1978 when he became a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). Of his brilliance at the Bar there can be no doubt. Less than eleven months after he commenced legal practice, he successfully appeared in *Memudu Lagunju v. Olubadan-in-Council and Another* (1947)<sup>27</sup> before the West African Court of Appeal, then

the highest court in Commonwealth West Africa. It was a classic example of a fight for the supremacy of the Rule of Law. The colonial governor, Awolowo contended, was not empowered to use his discretion in determining whether a chief had been appointed in accordance with the prescribed native law and custom; evidence must be adduced to show that the governor made the enquiry and consultation impliedly required by law. He earned the commendation of the same court two years later in *Samuel Toriola and Others v. Gabriel Arewa* when he successfully opposed an appeal by a formidable team of lawyers (Adegunle Soetan, Chiefs F.R.A. Williams and H.O. Davies). The issue involved was the interpretation of section 28 of the Native Courts Ordinance in respect of a Magistrate's court's jurisdiction in matters relating to interest in land.<sup>28</sup> Throughout his career at the Bar, he maintained this high standard of performance. "Whether the judgement is in favour of or against his client", wrote Chief F.R.A. Williams, who is in a position to know, "there is invariably a reflection of Chief Awolowo's industry, profound learning and erudition in the arguments he presented to the court".<sup>29</sup> He retained the brilliance of his legal mind to the end, defending himself or pleading his own cause at two critical points in his political career — the treasonable felony trial, *Queen v. Omisade and Others* (1963)<sup>30</sup>, and the dispute over 1979 Presidential elections (*Awolowo v. Shagari and Others* (1979)).<sup>31</sup>

Awolowo's contribution as a lawyer to the establishment of the Rule of Law in Nigeria consisted in his contribution to the development of the law itself, or rather the adaptation of English legal principles to the Nigerian environment. His expertise covered a large spectrum of the subjects of Law: Land, Equity and Trusts, Tort, Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Commercial Law, and so on. In many of the cases in which he appeared in court, to quote F.R.A. Williams again, "there is either a clarification of the existing case law (on the subject matter) or a judicial pronouncement involving a decision on points of law which is being decided for the first

time".<sup>32</sup>

In this connection the role of Awolowo as a lawyer is indistinguishable from that of his role as litigant in the Nigerian legal system. Important principles of law have similarly been laid down by the courts in cases in which he was involved as litigant, especially in defamation cases. In *Zik Enterprises Ltd v. Awolowo* (1955)<sup>33</sup> the West African Court of Appeal affirmed an old rule of English Law that to be actionable, an alleged libel must be specifically referable to a plaintiff. In *Rotimi Williams: Akintola: Awolowo v. West African Pilot* (1961)<sup>34</sup> a rule of Evidence emerged that the court may take judicial notice of the fact that a particular newspaper is a national daily in Nigeria and that it has readers outside Nigeria. From the celebrated *Awolowo v. Kingsway Stores* (1968)<sup>35</sup> it is now clear that a book-seller cannot be too careful about his merchandise.

A book seller who undertakes the sale of a book which, known to him, is written about a particular locality or geographical area and contains the names of the people of that place and their activities ought to read through such a book to satisfy himself that it does not contain a libel on the people of whom it is written; the more so if the book is meant for distribution in that area and its title is such as to put him on his guard.<sup>36</sup>

*Awolowo v. The Hon. Mallam Usman Sarki and the Attorney-General of the Federation* (1966)<sup>37</sup> may still be relevant to the question of human rights and the Rule of Law. There it was held that the right of an accused person to counsel of his own choice under section 21 (5) (c) of the 1960 constitution of Nigeria was not absolute; it could be curtailed for various reasons, including some other provisions of the constitution.

Of similar importance as these cases in the development of the Nigerian law are cases involving others, Awolowo's associates, arising from his political activities, in particular the crisis that engulfed the Action Group party (of which he was leader) and the old Western Region in 1962.<sup>38</sup>

The crisis was most productive of litigation in the courts, and few of the cases, if any at all, could have been instituted without his knowledge and support. They all put to test the Nigerian Independence constitution of 1960, and have thrown up a number of legal principles which have enriched Nigerian case law in constitutional matters.

It would be tedious to discuss here all the issues litigated by Awolowo's political associates.<sup>39</sup> For instance, on only one aspect of the crisis – the tussle between two of his associates, Adegbenro and Akintola, over the governorship of the Western Region – some twenty-seven issues would appear to have been raised in the courts. But they were all of constitutional importance. Thus, for instance, it is now clear from *Doherty v. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Others* (1961)<sup>40</sup> that an Act of Parliament which purports to limit the jurisdiction of the courts in hearing and determining civil rights and constitutional issues, contrary to the Human Rights provisions of the Constitution will be declared a nullity. *Olawoyin and Others v. Commissioner of Police (No. 2)* (1961)<sup>41</sup> provides a definition of what constitutes 'a substantial question of law'. To give rise to a substantial question of law, an issue must be "such that there is some doubt or difference of opinion as to what the law is"; difficulty in the application of a law does not make it a substantial question of law. *Williams v. Majekodunmi (No. 2)* (1962)<sup>42</sup> is an authority for the view that in the Nigerian political system only Parliament, and not the court of law, can decide whether a state of emergency exists. Of strong relevance to the Rule of Law is the principle established in *Williams v. Majekodunmi (No. 3)* (1962)<sup>43</sup> that the Fundamental Human Rights entrenched in the (1960) Constitution – and, by extension, in the 1979 Constitution as well – may be overridden "only to the extent that it is essential for the sake of some recognised public interest and no further". The principle of *locus standi* (the legal capacity to sue) was affirmed in *Adegbenro v. Attorney-General of the Federation*

*and Others* (1961)<sup>44</sup>: the Federal Supreme Court will not examine the validity of a law "except at the instance of a person whose rights have been invaded or threatened by that law". In the interpretation of the Nigerian Constitution or the constitution of a state of Nigeria, is it permissible to import "extraneous principles of other constitutions" not explicitly written into such constitution? *Adegbenro v. Akintola and Another* (1962)<sup>45</sup> would appear to have answered that question in the negative.

#### IV

In discussing Awolowo's place in the development of the Nigerian Law in relation to the Rule of Law, mention should be made of his immense contribution to the establishment of Federalism as "the foundation of our system of government and of Nigerian Constitutional Law". He was clearly a major architect of the Nigerian Federalism. True, two colonial constitutions — the Richards constitution of 1946 and the Macpherson constitution of 1951<sup>46</sup> — had sown the seeds of Federalism or Regionalism before Awolowo became an actor on the Nigerian political scene. From this standpoint, it is arguable, Federalism as a political way of life for Nigeria was inevitable. But it was he who, as a Nigerian, first wrote at length to advocate Federalism for the country. Significantly, the manuscript for his book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*<sup>47</sup>, in which he first expressed his thoughts on the subject, was completed in 1946, the year of the Richards constitution. In her Foreword to the book, Dame Margery Perham described it as "full of hard thinking and strong feeling".<sup>48</sup> Like the architect that he was, Awolowo designed a goal and a purpose for the country's emerging political structure. He saw in Federalism for Nigeria "a system within which the diverse elements may progress at varying speeds, amicably and smoothly, towards a more closely integrated economic, social and political unity without sacrificing the principles and ideals inherent in their divergent ways of life".<sup>49</sup> Again, like the architect that he

was, he developed an alternative design to what the colonial officials were putting on the ground. His scheme included re-drawing the administrative boundaries of the country so as to create more regions than the existing three, and giving greater responsibility to Nigerians in the management of the country's affairs.<sup>50</sup>

Space would not permit a full discussion of Awolowo's contribution to the making of Nigeria's Independence (1960) Constitution at the constitutional conferences held between 1957 and 1958. But of particular interest, in relation to the subject of the Rule of Law, is his posture regarding Human Rights which he strove to see entrenched in the Constitution. It was a unique posture openly acknowledged by one of the political parties at the constitutional conference, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), which saw in Awolowo's Action Group a strong ally with regard to Human Rights.<sup>51</sup> As Awolowo indicated at the same conference, his Party had been "a consistent advocate of constitutional provision for fundamental freedoms".

It was the Action Group that took the initiative to put forward specific proposals for fundamental freedoms in 1957.<sup>52</sup> At the constitutional conference in London, in 1958, Awolowo indicated, as it should be expected, that his Party welcomed the idea of a comprehensive code of rights to be entrenched in the Constitution, the objective being "to see that these rights are a real aid to the maintenance of free and democratic society in Nigeria".<sup>53</sup>

Awolowo went to the London conference in September 1958 determined to ensure that Fundamental Human Rights were entrenched in the Independence Constitution. His broadcast to the nation on 14 September 1958 centred on what he regarded as three main issues his Party would fight for at the conference: creation of (more) states, the problem of fundamental human rights, and the problem of universal adult suffrage. As regards fundamental human rights, he declared:

The charge which my delegation has to keep ... is quite clear. We will press, without yielding, for the fashioning of a constitution under which every one of us will live free from fear, from tyranny and oppression, and as equals in the eyes of the law... We will insist without compromise that provision should be made in our constitution which will guarantee to every one of you freedom of speech, of assembly, of movement, and of association in any part of Nigeria, as well as easy access to the law courts where justice will be dispensed with absolute impartiality. We are all born free and equal as to our rights and liberty. All the inequalities and oppression which afflict our society today... are man-made. Our aim, therefore, is to produce a constitution which will wipe out these ugly and unnatural stains from our body politic.<sup>54</sup>

As if to remind the various delegations of the importance of their assignment, he told the Press at Ikeja, Lagos:

The thoughts and words of all the delegations at the Resumed Conference must be dominated and guided by the following inextricably interwoven ideals: self-determination for the ethnic minorities; the continued and sturdy growth of democracy in its true acceptance and practice, as a way of life in our political activities; and the enthronement of the Rule of Law in our great country.<sup>55</sup>

In the course of the Conference in London, he sought to muster British public opinion in support of the entrenchment of Fundamental Human Rights in the Constitution being fashioned out for Nigeria. In a statement issued to the Press at the London airport on 19 September 1958, he argued

It is not enough for Britain to give us Nigeria; she must also see to it that provisions are entrenched in our Constitution which will ensure the growth of liberal democracy and parliamentary government in Nigeria. It is not enough that Nigeria as a corporate entity is free; it is essential that our Constitution should guarantee freedom to individual Nigerian citizens as well.<sup>56</sup>

He was more specific in a subsequent statement to certain

sections of the British press on 27 September 1958:

Our new Constitution must ... spell out guarantees for the enjoyment and enforcement of fundamental Human Rights such as freedom of movement, speech and assembly, freedom of the press, freedom from unjust imprisonment, the rights to a public hearing and properly regulated procedure in civil and criminal proceedings; and the right of an accused person, in every part of the country, to be represented in his own defence by a legal practitioner of his choice.<sup>57</sup>

It was a happy coincidence that the Henry Willink Commission which had been appointed in September 1957 "to enquire into the fear of Minorities in Nigeria and the means of allaying them", also recommended that one principal means of allaying the fears of minorities should be the inclusion in the 1960 Nigeria Constitution of detailed provisions based on the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, published earlier in 1953.<sup>58</sup> At the resumed constitutional conference in September 1958, it was agreed that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the assistance of his legal advisers, prepare draft clauses for the protection of Fundamental Human Rights. Intra-party discussions on the subject and the ensuing debates in September and October 1958 focussed on the draft clauses. In the end the Conference agreed that provision for Fundamental Human Rights should be made in the Constitution under fourteen heads, including rights to private and family life, right to liberty, right to freedom of expression, freedom to peaceful assembly, right to compensation for compulsory acquisition of property, and so on.<sup>59</sup>

The final product bore the marking of Awolowo's ideas, although a number of his other ideas were rejected. It was he, for instance, who insisted (and the Conference agreed) that persons seeking to enforce the fundamental human rights entrenched in the Constitution should be enabled to go directly to the Federal or Regional High courts in the first

instance, and that the courts should be empowered "to make all such Orders as may be necessary and appropriate to secure the applicant the enjoyment of any of these rights"<sup>60</sup> It was also his idea that there should be a right of appeal from a High Court to the Federal Supreme Court in respect of the infringement of any of the fundamental rights, and on all questions involving the interpretation of the Constitution.<sup>61</sup> The Conference did not adopt a proposal by him that some form of poor persons procedure be established in the Federal and the Regional High courts "so that persons who could not normally afford the cost of proceedings in the Superior courts should be afforded every opportunity of enforcing their rights".<sup>62</sup> Nor did the Conference accept to consider "freedom from want" a fundamental human right. As we shall see presently, Awolowo did not give up the idea.

## V

In many ways, Awolowo used the platform of practical politics to promote the Rule of Law in Nigeria. As Premier of Western Nigeria (1954-1959), he established the first autonomous judiciary in Nigeria with an African Chief Justice appointed 1 July 1955.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, by the testimony of F.R.A. Williams (Awolowo's Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government), he brought about considerable improvement in the conditions of serving judicial and legal officers.<sup>64</sup> It was not an easy achievement. Awolowo had to push through his programme of reforms "with uncompromising determination and tenacity" against the stiff opposition of the senior cadre of the administrative Service in the Region.<sup>65</sup> The conditions of judicial service became a model that was copied eventually throughout the country.

It was under his Premiership that the statutory laws of Western Nigeria was revised and compiled into seven volumes between 1957 and 1959. The rationale for the revision and compilation of the Region's statutory laws would appear to be simply the desire for efficiency in the adminis-

tration of justice. Fatayi Williams, one of the two assistants to the Commissioner for the revision of the laws, Sir John Verity, explained:

It became necessary for the Government of the Western Region to extract from the Statute Laws of Nigeria a whole body of Statute laws which were considered to be regional in content. Added to this assignment was the re-enactment with suitable modification, where necessary, of all English statutes, having force and effect in the Region which were of general application and in force in Nigeria before 1 January 1900.<sup>66</sup>

In the words of the then Attorney-General, F.R.A. Williams, the programme of revision and compilation of laws was undertaken "to ensure that all the statute laws which have been in force in this Region shall be on our own Statute Books".<sup>67</sup> Here again, the Western Region set the pace for the rest of the country to follow.<sup>68</sup>

The revision and compilation of the laws of Western Nigeria was much more than an effort at indigenizing English statutory laws "as were deemed appropriate to the present circumstances of the Region" Contained within the seven volumes were laws initiated by Awolowo's Government undergirding the measures he took for the socio-economic development of the Region. The laws covered such areas as education,<sup>69</sup> the organisation of customary courts,<sup>70</sup> Public Health,<sup>71</sup> Agriculture,<sup>72</sup> Communal Land Rights,<sup>73</sup> Chiefs,<sup>74</sup> Local Government<sup>75</sup> and others. The minimum the laws would have achieved in these areas was a degree of certainty and efficiency.

The use of the courts by Awolowo and his Party, the Action Group, in the protection of the Human Rights of political supporters has not received the attention of observers of the Nigerian Political Scene. Quite a large number of lawyers were drawn to the Party, the Party headquarters at Ibadan by August 1958 had a list of forty-one.<sup>76</sup> If by 1958 it was felt that the scope of legal work in getting the Party established in the North "does not require posting

of more than two lawyers" there,<sup>77</sup> by the following year, when the Party was making inroads into the North in preparation for the Federal Elections of that year, there were Action Group lawyers in practically all the thirteen Provinces of the North.<sup>78</sup> In late 1959 every team of campaign workers despatched to the North included at least one lawyer.<sup>79</sup>

The scarcity of Magistrates' courts posed a serious obstacle,<sup>80</sup> but it would appear the lawyers scored at least some degree of success in defending Action Group Party supporters in the Region. Adedapo Adeniran, the Action Group solicitor for Ilorin and Kabba Provinces "defended gratuitously" the Party's Field Secretary for Kabba when he was charged for murder in 1958.<sup>81</sup> G.A. Osinowo reported from Niger Province in November 1959 that he was able "to counteract these forces of oppression and victimization" by filing actions against the political opponents of the Action Group in the High Court, and publicising their atrocities in the newspaper press. Even a non-lawyer stalwart of the Party like J.E. Babalola was able to invoke "the Fundamental Human Rights of our Constitution to frighten *Sertkis* and chiefs of *dongaris* to grant us permit to campaign" in Auna, Lapai and Diko in the Niger Province towards the end of 1959.<sup>82</sup>

The lawyer's presence could have a dramatic impact as this testimony on the professional activities of Adedapo Adeniran would indicate:

The mere mention of Lawyer makes all supporters of NPC (Northern People's Congress) shake in the whole of Ilorin Emirate, and all the bush people in Ilorin Emirate keep on praying for him daily as he is their saviour... He has done a very great work since he has been here. Before Lawyer Adeniran came here. there were many AG members in jail, but since Lawyer Adeniran started his work, he has sent many NPC to jail in the ratio of about 5 to 1. Lawyer Adeniran should be worshipped by those who know and value his work.<sup>83</sup>

The lawyers' role in the Party's programme of activities in the late 1950s in the North might have helped in reinforcing the self-confidence of supporters, but the day of the enthronement of the Rule of Law was certainly not in sight. As Awolowo noted in his Presidential Address to the Party conference held late October 1960,

The fundamental human rights entrenched in our Constitution for the freedom and happiness of our people are being violated daily in different parts of the North. Our resident lawyers are hard put to it to catch up with the pace and multitude of such violation.<sup>84</sup>

More violations of Human Rights were yet to come in the North and in the rest of the country as well in the dark days ahead, culminating in the complete breakdown of law and order by January 1966 when the Military took over the administration of the country.

Events in the Second Republic (1979–1983) did indicate that Awolowo never gave up his propensity in politics to resort to the law courts to champion the Rule of Law. He himself challenged the election of Shehu Shagari as the country's President in *Obafemi Awolowo v. Shehu Shagari and Others* (1979)<sup>85</sup>. His close political associate, Abraham Adesanya, in *Abraham Adesanya v. President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Another* (1981)<sup>86</sup> unsuccessfully challenged the constitutionality of the appointment of Ovie-Whiskey as Chairman of the Federal Electoral Commission. Bendel State, controlled by Awolowo's political Party in the Second Republic, the Unity Party of Nigeria, in *Attorney-General, Bendel State v. The Federation* (1982)<sup>87</sup> successfully challenged the constitutionality of a Bill purportedly setting out a new formula for revenue allocation in the Federation.

Undoubtedly, the most celebrated case in the Second Republic directly touching on Human Rights and the Rule of Law was *Shugaba Abdulrahman Darman v. The Federal Minister of Internal Affairs and Others* (1980)<sup>88</sup>. Shugaba,

the Majority Leader in the Borno House of Assembly, was forcibly deported to the Chad Republic by the Federal Government on the ground that he was an alien. Shugaba successfully established his claim to be a Nigerian. Behind the scene Awolowo played a major role in ensuring a successful defence. He personally despatched to Maiduguri, where the case was heard, a number of his professional colleagues, including a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, "to help test in the law court the supremacy of the constitution with its clear provision for the inalienable right of the individual to a fair trial".<sup>89</sup>

## VI

We need not dilate too heavily here upon Awolowo's thoughts on the dynamic aspect of the Rule of Law. The dynamic aspect of the Rule of Law, the reader will recall, seeks to confer upon the individual person certain positive advantages, and provide him facilities for the development of his physical, mental and social well-being. Awolowo has written at length on the subject matter; it is fair, indeed, to say that a great deal of his intellectual output between 1963 and 1987 – in lectures, addresses, books and pamphlets – was devoted to the theme of how to improve the living conditions of Nigerians.

We noted earlier how at the 1958 Constitutional conference he unsuccessfully advocated that "freedom from want" be a Fundamental Right to be entrenched in the 1960 Independence Constitution. Said he:

The Governments of the Federation ... must from time to time devise ways and means of guaranteeing a sound economy for the country as a whole, and of raising enough money to ensure that all the Governments in the Federation are able to maintain their existing services and progressively expand them in the future, and that, in particular, backward areas are assisted to move forward with sufficient speed to catch up with the advanced areas in such essential services as Education, Health and road communications.<sup>90</sup>

Consistent with this line of thought, his Party, the Action Group, adopted Democratic Socialism as an ideology by October 1, 1960, with one cardinal principle being "the provision by the State of social services for the entire people".<sup>91</sup>

He elaborated upon the concept of social services in his later writings. The rights to social services, he wrote in *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* 1966, should include the following rights:<sup>92</sup>

Right to education.

Right to work and to just remuneration.

Right to just and favourable conditions of work.

Right to protection against unemployment.

Right to social security, especially in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability or old age.

Right to property and to protection of property against confiscation or acquisition without compensation.

Freedom from discrimination on any grounds, and with respect to the enjoyment of any right whatsoever.

Right of every child, whether born in or out of wedlock, to equality of treatment and social protection.

From 1963 on, Awolowo consistently maintained in his writings that these rights should be entrenched in the Constitution of the Nigerian Federation. "The world", he insisted, "has moved very far away from the era when it was believed that the only rights which a government is called upon to guarantee and protect are the natural rights of man".<sup>93</sup> In *The People's Republic* (1968) he declared that these rights are "inherent in every man and are inalienable".<sup>94</sup> In his contribution to the debate on the draft of the 1979 Constitution he called the provision of these social services "the *raison d'être*, the bedrock, and indeed, the original legitimacy of the State, ... the ends for which a State is ordained"<sup>95</sup>

The novelty in Awolowo's thoughts on social services as rights is his ardent insistence that they should be justiciable. His concern for the welfare of the common man is obvious

in his reasoning. "Experience has shown that in underdeveloped countries", he wrote, "these rights must be fully set out and entrenched in a written constitution if they are to have any chance at all of due recognition and enforcement".<sup>96</sup> On another occasion he made it clear that unless the social objectives of the Constitution "are clearly defined... and provisions made for their legal enforcement", the State "will drift and suffer instability and turmoil".<sup>97</sup> He asserted that constitutional obligations between the people on the one hand and the State on the other must be mutual. It is therefore wrong, he said, to "provide for the justiciability of the duties laid on the people towards the State and for the non-justiciability of the [social] obligations which the State owes to the people".<sup>98</sup>

Awolowo's conviction about the justiciability of the social objectives of government could have been born out of the rapid pace of social development achieved by the Western Region under his leadership between 1952 and 1959.<sup>99</sup> But, with all due respect, I doubt if all the social objectives of the Constitution (embodied in Chapter II of the 1979 Constitution as Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy) can be justiciable. Legal enforcement of a number of them bristles with difficulties. How will the court determine, for instance with respect to section 18(3) of the 1979 Constitution, when the State is in a position to provide free secondary or university education, if this were to become justiciable? I believe a distinction should be made between social objectives which can, and should, be achieved through the political process, by constitutional or democratic change of government, if need be, and those rights of the individual which are peculiarly within the competence of the courts to *ascertain* and enforce. Again, the principle of justiciability of Fundamental Social Objectives, when carried too far, may endanger the delicate balance of power between the judiciary on the one hand, and the legislative and executive branches of government on the other.

Let the fundamental objectives of the Nigerian constitution remain, in the words of Hon. Justice C.A. Oputa, "guiding principles for all legislation, for all administration and for the implementation of all governmental functions at Local, State and National levels".<sup>100</sup> Ensuring that governments fashion out policies in conformity with their letter and spirit is the province of politics. The Rule of Law is not, and should not be, limited to the court of law. In its more expansive, more dynamic signification, it is, indeed, a function of politics, when politics is perceived by those who lead their fellowmen as the art of selfless service and no more.

## VII

It is fair to say, in conclusion, that Awolowo's contribution to the process of establishing the Rule of Law – in all its significations – has been considerable. He seemed to have had an abiding faith in it as a potent instrument for ordering the society along the path of justice and societal well-being. In the fields of Law and politics, he strove to see it established in the country with all his talents and energy. The task is, of course, not completed, and the Rule of Law is, as yet, a frail and fragile legacy. "The struggle for law", warned Rudolf von Jhering, "is an everlasting one, for political power, whether in the hands of an individual or the community, is never at any time or in any place ready to acknowledge any limits".<sup>101</sup> Eternal vigilance is called for on the part of all those who are deeply concerned about justice and the dignity of the human person.

Awolowo has himself written enough to indicate how long is the road we still have to travel to reach that Promised Land of prosperity and contentment under Law. His book, *The Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law* (1987) is at once a testimony and a challenge. The struggle for the Rule of Law must therefore continue with the same kind of dedication, energy and single-mindedness he has demonstrated in his professional and political activities.

Let no one underestimate the magnitude of the challenge. For the prerequisites for the Rule of Law are not yet fully developed in Nigeria. There are courageous souls on the Bench, but there are those also who, in the colonial tradition, are "more executive-minded than the Executive" in their judicial orientation.<sup>102</sup> The Bar, too, as a body, has not always been fearless. It probably reached the nadir of its popular esteem in 1983 when, in the face of many obnoxious decrees by the then military regime, it would appear to have lost a sense of mission as champions of human rights.<sup>103</sup> There have been strange doctrines and modes of thinking from the Bar and the Bench which are not conducive to a healthy development of the Rule of Law. The concept of *Grundnorm* has been defined to be almost synonymous with the Federal Military Government, and *Liversidge v. Anderson* (1942)<sup>104</sup> has been strained to produce a controversial definition of "public interest".<sup>105</sup> The celebrated *Lakanmi* case,<sup>106</sup> one proud moment in the history of the Nigerian judiciary when it asserted its independence, is now being regarded as an instance when the judiciary "took a dangerous stand on a banana skin".<sup>107</sup> It is a rather dangerous warning that the Supreme Court, for the future, "should not allow itself to be found in that kind of posture".<sup>108</sup>

Two other issues relating to the content of law and access to the law courts should be regarded as part of the challenge Awolowo has left behind. It is not enough to hammer on equality before the law; the law must be fair and just, and must enhance the development of our culture and way of life as a people. A legal system that is used to cloak systemic exploitation or day-to-day repression is bound to be counterproductive of social disorder and political instability.

The Rule of Law would remain a mere slogan if the vast majority of Nigerians have no access to the law courts. More and more, the law and the legal processes are being insulated from the masses on account of high costs of justice and the psychological barriers impeding the poor to fight for justice.

The Legal Aid scheme, established in May 1977, is yet to scratch even the surface of the enormous problem of access to justice by the poor.<sup>109</sup> Ways must be found by the legal profession and the society at large to provide for all Nigerians, high and low, equal access to justice and social well-being through the law.

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## Awolowo and Human Rights in Nigeria

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BAYO OKUNADE

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One central theme that runs through the many published works, Lectures, Addresses and Speeches of Chief Obafemi Awolowo is his commitment to a systematic ordering of his immediate world in a certain way. A careful analysis of his policies, programmes and practices within and outside government inform one of his concern for Human Rights as an end and a means to an end of the state. Thus, the promotion of fundamental Human Rights is one of the pillars if not the most important aspect of his socio-political philosophy and a *sine qua non* for national development.

This paper which appraises the human rights aspects of Chief Awolowo's socio-political philosophy discusses his conception of Human Rights, the ends and aims they are to achieve as well as a consideration of the prescribed means for their protection and enforcement. The consistency and vigour with which he pursued these rights in reality are also considered. In essence, this study aims at engendering a systematic understanding of Chief Awolowo's contribution to the thinking in Human Rights field and the extent to which he was able to promote and protect these rights in Nigeria.

An attempt is also made at a critique of his Human Rights policy within the framework of internationally recognised standards, the conception of African leaders in general and

the countries socio-economic realities.

#### GENERAL DISCOURSE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The facts that the meaning, elements and characteristics of Human Rights are at times erroneously held as being comprehensible to all and its particularly elusive nature necessitate a discourse on the subject. This is particularly important and appropriate for clarification purposes, if one takes cognisance of the fact that the subject is so general as to accommodate varying and conflicting ideologically and regionally induced conceptions, models and approaches.

Human Rights can be described as the inherent and inalienable qualities or status bestowed or bestowable on any individuals by the simple fact of their being human, that is, they derive in the main from the inherent dignity of the human person. These rights, it has been argued;

are created by the state but are external and universal institutions, common to all mankind and antedating the state and founded upon natural law.<sup>1</sup>

At the international level, within and outside the United Nations system and in most nation's settings, Human Rights principles have become obligatory on states. So, Human Rights are not supposed to be privileges that flourish only in 'societies abundant in wealth, confidence, social stability and a continuity of liberal traditions.'<sup>2</sup>

As to the essence of Human Rights, they are ordained "to protect ordinary people, minorities, groups and races, from oppressive rulers and governments."<sup>3</sup> It must be added that the protection that Human Rights affords protects an individual against his fellow individual or human collectivities, organizations and institutions. These forms of protection are reversible. In all these cases, the responsibility for ensuring the promotion and enforcement of Human Right rests on the state. On this ground, Human Rights are claims by individuals, groups, among others, against the state.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in one of its preambular paragraphs recognises "equal and inalienable

rights of all members of the human family" as "the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world". It also stresses the need for the protection of Human Rights "if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as the last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression." And, only recently President Reagan asserted that world peace is attainable only if governments observe and guarantee Human Rights of their citizens.<sup>4</sup>

From the above essences of human rights, it is evident that Human Rights are categorical imperatives for not only ensuring the dignity and equality of man, but also, world peace. Also, within the United Nations system, observance of Human Rights is fundamental to development. So, one can understand why Thomas Jefferson regarded the Bill of Rights as a document that 'no just government should refuse.'<sup>5</sup>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) - both adopted and came into force in 1966 and 1976 respectively - and myriads of instruments within and outside the United Nations system define the scope and constituents of Human Rights. These stipulate standards or framework for assessing Human Rights Policies and practices.

The Universal Declaration and the Covenants which collectively are regarded as International Bills of Rights are of particular significance to merit greater attention. But giving the inconclusiveness and lack of consensus on the contractual or obligatory nature of the Universal Declaration, only the two Covenants will attract further discussion. The ICCPR ideally represents the traditional Western approach to the concept of human rights and it specifies mainly, the 'classic' or 'natural rights' and freedoms. The ICESCR is on the other hand "more contemporary in purpose" and consists of physical and in some cases quantifiable benefits and state of being, or the quality of life which the state must promote. It imposes on the state the responsibility for the provision of certain necessary needs and welfare of its citizens.

Although the composite of these covenants is distinct, they should however be put on the same horizontal plane and concern in a unitary sense. While it is true that the ICCPR and ICESCR were at a point regarded as constituting first and second generation rights respectively, a description that was not only discriminatory but conferred primacy on the former and discounted the latter; it is equally true that the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 32/130 of 1977 has established the parity and interdependence of the Rights in the two covenants. It states in parts; all Human Rights 'are inalienable' and that "the full realisation of the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights without the enjoyment of Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is impossible."<sup>5</sup>

The various Human Rights norms have been subscribed to in varying degrees by states. However, this does not suggest compliance or observance. In fact, only few people in the world enjoy the quality of lives that is consistent with modern ideas of Human Rights.<sup>6</sup> Most Human Rights are being flagrantly and grossly violated with impunity. An explanation for this is the general familiar paradox that the state, the chief violator of Human Rights has the primary responsibility for the protection and implementation of Human Rights. In other words, the dilemma of Human Rights enforcement is that such rights must often be defended against those agencies (governments) that are supposed to be the prime protector of Human Rights. Here comes the relevance of an independent judiciary as the adjudicating authority in contestations that may result from Human Rights violations. In contemporary international human rights law, provisions for, and possibility of complaints of a breach, or/and for seeking remedies to human rights violations exist in regional or global institutions with (in some cases) supra-national adjudicating authority. This is however not possible until after the various domestic legal remedies have been exhausted.

It is also pertinent to point out here that Human Rights

provisions, despite their significance are not absolute as there are permissible limitations on grounds that are considered necessary "for respect of the rights and regulation of others, and for the protection of national security, public order (*order public*) or of public health".<sup>7</sup> Restrictions on the basis of the limitation clauses are no violations if they are in accordance with the law and are necessary.

In conclusion, it must be noted that the concept of Human Rights is a progressively dynamic one and that standard setting in the field is an on-going one. Similarly, existing instruments are being interpreted to make for the recognition of 'new' categories of rights, thus leading to an enlargement in the scope of Rights. Having discussed the concept of Human Rights in a general sense, the next part of this paper focuses specifically on Chief Awolowo's conception of Human Rights.

#### AWO ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In an apparent reaction to the *leit motif* for the decision and the eventual entrenchment of the principle of Fundamental Human Rights in the 1960 Independence Constitution, Chief Awolowo expressed the view that.

Fundamental Human Rights are ordained not for the protection of ethnic minorities as such, but for the protection of the citizens at large against executive and legislative tyranny and excesses.<sup>8</sup>

The Willink Commission set up by the colonial administration on the recommendation of the 1957 London Constitutional Conference had recommended the inclusion of Fundamental Human Rights in the constitution as a "mechanism to protect ethnic minorities and to allay their fears of domination." So, there was no broad-based rationale for its inclusion in Nigeria, it was far from being recognised as an essential ingredient of a democratic state, the issue of minorities notwithstanding.

Any meaningful discussion of Chief Awolowo's conception of Human Rights cannot be undertaken to the exclusion of his conception of "development" and his 'theory' of the state

which are essential components of his socio-political philosophy. His position on Human Rights is a derivative of these. In fact, the view has been expressed by Ogunmodede in his critical interpretation of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's socio-political philosophy that human freedom is central to his socio-political philosophy. Even, a cursory reading of his works right from the *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947) to the last of his published works *The Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law* (1987), and a judgement based on the 'title' of the book *For the Good of The People*, that was to be the last in his last trilogy confirm this. 'Man', to Chief Awolowo is,

the ultimate object and prime mover and initiator and organiser of all economic and political activities....<sup>10</sup>

To him, man is endowed with 'innate talents or latent ability' which are underterminable 'until all of them are given equal opportunity to develop.'<sup>11</sup> The consequences of not developing these talents at all or to the fullest will not only adversely affect the individual concerned, but according to him, 'the society as a whole also suffers.'<sup>12</sup> He came to the conclusion on the grounds that the development of man and the economy are inextricably related.<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of the above and his realisation that many individuals wallow in ignorance, poverty, disease and squalor among other deficiencies which are serious incapacities to self-development and self-actualisation, Chief Awolowo imposed the responsibility for ensuring individual development on the State. This he viewed as the State's primary duty, the purpose and end for which the state exists.<sup>14</sup>

In a way, similar to the social contract theorists, he attributed all the organs of the state as well as all social institutions to man's creation;

to ensure a congenial atmosphere for his economic advancement and prosperity and to regulate economic intercourse between him and his fellow men within the community or state.<sup>15</sup>

He specifically identified the defence and 'maintenance of internal order and security', 'the promotion of economic, social and political welfare' as the basic interrelated purposes of the state.<sup>16</sup> Of particular significance and relevance to our discussion are the social and political welfare objectives of the state which in Awolowo's analysis are no more than the state responsibility to conduct its affairs along the provisions in the two Covenants.<sup>17</sup> So the two categories of rights were considered to be inalienable and of equal importance, a sort of unitary conception of the provisions in the two Covenants along the United Nations position.<sup>18</sup> He argued elsewhere that,

By living in the nation states and in organised communities, man has acquired new rights which are now regarded, by many civilised countries, just as inalienable as those rights with which nature endows him at birth.<sup>19</sup>

Two of such 'new rights' according to him are education and health which were the two most important issues that attracted his greatest attention in his life time. The reasons for man's indefeasible entitlement to these rights he asserted, 'are so weighty'. He concluded that 'poverty and statehood are antithetic' and that a state which manages its affairs in a manner other than that which promotes the interest of the vast majority of its people 'has failed to live up to his legitimacy'.<sup>20</sup> It is on the state's ability to promote the common good that its legitimacy or the loyalty of the citizens to it lies as 'man is not loyal to a ....State for its own sake'.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, he concluded that under normal situation, 'it is only within the state that man can enjoy personal freedom and live a full happy life'.<sup>22</sup>

Another important aspect of Chief Awolowo's conception of Human Rights is his insistence on a formal declaration and entrenchment of Fundamental Human Rights in the Constitution. This should include, the various 'normative social objectives' which from a careful reading of his writings are Human Rights proper.<sup>23</sup> According to him, it is necessary to make the provision in the Constitution *ex abundanti cautela* and justiciable too in order to avoid "the policy of drift".<sup>24</sup>

This position should be appreciated because, despite the fact that an entrenchment of the bill of rights or a written constitution is not necessarily the hallmark of democracy, it nevertheless constitutes a potential 'insurance against tyranny provided the judiciary is impartial ...' This explains why he viewed the judiciary 'as the citizens bulwark of last resort' against tyranny.

In a way that conformed with our discussion on restriction to Human Rights in the preceding part of this paper, Chief Awolowo advanced the view that 'true freedom' or 'absolute freedom' which he viewed as a state of being free to do whatever one likes at whatever time, only exists in theory. He cautioned that 'absolute freedom' is bound 'to degenerate into licence and lead to endless clash of interests with disastrous consequences.' Therefore, Human Rights should be enjoyed 'with due and strict regard to its enjoyment by other persons.' However such restraints are permissible 'for the purpose and freedom of others, and such as is necessitated by war, emergency, epidemic, or the execution of judicial decisions'. These are also exceptional situations for derogation.<sup>25</sup>

His strategy for guaranteeing the enjoyment and enforcement of Human Rights is no other than his multi-party democratic socialist alternative to social order.<sup>26</sup> He did not hide his abhorrence for the *status-quo*, capitalism and revolutionary or pure Marxian Socialist approaches. So, for him, the enjoyment and promotion of Human Rights are only realisable within a democratic setting. To him 'there can be no alternative to a democratic way of life' if the aim of the government is the promotion of the people's welfare.<sup>27</sup> His preference for a two party or multi-party democracy even within a socialist setting is based on his view that 'democracy and one party system are absolutely antithetic' and that 'one of the quintessences of democracy is a multi-party system.'<sup>28</sup>

Despite his believe that 'no system is wholly evil' or none is 'an unmixed perfect blessing' his preference for the socialist approach or alternative was based on certain facts of

history. One of the reasons is that, he held that, 'capitalism has failed' and it is 'doomed to perish', that the only system that has every chance of success in contemporary world and in future is socialism because of 'its intrinsic harmony with the dialectic'.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, his choice was based on the aim of socialism which according to him is;

to bring about an economic commonwealth in which the need of all regardless of birth and status in life, as opposed to and distinct from the profit making desires of some, will be satisfied.<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, his choice was conditioned by the fact that capitalism is afflicted with certain social and economic problems *viz*: inflation strikes, unemployment, poverty in midst of plenty, among others, which are absent or present in lesser degree in a socialist setting.

On the basis of the above, he regarded democratic socialism as the best political ideal for mankind, a framework for ushering in 'social justice, equal opportunity for all and the well-being of the individual'<sup>32</sup> which are the central goals of human rights.

#### AWC AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

Expectedly, the colonial situation among other factors<sup>33</sup> influenced Chief Awolowo's conceptions of Human Rights. He like other nationalists recognised the right to political self-determination and political independence for the subjects in the colonies. His first major work, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947) adequately and fearlessly dealt with this. In it, he advanced the view that, 'colonialism and political domination are negations of the right to self determination which cannot be justified by any standard of morality'<sup>34</sup> So, the enjoyment of the right to self-government or political self-determination is 'not subject to negotiation' or even debate.'<sup>35</sup> The publication undoubtedly created greater political awareness, exacerbated anti-colonial struggle and heightened the demand for the right to self-determination in Nigeria and elsewhere on a higher scale.

An opportunity for pursuing the expressions in the *Path*

to... in a more systematic way under his leadership came when he and his associates formed the Action Group (AG) from a Yoruba socio-cultural organisation in 1951. At a time when most nationalists and political organisations including political parties in the colonies were pursuing their right to political independence to the exclusion of social well-being of the citizens, on the grounds that political independence would automatically usher in the good things of life; the Action Group, a party whose principles and objectives were no more than Chief Awolowo's pursued these simultaneously. The party dedicated itself to ensuring freedom from British Rule, freedom from ignorance, freedom from disease and freedom from want.<sup>37</sup> These principles which were summarised in the Party's motto – 'Freedom For All, Life More Abundant' – were standards set by the Party to pursue for the people of the defunct Western Nigeria in particular and Nigeria in general.

In the actual programme output, the AG promised the people that before the end of its five year-term (1951–6) certain specifics would have been achieved and some programmes that should be pursued on a continuous basis should have begun. Some of these were, the immediate termination of colonial rule, the education of all children of school going age, the general enlightenment of all illiterate adults all illiterate children above school going age. Others were, the provision of health, general welfare for all people and the total abolition of want by the most expedient and effective economic policy.<sup>38</sup>

Although the above were not stated in strict Human Rights terms until later, nevertheless, their pursuit did not only have positive consequences on Human Rights, but by simple logic, they are a recognition by the AG that the components of the various programmes are the citizens' entitlements. It must be added here that apart from the freedom from colonial rule (which however, at independence had been replaced by freedom from fellow Nigerians, feudalism among others), the principles remained to a large extent

the mainstay of Chief Awolowo's social package for societal transformation. His writings were to a large extent an elaboration of these central principles.

While the various principles were of immense importance and were pursued as a package in Western Nigeria, the AG recognising that freedom from colonial rule was a *sine qua non* to their solving the country's problems in their own way and in their own interest sought all effective constitutional means to terminate British rule. If the historic 1953 Motion by Chief Anthony Enahoro that<sup>39</sup> the House of Representatives "accepts as a primary political objective the attainment of self government for Nigeria in 1956" — a motion which to Chief Awolowo constituted 'the most prominent landmark in Nigeria struggle for freedom' and the unmistakable beginning of the termination of colonial rule — was passed, a counter-factual argument that Nigeria's independence could have been earlier can be advanced.

By 1956, the year which marked the end of the five year term of the Party, all the programme and more, except the first which was beyond the Party were achieved in the Western Region. Chief Awolowo and the AG have been credited with certain achievements some of which are in the field of Education, Health, Administration among others which had a lot of implication for the promotion of human rights.<sup>40</sup> Particular mention should be made of his contribution to the promotion of democratic rights starting with the democratisation of local government (Native Authority System) councils, the introduction of voting by symbol in 1953 and the utilisation of steel ballot boxes and security printed ballot papers in Western Region in 1956. His labour policy in Western Nigeria had also been acclaimed the most enlightened in Nigeria at least before independence. The minimum daily pay in the Region was doubled in 1954 and was further increased in 1959:

Chief Awolowo's *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966) which addressed Nigeria's Constitutional and political

problems especially in post-colonial era and was to be a blueprint for post-military civilian administration could be regarded as the most authentic writing Awolowo had on Human Rights (among other constitutional issues) in general and in Nigeria in particular. His subsequent writings on the subject only elaborated or dealt with the 'strategy and tactics for effecting the ideals in the *Thoughts on . . .*, a sort of attempts at 'establishing a convincing case for their practicability' Awolowo, on the basis of his analysis of the Nigeria situation in the first six years of independence concluded that, though we are ostensibly free as a nation, yet as a people, we remain tightly shackled in the chains of ignorance, disease, want and native tyranny.<sup>41</sup>

To him, the first Republic, including its Constitution, are guilty of three principal offences namely, regionalism, tribalism and corruption. And of the 33 operational and constitutional items, he identified as causes of the fall of Nigeria's first Republic, 12 were strictly Human Rights related.

A consideration of some defects in Human Rights related provisions in the 1963 constitution which he identified is appropriate here. While Chief Awolowo acknowledged the fact that the Chapter Three of the 1963 Constitution dealing with Fundamental Human Rights contained rights that were largely taken from the Universal Declaration, on the other hand, he pointed out that the provisions suffered two main defects. The first is the limitedness of the scope of rights. The aspects on Human Right, contrary to expectation, did not include any of the fundamental social rights contained in the Universal Declaration. Of this defect, he wrote,

The world, has moved very far away from the era it was believed that the only rights which a government is called upon to guarantee and protect are the natural rights of man.<sup>43</sup>

This certainly was a rejection of the Western model of Human Rights, this was at a time when the controversy on the status of the International Covenants on Economic Social and Cultural Rights was still on.

Although, some civil and political rights were entrenched, Chief Awolowo was very critical about the way rights were embodied in the Constitution.<sup>44</sup> To him all the rights except 'freedom from intentional deprivation of life', from slavery, servitude, or forced labour "and from deprivation of personal liberty" were so limited in the section of the Constitution providing for them in ways that made them nugatory. Some provisions in the 1963 Constitution constituted a grave defect and invariably "permits the subjection of man to torture, inhuman and degrading punishment or treatment, in certain parts of the country." He further stated that this defect allowed discriminations especially against the female sex and made it "lawful for discriminatory restrictions to be imposed with respect to the acquisition or use of land or other property."<sup>46</sup>

The above defects in respect of Human Rights provision among others in the 1963 Constitution were according to him, responsible more in practice than in theory, for evils and the ruins of the First Republic. So, Awolowo in addressing the issue of a new Constitution proposed twenty-nine principles, five of which were specifically Human Rights related. These were broadly stated in respect of the need for the entrenchment of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution including Normative Social Objectives, democratic rights and Human Rights restrictions and limitations.<sup>47</sup> These have been discussed in the last part of this paper, so a repetition is unnecessary here.

In respect of specific rights, he did not only elaborate on the civil and political rights enshrined in the 1963 constitutions but suggested that, in order to remove the defects in the 1963 constitution, the new constitution should include a far reaching catalogue of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He gave a list of such economic and social rights as – right

to education, to work and just remuneration, to just and favourable conditions of work, to protection against unemployment, to social security, especially in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, or old age and right to property. Others are, the right to protection of property against confiscation or acquisition without compensation, from discrimination on any grounds, and with respect to the enjoyment of any right whatsoever, and lastly, the right of every child whether born in or out of wedlock, to equality of treatment and social protection.<sup>4 8</sup>

These rights are convincingly revolutionary, even in contemporary Nigeria, they are being debated in most cases as mere social goals and not necessarily as Human Rights. And as already stated, derogation and limitations to these rights shall only be lawful if imposed solely for the purpose of securing due respect for the rights and freedom of others.

While there is a seeming consensus that the *Thoughts ...* had some profound impact on the defunct Second Republican Constitution (1979), the first, after Awolowo wrote his book, this influence did not affect the Human Rights provisions in the Constitution. The first defect in the 1963 constitution remain unresolved as the Chapter IV of the constitution dealing with Fundamental Human Rights excluded economic and social rights. The provisions in respect of economic and cultural rights were contained in very broad terms in some cases, in Chapter II of the 1979 Constitution dealing with what it calls 'Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy'. This has been subjected to a lot of criticisms. The provisions in the Chapter are regarded as mere elliptical statements and are not justiciable and are also of no effect. To Awolowo, the way the provision was enshrined in the Constitution reduced it to "empty platitudes and hollow admonitions which have no place in a Constitution ... whose provisions must *IPSO FACTO* be justiciable and legally enforceable."<sup>4 9</sup>

The lifting of ban on party politics in 1978 as a step

towards the democratisation of the political system afforded Awolowo (and his associates) the earliest opportunity to effect his Human Rights policy. Despite the dwindling economic fortune of Nigeria and the fact that the Obasanjo military administration had commenced series of austerity policy measures, Chief Awolowo committed the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) — that was regarded as a re-incarnate of the AG — to the ideals especially the social rights provisions in the *Thoughts* .... The UPN according to him is “dedicated to the improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of Nigeria” and that the party is guided by one great principle — “The glory of a Ruler is the welfare of everyone of his people.”<sup>50</sup>

He expressed the optimism that the four cardinal programmes of the party *viz*: free education, free health, integrated rural development and full employment

. . . will, on implementation represent a revolutionary leap forward in Nigeria's relentless march to individual freedom, prosperity, and happiness of all citizens.<sup>51</sup>

One becomes very critical of his optimism if one recalls that, the *Fourth National Development Plan* (1981–85) categorically excluded education and health among other social sector programmes on the ground of what the *Plan* refers to as “existing potential constraints”.<sup>52</sup> But the facts of the Second Republic seemed not to have validated this aspect of the *Plan*. The problems of the Second Republic were even more than ‘the policy of drift which characterised the First Republic.’ The inadequacy in the manner of entrenchment of Human Rights provision is partly responsible for this.

The debate on what constitutes an adequate Human Rights policy is still raging on, in fact the recent Federal Military Government position on this aspect of the Political Bureau Report cannot be regarded as being conclusive, this will attract some consideration in our next part which assesses Chief Awolowo's Human Right policy.

## AN APPRAISAL

From the discussion above it is not an overstatement that Chief Awolowo had a clear perception of the subject of Human Rights and that he made some remarkable (both in theory and practice) achievements in the promotion of Human Rights particularly in Nigeria. In fact, His Human Rights view is an essential aspect of his socio-political philosophy that qualified him as 'the greatest Nigerian political theoretician and controversialist' even after his transition. Also, it should be recognised that he had a clearer and broader perception of Fundamental Human Rights and had resolved the controversy between the status of the two Covenants long before the issue was resolved by the United Nations. Furthermore, to date, Chief Awolowo's Human Rights standards and Human Rights related policies are standards yet to be matched, in fact, recent developments seem to suggest that Nigeria is drifting farther away from even recognising them as values worthy of pursuit.

From our understanding of Chief Awolowo's discourse on Human Rights, he is exceptional when compared with most African leaders. His thoughts on Human Rights did not give any credit to the trend and perceived relationship between Human Rights and Development in Africa. He did not subscribe to the consensus among African leaders that Human Right and Development are negatively related and that Human Rights is inimical to the stability, unity and development of African states.

For Awolowo, the propositions below which summarise the argument of African leaders in support of their de-emphasising, delaying or totally ignoring Human Rights or their intention to do it would be false. These propositions are stated as follows:<sup>5 3</sup>

- (a) democracy is unsuitable to developing countries because it encourages unrest, which is inimical to rapid economic development;
- (b) discipline is essential to development and can only

- be ensured by resting ultimate authority in the hands of one leader, or a small elite group under a one party arrangement;
- (c) before Human Rights could be respected, a degree of modernization must be achieved;
  - (d) Human Rights are meaningless until development is achieved and the latter must be given priority;
  - (e) the main concern is nation building and when that is completed consideration will be given to Human Rights issues;
- and, (f) certain international norms are inappropriate in view of cultural and other conditions in a particular country.

So, Awolowo was an exception to the bewildering ignorance on the positive relationship between Human Rights and national development. To him, there is an intrinsic relationship between the two and he did not see any chance for development in the absence of respect for Human Rights. He held the contemporary meaning of development which regards human person as the subject and not object of development. This conception of development necessitates the need for developmental activities to be channelled toward "the realisation of the potentialities" of "both material and non-material needs" and respect for Human Rights.

Rather than African leaders (or states) wanting to ward off threats to unity and their political positions by abridging Human Rights, Awolowo's recipe is the recognition and enforcement of Human Rights. He put this succinctly:

In order ... to discharge one of its primary functions of maintaining internal order and security, and to ensure its own solidarity and survival every state must recognise, and guarantee to all its citizens, the Fundamental Rights of man.<sup>54</sup>

He later advised all African Governments to take early steps;

to liberalise and democratise themselves, to acknowledge and defer to the sovereignty of the people and to restore all the freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>55</sup>

The sooner this could be done, "the better for the material progress" of all the peoples of Africa and "for the enhancement of Africa's self respect as a civilised continent in the country of nations."

An existing detailed comment or criticism of Awolowo's theory of the state, that relates to the above needs to be examined. Given Awolowo's conception of the relationship between Human Rights and Development, both of which are to be ensured by the state, Ogunmodede's question that<sup>56</sup> – Is the State really a Father Christmas or Santa Claus who dishes out goodies free of charge to the people? does not arise. Also Awolowo's conception of the state does not necessarily have to encourage "indolence and laziness among citizens" instead, it is the opposite that should be expected. A revisit to his position on the legitimacy of the state, his rationale for Human Rights and the relationship between under-development of man's talents and under-development is necessary here. Even if one assumes the role of the state as that of a 'Father Christmas', to Awolowo, it is a sort of purposive investment that has the potentiality of enhancing development in future. It should also be added that, these prescribed roles of the State obtain elsewhere especially in the developed worlds, although on a selective and not a universal basis.

Some criticisms relating mainly to the means for ensuring the enjoyment of Human Rights rather than the contents of Human Rights could be identified. His preference for a multi-party democratic socialist state is suspect. Some questions are apt; How does one effect the socialist transformation through the ballot box?. Can the 'meticulous planning' and 'social discipline' required be guaranteed?, and

lastly, can the dynamics of the multi-party democratic socialist approach guarantee the continuity of goals, leadership and efforts?

Given real life situation, particularly the contradictions in Nigerian society, there is a limit to which one can answer these questions in the affirmative. With this how can the transformation take place without some autocratic doses? More importantly, Chief Awolowo's claim to being a democratic socialist was challenged on a number of times. In his defence of the autocratic charge, and in his reaction to Chief Akintola's graphic impression about him that, "it is much easier to move the earth from its orbit than to get Chief Awolowo to change his stand once he makes up his mind", Chief Awolowo accepted the truth of the statement (barring its touch of hyperbole) as far as 'goals, ideals, and principles' are concerned because according to him;

one can be flexible about means and methods, one must be absolutely rigid and immutable about goals, principles and ideals; once one is convinced that one is right.<sup>57</sup>

Possibly, here lies his strength and consistency as 'an unswerving and irrepressible upholder of the principle of democracy and the rule of law' and 'a pace setter in many ways', in the political life of Nigeria. At the same time, this was probably his major weakness which establishes him in between the autocratic and democratic continuum. But it could be said in fairness to Chief Awolowo that the other views more often than not had been proved wrong by events.

Also, the possibility of some flexibility in means and methods perhaps explains his vacillating between socialist and capitalist strategies. At a point, he talked of the need for the nationalisation instead of liberalisation of the economy (1970) and between 1979 and 1983 he had vacillated between privatisation and Taxation as policy instruments for the socialist transformation. In fact, he acknowledged that 'as a practical politician and economist' he was "sometimes eclectic in making use of the best in all the rival ideological

systems" in resolving social problems.<sup>58</sup> On the whole while he could be called 'an advocate of socialism, but a capitalist',<sup>59</sup> the acid test to his democratic socialist claim would have been his performance in the highest elective office in Nigeria. Despite his not being in elective office at the national level, one is inclined to believe he would have effected his Human Rights policies. Apart from his enviable record in the Western Nigeria, paragraphs 2 and 3 of his *Affirmation* are instructive. These state that:

2. I ... affirm that, by the grace of God, I, Chief Obafemi Awolowo; will be the Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria at the conclusion of the said Federal Election.

and that,

3. In return for this privilege, I solemnly offer and promise, in the presence of God, that, as the holder of the office of the Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Nigeria, I will strive my very utmost to ensure for the entire people of Nigeria – irrespective of tribe, regional origin/religion, and political affiliation individual freedom, human dignity, the rule of law, material and cultural progress, happiness and spiritual well-being.<sup>60</sup>

In a similar way, in 1965 he claimed to have pledged irrevocably behind prison bars that,

I hereby dedicate the rest of my life to the services of the people of Nigeria, nay of Africa, by promoting their welfare and happiness.<sup>61</sup>

And lastly, in his acceptance speech delivered to the UPN on the occasion of his nomination as the Party's Presidential candidate in 1978, he said:

... this high office carries with it enormous obligations and responsibilities. It is not an office of pleasure. .... On the contrary, having regard to the democratic setting in which the office will be held; having regard to our present econo-

mic. political and social circumstances, having regard to the legitimate yearnings, and the crying and pressing needs of our people, ... it is an office which, to make a real success of it, will *ipso facto*, demand, from its incumbent, a kind of industry, self discipline, public probity/tolerance ... which have no precedent here in Nigeria.<sup>62</sup>

Rather than passing Awolowo as being over ambitious on the basis of the above, it is more plausible to see him as a missionary dedicated to a course, a leader with 'missionic zeal'.

One last criticism of Awolowo's Human Rights policy is the fact that it assumes the availability of requisite resource base and that in the absence of such, it could be created. The enforcement and promotion of the provisions in his Human Rights package certainly require a lot of resources in terms of finance, institution and personnel. The problem now is how to strike a balance between the resources required for ensuring Human Rights especially the economic and social aspects and those that should go into economic development. The fact that Chief Awolowo recognised the need to transform the economy to a modern, prosperous and self-supporting one, and the need to boost public finance in order to meet the required resources does not solve the problem. This is because, apart from his view that Human Rights and Development should be pursued simultaneously, the former had attached to it specified period (in most cases) within which the related programmes must commence. In some cases, there is no room for gestation period to harness the required economic and other resources. For example, from October 1, 1979 in line with its electoral promise, the UPN-controlled states embarked on the free health and free education policies in an immediate post military era. It turned out that the Party was unable to fund the programmes adequately, but were said to have "built up mountains of debts." Apart, the fact that adequate resource inputs

were not available, its implementation actually affected other aspects of development especially economic development. In fact, it could also be argued on the basis of Chief Awolowo's declared preparedness (while emphasising his commitment to education) of the UPN to spend one third of the national revenue on education,<sup>63</sup> that such commitment might not only hamper economic development but also capable of eroding other Rights especially, economic and social Rights.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Our discussion in this paper leads to some obvious conclusions on Chief Awolowo's conception of Human Rights in general and with particular reference to Nigeria.

Essentially, his conception of Human Rights is a derivative of his conception of the State, man and development. To him the state has the primary responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the citizens for the realisation of their talents as there can be no development without the development of man. For this to be realised Fundamental Rights is basic.

He therefore did not subscribe to the position of most African leaders that human rights and development are antithetic, and that it should be restricted or delayed to facilitate the developmental process.

It is also evident from our discussion that both in principle and in substance, his conception of Human Rights is more revolutionary and too advanced when compared with what obtained in Nigeria's three post-independence constitutions. Also, at policy level, his prescriptions, programmes and to a large extent their actual execution are sophisticated and adequate. The two major constraints that actually denied Nigeria the benefit of his plans are his 'electoral misfortune' at the centre, a factor that has attracted a lot of reactions from the Nigerian public and from Awolowo himself, and probably the second is his transition. The absence of resource

base, (given his attested managerial ability and the economic mismanagement which has plagued the country's economy which he thought could be re-activated,) is only at this point a marginal problem.

To a large extent Chief Awolowo had a lot of influence on Human Rights in Nigeria. His criticisms of the 1963 and 1979 constitutions were not only eye-openers but prompted certain changes especially under the 1979 Constitution. As we already pointed out the mode of entrenching Human Rights in the 1979 constitution still suffered from what Chief Awolowo referred to as a grave defect, this is in respect of the status of economic and social rights. The on-going search is not likely to match Awolowo's conception. The Federal Military Government comment on the part of the Report of the Political Bureau relating to Human Rights gives some indications along this line. The Federal Government seems to prefer the *status quo* to the Bureau's recommendation calling for an impressive Bill of Rights that should include justiciable social objectives as a springboard to a 'new social order', and social justice.<sup>64</sup>

Chief Awolowo's Human Rights policy just as his personality is exceptional in the Nigerian ruling class if one bears in mind that the Nigerian ruling class according to Adebayo Williams is distinguishable by its 'absence of a sense of mission.'<sup>65</sup> One could conclude further that Awolowo and his 'Human Rights policy 'would have made a crucial difference'.

In conclusion, Awolowo's Human Rights policy is undoubtedly one of hope, an ideal and a challenge to the Nigerian State. Despite the desirability of the policy as goals that Nigeria should aspire, the acceptability of the policy as desirable principles and indeed its accomplishment seem impossible without a struggle which hopefully has started and might continue for many years.

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\*There are many other possible references or sources of Chief Awolowo's ideas including quotations in this paper. This is because the ideas expressed in most of his books (including the central propositions in his socio-political philosophy) especially from *The Peoples Republic* (1968) are similar, at least in aspects relevant to our concern in this paper.



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# **Part Seven**

## **Education**

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# Awolowo and Seven Years of Mass Education Work, 1952-1959: A Study on the Question of Number in Education

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MICHAEL OMOLEWA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chief Obafemi Awolowo has been recognised both as an educator and as an educationist. One is not in doubt that he was an educator, but the point must be made that he did his educating chiefly out of the classroom, through his publications and during his political campaigns. He was never in love with the work of teaching and he persistently found no attraction in the teaching profession. Thus, he took the job of Pupil Teacher at Imo Wesleyan School, Abeokuta in July 1926 only after much pleading, and he had left the position prematurely to study at Wesley College, which he again deserted before he completed his training. Chief Awolowo's dream was to wear the wig and gown, and not to use the cane. Even on his journey he had preferred the work of shorthand-typist to that of the teacher. Chief Awolowo was unwavering in his attachment to law and politics. Thus at the dock during his defence at the Treasonable Felony trial, he had introduced himself, not as a teacher, but 'By profession, I am a barrister and solicitor . . . By calling I am a politician.'

As an educationist, Chief Awolowo was a careful student of the teaching and learning process. He had a clear idea of the curriculum, the use of education and he set aside sections of his work to discuss the subject of education. Chief Awolowo took his business of Chancellor of the University of

Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and later of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, most serious. His addresses to the Universities left no one in doubt that Chief Awolowo was among the foremost thinkers of his time. But again, there the story ends. Chief Awolowo's main preoccupation was with politics<sup>1</sup> as he rightly titles his post-1960 publications. Chief Awolowo's work constituted *Adventures in Power*. Education was obviously a political tool, and an object that could benefit from his political leadership. But his preoccupation was neither with pedagogy nor with andragogy. Thus, Chief Awolowo could by no means be classified in the category of educationists such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel, Dewey, Piaget, Skinner, Brunner, Awokoya, Fafunwa, Ransome-Kuti, Ukeje or Eyo Ita. Yet Chief Awolowo is often better regarded as having made his major contribution in the area of education. One area that is instantly mentioned is the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) the opening of access to several children who could never have benefitted from formal education without the UPE programmes.<sup>1</sup> Thus the 55 kobo calendar, titled *Awo's Words of Wisdom* carries the quotation:

We are offering Free Education so that every man and woman can stand up for himself or herself and find the way for the good of society.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, we submit that Chief Awolowo's most important contribution was not necessarily in the area of Free Primary Education, but more in the area of the expansion of educational facilities at all levels of educational enterprise in the Western Region of Nigeria. In the process, he demystified access to education and introduced the democratisation of the opening to education for all Nigerians. We shall further seek to address subjects such as the consideration of the origins of educational expansion in Nigeria in order to identify the real roots of mass education in the country. Finally, we shall examine the issue of quantity and

quality in education.

The point must be made that it was by no means the intention of Chief Awolowo to limit his educational expansion to the primary schools. The scheme launched on 17 January, 1955 was only a fraction, indeed a modest beginning, of his Party's educational expansion programme. Aspects of the expansion scheme had to be shelved temporarily, at least in the face of the heavy financial toll incurred by government on the primary education scheme. As the Banjo Commission later observed:

The Regional Government spends 76 percent of its total education budget on primary education. We are told that nowhere else in the world do governments spend such a large proportion of their budget on this aspect of education.<sup>3</sup>

Our study on this subject is necessarily exploratory. For one thing, research is scanty. Most writers are eye-witnesses whose account constitutes reminiscences rather than critical studies. For another, there are so many myths around the various activities of the controversial Chief that demand a systematic consideration. But more significant is the point that the personal papers of the Chief, including his diaries, have not been examined and his aides and his foes have not been penetratingly interviewed.

For this study, most of the works have been considered primary sources offering information on the subject. The recent Daily Times of Nigeria (DTN) publication titled *AWO in the Eyes of the People* has a refreshing collection of interviews with the elder statesman's former aides and colleagues. Both Fafunwa and Taiwo were associated with the work of Chief Awolowo and watched events at a close range.<sup>4</sup> In other words they were 'part of the history'.

To avoid the danger of presenting a superficial account of Chief Awolowo's 'adventures in education', this work has been limited to the period from 1952 to 1959 when Chief Awolowo was at the head of the Administration in Western Region first as Leader of Government Business and later as Premier. During the period, Chief Awolowo offered the

necessary leadership. The period is rich in archival sources which become intolerably scanty as one moves to the more recent times. It also offers a foundation on which the Mass Education programme was built in later years.

## 2. THE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

We must first consider the question of the origins of the Free Education Scheme in Nigeria. Contemporary opinion suggests that Chief Awolowo introduced the idea of free education to Nigeria because he himself had suffered considerable hardship during his primary school days following the death of his father at an early age.

There is some truth in this opinion. Chief Awolowo himself had submitted that:

With the death of my father in April 1920, there was an abrupt cessation to my schooling, and all the hopes and aspirations which my father had systematically and relentlessly instilled in me were remorselessly dashed.<sup>5</sup>

Chief Awolowo had, as a consequence of the death of his father, moved from Ikenne where he had earlier attended two primary schools to Abeokuta where he attended, at various times, Ibara Anglican, Ogbe Wesleyan, Itesi Wesleyan, Itesi Roman Catholic, and Salvation Army School, Imo Wesleyan School among others. When he later arrived at Wesley College, Ibadan, he had been most touched by the free education scheme in operation at the College.

At Wesley College, everything was free: tuition, books, board and lodging, uniforms. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Later he was to experience considerable anguish during his search for education due to his poor financial situation. Thus in 1929, he had sold a most valued dress 'to swell my meagre savings in order to pay for the correspondence courses which I took in that year'. He had also been in need of funds for his travel to read law in Britain. He had thus addressed himself to a successful businessman in Nigeria for a loan of £1,400 free of interest. As he later reported:

The result was negative. I resolved to fight for the next five years, if need be unaided, the long-drawn battle for raising funds to acquire a profession.<sup>7</sup>

The point must however be made that long before Chief Awolowo's free education programme, efforts had been made to make provision for the education of children from poor homes. Even the colonial government had been touched by the efforts of parents who spent their life savings to provide education to their children. In the process, government scholarships had been introduced. By 1949 50% of such scholarships had been offered 'to enable boys who would otherwise not be able to go to a secondary school, get into one'. The number was shared as follows:

Northern Region	-	10
Western Region	-	12
Eastern Region	-	20

Some schools had also provided scholarship to the very bright pupils who were considered the best in their schools 'both in character and ability'. A few scholarships were awarded to pupils whose parents died suddenly and whose parents genuinely suffered increasing financial difficulties arising from the payment of fees.<sup>9</sup>

Earlier, the Colonial government in Nigeria had suggested an increased government financial support to schools, in accepting the Ten Year Education Plan prepared by Morris. Government had accepted the need 'for a more effective widespread education in Nigeria' and the gains of education 'for the mass of the child population'. Government Plan had been shelved on the instruction of the Secretary of State who was disappointed that the Plan merely 'touched the fringe of the problem at a cost out of all proportion to the Territory's economics'.<sup>10</sup>

Many Nigerians had taken up the challenge and had done for the Nigerian masses what the colonial government was unwilling to do. Community Schools had been established and free education provided for the deserving ones.<sup>11</sup> Politicians

had also shown considerable interest in education since the formation of the Nigerian Youth Movement. In the post-war years, politicians of all the parties in Western Region had also been concerned about the problem. Thus on 20 February 1952, five months before Chief S. O. Awokoya, Western Region's A.G. Minister for Education, moved his historic motion, Chief F.S. Edah of the NCNC had stood up to move the motion:

That Government should start on a workable programme that will give free and compulsory elementary education to all children in the Region within two years hence.<sup>12</sup>

Chief Edah had argued, while speaking to his motion that 'the question of free and compulsory elementary education in the Region and perhaps in the whole of Nigeria is overdue'.

It was clear from the statements made by Chief Awolowo that the Action Group Party had actively considered the question of free education by the election campaigns of 1951. The Party had also supported the overseas tours of Chief Awokoya to the United States, Britain, France, The Netherlands, India and Ghana in the course of preparing Sessional Papers for the consideration of the Western House of Assembly. As Chief Awolowo put it, at the time, the Action Group Party was only seeking to meet the felt needs of the electorate and the generality of the people:

I have no doubt at all in my mind, that future historians who have the honour of chronicling the doings of our age, would have no hesitation whatsoever in acclaiming these Sessional Papers as historic and epoch-making.

I hasten to add that the credit for these schemes would go, primarily, to the indomitable and resourceful Action Group Government, as the initiators and designers of them, and secondary to all of us, as accredited representatives of our people . . . Our own knowledge that they gave concrete and definite expression to the deepest yearnings and aspirations of our people.<sup>13</sup>

We shall later return to this subject. But let us move to a related one.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION PROJECT

The consideration of Chief Awolowo, his party and people was not limited to the primary education level. Rather, the primary education programme was conceived as the beginning of an education package that would truly liberate the recipient. Thus, related to the education revolution being proposed was the education expansion, increase in the number of those gaining access to education and the widening of facilities for education at the primary and the post-primary level.

Before the Action Group educational experiment in Nigeria, the bulk of the work of providing broader access to education had been done by Christian and Muslim missionaries, communities and individuals. The idea was to provide more places for those willing to obtain formal education.

This was the background to the expansion of education in communities not adequately served and the establishment of institutions such as Olode College, Ijebu Ode; Muslim College, Ijebu Ode; Molusi College, Ijebu-Igbo; Urhobo College, Warri; Lugard School, Sapele; Oduduwa College, Ile-Ife; Ilesha Grammar School, Ilesha; Imade College, Owo; Jubilee School, Ikare; Isoko Secondary School, Ole; and St. Patrick's School, Asaba. These schools were to supplement the efforts of government, missionaries and communities which had made the establishment of schools possible, inadequate as the provision was.<sup>14</sup>

We must also draw attention to the liberal phase of colonial administration from the outbreak of World War II. For mass education programmes were launched in parts of the country and the facilities for the education of the adult were expanded. The Colonial Welfare and Development Fund was made available to assist in the education work.

The Action Group plan of expanding education facilities was however a more elaborate one. As Chief Awolowo announced in January 1953:

Every child reaching the age of five in the year 1955 and thereafter, and every other child already in school in 1955, will be entitled to complete his primary education without his parents having to pay school fees. This is not all. Our educational programme aims at (i) the total abolition of illiteracy among our adult and adolescent population; (ii) the expansion of secondary education; (iii) the provision of Technical Education...Schemes such as these mean 'that as from this present year, we have' to start training teachers on a hitherto unprecedented scale. We have to establish new teacher-training institutions.<sup>15</sup>

In recognition of the fact that there would be 'a greatly increased demand in the Region for University graduates as a result of their education expansion programme, the Action Group proposed a scheme for the training of 'an adequate pool' of University students at the University College, Ibadan and at overseas Universities.<sup>16</sup>

The achievements of the education expansion scheme are still to be studied objectively. But we know that primary and secondary schools were built to accommodate more pupils and students. We also know that the location made it unnecessary to undertake long trips to schools. Thus the St. Jude's School, Ebute-Metta and the Methodist School Olowogbowo, the C.M.S. Grammar School, Bariga and the Christ's School models had their counterparts in villages. More teachers were trained and many people had access to education. Thus in Western Region, 'primary school population . . . rose phenomenally from 457,000 in 1954, the year preceding the scheme to 811,000 in 1955 and to 982,755 in 1957'. The figures are still being contested by scholars.

The exercise of course had its problems as Canon S.A. Banjo's Commission later submitted. Standard fell, quality was affected by the large number of learners, facilities were overstretched and the Region's finances were grossly affected. The modern school, of course, folded up and the mass literacy efforts were suspended. The quality of teaching was hardly improved and several teachers continued to be guilty of stylistic infelicities.

Under this circumstance it may be asked if the education expansion was desirable. In other words, was it the number of those educated that mattered more than the content of instruction provided? Rather than plan for an expansion, would it have been wiser to work out an education programme that could have addressed the subject of under-development, ignorance, disease, poverty, ethnic loyalty and religious bigotry? Was it possible to have quantitative education that could still guarantee quality? These are issues for discussion later.

#### 4. AWOLowo FACTOR

We shall examine some of the assumptions that suggest that the Free Education Scheme and the mass education programmes were the handiwork of Chief Awolowo. In the process we shall discuss the role of Chief Awolowo and review Soyinka's submission that in Chief Awolowo, the Tree did make the Forest.

First, the evidence of careful planning that was visible in the planning and execution of the programmes suggested that the Chief had a hand in the origination and the implementation of the education scheme. The estimate of the education cost was carefully scrutinised, and the capital cost of nine million pounds was reduced to three million, while the recurrent expenditure was put at two million pounds for 1955.

Another area where planning made an impression was in the area of teacher preparation and the provision of learning facilities. The Action Group was never a party in a hurry to rob itself of adequate planning. It was obvious to the architects of the scheme that teacher training facilities were inadequate and the institutions were intolerably few. In his days at School, Chief Awolowo had observed that it was rare to have good schools. He himself had attended St. Saviour's School, Ikenne which was not recommended for grant-in-aid following its inspection by P. F. Heribert. Heribert had

observed that 'there was but one map and there were on the wall a number of biblical pictures which were too small to be of much use'.<sup>17</sup> Heribert continued:

There were no proper latrines . . . Teaching was unenterprising and careless. Subjects were taught in a mechanical manner and such explanation as was attempted by the teacher was neither accurate nor thorough enough.<sup>18</sup>

Heribert was unhappy with the status of the teaching staff which 'consisted of one certificated, one provisional and five probationary teachers, none (of whom, except one) has any qualification higher than a Standard V pass'.

Chief Awolowo later attributed his initial reluctance to attend school at Ikenne to the situation at St. Saviour's School where corporal punishment was generously given and rote learning encouraged. He recalled the defective teaching method:

After prayer, there was physical exercise. I would have enjoyed this but for the manner in which it was conducted.<sup>19</sup>

Chief Awolowo had recognised the value of the poor quality of the teachers in his school at Abeokuta as early as April. There he 'discovered that my acquaintance with the three Rs was much better than that of our teacher', and immediately left the school. He also recalled that:

In later life when I met some of these teachers, I was staggered by their own utter scholarstic inadequacy. One of them had only a niggardly acquaintance with the English Language.<sup>20</sup>

But even here, one must recall the point that, Chief Awolowo had entrusted the Ministry of Education, to the hands of his competent and industrious lieutenant, Chief S. O. Awokoya. Chief Awokoya was one of the most brilliant teachers of his days. A graduate of Yaba Higher College and a pioneer in Science Education Awokoya had taught at

Abeokuta Grammar School before he was invited to head Molusi College, Ijebu-Igbo where he left to serve as Minister. It was Chief Awokoya who had advised Chief Edah to withdraw his motion in February 1952 because government was actively considering the subject of the introduction of free and compulsory education in Nigeria.<sup>21</sup> It was Chief Awokoya who pleaded in the Western House of Assembly on 30 July 1952 that:

Educational development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency, second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution.<sup>22</sup>

Chief Awokoya thus committed the region to the bold venture. As a former teacher, a school principal and a widely travelled educator and educationist, Chief Awokoya was eminently qualified to examine the status of teacher preparation for the education expansion being planned for the region among other responsibilities assigned to his Ministry.

We shall emphasize the point that the contribution of Chief Awolowo for education was not in the area of originating the idea of Free Education or of the expansion of education. As has been from our submission, Chief Awolowo verbalised, vocalised, articulated and popularised an idea, a desire that was already current in society. But even here Chief Awolowo did not have the monopoly of undertaking the assignment. Indeed in 17 January, 1955 when the Free Education Scheme was launched, the shout of 'Awolowo' was addressed to Awokoya.

What is significant is that Chief Awolowo stood at the head of an Administration which lent political weight to the programme of providing access to education for the masses. In the process, Chief Awolowo used his immutable courage, drive, candour, resourcefulness, boldness, fearlessness, vision, industry and doggedness, leadership attributes that had also earned him lifelong enemies, in the pursuit of this education project. 'Unsparring in combat', determined and resolute and relentless to pursue programmes 'with forensic aforcefulness'

Chief Awolowo mobilized his entire party, his government and entire people in the pursuit of free education. Following his lead, his Minister for Education and his officials joined hands with

the Director of Education down to clerks . . . Chiefs, Counsellors, party supporters and non-supporters, retired and serving teachers, pastors . . . traders, Farmers, prominent citizens, missionaries, both men and women.<sup>23</sup>

Chief Awolowo's programmes which included mass literacy campaign and the eradication of illiteracy from the population may be likened to those of Lenin, Napoleon and Bismarck and Nkrumah, authors of the educational revolutions in Russia, France and Germany and Ghana respectively. These statesmen had recognised the import of establishing a large army of literate citizenry in the task of liberating their people. As Lovett, a British advocate of mass education also forcefully argued:

Could the present influence of money perpetuate the slavery of millions for the gains and dissipations of the few? Could corruption sit in the judgement seat, empty-headed importance in the Senate, hypocrisy in the pupil, and crime stalk triumphantly through the land if the millions were educated in the knowledge of their rights? No, on, my friends, and hence the efforts of the few to keep the people ignorant and divided.<sup>24</sup>

When it is remembered that Chief Awolowo was well read, and had studied several subjects including history, and when it is remembered that Chief Awolowo was familiar with the aborted efforts in Nigeria from 1940 to 1946 to provide mass education, it can be further confirmed that Chief Awolowo was moved by a passion to transplant a successful programme elsewhere to Nigeria, and to implement the transplant systematically, in the interest of the masses for whatever cause motivated him in this direction.

To the critics of the education expansion, the whole exercise was clearly deceptive, unrealistic, politically-motivated

and vote-catching, It brought in a great illusion that soon resulted in frustration and disappointment in the society, with the attendant mass unemployment, insubordination and indiscipline.

To Awolowo, the effort was desirable. So unconvinced was he by the arguments of his opponents, that he anchored the programmes of his Unity Party of Nigeria on free education and education expansion in 1979 and 1983.

Chief Awolowo cannot be faulted in his claim that education is a right and a necessity for all, which opens up opportunities for recipients, allows access to choices in personal and societal matters, and empowers recipients economically, politically, socially and spiritually. The Chief also believed that an education can be used to influence school curriculum and promote cultural awareness.

What was unique with the programme of Chief Awolowo was the conviction of the Chief that where other governments had pleaded caution, his duty was to take a risk. In this task he was helped by his vision of Nigeria purged of 'the dead-weight of feudalism, aristocracy and privilege'.

The *Daily-Times* comment of 27 January, 1953 praised Chief Awolowo for the bold steps his Administration had taken:

A statesman does not need universal approval of his every measure to be great. Indeed, Mr. Awolowo was not seeking the applause of today but the gratitude of years to come when 'our beloved and trusting masses .....will .... remember us ... as their faithful and devoted servants.'<sup>25</sup>

While past governments shelved their laudable plans, Chief Awolowo had moved on. He did not mind the fate of Hussey whose 'proposals were stultified by the financial depression of the early thirties'. In the post-World War II years it was observed that the demand for education greatly outstripped the funds available to meet that demand'. To Chief Awolowo, the education expansion scheme was a worthy investment in the people by the government. He wanted the programme to be seen not for its 'temporary

political advantages' but 'for its wide and nobler objective, namely the progress and general well-being of the people, whom it is our privilege 'to serve'. Chief Awokoya, in a similar vein, had declared that:

I hope that our humble effort may contribute to the development of future generations coming after us. I also hope that the development of this country may be promoted by this great scheme.<sup>26</sup>

Contrary to the image of an inflexible Awo, one should note that the education package was frequently subject to change. For example, in Chief Awolowo's view, Free Education meant that the recipient or his parents would not pay for receiving education. Rather the State would shoulder the responsibility of providing education to the people. As he pledged in January 1953:

In 1955 parents will no longer be harrassed by the necessity of finding school fees, or in hunting hopelessly for vacancies for the children; places will be available and free for all as they attain the age of five years.<sup>27</sup>

To Chief Awolowo it was the duty of the rich to help with the cost of educating the children of the poor. Chief Awolowo also believed that the people must move in the direction of self reliance. As he argued:

If Nigeria is to take its place among the independent Nations of the world we must cease to rely on C.D. & W. (Colonial Development and Welfare) Funds and other kinds of economic spoon-feeding which goes all together with the political independence which we rightly and sincerely clamour for. If we want to be free we must be prepared to stand on our own feet. There is no easy or other road to progress and political self-determination.<sup>28</sup>

To this end he sought to introduce a levy on all tax-payers in the Western Region to meet part of the cost of educational and health schemes in the Region, because, in his words:

The hard fact is that, if we in this country are to make

progress, we must do so mainly by our own efforts and by our own sacrifices.<sup>29</sup>

Awolowo met with opposition from the rival political party in the Region and was misrepresented. But in England in an earlier century, the scheme had worked because discussions and contributions were positive, supportive and patriotic, and in spite of the opposition of vested interests carefully articulated in government and in the House of Commons where Gidy had pleaded with his colleagues to shelve any mass education proposal. For, in his view,

However specious in theory the project might be of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would in effect be found prejudicial to their morals and happiness it would teach them to despise their lot of life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them.<sup>30</sup>

Britain later passed the Elementary Education Act of 1870.

It is also important to note that at the beginning of the Free Education Scheme, Chief Awolowo had not been enthusiastic. Indeed he had not considered the issue of mass and Free Education until he founded the Action Group. Of course he had appreciated the value of education as a liberating force. To this end, he had pleaded in 1947 that the governance of Nigeria should be entrusted to the hands of the few eminently qualified by their education to undertake the assignment.<sup>31</sup>

Later on, when he was convinced that the scheme was politically desirable, he had been opposed to the idea that it should be compulsory. The Chief later recalled that his view was defeated in 1953 but that the party and government later reversed the former decision and agreed to delete 'Compulsory' from the Education Act.<sup>32</sup> One therefore sees the 'inflexible' Awo shifting his grounds on the dictates of political expediency and democracy.

One major criticism of Chief Awolowo was in the area of his failure to appreciate the enormity of problems that accompany educational expansion. In developing countries with limited resources, educational expansion introduces stress and tension in the educational system as classrooms are crowded, teachers, overworked, supervision made more difficult and ineffective and school facilities overstretched. The point that is being made is that under normal conditions there is no mutual exclusiveness between quantity and quality in education. However, in a situation in which the emphasis is on the increment in admission quality is affected. Thus products of mass education continue to be handicapped by their initial limited scope and quantity of education obtained.

Added to the problem of quality is the issue of the content of instruction. The limited review in the education curriculum was cosmetic. The emphasis continued to be on the adoption of the colonial education with its limitations for the African needs. Thus examinations, the method of teaching, use of textbooks, focus on rote-learning and the absence of incentive for the development of original thinking, remained in the mass education package.

The mass education introduced was clearly for the poor who were uncritical and excessively appreciative of whatever was provided. It therefore fell under similar mass education schemes.<sup>33</sup> A contemporary critic had challenged three members who established the free education scheme

to express their faith in the education schemes by withdrawing their children from the University College Staff School and placing them in the new free primary education schemes.<sup>34</sup>

##### 5. THE FAILURE OF THE SCHEME AND POLITICAL INTERVENTION

The education expansion programmes were aborted by a variety of factors. First, the statistics were inaccurate and unreliable for planning purposes, a situation which introduced another set of difficulties as soon as the scheme was launched. Secondly, the rich were in no way prepared to

share the burden of educating the nation and the education was suspended. The consequences was that government had to shoulder the heavy financial burden of the education scheme.

But perhaps the most intractable problem was political. In an age when politicians were intolerant and saw programmes only from selfish point of view, Chief Awolowo's dreams were misrepresented and mocked. He was literally called a liar and his vision was not given the desirable consideration or cooperation.

The myopic eyes of his opponents could not appreciate what Fafunwa has since described as 'the boldest and, perhaps, the most unprecedented educational scheme in Africa, south of the Sahara'. Rather, one of the critics of the scheme had described it as 'a tragedy'.<sup>3 5</sup> Critics also raised pertinent issues of the danger of lowering standard because of the reduction of the primary school duration from eight to six years and the introduction of automatic promotion system. These issues could have been brought in a constructive way in places where politics was operated with minimum bitterness. At any rate the NCNC leadership which was at the forefront of the assault on the new scheme had themselves supported it earlier and had also made efforts to introduce it in Eastern Region.

#### 6. END OF AN ERA?

Chief Awolowo's mass education scheme represented a vision, a dream; it was an expression of a people's felt needs. The exit of the captain of the ship can therefore be said to constitute the end of an era. The pace of movement may be affected by a change of the captain.

Our assertion can be confirmed by the history of education in Nigeria from 1959. When Chief Awolowo left Western Nigeria, the scheme continued with modifications. It was expanded by the Federal Military Government to cover the entire country in 1976 when General Obasanjo launched the Universal Primary Education Scheme. Free Education-at-all-levels was the slogan of the Unity Party of Nigeria in 1979

and in 1983. The scheme was introduced in the states controlled by the UPN in 1979 and in 1983, and it is feebly included in Chapter Two of the Nigerian Constitution of 1979.

It is of course important to note that Chief Awolowo continued to plead the cause of free education in his writings. Thus while in prison he had lamented in 1966 that 'Education continues to be under-nourished' and 'even being repeatedly threatened with semi-starvation'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly he had repeated the view two years later that

In order to attain the goals of economic freedom and prosperity, Nigeria..... must provide free education (at all levels) .....for the masses of its citizens<sup>37</sup>

Later, Awo, the shrewd politician and strategist, rather than relenting had dedicated his 1970 publication 'To The Aspiring Youths of Nigeria' and raised the issue of Free Education for all.<sup>38</sup>

The exit of Chief Awolowo may perhaps remove some of the criticisms of the scheme that are neither positive nor objective by his enemies and political rivals. For Chief Awolowo had himself submitted that the issue of Free Education is controversial because he happened to be its chief advocate,<sup>39</sup> although it is clear that several enemies of Free and Mass Education have other vested interests to preserve by opposing it. It is in this way that one may indeed describe the exit of Chief Awolowo from the educational scene as the beginning, clearly not the end, of the era of Mass Education in Nigeria.

Again, one should be reminded that the mass education scheme is not a monopoly of Nigeria. Rather, one should see it against the background of global concern for increased literate citizenry, and the subsequent United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The efforts of Unesco, the African Ministers of Education of the Commonwealth Ministers of Education and of the African Association for Literacy and Adult Education are directed towards Mass Education. Thus, Mengot had reported that the Conference of Ministers of

Education of African Member States of Unesco had firmly commended that 'Mass Education must be provided for the entire population - children, young people and adults as well'.<sup>40</sup>

Nigeria's lamentation can only be sustained by the awareness that an era closed by the departure of one leader who was fully committed to providing the equalisation of educational opportunities to the entire Nigerian population, without respect for religion, sex or place of origin. Or how else would one describe the exit of Awolowo who, like Fidel Castro of Cuba at the United Nations, declared in the Western House of Assembly at the commencement of his education scheme that:

We of the Action Group will press forward in the execution of the laudable projects which this House has unanimously approved and accepted; believing, as we do, that God, who sees our hearts and knows that we are doing these things to better the lot of our people, is on our side.<sup>41</sup>

By his effort, Chief Awolowo had assisted in the translation to reality of the dreams and desires of the populace. He had helped to expose the weak to education, albeit limited, and to use the machinery of State to liberalise access to education. He had of course not sufficiently considered the consequences of his action for the quality of products and the finances of the States. These issues transcended politics, and the Chief was not attracted by the purely pedagogical and andragogical matters that appeal to educators and educationists. He was first and foremost a politician. The fact that he remained consistent and was not challenged by the educators, must further attract the attention of researchers. The warning, of course, is that policy formulation must always ensure that the quantity of access does not disturb the quality of products.<sup>42</sup> What remains, however is the courage of Chief Awolowo to invest in education during the period before Nigerian independence and at a time when Nigerians had only limited control of their own affairs.

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  8. National Archives, Ibadan (hereinafter NAI) IBMINED 1/2 CIW 4244. Minutes of the Meeting of the West Regional Board of Education, Tuesday and Wednesday, 13 and 14 September, 1949.
  9. NAI IBMINED 1/2 CIW 4244.
  10. For a full story of government's efforts, see NAI IBMINED 1/1 DDW 99 vol. 1, Educational Developments in Nigeria, and, more important, A Fajana, *Education in Nigeria*.
  11. For an account of the community involvement in secondary education see A.A. Adeyinka, *The Development of Secondary Grammar School Education in the Western State of Nigeria (1908-1938)* M. Ed. Project University of Ibadan. 1971.
  12. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 20 February, 1952.
  13. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  14. A full and comprehensive list is available in the written answers presented to the Western House of Assembly by the Minister for Education at various times between 1952 and 1955. The Igbo State Union, the Ibibio National Union, the Educational Union and the *Egbe Omo*

- Oduduwa* had awarded scholarship to the deserving indigenes for overseas study.
15. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  16. Western House of Assembly Debates, Lieutenant – Governor's message, 14 July, 1952.
  17. NAI, IBMINED 1/2 CIW 787: St. Saviour's School, Ikenne.
  18. St. Saviour's School, Ikenne, Report of 12 October, 1927.
  19. *My Early Life*, p. 28.
  20. *My Early Life*, p. 32.
  21. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 20 February, 1952.
  22. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 30 July, 1952.
  23. Evidence of C. O. Taiwo quoted in *Awo in the Eyes of the People*, p. 20.
  24. Quoted in E.A. Corbett, 'A Short History of Adult Education', *Food for Thought*, vol. 7 No. 5, February 1947, p. 16.
  25. *Daily Times*, 27 January, 1953.
  26. Statement of the Minister for Education, Quoted by Ibikunle, 'Awo's Free Education' p. 22.
  27. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  28. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  29. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  30. S. J. Curtis, *History of Education in Great Britain*, quoted in M. Omolewa 'The Failure of Mass Education in Nigeria: A study of the Triumph of "Small is Best" in African Education in A.B. Oduaran and B. Ehezari eds., *Issues in Nigeria Adult and Community Development Education Benin, Nigerian National Council for Adult Education, 1987*, p. 21.
  31. O. Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, London, Faber, 1947 p. 31.
  32. O. Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Greatness*, Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1981 p. 9.
  33. cf. M. Omolewa, 'On the Definition and Scope of Mass Education in Nigeria, 1946–1960' *Education and Development*, vol. 3 No. 2, July 1983 pp. 216 – 220.
  34. Ibikunle recalls the opposition of Dr. Sanya Onabamiro then a lecturer at the University College, Ibadan, to the scheme. See 'Awo' *Free Education*, p. 23.
  35. Onabamiro on the scheme, 'Awo's Free Education' p. 23.
  36. O. Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1966.
  37. O. Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1968 p. 311.
  38. O. Awolowo, *The Strategy and Tactics of The People's Republic of Nigeria*, London, Macmillan, 1970.
  39. O. Awolowo, *The Strategy and Tactics* p. 47
  40. Quoted in 'Failure of Mass Education in Nigeria' p. 21.
  41. Western Region House of Assembly Debates, 23 January, 1953.
  42. For some fruitful discussion of this subject, See the Nigeria Educational Research Council Report, *Perspectives of Qualities and Quantities in Nigerian Education*, Lagos, NERC 1980.

## **Awolowo and the Politics of Education in Nigeria**

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**P.R.A. ADEGBESAN**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

On May 9, 1987, as a "News Flash" on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network News, it was announced that Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the controversial political figure had quietly left this mortal scene for the world beyond. As people recovered from the shock of his death, avalanche of tributes were paid to the memory of this great Nigerian by friends and one time political foes alike. Some people who were in opposite camps during the days of partisan politics unabashingly confessed their secret admiration for this great man, which for timorousness and political expedience could not express in his lifetime.

Thus, for Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, Awolowo was the best president Nigeria never had; for Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) stalwart and Nigeria's former permanent representative at the United Nations Organisation (UNO), Awolowo's death was a great loss. He was an excellent administrator and the best manager of the economy Nigeria had ever had. He added that his educational policies were misunderstood "but if pursued with all sincerity they would have ushered in a new era in the history of Nigeria". Professor Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate manifested anger that Nigeria wasted a genius and added "... some people, no matter what hypocritical nonsense they utter, sleep better now that Chief Awolowo is gone". For General

Gowon, former Head of State under whom Chief Awolowo served as Commissioner for Finance, "Nigeria's Political and Social life will not be the same again without him and the void created by his demise will be hard to fill."<sup>1</sup> For Femi Osofisan, playwright and critic, "he was a colossus". The grief of some of the literary men did not stop them from lamenting Awolowo's lack of fondness for the arts!

... There are no sculptures anywhere, no imaginative painting no single statement from a poet ...<sup>2</sup>

For others, it was an occasion to show the limitations of the popularity of Awolowo. Whatever service he might have given was to a particular section of this country and that made him a tribal leader and that did not warrant him a National burial. Thus, for Achebe, "... to turn the burial of a tribal leader into a state funeral ... should be seen as no less than a national swindle".<sup>3</sup>

The few citations above showed how Awolowo was perceived during his life time and what strong passions he could generate in people. Awolowo was indeed a man of many parts: a philosopher, an economist, an astute administrator, a tactician, a strategist, a politician, a legal luminary, an astute business man, a social democrat, a rapacious reader, a prolific writer, a statesman and a religious. The latter came as a surprise to many given the fact that Awolowo's reputation as an agnostic seemed to have over-shadowed his orthodox christian religiosity and mysticism.<sup>4</sup>

In this modest piece, our contribution would be centred on his educational policies and the politics which they inevitably generated. As President Ibrahim Babangida observed in his tribute to Awolowo on his 77th birthday: "Awolowo has been the main issue in Nigerian politics during the last 35 years: the main political question has been whether you are with Chief Awolowo or against him."<sup>5</sup>

True, in 1951 when partisan politics began in Nigeria, the budding political parties had no ideology around which issues were centred. Thus, they all ended up with promises

of amenities that would benefit the community such as improved health facilities, education, better roads, pipe-borne water, light, and what have you, things that promised to make living easier and better. But promises apart, there was need to establish credibility by fulfilling promises made during the heat of electioneering. Awolowo, who believed in redeeming one's image, attempted to fulfil his campaign promises. His record of achievements showed that he made no idle electioneering promises.

We cannot discuss Awolowo's policies on Education without touching on the politics which surrounded him. Politics and Education seem to belong to different spheres and formerly, scholars used to compartmentalize them.<sup>6</sup> Politics belongs to the realms of politicking, scrambling for scarce national commodities, power, state, order, disorder, and others. Whereas the latter, education seems innocuous enough. It relates to the systematic training of particularly the young either formally in an institution or informally at home or (and) in the community, about all sphere of life. Thus, the two, politics and education, seemed not to belong together.

Nevertheless, from experience, we know that they are in circular fashion. For instance, education influences the formation of political norms and values and provides one of the several qualifications for political office holding. Politics in authoritatively allocating public goods, is usually involved in public policy making and educational policy is just one of them. When public officials take far reaching decisions on education, for whatever reason, which affect the course of life of individuals in a polity, then they are in the realm of politics of education.

Politics of education is manifested in various ways. Education serves to perpetuate inequality in the society rather than offer opportunities for people to move from a lower cadre to a higher one, postulated some scholars. Lois Weis,<sup>7</sup> in a study carried out between 1961 and 1974 on Ghanaian Secondary School students, showed that the students were

drawn disproportionately from high status urbanized sector of the society. This means that students with rural and low socio-economic background were few in Ghanaian secondary schools. This suggested to him that secondary level of the Ghanaian educational system was acting increasingly to reproduce social inequality rather than offer opportunities for improvement on the social ladder. O'Connell and Backett<sup>8</sup> did a study on Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, students and found that 40 percent of the population had fathers whose incomes were less than the national average. Given the fact that education does help to maintain the *status quo*, in the near future, it is to be expected that the offspring of those who had benefited from education would continue to do so because they would have ensured that their children got the proper education that would qualify them for high cadre jobs.

These findings support the much highlighted thesis in Karabel and Halsey<sup>9</sup> that educational system serve primarily to maintain system of structured social inequality rather than offer opportunities for the individual's mobility into a higher position in the social stratum.

Furthermore, there is a school of thought which postulated that education performs important functions in the political system such as socializing children and youths in the political culture, selecting, recruiting and training of political elites and enhancing political integration or nation building.<sup>10</sup>

Expatriating upon this view point, Massialas<sup>11</sup> observes that when schools are controlled by a governing elite who decides who could be admitted into them by utilising selective criteria, they effectively keep away undesirable elements while, those sympathetic to their cause would be admitted. Thus, education accentuates the mass-elite gap. But, if education is used in an open manner, it could bridge the gap.

Politics of education is thus manifested in the goals of policy makers. It is also manifested in the different ways

groups within a polity struggle for merit base. The merit base, most often than not, is identified by the educational attainment of the individual. With the goals in view, policy makers decide who gets what kind of education: Vocational or Literary.

Also, political structure affects the educational system which operates in the state. If the political structure is unitary, then effective control of education comes from a central point. If the structure is federal, the various units of the federation too would have effective say in educational policy. Similarly, changes in political order do affect education. One form of political order that could affect education and which has become endemic in most of the New States, is military coup d'état. Intermittently, civilian administrations do lace these perennial interruptions of legitimate governance. These persistent changes in political order military to civilian government and vice versa — affect the educational system which often assume some of the characteristics<sup>12</sup> of the military institution without taking into cognisance the political structure. Thus, a federal structure such as the Nigerian polity becomes in reality a unitary structure since order flows from the central governing body, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) in Lagos or Abuja. Similarly, educational policies becomes unitarized since order for education emanates from the same source and affect the various units uniformly.

Education has been perceived as a tool for modernization and rapid growth.<sup>13</sup> The New States have bought this idea wholeheartedly and had embarked on massive education programmes in order to achieve modernization at the shortest possible time.<sup>14</sup>

However, there is another school of thought which perceive education as an instrument for political decay. To them, education helps to bring down traditional institutions. Once people have acquired education, they no longer cherish their traditional institutions (for instance, they ask for the scrapping of such traditional institutions as the Obaship/

Obishop/Emirship and the rest. Thus, this school opined that education should be available only to those who would maintain the traditional institutions. It accepted Plato's Philosopher of King's theory whereby only "the best in the society should be educated by the state.

This view could be compared and contrasted with the view of the school of thought which advocated mass-base education. According to this school, everybody has the right to education. It is an inalienable right of the individual.<sup>15</sup> However, the school of thought referred to earlier, (the elite school) contend against mass-base education. It creates problems. For example it could lead to unemployment. Without gainful employment parasitic class, such as armed robbers, drug pushers and other layabouts would develop and these could threaten the survival of the political system. Therefore, to guard against such development, mass-base literary education must be avoided. Instead of mass-base education, vocational education was advocated especially for people in the rural areas.

But studies have shown that such assumption was fallacy. One, vocational education would not stop the rural-urban drift because the non-existence of amenities in the rural areas cannot stop the attractions which the urban areas hold for the rural dwellers. Two, in most developing areas, the rural population surpasses urban population, if therefore, vocational education is embarked upon, the aspiration of the developing states would not be met. Thus, rapid development would continue to elude them. Three, the people themselves, have their own aspirations which vocational education would not be able to meet, thus, they too would be thoroughly dissatisfied with an educational system which would forever sentence them to rural life and deny them access to the ruling segment of the society.<sup>16</sup>

David R. Evans<sup>17</sup> in a critique of Barber's paper observed that extending access to the literary form of education to the rural population by no means equalizes their opportunity to participate in the economic and political life of the country. Karabel and Halsey have shown that education does not

necessarily remove inequality in any society since the governing elite has an advantage over an emerging elite. Placed in a vantage position, the ruling class can decide who benefits from the state's educational policies. They can decide the values to be taught in schools and their ideological contents. Usually, the values propagated would be those that would be supportive of the political system. This is what Almond and Powell refer to as Political Socialization.<sup>18</sup>

For supporters of literary education, basic general education helps to accelerate agricultural development because "it is necessary for rural people to learn, rather than simply to learn to do; learning to learn is essential for both participation in and adaptation to change".<sup>19</sup> Similarly they opine that, literate peasantry with a sense of the possibility of change is a prerequisite to the adaptation of more productive agricultural technology and of more prosperous rural society. Lastly, they observed that the state need not be responsible for the employment of graduates once they have been properly educated. The important thing is that having benefited from a good education, they have become enlightened sufficiently to fend for themselves and not be liabilities to the political system.

Politics of Education is not a recent phenomenon. It could be discerned in the theories of Plato in *The Republic*, when he advocated that the society be divided according to the educational capabilities of the citizens. Thus, citizens were categorized into bronze, silver and gold. The highest, that is, those who attained level of gold, were to become guardians. Similar categorization was sustained by the theories of Aristotle in his *Politics*. Also, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in spite of his attempts to bridge the gap between the rulers and the ruled by the concept of the general will in his *Social Contract*, advocated education only for the elite in his book *Emile* because the masses would not know what to do with it.

It is ironical, however, that the ideas of these classical

theorists became utilized, for the benefits of masses. The state became responsible for the education of the masses. However, this, was not achieved without some struggle in the developed countries.<sup>20</sup>

In the United State of America, free education came as a result of the unwavering efforts of educationists such as Henry Benard and Horace Mann who convinced their individual state legislatures that it was the duty of the state to educate children of the masses. In 1830, free education was declared in New York and became compulsory there in 1874<sup>21</sup> Though education is free and compulsory in the US today for ages between 16 and 18,<sup>22</sup> it did not immediately overcome religious bigotry and segregated education. The Ku Klux Klan endeavoured to outlaw private school in 1922. This was to crush the Catholic parochial school system and force Catholic and immigrant children into the Neo-Protestanizing and Americanizing force of the public Schools. But in 1925, in Pierce Vs Society Sisters, the American courts struck off this attempt and declared the right of private schools to exist along-side public ones.<sup>23</sup> Also, after the Emancipation, American policy makers thought it was best for black Americans to have only vocational education. That way, they would have been civilised but insurrectionist ideas would not have been implanted in them.<sup>24</sup> Segregation in Education however, continued until 1954.

In 1833, British Parliament became gradually interested in the education of the masses and granted £20,000 to two voluntary societies. By 1870, the Education Act empowered the School Board to pass by-law for compulsory attendance of all children within the district from the age of 5 to 12. Also, no religious formula which was distinctive to any particular denomination was allowed in schools. In 1944, fees were finally abolished in public school. By 1947, it was compulsory that a child remain in school until the age of 15.<sup>25</sup>

Mass education in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) was achieved only in the 1930s in spite of the fact

that Lenin recognized the need for it. According to Lenin, "an illiterate person stands outside, he must first be taught the ABC. Without this, there can be no politics; without this, there are only rumours, gossips, tales and prejudices but no politics"<sup>26</sup> Mass education was introduced during the tenure of Joseph Stalin and was geared toward the political need of the State and Communist Party. By 1939, literacy rate was 81 percent where formerly illiteracy was 75 percent particularly in the non-European areas. Today, education is free in the USSR at all levels and compulsory up to the age of fifteen.

In imitation of the industrialised countries, developing African countries too embarked on mass education and even gave themselves a deadline.<sup>27</sup> The conference of African Ministers of Education held at Addis Ababa in 1961, had hoped that by 1980, primary education would be free and compulsory and also that, a substantial number of their population would have attained secondary and higher levels of education. But how many of them have been able to achieve this?<sup>28</sup> Some of them had embarked on free education at the primary and secondary levels but they are now plagued with unemployment of graduates of the various levels.<sup>29</sup> Generally, however, majority of African States are yet to achieve the 1961 Addis Ababa objective.

As we have shown above, theorists often put the fault of mass unemployment on literary education which the developing states are said to have concentrated on. Vocational education would save the day, they suggested. But Foster has faulted such simplistic solution to the problems of the new states. According to him even when high school children were prepared to be engaged in vocational jobs they were not available.

It seemed clear that mass unemployment among school leavers in many new African nations is due to dysfunctions existing between the gross rate of school output and the slow expansion of occupational opportunities for all types within the exchange sector.<sup>30</sup>

Having attempted to clarify this expression, "politics of

education" we intend to relate some of the points raised to the contributions of Chief Obafemi Awolowo in education and see how he tried to avoid some of the shortcomings identified above in the type of education he adopted. It is clear that Awolowo, in his full blown ideas on education was not elitist. He believed that education was a must for the masses. But the British and his peers were elitist. Why was he not influenced by them? Why did he decide to break a new path for himself? What are the political reasons for this? In the attempt to answer these questions, the paper has been divided into five parts. The first part is the Introduction which focuses on the clarification of the subject matter. The second part deals with the Educational Development in Nigeria. The third part looks at Awolowo's outstanding contribution in Education. The fourth part examines the "Multiplier Effect" of Free Education at all levels and the final part reflects on our findings and concludes the study.

At this juncture, it is necessary to state here that in this paper, the salient aspect is the attempt to answer these two important questions: Education for whom and education for what?

#### EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA— AN OVERVIEW

Education in Nigeria had no history of mass beginning. In fact, that would have been anti the policies of the British Colonial Authorities. The groups which took interest in formal education in Nigeria were the Missionaries. For forty years they held fort. They were in absolute control of the educational system in the South. The education they imparted was limited, in some cases, vocational but it was necessarily tailored to meet their need - proselytization. Thus, they saw no reason why education should be more than rudimentary.

In this, they were supported by the British colonialists. Lugard and Clifford did not hide their dislike for the educated Africans who often made "irritating" demands. For the British colonisers, if Africans were to be educated, it must

be vocational. Thus, they opined that Africans would have been educated in a useful way rather than for them to acquire literary education which turned them into meddlers in matters about which they have little knowledge.

But as it turned out, demand for literary education went beyond that of the rudimentary level. Thus, by the turn of the century, missionaries had become involved in the establishment of Teacher Training Colleges and Secondary Schools, while the government supplemented the efforts of the missions and voluntary agencies by grant – aiding them. The first schools established by the colonial authorities in the North had political colouration. They were muslim schools built in order to create avenue for the training of muslim children who were thus saved from the proselytizing influence of the christian missions who had schools strewn all over the Southern Protectorate and the Lagos Colony.

While the colonial administrators accepted the missionaries' contributions in educational development in the south, they did not encourage the missions to spread their efforts into the core muslim areas of the North. They could assist in the non-muslim areas, but not in the core Muslim north. This was a result of Lugard's promise to the Sultan and the Emirs that "Government would in no way interfere with the Mohammedan religion. All men are free to worship God as they please"<sup>31</sup> Allowing the christian missionaries into the core muslim areas would in Lugard's opinion amount to interference. This policy was upheld by subsequent colonial administrators.

When eventually the government decided to set up schools in Northern Nigeria, it looked for guidance in the Sudan rather than the Southern Nigeria. Thus, the "Nassarawa Schools" were modelled after Gordon College at Khartoum. Unlike the quasi-mass education given in the South by the missionaries, the Nassarawa schools were elitist, since only the sons of the ruling class were admitted. By 1912, there were the following types of schools for the different cadres of northerners: the Nassarawa schools for the sons of the ruling

class, primary and secondary schools for the *Malamais*, technical schools for the masses and Alkali and Liman schools for muslims. The few mission schools in existence in the *sabongari*, served southerners and other strangers working in government or business.

This dual attitude of the colonisers to Nigerians' education was partially responsible for the educational gap between the North and South today. This was because at that point in time, the muslim considered education in Arabic superior.

Northern Nigeria was not the only area where the British colonisers attempted to establish vocational education. As they got more involved in education in the first decade of the 20th Century, they tried to promote agricultural and vocational training. It reorganized Hope Waddell Institute at the cost of £10,000, and built new ones at Bonny and Sapele where trades such as bricklaying, carpentry and coopering were taught. They encouraged the missions to set up vocational institutions by giving them extra grants-in-aid for those schools.

This insistence on vocational education as against literary education was in line with the British racialist assumption that blacks were mentally inferior and therefore better suited for manual education, whereas literary education would breed political agitation.<sup>32</sup> Among Blacks in the U.S.A., Booker T Washington became an ardent apostle of vocational training while his contemporary, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, believed that education should first of all deal with the "talented tenth"<sup>33</sup> viz, the elite. According to Du Bois, vocational education without literary education would perpetually keep the black-man as underdogs and backward.

Thus, in spite of the colonial government machinations in this, all experiments with vocational education failed,<sup>34</sup> while literary education, eventhough poorly run, gained popularity. In the end, the colonial government gave in. With the demand for better secondary school mounting, the government set up King's College, Lagos in 1909, as model for Secondary Schools' literary education. Beside the demands of the people for literary education, exigencies of the period called for more literary educated graduates to man the various government and commercial business springing up between

the World War years. However, the fact that southerners were luckily able to anticipate the needs of a growing polity put them ahead of their northern counterparts who had allowed the British gradualist and vocational policies to permeate that society. The result of these two approaches was that the southerners were put in a position not only to man their areas but to occupy posts in Northern Nigeria.

In 1929, the colonial government made attempts to bring Northern and Southern Nigerian educational administration together under the control of Mr. E.R.I. Hussey. Hussey proposed three distinct phases of education: a six year primary education, a six year intermediate stage and vocational training stage. The first stage would serve the masses, the second stage, government and business sectors, and the last stage, would produce professionals. It was to meet this last level that the Yaba Higher College was set up in 1934. However, graduates of Yaba Higher College did not enjoy equal remuneration with their counterparts trained overseas.

The discriminatory treatment meted out to graduates of Yaba Higher College led to criticisms and the demands for oversea studies. This led to the 1948 Education Ordinance which for the first time, covered the whole country. It was a Ten Year Plan based on the Memoranda on Educational Policy of the Director of Education, Mr. R.A. McI Davidson. It was comprehensive and was related to the needs of the country.<sup>35</sup> It was also in 1948, that government inaugurated the University College of Ibadan (UCI) as a result of the Elliot Commission of 1943. The UCI was established in order to solve the problems of shortage of teacher and also to meet constant criticisms of the inadequacies of the Yaba Higher College. According to Taiwo,

The University is expected to supply the man-power needs of Nigeria, raise social and welfare stands of the community and serve as leaven in improving the quality of education throughout all the levels.<sup>36</sup>

With the creation of the university, the education pyramid whose base was primary education, was completed.

The politics of education of the period was such that,

an elite group was slowly created but the bulk of the people's education was decidedly to perpetuate British rule, more so in the north than in the south. Generally then, the education given was to meet the needs of the colonial government and their cohorts.

The period of the Diarchy, 1951–1960, showed a dramatic change in education generally<sup>37</sup> through the impetus given by Western Region where free Universal Primary Education was launched under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1955. This was possible because by the Act of 1952, education had become the responsibility of the regions, though the financial burden was shared by central, regional and local governments.

However, while Awolowo and his government were moot-ing on the possibility of UPE in the Region in the near future, the Central Ministry of Education Lagos, advocated a gradualist approach: "While universal primary education is one of the essential aims of educational policy, it is not the only nor is it necessarily the most urgent aim"<sup>38</sup> Pleading non availability of finance, trained teachers and need for increase in secondary education. it stressed the need to concentrate on technical education which had taken considerable investment and in which the country's productivity and hence its wealth lies.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the federal department was laying a precedence which other Nigerian officials followed. Thereafter, the UPE was not feasible in the immediate future. Nonetheless, the Western Regional government was determined to show that it was feasible. In July 1952, the Minister of Education for the Western Region the Hon. S. O. Awokoya presented to the House of Assembly, a sessional paper on the educational policy of the Region which was to be "one of expansion and reorientation ... It is hoped that in a few years time it should be possible to have universal education for all children of school age in the Western Region".<sup>40</sup> This announcement was greeted with misapprehension by other regions. Yet in 1953, the Eastern Region under the

leadership of Eyo Ita, announced a similar programme while Lagos, the federal territory, embarked on UPE in January 1957.

Generally, as a result of these schemes, the Southern Regions experienced enrollment explosion, while the Northern Region continued in its cautious way. This imbalance was confirmed officially by the Report of Sir Eric Ashby of 1959. He recommended that there was urgent need to expand educational facilities at all levels, throughout Nigeria.

After Independence, the federal government concentrated on the consolidation of education. There was greater concentration on the secondary, tertiary, and university levels in order to meet the aspiration of the Addis Ababa Conference of 1961. Thus, Federal Advanced Teachers Colleges were established at Lagos, Ibadan, Owerri, Zaria, and Kano between 1962 and 1964, National Technical Teachers' College was established at Yaba to augment the services of the Yaba College of Technology. While four universities were established at Nsukka, Zaria, Lagos, and Ife between 1960 and 1962.

Under the military rule of 13 years (1966–1979) a conference on Curriculum Development was held in 1969 which dealt with the objective of education, the content of the curriculum, method, materials, equipment and aid. This paved the way for adoption of the National Policy on Education in 1977. Meanwhile, in 1973, a seminar under The Chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebayo deliberated on all aspects of National Policy on Education in preparation of the UPE which finally took off in 1976. The 1977 National Policy on Education attempted to articulate Nigeria's national objective. Education was conceived to entail much more than mere training or mere knowledge of facts. The essence of education was "the transmission of value and ideas" which had to be internalized as part of our mental make up.<sup>41</sup>

The innovation envisaged in this policy was further subjected to scrutiny by an Implementation Committee headed by Professor Sanya Onabamiro in September 1977.

Onabamiro's BLUEPRINT was submitted in October 1978. The government's white paper was published in 1979 virtually accepting all the recommendations which were basically the points raised by the National Policy on Education of 1977. The white paper accepted the innovation in the educational system whereby children would spend 6 years in primary school; 3 years in the junior secondary, 3 years in the Senior Secondary and 4 years in the University. This policy makes provision for those who are not cut out for academic work to proceed to trade schools immediately after the junior secondary stage.

Also, in pursuance of technological development of Nigeria, admission into the nation's universities was to be on the basis of 60/40 ratio between science and non-science disciplines.

Apart from the introduction of the UPE scheme in 1976, the Obasanjo government announced free tuition in all Higher Institutions of learning and pegged secondary school fees at ₦30. per term. In addition, it granted to all undergraduates studying education, students in the polytechnics, Colleges of Technology and Education and Trade Schools, automatic Federal government sponsorship. This was to encourage more people into teaching and technical professions. The Federal government was also to pay ₦40 on every primary school child to the state governments.

This was free education (almost) without the Federal Government declaring it so. It was too good to last. Besides, it was partial to teaching and technological disciplines. It was as if other disciplines were irrelevant to the development of the society.

Also, this development had political implications. Here was a military government suddenly becoming benevolent and father christmas with just about a year to leave office. This generosity of the Obasanjo government, could create problems for incoming administration which might have other priorities. It could be that this action of the Obasanjo's government was to take the shine off the political party which might use

free education scheme as campaign gimmick.

As it happened, under the Civilian Regime, of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Obasanjo's bonaza faded away. The President claimed that the new Revenue Allocation had made the state bouyant enough to meet the educational expenses. Thus, all automatic sponsorships and subventions were stopped both at the primary and the university levels. Fees rose steeply at all levels under one guise or the other. Thus, in one short period of one year, education moved swiftly to becoming an elite commodity.

Yet, the Federal Government pushed ahead with its 6-3-3-4 programme with varying degrees of implementation at both federal and state levels. The common complaint both at the Federal and State Schools was the scarcity of both fund and vocational equipment.

#### AWOLOWO'S OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN EDUCATION

##### (a) *His ideas and writings*

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's ideas on education seemed to have moved from an elite-based view to mass-based view. In his first book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, published in 1947, Awolowo was of the opinion that Nigeria must be ruled by the most educated whose capabilities must be beyond reproach. Like Plato, he identified three classes of people in Nigeria: the educated class which consisted of professional people, teachers and clerks; the enlightened class, and this consisted of traders and artisans and lastly the ignorant masses.

His conscience must have been plagued by these ignorant masses who made up the substantial number in the population because his very first act as a Leader of Government Business was to embark on free Universal Primary Education in 1955.

In his second book, *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*, published in 1960, he gave a moving account on how he acquired education. He did all kinds of odd jobs in order to acquire primary and partly Teacher Training education. Later, he sold his property and in add-

tion got a loan in order to finance his law education in Britain between 1944 and 1946. These hardships must have made lasting impression on him enough to influence his later policies on education.

Having introduced UPE successfully in the West, and with Independence round the corner, he flew a kite in his 1959 electioneering campaign that it was possible to establish free UPE and secondary education throughout the country. Secondary education included secondary modern, grammar school, secondary technical colleges and trade centres.

In the Action Group, 14 - point programme, he explained that his party attached the greatest importance to education for three reasons: a truly educated citizenry is one of the most formidable deterrents to dictatorship oligarchy, and feudal autocracy; an educated individual is the strongest single factor in the rapid economic and social advancement to any nation; and lastly, the pursuit of a welfare state is meaningless unless there is equal opportunity for all.<sup>42</sup>

Awolowo, unfortunately failed to win at the centre, thus, his plans on education did not materialise generally in the country. However, other problems befell him in rapid succession which climaxed in his imprisonment at Calabar in 1963. It was while he was in prison that his major treatise on education was conceived namely: *Thought on Nigerian Constitution, The People's Republic and The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria* published in 1966, 1968 and 1970 respectively.

In the first book, Awolowo observed the *laissez-faire* attitude of policy makers towards UPE scheme even in areas where it had fully taken off. But for the military intervention of 1966, the UPE programme would have been abolished. Usually, policy makers bemoaned the money spent on education that three quarters of the Teacher Training Institutions were closed what-with 1000 teachers roaming the streets with no prospect of absorption. In such situation, Awolowo observed, no one dared talk about Free Education beyond the primary level.

Awolowo frowned at the Federal Government granting loan to needy university students because such practice created two groups of students: those who were lucky to have rich parents or benefit from government scholarship, and the debtor students. At the end of their course, the government cannot expect to have the same unalloyed commitment from both groups.

Therefore, Awolowo suggested that to meet Nigeria's developmental needs, the constitution should include:

- (1) That within 2 years' post primary and post Secondary education of any kind whatsoever shall be free to those who are capable of pursuing and benefiting from these types of education;
- (2) That free and compulsory primary education shall be introduced throughout the federation within 5 years;
- (3) that a scheme for compulsory adult education shall be introduced within 5 years and
- (4) that a scheme for the provision of suitable literature for literate adults shall be introduced within 5 years.<sup>43</sup>

Awolowo criticized some defects in the 1963 Republican Constitution and suggested that the new constitution should include the Right to Education.<sup>44</sup>

These ideas were well orchestrated in his *People's Republic* under the social objectives. Awolowo argued that the right to free education was among the fundamental rights which each family regarded as inalienable at the time when it voluntarily or compulsorily entered into political association with other families. It is not possible to deny or take away these rights.<sup>45</sup>

Also, in order to attain the goals of economic freedom and prosperity, Nigeria must as a matter of urgency and priority provide free education at all level for the masses of its citizens.<sup>46</sup> He dismissed the argument of those who favoured instead rapid industrialization. For him the success of rapid industrialization is dependent on the attainment of free education at all level.<sup>47</sup>

These views were further expatiated upon in the third book of the trilogy: *The Strategy and Tactics of the People's*

*Republic of Nigeria.* Again, under the Social Objectives, he elaborated on free education at all levels. He explained why it was a priority for Nigeria and how it could be successfully financed. In this book also, the details given were even more definite. For example, Awolowo insisted that (1) Free Education at the post-secondary level should begin in the 1970/71 academic session; (2) Free Education at the post primary level should start in January 1971 (3) Free and compulsory Primary Education should start in 1974; and (4) Free and compulsory Education for adults was to begin in January 1976.<sup>48</sup>

One of the powerful reasons for free education to be treated as a priority was to reduce the inequality in the society which has been the most potent cause of deep social and political disaffection in Nigeria. The disaffection has not been confined to income groups and individuals alone but also existed among ethnic and territorial groups. It was the gross disparity and imbalance in education particularly between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria which has been responsible for the state of things. Therefore to keep Nigeria, one, Awolowo advocated that the yawning gap in education between the North and South must be closed with the least delay.<sup>49</sup>

Then he launched into a tirade on why it was important to embark on free education at all levels, which is not a phenomenon of developing states alone. Developed states too had to pursue education vigorously in order to catch up with the ever improving technology. With Free Education, industrialization would be embarked upon on a surer footing. Less people would be needed to work on mechanized farms while the surplus hands would be absorbed in other productive and gainful employment. Thus, he registered his disagreement with the view that free education at all levels aid unemployment. Rather, it aids full employment because the government would be able to orient its education policy to its economic and social needs and thus make the absorption of youth more easily than it would otherwise have been

the case,<sup>50</sup> with a mass of illiterate citizens.

On financial feasibility of his scheme, Awolowo painstakingly gave the estimated cost of the Proposed Education Development Plan in Nigeria between 1971 and 1990. This he hoped would serve as guidelines to policy makers.<sup>51</sup>

The plan covered the three levels of education namely: primary, secondary and higher levels. Also, Awolowo was not just being literary minded. Provisions were made for secondary vocational schools which would take in children leaving primary school at the age of 12 but would be too young to take up employment: "Three years in vocational schools would equip them physically, mentally and technically, to earn a living for themselves."<sup>52</sup>

The proposals of Awolowo showed that if the scheme was embarked upon and adhered to, by 1980 the Northern States would come into their own and the final phase in the closing of the educational gap between the North and South of Nigeria would have begun in earnest.<sup>53</sup> He was also optimistic that with this projection every state would have at least one university.

In this book, the financial feasibility of his educational structure was mapped out (See Tables 7 and 8) From 1970/71 to 1975/76, the total estimated annual recurrent cost was less than one fourth of the total projected annual recurrent revenue.<sup>54</sup> Awolowo added that with judicious spending the cost could be considerably reduced. Awolowo ended his discussion with this quotation and it seems apt to end this section with it as well:

The inward moulds the outward, the power of a people lies in its mind: and this mind, if fortified and enlarged will bring external things into harmony with itself. It will create a new world around it, corresponding to itself. If however, I err in this belief, if by securing time and means for improvement to the multitude, industry and capital should become less productive, I still say, sacrifice the wealth and not the mind of a people.<sup>55</sup>

In subsequent books, Awolowo had often reiterated his stand on education. But for lack of space and time, the ones we have highlighted will suffice.

Though Awolowo never achieved his aim of giving free education at all levels during his life time to all Nigerians, his ideas must have influenced some of the educational seminars' conferences and policies of the late 1960s and the 1970s. We refer to Adebo's UPE seminar proposals, the National Policy of Education of 1977 and the UPE programme of 1976. But the policy makers were too chicken hearted to go all the way. Obasanjo's half measures of declaring free tuition for universities students while at the same time hiking accommodation and feeding fees led to the now famous "Ali Must Go" Students' unrest of May 1978.

#### AWOLOWO'S ACTIONS AS PREMIER

Awolowo's party, the Action Group, won the elections in the Western Region and thus he became Leader of Government Business in that Region. One of his first actions as head of the government in 1951 was to state his governments priority:

As far as possible, expenditure on services which tend to the welfare and health and education of the people should be increased at the expense of any expenditure that does not answer to the same test.<sup>56</sup>

In July 1952, the Hon. Minister of Education Chief (Prof) S. O. Awokoya gave a detailed set of proposals which called for an all-out expansion of all types of educational institutions.<sup>57</sup> The major proposal were Free and compulsory Education in Junior primary Schools, starting in January 1955; expansion of teacher training colleges as from 1953; establishment of 12 additional teacher training colleges; expansion of secondary and technical education, intensification of the mass and adult education campaign with the ultimate aim of eradicating illiteracy and expansion of women education by the opening of more Domestic Science Centres.<sup>58</sup>

Stressing the need for education, Awokoya said: "education development is imperative and urgent. It must be treated as a national emergency second only to war. It must move with the momentum of a revolution."<sup>59</sup> He envisaged three problems namely: psychological, tutorial and financial problems. But while the first two were considerably removed through propaganda, mass education and provision of adequate teaching manpower, the last was problematic.

However, Chief Awolowo tried to allay the fears of how the programme would be financed. He explained that the scheme was expected to cost £3 million. To raise this, there would be taxation by two methods: Direct Taxation and Indirect Taxation. The capitation tax was to be increased and it was expected to yield 1.5 million in 1955. The indirect Tax would come from the entertainment and cinema tax, sales tax on cocoa and oil palm produce and the running of a government lottery. Also, the Native Authorities were expected to raise money through Income Tax, and by imposition of a given sum of money as levy according to the capacity contributed into the general pools.<sup>60</sup>

But apart from the ways enumerated by Awolowo above, the Region was lucky to benefit from a new formula for the distribution of National Revenue. Thus, the West gained an extra £3.8 million from this source. Also, the regionalization of the Marketing Board brought into the coffers an extra £34.4 million.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the region was placed in a comfortable position to embark on the UPE scheme, with the training of teachers, and building of new schools and classrooms to meet the massive enrolment of pupils.

On January 17, 1955, the UPE scheme began but without the compulsory aspect because it had become politicized both within and outside the AG. Leaders therefore felt it was safer to leave it out for the time being.<sup>62</sup> This proved to be a wise decision because without compulsion, 811,000 pupils turned up when 457 pupils were expected. It would have been politically unstrategic to send the extra home.

Thus they were absorbed. To meet this upsurge, an extra 1000 teachers were employed in addition to the 17,000 employed earlier, 3550 schools were increased to 6274 and 8239 more classrooms were added to the existing 9450.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, secondary schools were increased while the regional outlay for education leapt from £2.2million to £5-million.<sup>64</sup>

The only level of the programme which did not take off was the technical education. Of the 8 projected technical schools, only 1 began operation in 1955. This was a grievous failure in the scheme because it then meant most of the graduates of UPE scheme would be oriented towards clerical rather than vocational jobs. However, as at this period, it was not seriously viewed as a mishap in the scheme, given the orientation of the people (parents and pupils alike), literary education was preferred to vocational education.

Apart from the shortcomings in the area of vocational education, the scheme was a success. To keep the programme up to date, the Taiwo and Banjo Commissions were set up in 1958 and 1960 respectively to look into the UPE programme.

The success of the UPE programme was due to a number of factors. Awolowo was lucky to have as supporters from the beginning of the formation of the AG, an intellectual group made up of Chief T. T. Solaru, Canon E. O. Alayande, Chief M. A. Ajasin, Canon S. A. Adeyefa and Mr. S. O. Awokoya. This group had been meeting regularly to discuss "what a Nigerian Education Policy should be if the British called our bluff and left the country."<sup>65</sup> Thus, the educational policy later conceived in 1951 in the Town Hall of Owo by the AG and later adopted by the AG as part of its manifesto was the brain child of these gentlemen.

Another factor could be attributed to the fact that substantial number of the AG were teachers or former teachers. In the Western House of Assembly by 1952, 21 out of 87 members were teachers.<sup>66</sup>

There was the leadership factor. Many of The AG leaders

had been exposed to modernization and development through travels or studying abroad. They became motivated by considerations of elements of political development such as "political capacity, equality, and integration."<sup>67</sup> Thus, populist education would enable the new elite to control and develop their own economy, reduce the gap between the elite and the mass, as well as solve the "legitimacy crises"<sup>68</sup> of the evolving new ruling class. Also, the competition between the Western and Eastern Regions encouraged educational expansion. The success of the educated people attaining power in 1951; reinforced the belief that education was the key to power, prestige and wealth. Thus, the masses called for free and compulsory education. For example out of the 111 questions posed by legislators during the first two days of the July 1952 session, 35 were directed at the Minister of Education. This showed the level of awareness for education and this too was a factor in the success of the UPE.

Above all, it was Chief Awolowo's role in the UPE scheme which ensured the success of the programme. First of all, the memory of his childhood hardship served as a driving force making him to want to make the UPE a success and thus save millions of children from such agonizing experience. Added to this driving force was his administrative and economic sense. Many of his peers who had similar humanistic thoughts on Free Education were probably constrained by the sheer enormous finance that would be needed to bring such ambitious scheme to reality. According to Alhaji Adelabu Adegoke when the UPE scheme was announced, he observed that the constraint on the AG programme would be money. He suggested that the scheme would take at least £50 million at the initial stage.

Awolowo's administrative skill made it possible for him to liaise with both the Central and the Local government officials. Finally, his policies on education did not antagonize religious organizations, unlike what Dr. Azikiwe and his government experienced in the East with the various Christian denominations when it embarked on its UPE

scheme. Awolowo built more schools for the muslims so that they too could have schools to attend without fear of proselytization by the christians. Thus, all religious groups were able to cooperate with his government and made the UPE a success.

#### AWOLOWO'S ACTION ON EDUCATION AS FEDERAL COMMISSIONER FOR FINANCE

Chief Obafemi Awolowo became Federal Commissioner for Finance in Gowon's administration between 1967 and 1971. During this period, the thirty months Civil War was fought. Thus, it was a period when all efforts were channelled towards the successful prosecution of the war at a minimum cost. The table below shows the amount devoted to Education vis-a-vis that devoted to Defence in the estimates of the total expenditure during the years 1967 to 1970.

*Table 1*

#### *Recurrent Expenditure for Education and Defence 1967-1970*

ITEM	1967/68	1968/69	1969/70
Education	2,998,973 (2%)	1,833,400 (1.3%)	1,782,410 (1%)
Defence	20,249,295 (13%)	15,000,000 (10.%)	18,695,410 (10%)
Total Exp.	153,674,419	146,405,460	187,766,550

Source: Estimates of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the year 1967 to 1970. Lagos, Federal Ministry of Information, 1967-1969.

According to the table above. as the war progressed, the amount devoted to education diminished. This might be because education was not paramount. Survival of the nation was paramount. Thus, the paltry amount devoted to educa-

tion was to keep the various institutions alive.

Awolowo should not be seen as having been less concerned about education during this period. It was during this period that he completed his trilogy in which he declared forcefully the need for the state to be responsible for education at all levels. This was to take off in 1970/71 while compulsory UPE must be declared in 1974. In other words, he had envisaged the possibility of not being in office and therefore left guidelines for policy makers.

Yet, at the completion of the Civil War in 1970, he left office in 1971. Critics had wondered why he did not remain to prosecute his laudable educational scheme. There were possibly many reasons for this. First, Awolowo had his abhorrence for military dictatorship however benevolent the military leader might be. Therefore, he felt he had completed his assignment at the end of the civil war and left office. Secondly, General Yakubu Gowon, having announced his programme for a return to civil rule in 1976, Awolowo felt it was time to leave in order to prepare for his participation in the new civilian governance.

#### **AWOLOWO AS THE LEADER OF UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA AND FREE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS 1979-83**

As it is well known, Awolowo failed to win the Presidency the two times he bid for it during this period. Yet, the party went ahead to implement free education at all levels, immediately the civilians came into power on October, 1, 1979, in the five states in which the party had a majority. The states were Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Bendel States.

People marvelled at how Awolowo and his lieutenants could embark on this gigantic programme with them coming into office newly and without the proper knowledge of the state of the national purse. People who were ignorant of his trilogy could have doubts. As we have shown above, in his book, *Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of*

*Nigeria*, he had marshalled out a twenty year programme and its attendant expenditure made on the conservative figure of revenue expected both from oil and agricultural products. Besides, as an economist, he had followed keenly Nigeria's fiscal position from the time he left office as Finance Commissioner to the period when he announced his programme of free education at All Levels on September 22, 1975.

A look at the UPN policy paper on education showed a similar outline of what he has in his books:

If the state expects full service and complete loyalty from every citizen then the state is duty bound to educate every citizen to the limit of his ability so that he can also serve the state to the limit of his competence.<sup>69</sup>

As part of its objectives, the UPN wanted to impart to each citizen a permanent academic and functional literacy; to train citizens who will have an understanding of and sympathy for the nation's problems, to train citizens who will have respect for all types of honest labour and to train the various levels of manpower needed to develop, modernise and advance the economy and the society.<sup>70</sup>

The UPN educational programme retrained the 6-5-4 and 6-5-2-3 structures. These meant 6 years primary education, 5-year secondary education and 4 years University education, of 6-year primary education, the 5-year secondary education, 2-year post-secondary education and 3-year University education. Higher Education included Universities, Colleges of Education, Technology, and Polytechnics. There was to be available in every village or town, Adult, and Continuing Education.<sup>71</sup>

Also, the paper spelt out content and philosophy of the programme. It was fired with "a desire to fashion a well-ordered, just, self-reliant and confident nation out of our present situation".<sup>72</sup> As part of the UPN Administration on education programme, it took over responsibilities of planning, management, finance, making available facilities for the programme and training of enough personnel to man the

programme.<sup>73</sup>

To implement this programme, Awolowo had to rely on his lieutenants who became governors of the five states named above. Thus, he was handicapped from actually implementating at the national level, the programme he had so painstakingly drawn up. Another problem was that he had to depend only on the revenue at the Second Tier level (State level). A third problem was in the area of management. None of his lieutenants could claim to have Awolowo's wizardry in financial management and doggedness in pursuing a programme. But given the fact that both parties: Awolowo and his lieutenants needed each other,<sup>47</sup> both parties worked hard so that the UPN programme on education would be a success.

In implementing the UPN educational programme, varying percentage of their annual estimates were devoted to education, (See Table II). It ranged from 11 to 44 percent. Whatever the percentage, the five states were more engrossed in implementing education programmes than non-UPN states or the federal government which was concerned about qualitative education with the results that we have mentioned above.

Within the short period of four years, secondary schools were sited in such a way that many students did not need to walk more than 5 kilometres to school. Therefore, boarding facilities were discouraged. New Colleges of Education were set up in all the five states as a matter of urgency, text books were provided free. Also Universities were set up in four of the five states to cater for secondary school graduates who might not get admission into the Federal Universities. As in the Federal universities, tuition was free. In addition the states instituted bursary award to all their indigenes in higher institutions of learning.

As it was to be expected, this programme was not embarked upon without criticisms and problems. Proprietors of educational institutions of the first and second levels, and political opponents eagerly found fault with the implementation of

TOTAL BUDGET AND ALLOCATION TOWARDS EDUCATION IN UPN STATES 1979-1983

STATE	1979/80		1980		1981		1982		1983	
	TOTAL BUDGET	EDUCATION PERCENTAGE	TOTAL BUDGET	EDUCATION PERCENTAGE	TOTAL BUDGET	EDUCATION PERCENTAGE	TOTAL BUDGET	EDUCATION PERCENTAGE	TOTAL BUDGET	EDUCATION PERCENTAGE
BENDEL	300,161	131,957 44	354,504 161,819	46	491,208 150,084	31	505,730 57,598	12	749,640 237,300	37
LAGOS	614,976	170,695 28	616,947 193,510	31	756,554 176,510	23	687,496 188,884	27	1,000,707 186,833	19
OGUN	237,913	37,119 16	593,985 84,982	14	405,178 121,400	30	417,504 104,797	25	473,208 95,575	21
ONDO	240,397	11,530 18	374,468 59,622	16	636,980 103,331	16	687,019 124,470	18	614,059 85,995	14
OYO	284,637	106,308 37	393,302 137,230	35	679,255 260,822	38	772,305 283,526	37	809,600 303,000	38

Sources:

\*Bendel State figures were obtained from the office of the Accountant General and stopped at July 31, 1982.

\*All figures for 1983 were proposed figures for that fiscal year.

\*All other figures were taken from Estimates Books of the States of Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo for the years 1979/80 to 1982.

\*The figures have been rounded up to the nearest million and ten respectively.

the programme or attributed the ill of the society to products of Free Education. According to the then Provost of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos, the very Reverend Sope Johnson:

School Certificate examination question paper leak every year, certificates are forged; standard are allowed to drop; the missionary schools which have served the nation so admirably have been disorganized and left to waste away in mediocrity. We hear so much talk now of Free Education for all, yet the schools are ill equipped, scheme are hardly fit for cattle or for keeping poultry.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, Alhaji Lateef Jakande had running battle with the proprietors of voluntary agencies whose schools were taken over by government without compensation. These agencies wanted their schools at the primary levels returned.<sup>76</sup>

Rev. Fr. Ogunmodede observed that had Nigeria been a totalitarian State, where the State is synonymous with society, this position would not have been challenged. In a democratic State however, this stand was not readily accepted. Hence, Jakande's problems in Lagos. Awolowo in an interview with Ogunmodede agreed that privately - run schools should be permitted to exist side by side with public schools as long as they maintained the required educational standards.<sup>77</sup>

In the other UPN states such mistake was not made. Private schools existed alongside public ones. Only secondary schools were uniformly taken over by government in the five UPN states. However, they had their own problems. In Oyo State, the Governor, Chief Bola Ige had problems with the muslims who accused him of using state resources to promote the interest of christians.<sup>78</sup> The result was the directive<sup>79</sup> which made religious knowledge optional for students. Also, no child must be subjected to any form of religious instruction or practice against his choice or the wish of his parents and guardians.

Furthermore, the UPN States were criticised for reintroducing pools betting and other games devices as well as

levying capitation tax. These, according to the critics were clear indications that these states governments could not cope with the programme financially. Others criticized the mass nature of the programme. Nothing good could ever emerge from such hurried mass production programme.<sup>80</sup>

Awolowo thus felt compelled to defend his lieutenants who he said were doing their best given the situation they found themselves. He then called on these critics who deride the UPN education scheme to look at the results of GCE at the ordinary and Advanced levels of the whole country for the 1975/76 session. (See Table III and IV)

*Table III.*

*Advanced Level G.C.E. December 1979*

<i>State</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Western States	6492	48.8
Eastern States	2500	37.9
Northern States	1251	41.0

Table IV

G.C.E. O.L May – June 1975

<i>State</i>	<i>Passes</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Division I</i>		
Western States	1151	2.6
Eastern States	1087	3.1
Northern States	462	2.8
<i>Division II</i>		
Western States	3545	8.0
Eastern States	3381	10.5
Northern States	969	5.7
<i>Division III</i>		
Western States	13,494	28.6
Eastern States	9,067	27.6
Northern States	3,834	22.4

*Source:* Address delivered by Chief O. Awolowo, cited in 25 years of UPE in Oyo State (Ibadan, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Information, 1980), p. 20.

According to him, it was clear that products of free UPE who had been thoughtlessly described as semi-illiterates and armed robbers were indisputably in the lead. He again, in that address, took the opportunity to call on the Federal Government to declare free education at all levels. That way, the gap between the North and the South would be closed permanently in another 15 to 20 years time.

**MULTIPLIER EFFECTS OF FREE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS**

This section briefly looks at the reactions of some peoples to Awolowo's failure to win the Presidency at the second attempt in 1983. While Awolowo accepted the victory of the NPN candidate, Alhaji Shehu Shagari without contesting it at the law courts, his supporters in the five former UPN states and particularly in Oyo and Ondo States went on rampage and declared the election at all levels rigged.

It is important to know why people went on rampage particularly after the results of the 1983 gubernatorial election. The reason was simply because the people feared the fate of education under a non-UPN leader. While some bemoaned Awolowo's inability to win at the centre, they were content that at least at the state level their hearts' desire would still be had. The federal might was remote while the state's was close and overwhelming! Thus, when the prospects of not enjoying Free Education dawned on them, they decided to take the laws into their hands and remove the impending block.

The military returned to power in 1983 and what the people of the Western States were afraid of had since happened. Under the guise of economic problems, Free Education which had existed for almost three decades in these states was being gradually eroded. In nearly all the UPN states tuition gradually crept back at the Secondary School Level while extra fees were levied under one guise or the other: development levies; Parents and Teachers Association (P.T.A) levies, and what have you. Also tuition in the higher institutions was reinstated while state governments' bursaries to their indigenes were stopped. For a term or two, fees were back at the primary level, but sanity returned and UPE had since been restored in all states. However, various forms of levies continued.

To save face, the government periodically made statements against illegal levying of fees by the PTA and Head teachers. Yet there have been occasions when Commissioners of Education enthusiastically perform opening ceremonies of

classroom blocks, science laboratories, school halls, all proceeds of PTA levies !! In other words, in one breadth, the government told parents that it would not refuse help from PTA and wealthy individuals at the same time it warned Principals and Head teachers not to impose extra levies on students after tuition had been paid. A typical dog in the manger attitude!!

Thus, of the five UPN states which embarked on Free Education at all levels, only Lagos State still continues the programme fully but it is not without fears that it would follow soon the path of the others, what with the economic uncertainty which continually hover around every project.

Speaking to some social scientists at the University of Ibadan of the uncertain policies of education in Nigeria, we were told by the federal government that Education is problematic, because there has been no policy of Education. Thus, each Administration introduced its own special programme on education without regards to what was formerly in operation. If it were losing credibility, it would embark on populist programmes which would enable it to find its feet.

The Babangida administration had promised to embark on Free and Compulsory UPE scheme throughout Nigeria. This is a good sign that Awolowo's legacies remain. But at the post-primary level, education is really problematic. It is said that at the University level, certain steps are to be taken which definitely would make university education available to only a few people. Intake of students is being reduced by 40 percent while surplus teachers would be laid off. It was also said that the students who have been enjoying free tuition since the period of Obasanjo (1978) might be asked to pay fees.<sup>82</sup> But would these steps about to be taken improve the conditions in the Halls of Residence, lecture rooms and laboratories or would they curtail those who have access to higher education?

## REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

This paper has looked at Chief Obafemi Awolowo's contributions to education in Nigeria. Inevitably to do this, we conjectured that as humanistic as his views on education were, they could not have been without a hint of politicking, giving his penchant for politics. Thus, the first section of the paper was devoted to conceptualizing "politics of education".

The second section was devoted to giving an overview on education in Nigeria from the 19th Century to the present day. We found that policies on education had always been gradualistic. Nigerian administrators had generally been too timid to embark on free education at all levels even when the economy was bouyant. Presently, the economic situation has considerably worsened, making more remote the possibility of Free Education at all levels. Thus, we reached the conclusion from our observation that education is certainly becoming more elitist rather than being populist.

The third section looked at the contributions of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to education. Some of his ideas and writings were looked at and we found that Awolowo had a consuming thirst for education and got himself educated through hard work. But initially his views on education were elitist. He then believed that in a land of illiterates, only the educated should rule. However, he reversed this viewpoint when he realised that for a new state to attain rapid modernization and industrialization, the education of the masses must be embarked upon. This should not stop at the primary level alone but extend to all levels. This is where he parted ways with his colleagues who believed that higher education must be for the offspring of the wealthy while the poor must be condemned to vocational education only. Awolowo also stressed that education could reduce inequality and rancour among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria so far as all were exposed equally to education. It is only when it is sectionally given that inequality is pronounced. Also free education at all levels creates employment rather than unemployment

because a great number would have been educated and trained who would go into various areas of the economy and this would aid development.

In this section too, we tried to examine how he operationalized his programme first at the UPE level between 1955 and 1959 and at all levels in 1979 and 1983, and with what successes. In the first case, he was in office and thus was able to direct affairs. But in the second case he had to rely on his lieutenants. However, political exigencies on the part of the lieutenants propelled them to work for the success of the programme. In spite of the meagre finance at their disposal, they gave an inkling of how it would have been had Awolowo been voted into office as President.

We would like to conclude by saying that Awolowo had left a lasting legacy and that nothing can be done to erase that fact, more so that he had left this legacy in writing for anybody to read. He had also given practical demonstration of the programme. Thus, no matter what the military government does during its tenure, education would continue to be an issue for any civilian administration to succeed. People are aware of its possibility at all levels with little re-arrangement of priorities.

Education would continue to be political, what with the 6-3-3-4 programme taking off haphazardly. Nobody wants his child to end up a technician without practical knowledge of the technical tools he would need. If technical and scientific education must be promoted, then it must be pursued with a singlemindedness that they deserve.

It is then to be expected that the citizens of this country would ask our future rulers to make concrete pronouncements on education. It definitely will not be the case when government would continue to toy with education because that would mean that it will be playing with the future of its citizen.

We hope we have been able to answer our salient questions: Education for whom; Education for what? Awolowo had definitely shown that education should be for the enlighten-

ment of the entire populace of the State and that with an educated populace, true industrialization and technological advancement would be a reality.

We submit therefore in conclusion that though Awolowo had left the stage, it is not the end of an era. It is a period of re-awakening with an articulate public that would concretize his dreams and ideas for the education of the masses of this country. Future rulers would be on their toes because they cannot afford to fall below his standards.

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# **Part Eight**

## **Religion and Culture**

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## Awolowo and Religion in Nigeria

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O.B.C. NWOLISE

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### *Background and Objectives*

The world of today houses over five billion people most of whom belong to one or the other of the several religions competing for their souls and resources. These religions include Hinduism with about 476 million, Buddhism 225 million, Confucianism 158 million, Taoism 31 million, Judaism 14 million, Shintoism 57 million, Islam 587 million, and Christianity 998 million followers.<sup>1</sup> Given this fact, one would expect the world to be a very peaceful, lovely, orderly, and socially admirable planet to live in as religion teaches amongst others, love, peace, tolerance, consideration for others, justice, brotherhood of man, understanding, unity in one God and other virtues.

However, any one who has been observing the goings-on in the world as they relate to religion and human behaviour typified by the devastating war between Moslem Iran and Moslem Iraq, the bitter rivalry and destructions going on in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants (all Christians), the four century long enslavement of Black Africans by Christian West Europeans and Moslem Arabs, the atrocities of Nazi Germany, the butcheries of Idi Amin (Uganda) and Nguema (Equatorial Guinea), the destructions of the Maitatsine men against their fellow Moslems and other

religion's members, the recent devastations of the Kaduna state riots and a host of others will not wonder why the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche once screamed that "God was dead"<sup>2</sup>. The truth is that in the world of today in which all of us are at the mercy of men and women of desire, materialism and domination (rather than of ideas and service), it is rare to find people who seek light, truth and justice, and obey the inward dictates of their souls and conscience in sacred duty to God and humanity instead of following the narrow considerations of worldly ethics of cash, political power and dominance over other people in the name of religion. In short, the debate will soon gather momentum as to whether it was God who created man, or it was man who created God to enhance his exploitation, and oppression of his fellowmen.

Within one nation, millions of citizens and subjects exist who individually and or collectively belong to one or more of the numerous religions operating in the country. As religion is a matter of emotion rather than reason, and since religious differences and crises not properly handled can cause a huge conflagration, it is then the duty of diplomats, statesmen and patriots in each nation to promote religious tolerance and understanding as well as peaceful co-existence of all religions and their followers in the country. Nigeria is a nation of many religions and as shall be shown presently in this paper, has been a religiously turbulent nation, with some of her leaders playing different roles in the context of turbulence.

It is with this background that we have set out in this piece on the modest objective of exploring the contributions of Papa Obafemi Awolowo to religious tolerance growth and harmony in Nigeria with a view to highlight his legacies for our religiously turbulent nation. Studies like this have become crucial at this time for several reasons. First, we observe that due intellectual attention has not been given to Awo's religious ideas and practices in the country especially as regards his contributions to the growth of other religions (not his own)<sup>3</sup>. Second, positive legacies with respect to

religion are very important in Nigeria today with all our religious problems in nation-building and the present move for a new social order in the country.

*(b) On Religion: Meaning, Nature And Role*

To people of different ideological colourations, shades of perception and interpretation, religion will intellectually have different meanings, and roles. But for the purpose of this paper, just a few definitions of religion will do. Bilton defines religion as:

a system of belief about the individual's place in the world, providing an order to that world and a reason for existence within it.<sup>4</sup>

For Adegbesan, religion is:

any system relating man to ultimate value epitomised in God or the Supreme Being and embodying a creed and a mode of worship and communion.<sup>5</sup>

Some Marxists (many socialists and communists have accepted liberation theology) see religion as the opium of the masses - a creation of the ruling and property class used to uphold an exploitative and oppressive social order favourable to the class in a society. In short, Karl Marx himself wrote that;

Religion is the sign of the oppressed creatures, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of the spiritless conditions, it is the opium of the people.<sup>6</sup>

For this paper, we will regard religion as a system of beliefs and practices which if organised along the Will of the Creator helps in explaining the uncertainties of human life, securing moral behaviour and ensuring that people have smooth social relations on earth as prelude to having everlasting happy life with God after death; but which if run according to the dictates of evil forces brings fire and brimstone on the society whether multi-religious or mono-religious.

It is thus clear that religion is capable of playing catabolic or anabolic role in society. This dual role of religion has

long been recognised by scholars. Thus, while Emile Dur-  
keim,<sup>7</sup> one of the fathers of Sociology, see religion as capable  
of uniting people, and contributing to order in society  
as it generates conditions for societal wellbeing, self-discipline  
and the likes; and while Max Weber agrees with Durkeim  
on the positive role of religion by saying that it is a catalyst  
to economic development, Lewis Coser brings out the dys-  
functional role of religion clearly. Coser is of the view that  
though religion can pull people (especially of one religion)  
together it can also disintegrate them and set them against  
each other.<sup>8</sup>

As has been clearly demonstrated in Lebanon, (Christians  
against Moslems), Northern Ireland (Christians against Christ-  
ians), Sudan, (Christians against Moslems), India (Hindus  
against Sikhs), and recently Nigeria (Moslems against Christ-  
ians), and other examples, religion can be very volatile as any-  
thing that adversely hits religion in a nation hits at the pillars  
of that nation's survival, unity, and progress. As has been  
stated by this author during the controversy over the Organi-  
sation of Islamic Conference (OIC), nine handy reasons can  
be advanced for the volatile nature of religion: (i) Religion  
is based on faith, and faith belongs to the realm of the heart  
not the head, resulting in the situation where people tend to  
act without reasoning properly in what hits their religion.  
(ii) People whose profession or natural calling hinge on their  
religion will do anything to protect that religion.  
(iii) There are people who are opposed to the use or misuse  
of religion by the ruling class to back up the exploitation  
and oppression of the masses.  
(iv) There are people for whom religion is a source of autho-  
rity in the society.  
(v) There are people for whom religion is the only viable  
source of daily bread.  
(vi) There are people who do not believe in God, or any  
religion, and to these, discussing or quarrelling over religion  
is more than a disturbance.  
(vii) Religion is a form of belief system, and beliefs are diffi-

religion are very important in Nigeria today with all our religious problems in nation-building and the present move for a new social order in the country.

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long been recognised by scholars. Thus, while Emile Durkeim,<sup>7</sup> one of the fathers of Sociology, see religion as capable of uniting people, and contributing to order in society as it generates conditions for societal wellbeing, self-discipline and the likes; and while Max Weber agrees with Durkeim on the positive role of religion by saying that it is a catalyst to economic development, Lewis Coser brings out the dysfunctional role of religion clearly. Coser is of the view that though religion can pull people (especially of one religion) together it can also disintegrate them and set them against each other.<sup>8</sup>

As has been clearly demonstrated in Lebanon, (Christians against Moslems), Northern Ireland (Christians against Christians), Sudan, (Christians against Moslems), India (Hindus against Sikhs), and recently Nigeria (Moslems against Christians), and other examples, religion can be very volatile as anything that adversely hits religion in a nation hits at the pillars of that nation's survival, unity, and progress. As has been stated by this author during the controversy over the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), nine handy reasons can be advanced for the volatile nature of religion: (i) Religion is based on faith, and faith belongs to the realm of the heart not the head, resulting in the situation where people tend to act without reasoning properly in what hits their religion. (ii) People whose profession or natural calling hinge on their religion will do anything to protect that religion. (iii) There are people who are opposed to the use or misuse of religion by the ruling class to back up the exploitation and oppression of the masses. (iv) There are people for whom religion is a source of authority in the society. (v) There are people for whom religion is the only viable source of daily bread. (vi) There are people who do not believe in God, or any religion, and to these, discussing or quarrelling over religion is more than a disturbance. (vii) Religion is a form of belief system, and beliefs are diffi-

cult to question without a party taking offence.

(viii) Each religious group holds strongly and jealously to the belief that its own religion is the best and the only route to God and salvation.

(ix) There are always within each religious group people known as religious fanatics, who are always ready at the slightest stimulus to shed human blood and destroy property in defence of the group's religion without asking any questions.<sup>9</sup>

It is especially against these religious fanatics that patriotic and peace loving people always call for constitutional provisions for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as well as enforcement of such provisions; and the promotion of religious tolerance and understanding in the society especially among leaders, for the exercise of great restraint and tact in the handling of any religious misunderstanding, and for the avoidance of precipitation of any religious crisis. In the next section, we focus on Nigeria as a religiously turbulent nation.

## II. NIGERIA AS A RELIGIOUSLY TURBULENT NATION

The different societies that make up what is today called Nigeria existed mainly as theocracies before the coming of both the white man, and foreign religions - Islam and Christianity. The Yorubas for example worshipped the Creator through smaller deities as *Obatala*, *Ogun*, *Sango* and other gods, while the Ibos had *Ala*, *Omaliko*, and the Ijaws worshipped *Oruyai* and other gods and the political leaders of these societies performed rituals according to religious dictates. According to Ikime:

Among Nigeria's multifarious peoples, religion was inextricably mixed with government, the rituals performed by the Yoruba and Benin Obas, the *Sarakuna* of Hausaland, the *Okpara*, *Obi* or *Eze* of the Igbo, the *Amakosuwei* or *Amanyanabo* of the Ijaw, the *Ivie* or *Oppako* of the Urhobo and *Isoko*, all were essential ingredients in the maintenance of political order and stability and the promotion of the peoples moral code.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, before the arrival of foreign religious beliefs and modes of worship with foreign political systems, the traditional religion of most societies constituted what may be termed their "state religion". Then came Islam which was founded by Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) in the 7th century in Arabia. Islam made its first contact with our Northern people in the 9th century through the trade expeditions of Berber Moslem Merchants to the Kanem-Bornu region.<sup>11</sup> Christianity founded by Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Jewish) before the founding of Islam came later making the first contact with our Southern people through Portuguese traders who came to Benin Kingdom in the 15th century.<sup>12</sup> However, these first contacts of both religions did not have meaningful impact on both the Northern and the Southern societies because the set of foreigners that brought them were fishers of cash not fishers of souls and political power. The fishers of souls and political power came much later-Uthman dan Fodio's Jihad of early 19th century destroyed the traditional religion-based theocracies of the Hausa states and imposed Islamic theocracies of the caliphate system based on Sharia, Hadith and Sunna with the Holy Koran as major reference point. The Caliph here was both the political and religious leader. From the South later came the christian missionaries to fish for souls with the backing of fishers of political power that later overran the whole South and North creating today's Nigeria from the amalgamation of Jan. 1, 1914.

Nigeria today has a population estimated to be about 100 million people. But from the 1963 census it had a population of 56.5 million. Out of this total figure, Moslems made up 47.27 per cent, Christians 34.59 per cent, and other religions or no faith 18.18 per cent. In the North, there were 21.4 million moslems (38.88%), 3.8 million Christians (7.05%), and 5.5 million others or no faith; while in the South there were 16.3 million christians (29.68%), 4.9 million Moslems (8.98%), and 4.6 million other or no faith.<sup>13</sup> However, the projected religious distribution of Nigeria's population for 1981/82 shows that Moslems constitute 45.5 per cent of

Nigeria, Christians 44.9 per cent, and other religions or no faith 9.6 per cent.<sup>14</sup>

Given the progressive state of poverty, ignorance, hunger, disease, unemployment, exploitation, alienation, oppression and others in Nigeria since independence, this country has become today a fertile ground for the planting, germination, growth and balkanisation of all forms of religion. The two initial foreign religions have now got numerous out-growths, e.g. Christianity has Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Apostolic, Celestial, Jehoval Witness, Cherubim and Seraphim, Gospel Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Africa for Christ, "Born Again" groups and other growths. On the Islamic side, there are the Sunnis, Shite, Tariqa groups with numerous societies as the Ansar-Ud-Deen, Nawar-Ud-Deen, Ahmadiyya, Izala and the likes. In addition to these two foreign religions and the traditional religions, there are new religions like Hare Krishna, Guru Maharaji to mention a few.

The multi-religious nature of Nigeria made it practically impossible and unwise for the colonial masters to impose one religion on the whole country – not even their own christianity. The colonial masters from Lugard (1900) to Robertson (1960) followed the path of religious tolerance and non-interference. At independence, the 1960 constitution reflected respect for the multi-religious nature of Nigeria and entrenched the legal requirements to ensure continuity of tolerance by providing in section 23(1) for freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The constitution prohibited enforced religious education, and made for individual or joint propagation of one's religion or beliefs in worship, teaching, practice and observance. Section 24(1) of the 1963 constitution repeated the 1960 provisions. The 1979 constitution continued the provisions by providing in section 35(1) that "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion". Section 10 even went further to prohibit state religion by providing that:

The government of the Federation or state shall not adopt any religion as state religion.

Despite all these constitutional provisions to promote religious freedom, tolerance and peaceful co-existence, Nigeria has experienced religious tension and numerous intra and inter religious crises. A few examples will do here. The high tension in the country towards independence made religious groups to testify before the Willink Commission set up in 1958 to investigate the fears of minority groups. During the period 1977-1978 when a new constitution was being fashioned for Nigeria, the issue of having Sharia court at the Federal and State levels generated a lot of controversy in the country and bitterness between Moslems and non-moslems especially the Christians. While the Moslems argued that the Sharia Court was very important for moslems and can be applied to moslems alone, the christians argued that Nigerian Courts are not applying *jus Canonicum* (canon law), and that if the Sharia Courts will apply Islamic laws for Moslems, then Ecclesiastical Courts will have to apply Canon laws for christians. The situation was so bad that in the words of Eriwo, the "Sharia controversy could have led to a religious war in Nigeria"<sup>15</sup>.

In 1982, a quarrel arose between Moslems and Christians over a Church built in 1926 in Fegge area of Kano which was said to be too near to a Mosque built in 1960. In the process, the Church and nine other churches were burnt down.<sup>16</sup> In the same year, there was an attempt by a Moslem group to capture the Bauchi Central Mosque. From 1980 to 1985, Nigerians witnessed a ruthless process of massacre organised by the Maitatsine insurgents. They first struck at Kano in 1980, then at Kaduna and Bulunkutu in 1982, Gombe in 1984, and Jimeta in 1985. Hundreds of innocent people were killed and property worth millions of naria destroyed in the five religious riots that prompted the use of military force to quell. In 1986, the country was engulfed by the controversy over Nigeria's application and acceptance as the 46th member of the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Table 1 shows the religious proportions of the 46 OIC member states. It is interesting to note Nigeria's odd position

as the only state where Moslem population does not overwhelm that of Christians and animists put together; the population of animists does not overwhelm that of Christians, and yet the population of Christians and Moslems are closer.

As the OIC controversy raged on, a Christian procession celebrating Palm Sunday at Ilorin was ambushed by Moslems in March 1986. From this, the nation woke up on May 5 of the same year to hear that part of the statue of the rising Christ in the Chapel of Resurrection, University of Ibadan had been burnt in an attempt to burn down the Chapel. In the same year, during the opening ceremony of the newly built ultra modern mosque at the same University, it was declared by the Moslems that the cross which was erected over 30 years ago was too close and very visible from the mosque built in 1986, and therefore should be removed. This crisis had to be handled cautiously by the Police, the University authorities, and (informally) the Minister of Education. Eventually, the cross was left but screened off from the mosque, and the Moslems accepted erecting their own Islamic symbol under construction. The latest religious crisis and most destructive so far is the Kaduna (state) religious riots of March 1987. Table 2 below summarises the destructions done. The destruction has now imposed on government, millions of naira worth of compensation to be paid to victims as shown on page 3 of *The Guardian* of September 5, 1987. Up till September this year, some Nigerians have refused, on religious ground, to sing the National anthem, recite the National pledge, or salute the national flag.

The above analysis shows without doubt the extent to which Nigeria has become a religiously turbulent nation.

**Table 1**  
**Religious Proportions of All OIC Memberstates**  
**(Percentages)**

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Moslem</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Animist</i>
	<i>(000)</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>	<i>Proportion (%)</i>
1. Afghanistan	15,540	99	n.a.	n.a.
2. Algeria	19,130	99	n.a.	n.a.
3. Bahrain	364	100+	-	-
4. Bangladesh	87,657	85	n.a.	n.a.
5. Benin	3,567	15	20	65
6. Brunei	213	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
7. Cameroon	8,058	15	33	52
8. Chad	4,309	55	5	40
9. Comoros	290	Main+	Few	Few
10. Djibouti	250	94	6	-
11. Egypt*	41,572	90	7	n.a.
12. Gabon	538	1	46	53
13. Gambia	601	85	14	1
14. Guinea	4,890	75	1	24
15. Guinea Bissau	777	30	4	66
16. Indonesia	147,400	90	5	n.a.
17. Iran*	35,504	98	n.a.	n.a.
18. Iraq	12,767	90	8	n.a.
19. Jordan	2,152	95	5	
20. Kuwait	1,356	99	n.a.	n.a.
21. Lebanon	3,012	62	37	n.a.
22. Libya	2,856	97	n.a.	n.a.
23. Malaysia*	13,436	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
24. Maldives*	143	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
25. Mali	6,290	90	1	9
26. Mauritania*	1,544	100	-	-
27. Morocco*	20,242	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
28. Niger	5,098	75	n.a.	n.a.
29. Oman*	839	75	n.a.	n.a.
30. Pakistan*	83,700	97	n.a.	n.a.
31. PLO (Rep. Palestine)	n.a.	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
32. Qatar	250	98	n.a.	n.a.
33. Saudi Arabia*	7,866	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
34. Senegal	5,381	80	5	15
35. S.Leone	3,470	25	5	70
36. Somalia*	3,443	99	n.a.	n.a.
Sudan	18,691	70	5	25

38.	Syria	8,979	90	10	-
39.	Tunisia*	6,367	98	n.a.	n.a.
40.	Turkey	45,217	98	n.a.	n.a.
41.	Uganda	12,630	10	50	40
42.	U.A. Emirates	1,040	90	n.a.	n.a.
43.	Upper Volta	6,554	16	3	81
44.	Yemen A.R.*	7,080	Main+	n.a.	n.a.
45.	S. Yemen	1,853	98	n.a.	n.a.
46.	Nigeria	84,500	47	34	19

Source: Compiled from M. Bachellor (ed), *The Hammond Almanac 1982*, Maplewood, Hammond Inc, pp. 504-705.

Main+: Means that the population is mainly Moslem

\* Countries having Islam as official state religion.

n.a. Means not available.

100+: Means almost 100 per cent Moslem.

Table 2

STATISTICS OF DESTRUCTION DONE DURING THE KADUNA STATE  
RIOTS  
MARCH 6-13 1987

Town	Private Houses	Churches	Hotels	Lives	Vehicles	Motor Cycles	Mosques	Animals
Zaria	40	101	133	1	55	9	-	-
Kaduna	34	26	5	6	-	-	-	-
Kafanchan	29	2	-	12	-	-	4	-
Funtua	40	11	20	-	16	15	-	-
Katsina	9	10	8	-	-	-	-	-
Kankia	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Daura	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
Total	152	155	165	19	95	24	5	8

Source: *Daily Sketch*, April 17 1987. p. 3.

N.B. The figures were announced at the close of Public Sitting by the Mrs. H. Donly Administrative Panel that investigated the Kaduna riots. (The Column totals may not agree with the breakdown of figures as found in our source).

It is also clear that wanton destruction of life and property in the name of religion gained momentum after the OIC controversy, forcing the Federal Government to establish the Advisory Council on Religious Affairs, and to ban religious advertisements in all newspapers in the country, in order "to curtail what is considered to be an abuse of fundamental liberty with attendant consequences of social chaos"<sup>17</sup>. The Chief of Army Staff, General Sani Abacha has also toured key military establishments in the country urging soldiers to avoid religious sentiments, regard the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria as their 'religion', and treat as security risk anybody who attempts to introduce religious sentiment into their midst.<sup>18</sup> In the next section, we go further in our study to examine Papa Awolowo's thoughts and actions as well as his contributions to religious harmony in the country.

### III. AWOLOWO'S LEGACIES IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

#### (a) *Awo's practical Manifestations of religious tolerance*

Papa Awolowo who was born on March 6 1909 and died on May 9 1987 found only one complete chance in his life to serve the masses as an executive political leader and that was when he was the Premier of Western Region of Nigeria 1954-1959. His period of service under General Gowon's military administration presented Papa with little or no opportunity to carry-out national administration as it should be done. Awo's later attempts to serve as executive political leader of the country were frustrated with deliberate and unpatriotic electoral fraud by the incumbent governments. Thus, much of our discussions of his religious actions may centre on his period of service as Premier.

Awo, a christian by religion, believed in justice and fair play, and by extension, he believed in giving each religion its due. As Premier of Western Region 1954-1959, he gave Islam, christianity and Traditional religion their due, and never con-

templated or made any law that oppressed a particular religion's followers. According to Israel Ojo on Awo:

Although he was a practising christian during his lifetime, he was not only non-hater of other religions but a benefactor to them all. Records abound of his contributions both in cash and kind to those other religions..... He showed practical examples of what he meant by according all religions their due when during his premiership of the Old Western Region he usually gave instruction for the observance of Muslim service on Fridays, Traditional religious service on Saturdays, and christian religious service on Sundays on the occasion of state celebrations.<sup>19</sup>

When his Action Group-propelled government launched free education, and free health service (for children under 18 years) in 1955, it was made a purely secular matter. There was no discrimination on religious or even ethnic basis. Every Nigerian child in the Region no matter his creed or ethnic origin benefitted. Religion did not divide the pupils at school and there was no special uniform for Yorubas or christians nor were non-Yorubas charged higher fees. Instead, Awo made special arrangement to ensure that opportunity existed for children from the North in each class by keeping five vacancies for them. Thus, when the Hausa and Igbira community in Akure paraded the streets on June 3 this year singing praises of Awo in their farewell bid to him, they made it clear that they had been in Ondo state since 40 years (from 1917), and had benefitted from Awo's programmes. Igbo people numbering over 2000 also held a colourful rally on June 2nd this year in honour of late Papa Awolowo saying that "the Igbo community in Akure and Yorubaland generally benefitted from Papa Awo's policies as Premier of Western Region in the areas of Free Education and health".<sup>20</sup>

Religious organisations were allowed to own and operate their schools as long as the schools were established along government stipulations and standard. Freedom of religion, conscience and thought reigned in the Region as well.

Coming specifically to Papa Awo and the Islamic religion, we gathered during the course of this study that Papa Awo as Premier granted the request of moslems for land to build a mosque at the Oja Oba area of Ibadan. Not only this, he also donated some materials for the mosque. In his life time, Awo personally sponsored many moslem-friends and relatives especially to perform the Holy pilgrimage to Mecca. Also as Premier and leader of the Action Group, he supervised over the making of legislations in the Western Region for the increase in the number of public holidays observed for moslem festivals from the existing two days (one for Eld-El-Fitri and the other for Eld-El-Kabir) to five days: two for Eld-El Fitri, two for Eld-El Kabir, and one for Eld-El Maulud respectively. These new public holidays were effected in the Old Western Regional House of Assembly through a motion moved by Chief M.S. Sowole (second member for Remo). From the West, it moved to the centre (Lagos) where another Action Group member representing Ikeja Constituency Alhaji Sule Gbadamosi, moved another motion in 1954 at the House of Representatives. The motion was whole-heartedly welcomed by all sides, and it became law and operational since then.

However, the greatest act of goodwill towards the moslems carried out by Awo may be taken as the establishment of a pilgrims welfare Board for Moslems in May 1958 known as the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board. As at 1958, only moslems went on Pilgrimage. The establishment of this pilgrims Board was not only a show of religious tolerance and understanding, it was also a manifestation of exemplary leadership in the promotion of religious peace and harmony in the country. It will be recalled that the first Hajj Agency in Nigeria called the West African Pilgrims Agency was founded about the mid - 1950s in Kano by the late Alhaji Mahmud Dantata. This was followed by the formation of the Northern Nigeria Pilgrims Licensing Board in April 1958 by the Northern Regional government. But Awo was the "first to establish statutorily, a pilgrims welfare Board with responsibility to

look after the welfare of muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia"<sup>22</sup> For this and other things he did for the moslems, their leaders in Yoruba states showed appreciation of Awo's care and goodwill when he died.<sup>23</sup>

Some people have attributed the formation of the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board to political calculations as we shall discuss later, but the most Reverend Timothy Olufosoye, in a Sermon at the burial service of Papa Awolowo at St Saviour Church, said that, Awo established the pilgrim Welfare Board for moslems to forestal or difuse any religious tension or strife in the country, and to demonstrate that the nation's development must go together in spiritual and material settings.<sup>24</sup> The point however is that Awo who was a christian did establish the Pilgrims Board to cater for the welfare of the moslems going on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is very clear that Awo did not make an empty claim when he said;

I claim without any fear of contradiction that though a christian, I am the harbinger of the welfare of those devout moslems who do pilgrimage to Mecca from Nigeria.....<sup>25</sup>

It will be very difficult to find three more Nigerian political leaders (since 1914) who can make such a claim and get public approval as did Awo. He established the Pilgrims Board to reduce the sufferings of moslems going to Mecca and enable them have smooth pilgrimage. Awo's high degree of religious understanding and tolerance reminds us of the high degree of tolerance and understanding manifested by Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) in his last years when his word was law in Arabia, yet he did grant the monks of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai, and all the Christians under his jurisdiction a charter which has been designated as one of the noblest monuments of enlightened tolerance in human history. According to Chief Imam Shodeinde, in this document, Holy Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.) personally undertook and enjoined his followers:

.....to protect the christians, to defend their churches, the residences of their priests, and to guard them from all injur-

ies. They were not to be unfairly taxed; no bishop was to be driven out of his bishopric; no christian was to be forced to reject his religion; no monk was to be expelled from his monastery; no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage, nor were the christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for the muslims. Christian women married to muslims were to enjoy their own religion and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on account of their religion. If christians should stand in need of assistance for the repairs of their churches or monasteries, the muslims were to assist them.<sup>26</sup>

The Holy Prophet clearly stipulated in the Charter that any moslem violating or abusing these provisions should be regarded as a violator of Allah's testament. We also recall that the governor of Arabian and Persian Iraq (724 AD - 738), Khalid al Qasri did build a church for his christian mother, while in 759 AD, the Moslem government helped to complete the building of a church whose bishop could not raise enough funds to complete.<sup>27</sup> These testimonies of historic moslem tolerance will show that the destructions done in Kaduna state in March this year against christian persons, Churches and properties had more sinister motives far from religion as catalyst. This conclusion becomes more cogent when one considers Sheikh Gumi's statement during the crisis that "it was prohibited in Islam to preach violence or cheat anybody whether moslem or christian".<sup>28</sup>

### *(b) Basis of Awo's religious tolerance*

As stated earlier, some of Papa Awo's actions in the religious sector have been given different interpretations as far as the motive force is concerned. For example, the establishment of the Western Region Pilgrims welfare Board has been attributed by some people to have emanated from political calculations to the effect that Awo used it as a strategy to stop the muslims in the Region from forming a rival political party.<sup>29</sup>

Sklar noted also that:

..... ethnically inspired opposition to the AG among Yoruba people is reinforced by resistance based on religious sensibilities specifically among muslims..... religious differences lie beneath the surface of regional politics.<sup>30</sup>

It is true of course that the Action Group faced opposition in the West just like any other political party in the country at that time. But to attribute the establishment of the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board to purely political calculations of stopping the formation of a rival political party makes the matter too simplistic, and fails to recognise the fact that not all decisions of politicians emanate from the political "conversion" machine; and did not take into account Awo's belief that the best in politics derives from and is firmly rooted in religious ideals. When the Government of Northern Region established its Northern Region Pilgrims Licensing Agency, was it political? It must be noted that at this time, the Action Group was not just a party of the christians in the Western Region. It also had many influential moslems.

To understand Awo's religious actions, one needs to go beyond simplistic and superficial analysis. We contend that the several acts of religious tolerance manifested by Awo including the establishment of the Pilgrims Welfare Board are based on and will be understood better if one examines his personal beliefs, values and principles (many of which are in his numerous writings); his understanding of human nature; his foresight as a Nigerian and a political leader; his knowledge of religion's role in any multi-religious and multi-ethnic society as Nigeria; and his understanding of his people, their history, culture and other facets.

Looking at Awo's personal beliefs, values, and principles, it is clear that he truly had strong faith in God. He always asserted that he owed his success in life partly to the Grace of God. In his book *Awo*, he said "I found it hard to disbelieve in or to doubt the existence of God".<sup>31</sup> He regarded God

here as the true God and not the type of "God" worshipped by religious fanatics who "project their own self-created God instead of the true God..."<sup>32</sup> He also believed that all religions worth their salt worship this same true God. In the People's Republic, Awo observed:

For ourselves, we believe in God, and believe that he is the Creator of the Universe. We believe that He is the Universal Mind which permeates and pervades all things.<sup>33</sup>

From his belief in God, we descend to his belief in religion. Though Awo understood that religious development and moral development are not the same as moral principles and values can grow from reason, thus making it possible for a man to be moral without necessarily being religious, he still believed that religion is important for making a moral man. To him, man is both political and religious,<sup>34</sup> thus no development programme for human will be complete without a place for religious upliftment.

Awo believed strongly in Love and loving, whether it related to one's wife, his children, his neighbours, or his country. In *The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria*, Awo asserted that socialist orientation in Nigeria can be epitomised through three key elements (i) Patriotism, typified by selfless service to Nigeria for its own sake. (ii) Altruism, which is the attitude of mind that has regard for other people, and which in the words of the Communist Manifesto recognises 'the free development of each as the condition for the free development of all, as different from naked self-interest that propels capitalism. (iii) Love, that is one loving his neighbour as he loves himself.<sup>35</sup> In *The People's Republic*, Awo had earlier written extensively on the need for love for one's neighbours whether they are of the same religion with one or not. He had asserted:

The touchstone of what is good, be it in thought, or word or action is LOVE. We are to love our neighbours as our-

selves "That is the law and the prophets". Anything therefore-any thought or word or action which falls short of LOVE is evil, and holds within itself the germ of its own eventual and inevitable destruction.<sup>36</sup>

To Awo, the ability to love is a pre-requisite for the ability to be just, for he who does not love cannot be just, as hatred breeds injustice. This brings us to his belief in justice which we shall here define as the quality of doing what is right and fair. Awo believed that justice is very important for the attainment of peace, and stability which are relevant for development in the country. In his Presidential address to the Action Group Congress at Jos in 1962, he said;

We all profess belief in social justice, equal opportunity for all and the wellbeing of the individual.<sup>37</sup>

Again, in his address at the opening of the Federal Court of Appeal, he emphasised that justice was the *Somnum Bonum* (greatest good);

.....justice is the *Somnum Bonum* (the greatest good) after which mankind has continually and tirelessly striven in all its activities since the beginning of its creation; in the home, in the community, in sports, in business, in politics, in the church, in the mosque or in anything or place you can imagine, the ultimate of man's endeavours is justice. Wherever this ultimate is absent or unattainable, there are actual or potential strife, turmoil, instability, unrest chaos, and social evils.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, with his belief in the true God, in Love, and justice, and knowing that all religions serve the same true God, it was clear to Awo that oppressing people of other religions tantamounted to working against the true God whom all religions worship, going against the love law, and not doing what is right and fair. He believed that peoples religious rights and values must be respected by government because according to him, the earthly authority is ordained by God, as a result, Caesar's behests must not be repugnant to God's injunctions.<sup>39</sup> To Awo, freedom of thought, conscience and religion must not be tampered with, as it is part of the freedoms and rights that are fundamental and inalienable,

and should not be sacrificed on the altar of any political machinations. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is one of the 22 freedoms and rights advocated in his *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, and can also be found in *The People's Republic*.

The above concern of Awo for religious freedom and rights marked Awo out as a devoted secularist. He had always advocated a secular status for Nigeria, believing that religion and government should be apart so that religious leaders in addition to showing good examples to their followers can always speak the truth, teach the will of God, criticize and condemn evil in government and society. Another major reason for his advocating "separation of activities between the state on the one hand and religious bodies on the other"<sup>40</sup> is that religious issues are often very sensitive and explosive, and to avoid interferences and wranglings between church and state. Thus, Papa Awo proposed a secular state in which "there is no official state religion".<sup>41</sup>

It is possible for some people to think there is confusion or a mix-up in Awo's advocacy of secularism and his establishment of the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board in 1958. There should be no confusion about this. As stated above Awo wanted a situation where there is "no official state religion", but at the same time advocated a reasonable degree of cooperation between the state and religious bodies since the government and religious bodies are working towards the same goal — the welfare, development and happiness of man. When he lectured students of the Adventist College of West Africa at Illishan-Remo on January 27, 1961, he clearly told them that to bring out the best in a man and to enable him live a healthy and happy life, "the agencies of politics and religion must work in close and harmonious cooperation" for in modern times and in a democratic society, the functions of politics are complementary to those of religion".<sup>42</sup> He also told them in defining the responsibilities of politics and religion:

The purpose of politics is first and last the material well-being of man, while the purpose of religion on the other hand is to do this by ensuring by persuasion that it is done; and to cater in addition to the spiritual welfare of man.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, Awo impressed it upon the mind of the students that government can not ignore religion as "the best in politics derives from and is firmly rooted in religious ideals".<sup>44</sup>

These bring us now to Awo's strong views about the welfare including spiritual welfare of Nigerians. In Awo, he asserted that "the aim of government is the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the people".<sup>45</sup> He was more emphatic about citizens' welfare in *The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria*, when he wrote:

It is my earnest contention then that all productive activities, indeed all earthly human activities if they are to be meaningful, equitable, just and human should be geared to one and only one goal — the welfare of the individual.<sup>46</sup>

The above discussions show that religious actions such as the establishment of the Pilgrims Welfare Board by Awo can not be simply explained away on political grounds. We must look at Awo's personal beliefs, values and principles especially the role of religion, what he thinks should be the main duty of rulers-welfare of the citizens etc. Thus, the establishment of the Pilgrims Welfare Board for muslims falls into the scheme of what Awo knew was right and fair, to alleviate the suffering of the moslems going to Mecca.

We must also point out Awo's understanding of human nature in order to appreciate his religious activities. He knew that "human beings love (religious) rituals and ceremonies,"<sup>47</sup> and one way of making them happy is removing obstacles to these ceremonies where necessary. Awo also understood his (Yoruba) people, their culture, values and aspirations. He knew that religion occupies an important position in their lives. As noted by Idowu Bolaji who long ago observed that Yorubas are religious in all things:

As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of all the affairs of life belongs to the Deity; their own part in the matter is to do as they are ordered through the priests and diviners who they believe to be interpreters of the will of the Deity.<sup>48</sup>

More importantly, Awo knew that unlike what obtains in most of the Hausa-Fulani states in the north where most families are completely moslem, most families in Yorubaland have admixture of two of or the three major religions in Nigeria - Islam, Christianity, and the Traditional religions. He also knew that as a result of this admixture, the Yorubas have settled not only to tolerate but to accept and have accepted the three religions peacefully and happily amongst their families, villages, towns and states despite the differences in teachings, beliefs, and practices. A demonstration of this acceptance of the three religions can be seen among the Yorubas when they wine and dine with each other as each religion's festivities come and go - Moslems, traditional religionists enjoy the festivities of christians for example with Christians, and vice-verse in each family, and at times across families. One can also get the real feeling of acceptance of the three religions in the Yoruba famous song<sup>49</sup> which foreign missionaries saw as a brazen syncretistical display:

*Yoruba*

Awa o şoro ile wa o (2ce)  
Igbagbo o pe, o e, Igbagbo  
O pe ka wa ma soro  
Awa o şoro ile wa o

*English Meaning*

We shall participate in the worship of our ancestors (2ce) Our belief in the "new" religion notwithstanding. We shall participate in the worship of our ancestors.

The Yoruba family situation where a family can be made up of people belonging to two or three different religions reflected to Awo, the Nigerian Situation; and the only conclusion a patriot can draw from this reflection is that it is

not possible to impose any one religion on Nigerians today. The best thing therefore is to promote religious harmony. The above discussions show the forces we deem to have underlied Papa Awolowo's religious actions whether they were in terms of laying foundation stones for christian churches, forming muslim Pilgrim Welfare Board, giving land and materials for mosques, or asking traditional religionists to do their worshipping on Saturdays.

*(C) Awo and his Contemporaries*

We wish to devote the last part of this section to examining some of the religious activities of some of Awo's contemporaries in relation to other religions. The most outstanding contemporaries of Awo dating from the period of nationalism are Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was once Premier of Eastern Region and leader of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), and Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto who was once Premier of the Northern Region and the actual leader of the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Dr. Azikiwe had few or no moslems in the East in relation to what obtained and still obtains in the West and North. Thus, the search light turns on Sir Bello.

It is on record that Sir Bello was a very Godly man, and that on several occasions he reassured christians in the North, and commended the cordial relations between the government of the region and the christian missions despite religious differences. Crampton noted that Sir Bello once told the christians that the "differences in our religion need to be no barrier to our continuity to work together for the good of our people".<sup>50</sup> However, may be because he was a religious and political leader at the same time, Sir Bello unlike Awo found it difficult to pursue a secular line of action in his region. He seriously campaigned for the Islamisation of the Northern Region which had in his time 3.8 million christians and 5.5 million other or no faith citizens by 1963 census. According to Adegbesan, Sir Bello:

.....personally proselytized in the christian areas of the North. This conversion drive was thorough and intense

and as Garba ... shows many people succumbed under the pressure.....He also nursed the ambition of dipping the Quran in the sea.<sup>51</sup>

Sir Bello also demanded from the then Prime Minister, Sir Balewa, without success to register Nigeria as a member of the World Moslem League. As noted by Alaba Ogunsanwo:

Balewa .... insisted that Nigeria was a secular state and could not as the Sarduana demanded, join the World Muslim League as a state even though Alhaji Ahmadu Bello has been elected as the Vice Chairman of the League.<sup>52</sup>

Sir Balewa had a more liberal attitude and understanding of the Nigerian religious situation despite his being a devoted moslem. His personal liberal religious disposition which honoured the constitutional position (1960 and 1963) of a secular Nigeria helped to keep the country out of religious strife throughout the first civilian Republic.

From General Ironsi through General Gowon to Generals Mohammed and Obasanjo, government remained faithful to the secular status. Alhaji Shagari took over government in 1979 beginning the Second Civilian Republic with a promise not to raise the issue of Sharia which had rocked the transition period (especially 1977-1978). He surprised millions of Nigerians when he invited the Pope to Nigeria in February 1982, and later received the Archbishop of Canterbury in April of the same year. These were acts of religious tolerance and understanding. But again, President Shagari created religious and political tension when his government planned to establish a Department of Islamic Affairs under his office. It also gave ₦10 million to Moslems to build a national Mosque at Abuja without effecting same for Christians apart from promises. During the 1982-83 electoral campaign, the NPN under his leadership used religion as instrument of campaign against Christian opponents.

The Buhari government raised religious tension by having the Head of State and his Second in command as Moslems. Not only this, the Supreme Military Council was dominated

by Moslems. But what would have caused real crisis was the move by the government then to amend section 10 of the 1979 Constitution arbitrarily to enable it insert the Sharia as a Federal law as reported by *NewsWatch*.<sup>53</sup> Under the Babangida government, Nigeria was nearly thrown into cataclysm when the country was registered in the OIC as the 46th member—a political error which was quickly remedied by government, and a Council of Religious Affairs was then established to be advising government on religious matters, working for religious peace and harmony in the country, and promoting national unity through religion. In the next section, we conclude this study.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study set out with the modest objective of exploring the contributions of Awolowo to religious tolerance, growth and harmony in Nigeria. The study has clearly highlighted the fact that Papa Awo clearly manifested an exemplary character as to how political leaders belonging to one religion should behave towards other religion—toleration and promotion of other religions, while respecting the secular status of the country and keeping an effective touch with one's own religion. Awo, though a christian, promoted the growth of Islam by establishing a Pilgrims Welfare Board for the Moslems, giving them land and materials to build mosques together with other good deeds. He kept in effective touch with the christians by paying his dues in his church, contributing to the building of some churches to mention a few. At the same time, he advocated secularism for the country, and when he launched the free health service, and free education programme in 1955, they were operated as secular programmes. When his government gave scholarships, it never discriminated on religious ground.

Awo showed love, tolerance and understanding for his neighbours and even political opponents who used religion to campaign against him. While advocating secularism, he still

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at some form of cooperation was essential state and religious bodies. If Nigerian leaders at and State levels can follow Awo's foot-steps in the handling of religions and religious matters in Nigeria, the country will be a peaceful place for all of us as well as the religious fire and brimstones that have been burning in us especially since 1980. It is too late for anyone to contemplate imposing one religion on Nigerians today. We must respect the secular status of the country in the 1992 constitution. Government must enforce the laws of religious freedom in the country. The recent establishment of the National Council on Religious Affairs by the Babangida administration is a praiseworthy act which conforms with the provisions of section 15 (3a) of the 1979 constitution stating that it shall be the duty of the state to "promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious, or other social interests". We however are not happy with the absence of the traditional religionists in the council. Patriotism and nationalism dictate that we should learn from and promote more of what is ours than what comes from foreign lands. While we appeal to government to correct its error, we hope the Council will perform its task of articulating cordial relationship among the major religious groups and between them and the government. They should also generate and promote love, tolerance, sacrifice, peaceful co-existence, honesty, social justice, service to fellowmen and other virtues which are in short supply in the country. However, the point needs to be made and emphasized that too much of the religious peace needed will come from political leaders - the way they behave personally and the way they treat the three major religious groups. It is where we recommend the Awo model of religious behaviour as has been shown in this study. In the words of Dr. Azikiwe:

It is an incontrovertible fact of history that Chief Obafemi Awolowo left his footprints on the sands of time and from generation to generation his contributions to the history of Nigeria.

Nigeria in particular and Africa in general shall be a landmark and an inspiration to guide our people in our crusade for a place in the sun.<sup>54</sup>

Awo has died, and his era as a physical person has ended. But it is ideas that rule the world and shape the affairs of men. These ideas are "manufactured" mainly by scholars. Awo was a scholar and he left bodies of ideas for scholars, and the era of his ideas shall never end. We can then safely conclude that the Awo era will never end as his ideas march on. Awo's struggle with the forces of backwardness is no more physical but intellectual and spiritual. Therefore, the best thing anyone can do for Awo now is to organise his progressive ideas and equip them with wings to fly and spread. This is where this conference on Awo is timely, praiseworthy and patriotic. As long as Awo's ideas march on, Awo marches on. Thus, death has only made a fool of itself. Poetically therefore, we end by singing:

Poor death, Oh poor death,  
Thou think'st thou has destroyed Awo,  
But don't be proud for thou has only demobilised  
his flesh.

Awo's ideas live on and march on,  
By implication Awo lives on and marches on,  
Continuing the struggle against the forces of  
backwardness.

Poor death, oh poor death,  
Please take heart,  
For we still have the best of Awo.

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# The Religious Factor in Nigerian Politics: Awolowo and the Muslims, 1957-1983

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H.O. DANMOLE

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## INTRODUCTION

Towards the attainment of independence, leaders of various Nigerian political parties competed for political power. This competition featured prominently even after independence. In the struggle for political power, various variables ranging from ethnic solidarity to religion were used by the politicians to canvass for support. This was so because the power being sought for could only be attained through democratic process. In Nigeria, the party leaders rode on ethnic politics to achieve the limited power they had in 1951 in their different regions.<sup>1</sup> These leaders as earlier developed by Machiavelli were prepared to do anything to keep and enhance their power.<sup>2</sup> Therefore any attempt by another political party, individuals or groups to threaten their positions were fought with all democratic weapons at their disposal.

Politics, as it is well known, involves constant struggle for power. Nigerian politicians were ready for this struggle.<sup>3</sup> In the struggle, no particular position remained constant, indeed the same factor that lead to a particular attitude could be used against one's interest at a point in time and some time later such a factor could be used by the same person to foster his own political advancement.<sup>4</sup> In the same vein, political protests formed through association based

on religion or other common interests at times contributed to alter government approaches to dealing with the welfare of the governed.<sup>5</sup>

This paper examines the political career of Chief Obafemi Awolowo as it relates to the religious issue. It focusses attention on his position *vis-à-vis* religion in politics particularly following the formation of the National Muslim League in the Western Region in 1957 and during the First Republic. Furthermore, the paper examines the motives which necessitated the establishment of the Western Region Pilgrim Welfare Board in 1958. It finally analyses Chief Obafemi Awolowo relations with the muslim associates.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo is the focus of this paper because he was during his life time perhaps the most controversial figure in Nigerian politics. Not only that, as an energetic party leader, the political parties which he formed always forced other political party leaders to engage in serious campaigns even in areas they regarded as politically safe.

#### NIGERIAN POLITICS BEFORE 1957

In a paper of this nature it is necessary to briefly discuss some of the salient features of party politics in Nigeria before 1957. Party associations as Sklar observes began in Lagos during the first decade of this century with the formation of the Peoples Union in 1908.<sup>6</sup> Other political associations were also formed some years later but these associations always eclipsed as soon as the specific grievances which heralded their formation were met by the colonial administration.<sup>7</sup> However, with increased nationalist activity by the educated elite in Lagos and the promulgation of the Clifford constitution, what Tamuno described as the first modern political party emerged in Lagos. This was the Nigerian National Democratic Party which was formed in June 1923. The formation of this party was sequel to the provision in the Clifford's constitution which granted the right of fran-

chise to male adult tax payers who earned more than a hundred pounds per annum.<sup>9</sup> While this was indeed a limited franchise, it helped to increase political activity in Lagos. The Nigerian National Democratic Party and its leaders dominated the politics of Lagos. Its position was soon challenged by the Lagos Youth Movement which was formed in 1934 and metamorphosed into the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936.<sup>10</sup> The Nigerian Youth Movement had members across the country. Its membership was larger in scope than that of the Nigerian National Democratic Party. Its prominent members at the time of its foundation were J.C. Vaughan, H.O. Davies, Earnest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya and later Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo— who was the Secretary of the Ibadan branch of the Movement in 1936 — and several others.<sup>11</sup> The party seemed to be progressing until internal strife destroyed its multi-ethnic nature in 1941.<sup>12</sup>

Politics in Nigeria during that period was affected by the second world war. The war had serious economic impact on Nigerians, prices of essential goods increased, whereas the salaries and wages of workers stagnated. Thus, Nigerian workers became more aware of the efforts of Nigerian nationalists and were ready to redress the hardship caused by escalating prices. The General strike led by Michael Imoudu in 1945 was one of the ways through which workers contributed to the political life of the country.<sup>13</sup> It is important to stress here that politics in Nigeria was furthermore given a boost by newspapers which were founded by the nationalists and which were used to attack the obnoxious policies of the colonial administration as well as educate their followership.<sup>14</sup>

Between 1923 and 1944, the Nigerian National Democratic Party and the Nigerian Youth Movement dominated Nigerian politics. However, the internal strife mentioned earlier had considerably weakened the Nigerian Youth Movement thereby favouring the emergence of a new political

alignment. This was the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons in 1944 with Herbert Macaulay as President and Nnamdi Azikiwe as Secretary.<sup>15</sup> The party was later known as National Council of Nigerian Citizens when Western Cameroon was carved out of Nigeria. Without doubt, the leadership of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens fought the colonial administration relentlessly. Indeed, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens led vehement opposition against the provision of the Richard's constitution which was promulgated in 1946 and which, for the first time, divided Nigeria into three regions along the major ethnic groups.<sup>16</sup>

With the division of Nigeria into three unequal and artificial regions, ethnic politics which had been rearing its head within the defunct Nigerian Youth Movement assumed a wider perspective. Two political parties which were to play significant roles in the achievement of independence for Nigeria were founded on the platform of ethnic loyalty.

The Northern People's Congress which became a dominant party in Northern Nigeria was formed in 1951 with membership drawn mainly from northern Nigeria and from those who by ethnic origins were Hausa/Fulani.<sup>17</sup> Also in the Western Region, *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a Yoruba cultural organisation had metamorphosed into a political party, the Action Group of Nigeria. The main bulk of its members were from western Nigeria and other Yoruba speaking areas.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, at the death of Macaulay in 1946 and the subsequent election of Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Federal President of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, the party began to experience her share of ethnic politics. The party became more attractive in Eastern Nigeria because of its leader. However, it continued to attract huge support in Western region and Lagos.

The 1951 Macpherson constitution was an improvement

on the Richard's constitution because Nigerians were consulted before it was promulgated.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the constitution paved the way for leaders of the main political parties to exploit ethnicity to consolidate their power and position in their regions. In the elections that followed the constitution, the Northern Peoples Congress and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens won the majority into Northern and Eastern Houses of Assembly respectively, while that of the West was later won by the Action Group amidst allegations of carpet-crossing by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens.<sup>20</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo became the leader of Government Business in Western Region. The inadequacies of this constitution led to its criticisms by the leaders of the political parties especially Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Consequently, a new constitution was demanded and this came into effect in 1954.<sup>21</sup> In the same year, the "three majors" of Nigerian politics in pre and post independent era became premiers in their different regions.<sup>22</sup> It was during the premiership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo in Western Nigeria that a religious party — the National Muslim League was born in the Western Region.

#### AWO AND THE NATIONAL MUSLIM LEAGUE

The National Muslim League was an offshot of the Muslim Congress of Nigeria. While the Muslim Congress was founded in 1950 as a non-partisan muslim organisation, the National Muslim League declared itself a political party.<sup>23</sup> This party unlike other political party had religious connotations. However, it was not the first Muslim political party, earlier in 1953, Mr. (later Alhaji) M.R.B. Ottun had founded the United Muslim party in Lagos as an independent political party from a larger muslim organisation known as the Society for Promoting Muslim Knowledge whose original aim was to help muslim children to acquire higher education particularly

through scholarships to Al-Azhar University in Cairo.<sup>24</sup> The United Muslim party seemed to have enjoyed very little support and did not appear to have competed successfully with other existing political parties in Lagos.

When the National Muslim League was founded in 1957 in Ibadan, it received virulent attacks from the leader of the Action Group, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, but before examining the attitude of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to the party it is important to analyse the factors which led to the formation of the party. In his inaugural speech to the delegates of the party, its President-General, Alhaji A.R.A. Smith claimed that the leadership of the Action Group was christian, consequently the founders of the National Muslim League regarded the Action Group as an agent of christianity,<sup>25</sup> as a matter of fact, the leadership of the Action Group in Western Nigeria was dominated by Christians, but this did not make the party a religious one. The founders of the National Muslim party expressed the fear perhaps because since the control of Western Region by the Action Group in 1951 to 1957, only one out of twelve regional ministers was a muslim.<sup>26</sup>

The National Muslim party was launched also with a view to redressing the alleged neglect of Muslim schools as regards funding by the Western Regional Government.<sup>27</sup> However, there is evidence to believe that Muslim schools were not neglected by the regional government. The Muslim league seemed to have had this impression because of the disparity in education between muslims and christians. Before the introduction of Free Education in 1955, by 1957 there were 3224 primary schools in the region out of which 157 belonged to the muslims, that is 4.9% as Minorities Report of 1957 shows. The Minorities Report indicates that the government of the region gave the Muslims additional 10% of the total number of schools because of the disparity in the education of muslims and christians but the proprietors of muslim schools failed to use the offer.<sup>28</sup>

Another important consideration for the formation of

the party was that Arabic language which the muslims regarded as part of Islamic culture was not included in the curriculum of primary schools in Western Region and thereby in the training of their children.<sup>29</sup> It was true that Arabic language was not taught in primary schools in the region; the regional government however claimed at that time that this was the decision reached with proprietors of muslim schools who preferred the study of the Qur'an.<sup>30</sup> It is relevant to point out that in Lagos during this period, Islamic religious knowledge was taught in muslim primary schools.

Apart from these grievances, the National Muslim League condemned the conversion of Muslim children to christianity.<sup>31</sup> The conversion of muslim children to christianity was a common feature in christian missionary schools not only in the Western Region but also in Lagos. Indeed in Northern Nigeria, one of the reasons for the slow progress of western education there was the fear of conversion of muslim children to christianity.<sup>32</sup> The colonial administration was apprehensive of this fear and had to discourage the widespread establishment of christian missionary schools.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, the National Muslim League complained of inadequate representation of muslims in the Executive Council of the region. What the league perhaps failed to realize was that the Executive Council must reflect the party in power, particularly members of the party who the leader could work with. More important was the fact that certain criteria within the party machinery must be taken into consideration. Apart from lack of adequate representation in the Executive Council, the percentage of Muslim representation in the House of chiefs was also unacceptable to the league.<sup>34</sup> Without doubt, the grievances which led to the formation of the Muslim league were in a way meant to indict the Action Group and its leader. It was not a surprise therefore that Chief Obafemi Awolowo expressed in an uncompromising language his wish for the immediate dissolution of the party.

In condemning the formation of the Muslim league, Chief Obafemi Awolowo directed his attention to the religious nature of the party rather than the grievances expressed by the party. According to Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the party was going to create religious fanaticism which would lead to religious violence, communal strife and bloodshed.<sup>35</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo expressed the fears that the Muslim league was so dangerous that it could lead to the dismemberment of Nigeria. He cited the example of the Indian Muslim league as leading to the partition of the sub-continent, claiming that if such a league had not existed there would have been no Pakistan.<sup>36</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo clearly exaggerated the power and support of the Muslim league at a time when a party based on religion did not exist in Northern Region with a predominantly muslim population. Chief Obafemi Awolowo perhaps feared that the party was likely to attract many muslim members of the Action Group who were based in Yoruba speaking area of the region.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo in his attack of the Muslim League indicated that he would like to follow the example of India by enacting a law which would make it an offence to use religion against an opponent during electioneering campaigns.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, he promised to raise the question of religion in the 1957 constitutional conference with a view to making written provision into the Nigerian constitution such that it would guide against the exploitation of religion for political purpose or for the formation of political parties.<sup>38</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo concluded his attack by referring to the Northern Region which was predominantly muslim. According to him;

In the North where moslems (sic) are in overwhelming majority, political leaders are sensible and tolerant enough not to organise political party based on religion. It is open to any moslem or christian who has political ambition either to join one of the existing political parties or to start a new non-sectarian and secular political party of his

own. It is absolutely intolerable - indeed unthinkable -- for a group of co-religionists to essay to get themselves into power so that they might lord it over those who do not belong to their faith it is an indirect means of destroying freedom of religion to embrace the faith of the party in power.<sup>39</sup>

The uncompromising attack (of the National Muslim League) stemmed from the fact that the party was based in Western Region. This was not only a threat to the Action Group as a party but also to the consolidation of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's power in Western Region. If Chief Awolowo's power base was not solidified, his ambition to lead his party to victory at the Federal level was in jeopardy. After all, a muslim party as earlier mentioned had existed in Lagos but did not receive the vehement attack which the National Muslim League experienced in Western Region. It is important to indicate that by 1957 when the National Muslim League was formed, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group still had to contend with the deposition of *Alaafin* Adeniran Adeyemi II in 1956.<sup>40</sup> The *Alaafin* was a muslim who was supported by his people but who perhaps because of the changing times could not go along with the policies of the Regional Government. His deposition caused disaffection for Chief Obafemi Awolowo in Oyo.<sup>41</sup> It can then be suggested that the fear that many of *Alaafin's* supporters were likely to join the Muslim League led to the determination of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to nip the party in the bud.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's attitude to the party rested on power politics rather than his dislike for a particular religion. This was more so if one takes into consideration the political climate in Nigeria at that time. In Northern Region, the Northern People's Congress continued to campaign for supporters. The then Premier of the Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello used his charismatic leadership to ensure that the

region was solidly behind his party. In the Eastern Region, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was the Premier was also relentless in his effort to maintain the region for his party. But in the Western Region there was, as Sklar puts it 'a Three-cornered alliance' which involved the National Muslim League, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens and the Northern Peoples Congress.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it was politically astute for Chief Obafemi Awolowo to deal with the newest and weakest of the parties if he had to nurse and sustain his political leadership in the region.

The condemnation of the National Muslim League was not limited to mere speeches at the Action Group Party level. Several other strategies were adopted. One was a direct appeal to the members of the National Muslim League to disband their party. At a meeting of the National Muslim League in Ode-Omu in October 1947, Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro (of blessed memory) who was the Minister of Local Government went on behalf of Chief Obafemi Awolowo to appeal to members of the party to dissolve their party but the meeting ended in a fiasco as party stewards belonging to the Action Group stormed the meeting.<sup>43</sup> The National Muslim League was also attacked at the tenth annual Assembly of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* at Osogbo by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who saw the National Muslim League as a canker-worm aimed at destroying the unity and solidarity of the Yoruba people.<sup>44</sup> Ethnic sentiments became a vehicle for the destruction of the League. Finally, the Action Group under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo formed within the party a United Muslim Council with important leaders of the party as Alhaji S. Adegbenro, Alhaji S.O. Gbadamosi, Alhaji Y.O. Ojikutu as members.<sup>45</sup> The aim of United Muslim Council was to prevent their supporters and others from defecting to the National Muslim League.<sup>46</sup> Although the lifespan of the National Muslim League was short because the party changed its name to National Emancipation League in 1958.<sup>47</sup> It was a force that Chief Obafemi Awolowo had to reckon with in the politics of Western

Region in particular and of Nigeria in general.

With the dissolution of the National Muslim League, religion as a factor in Nigerian politics was still very important. In fact, the position of Chief Obafemi Awolowo on religion in politics seemed to be decided to have altered a bit. He began to see the signs clearly when he decided to leave the regional politics for the Federal one. During the campaigns for the 1959 General Elections, the leadership of the Northern Peoples' Congress capitalised on religious sentiments. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was referred to as a *Kaffier* who would not bother about the religion of Islam.<sup>48</sup> Apart from ethnic sentiments which permeated the air during the campaigns, religious sentiments can also explain the failure of the Action Group particularly in areas where Muslims were in dominant majority. It is relevant to posit here that Chief Obafemi Awolowo tactically concentrated efforts on non-Muslim areas of the North because he seemed to have realized that it would be difficult to gain large support in the Sokoto - Kano axis. Indeed, the success which the Action Group made in Northern Nigeria was derived from the Middle Belt areas, through the United Middle Belt Congress and the Ilorin Talaka Parapo.<sup>49</sup>

However, in Lagos, the Muslim supporters of Chief Obafemi Awolowo who can be described as highly influential in the Lagos society mustered all the energies at their disposals to assure many Muslims in Lagos that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was not against their religion. His supporters made preparations for him to visit the Lagos Central Mosque where prayers were offered for him and his party. During the occasion he made a cash donation to the mosque.<sup>50</sup> It is important to emphasize that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was not the first politician of a different religious persuasion to visit the Lagos central mosque for special prayers. In 1931, Herbert Macaulay along with several members of the Nigerian National Democratic Party attended a Thanksgiving service at the Mosque for the return of Eshugbayi Eleko to Lagos.<sup>51</sup>

The failure of the Action Group to win the 1959 General Elections must have increased Chief Awolowo's beliefs on the significance of religion in politics for a country such as Nigeria. As an acclaimed believer in democracy, he must have thought of several ways of enlisting the support of the Muslims in the Northern Region to vote for his party. While on a visit to Ghana, in 1961, Chief Obafemi Awolowo met the leader of the Tijaniyya brotherhood in West Africa, Shaikh Ibrahim Niass of Senegal through Alhaji Ibrahim Imam.<sup>52</sup> According to Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Alhaji Ibrahim Imam had impressed upon him that through Shaikh Ibrahim Niass, a large number of the Tijaniyya brotherhood in the Northern Region would be instructed to declare for the Action Group. In the words of Chief Obafemi Awolowo:

4th Prosecution Witness (Ibrahim Imam) informed me that the relationship between the Emir of Kano, who was of the Tijaniyya sect, and the Sardauna of Sokoto, who did not belong to that sect had become considerably strained. He thought that it would be wise for the Action Group to exploit the situation. He raised the matter again in August 1962 and I agreed that he should see the Shehu. I am a believer in prayers to God no matter by whom they are offered; but it was solely and wholly because of the political advantage which the Action Group might gain in the North that I asked 4th Prosecution Witness to go to Senegal to see the Shehu so that the latter might send word to his followers in the North to embrace the Action Group.

In spite of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's message to Shaikh Niass, the Shaikh did not instruct his followers: rather, Shaikh Niass had earlier written a letter to Sir Ahmadu Bello, urging him to remain in power so that he could continue his religious reforms as his great grand-father Usman Dan Fodio did.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless it was a significant attempt to exploit religion for political gains, a step which Chief Awolowo himself abhorred when he was the Premier of Western Region.

## AWO AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WESTERN NIGERIA PILGRIMS BOARD

In 1958, the West regional government under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo established by law, the Pilgrims Welfare Board.<sup>55</sup> According to the regional government, the board was established because of the dissatisfaction with the handling of Hajj matters by the Federal Government whose mission to study the Pilgrimage had not found any solution to the gamut of problems being encountered by pilgrims going to Mecca and Medina.<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that the government had started to study the problems of pilgrims from the region since 1955. In that year, Alhaji Y.S. Ola led a delegation to Saudi Arabia with the sole aim of studying the problems pilgrims from the region had to contend with.<sup>57</sup> Also in 1957, Alhaji Isa Williams was in Mecca for the purpose of informing the regional government of the pilgrims problems. However, the most important of the mission to Saudi Arabia was that of Alhaji Adegbenro who was then Minister for Local Government, and who on return from the pilgrimage outlined the multiple problems associated with the pilgrimage by muslims from the region.<sup>58</sup>

After a careful study of the reports of the different Missions, Chief Obafemi Awolowo explained to the members of the Western House of Assembly some of the problems that made the annual pilgrimage to Mecca 'an arduous and risky adventure'.<sup>59</sup> These problems were, namely: inadequate accommodation, which led to overcrowding and the spread of disease; inadequate medical facilities; transportation problem in connection with the journey to and from Saudi Arabia including journey to holy places during the pilgrimage; financial difficulties arising from failure of banks to send the pilgrim's money in good time coupled with the non-arrival of bank drafts and transfers belonging to the pilgrims by the time they arrived in Saudi Arabia; the loss and theft of travellers' cheques in transit (or in some cases such cheques were stolen); difficulties in obtaining visas and finally the exploitation of prospective pilgrims by pilgrim agents in Nigeria.<sup>60</sup>

The problems as enumerated by Chief Obafemi Awolowo were not peculiar to pilgrims from the Western Region alone, pilgrims from other parts of Nigeria also had the same problems. Indeed Sir Ahmadu Bello who performed the pilgrimage several times attested to the fact that many dishonest people were "fleecing the pilgrim."<sup>61</sup> It was with a view to reducing the problems of Northern Nigerian pilgrims that the Northern Nigerian Pilgrims Licensing Board was also established in 1958.<sup>62</sup>

A close look at the debate of the bill which gave birth to the law in the House of Assembly throws a great deal of light on the feelings of some section of the muslim community in the region on the government of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. As one would expect, Chief Obafemi Awolowo moved a motion for the adoption of the bill and the motion was seconded by Alhaji Adegbenro. Other leading muslims both on the government and the opposition benches spoke in favour of the bill.<sup>63</sup> During the debate, Chief L.A. Opaleye warned the government against considering members of the defunct National Muslim League as members of the board principally because the Action Group was opposed to the party.<sup>64</sup> While Mr. P.A. Afolabi wanted christians to be appointed as members of the board, Mr. Otobo warned the government against using the board to promote members of the Action Group alone in going on pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>65</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that the activities of the defunct National Muslim League must have contributed to the speed with which the government handled the affair of the pilgrims board. For instance, the activities of the league in 1957 must have incensed the government to send Alhaji Adegbenro on another mission to study the plight of pilgrims from Western Region of Nigeria. It is possible to suggest that the establishment of the Pilgrims Welfare Board in 1958 was an attempt to disabuse the minds of many muslims in the region who had imagined that the government neglected their welfare. Furthermore, Chief Obafemi Awolowo as a tactical

politician with considerable foresight needed to bridge the gap between him and sections of the muslim community as 1959 was another election year and his party needed all the support it could muster.

The Law which established the Western Region Pilgrims Welfare Board was asserted to by the Governor of Western Region, Sir John D. Rankine on 27th May 1958.<sup>66</sup> Two important functions were given to the board, namely, to protect and safeguard the interest and welfare of Western Region Pilgrims journeying to or from Mecca, and secondly, to make suitable arrangement with regards to transport, accommodation as well as providing assistance in matters concerning immigration and currency exchange.<sup>67</sup> Before analysing the effects of the board on pilgrims from the region, it is relevant to state here that the members of the board were drawn mostly from the Action Group, a fear nursed by Mr. P.A. Afolabi during the debate of the bill in the House of Assembly.<sup>68</sup> It should be stressed that the composition of the board was politically expedient for Chief Obafemi Awolowo. Firstly, it was an opportunity for him to increase the degree of participation of Muslims in the administration of the region. Secondly, as Premier of the region and leader of his party, he could only have control over members of his party. Apart from that, members of the party would necessarily want to work for the success of the board. Perhaps to monitor effectively the activities of the board, the Secretary to the Premier, Dr. Saburi Biobaku was a member of the board.

The Western Region pilgrims welfare board which was established under the leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo improved the lot of pilgrims from the region because it made the journey less arduous and enjoyable. In 1961, the board recorded a fifty percent increase in the number of muslims that performed pilgrimage from that region.<sup>69</sup> Apart from that, the board represented the first direct involvement by any government in this country in the affairs of pilgrimage to Mecca. It was indeed a pointer to other governments in

the country including the Federal Government.

Without doubt, the establishment of the board was to solve the difficult problems faced by pilgrims from the Western Region. It must be emphasized that at the same time, it was a political move which Chief Obafemi Awolowo constantly referred to whenever he had to enumerate his achievements as regards muslims in this country.

#### AWO AND HIS MUSLIM COLLEAGUES

Chief Obafemi Awolowo had many muslim colleagues and supporters in the 1950s and early 1960s, some of these colleagues were with him though not active during the second republic, while others had completely opted out of politics. In Lagos for example, Mr. (now Justice) Lateef Jinadu Dosumu represented the Action Group in the Lagos Town Council before quitting politics.<sup>70</sup> Others include the Late Alhaji Isa Williams (of blessed memory) Alhaji I.S. Adewale to mention just a few. In Chief Obafemi Awolowo's dealings with these people, the fact that they were muslim was not important, what was important to him was their ability to win support for the Action Group in Lagos and its environs. In the same vein, Chief Obafemi Awolowo's dealings with his muslim political opponents was based on competition for political power rather the fact of their being muslims. In his attacks of such opponents, there seems to be no record to suggest that he referred to their religion. While Chief Obafemi Awolowo maintained cordial relationship with leaders such as Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (at least up to the period of treason trial) and Alhaji Shehu Shagari, he belonged to the other side of the political spectrum with regards to how the resources of the nation should be managed.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's political career was enhanced by his close muslim associates. Three examples will be sufficient to illustrate this point. Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro who was a clerk and later merchant was one of the earliest converts of the Action Group. He was elected to the Western House of

Assembly in 1951 while at the same time he was a member of the House of Representatives.<sup>71</sup> Alhaji Adegbenro rose to become the Minister for Local Government and by 1962 he was the Deputy leader of the party. He was also elected by the Action Group as the Premier of Western Region in 1962.<sup>72</sup> Without doubt, Alhaji Adegbenro maintained a very close relationship with Chief Obafemi Awolowo. When Chief Obafemi Awolowo was in prison, Alhaji Adegbenro in the company of other members of the party most especially, Alhaji A.W. Elias of Lagos negotiated unsuccessfully several times for the release of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.<sup>73</sup> In the alliance between the Action Group and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, in 1964, Adegbenro was concerned with the release of his leader. Indeed, he kept Chief Awolowo updated on developments within the alliance.<sup>74</sup> Through this alliance, Alhaji Adegbenro and the Action Group worked out only for the release of Chief Obafemi Awolowo but also his possible acquisition of political power at the Federal level.

Another close associate of Chief Obafemi Awolowo is Alhaji S.O. Gbadamosi. Alhaji Gbadamosi had been an accomplished businessman before he joined the Action Group at its inauguration. He was a member of the Western House of Assembly from 1951 to 1959, and also, a member of the Federal Executive Council of the Action Group.<sup>75</sup> Through these positions, he interacted with Chief Obafemi Awolowo and a very deep relationship seemed to have developed. Alhaji Gbadamosi was one of the principal characters who influenced Chief Obafemi Awolowo in his political decisions during (the latter's) days as Premier of the Western Region. For instance, when Chief Obafemi Awolowo was to leave regional politics for Lagos, Alhaji Gbadamosi who Chief Awolowo claimed he had great deference to was one of those who convinced him that Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola should succeed him.<sup>76</sup>

The deference which Chief Obafemi Awolowo had for Alhaji Gbadamosi did not emanate from religious consid-

rations, rather, it evolved from loyalty and personal integrity of Alhaji Gbadamosi. During the Action Group crisis and the subsequent administrative *cum* political inquiries that followed, the opponents of Chief Obafemi Awolowo attempted to blackmail Alhaji Gbadamosi into giving evidence against Chief Obafemi Awolowo by promising him (Alhaji Gbadamosi) that his debt of over £200,000 would be written off, but Alhaji Gbadamosi did not yield to the blackmail.<sup>77</sup> Thus Alhaji Gbadamosi protected the political image of Chief Obafemi Awolowo which would perhaps have been damaged during the period of the crisis.

Whereas, Chief Obafemi Awolowo remained very active during the politics of Nigerian Second republic, it does not appear that Alhaji Gbadamosi was as active, as it was during the period leading to independence and after. Nevertheless, their friendship transcended the realm of politics. As Chief Oluwole Awolowo would want us to believe, Alhaji Gbadamosi was the last person to visit Chief Obafemi Awolowo before his death on 9th May, 1987. The Alhaji himself corroborated this.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps the most celebrated of Muslim colleagues of Chief Obafemi Awolowo is Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande. From Jakande's account, he met Chief Awolowo in 1950 at a meeting of the Nigerian Youth Movement in Lagos.<sup>79</sup> He established close relations with Chief Obafemi Awolowo when he was appointed editor of the Nigerian Tribune, a newspaper established by Chief Obafemi Awolowo.<sup>80</sup> Alhaji Jakande can aptly be described as Chief Obafemi Awolowo's protege — Alhaji Jakande used the Nigerian Tribune to project Chief Obafemi Awolowo's image in politics. It must be mentioned at this stage that Alhaji Jakande was one of those tried and convicted with Chief Obafemi Awolowo during the Treason Trial of 1962–63.<sup>81</sup> He also wrote a book about the Trial.

During the first republic, Alhaji Jakande though belonged to the Action Group, he was not as prominent as other leading members of the party. In the second republic however, he was in the forefront of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's party, the Unity Party of Nigeria. As the Governor of Lagos State (1979-83) Alhaji Jakande, like his mentor, pursued relentlessly amongst other things, a policy of Free Education at both primary and secondary school levels. Alhaji Jakande's relationship was more than political relationship. He married Chief Awolowo's cousin.<sup>82</sup> This family relationship must have contributed immensely to the deep association which existed between Alhaji Jakande and Chief Obafemi Awolowo. There is no doubt that Chief Obafemi Awolowo had built a great following in Lagos before the lifting of the ban on politics in 1978, but because of Alhaji Jakande's deep affection for his leader, he was widely acknowledged as the *Babakekere* who held the forte from which Chief Obafemi Awolowo radiated political power and influence in Lagos.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not only have Muslim colleagues who worked with him in the pursuit of political power. He had a sister, Alhaja Asanat Awofeso, who like her brother, was a christian by birth, but converted to Muslim when she married Alhaji Awofeso in 1934.<sup>83</sup> Whereas Chief Obafemi Awolowo vehemently opposed her sister's marriage to a muslim, like many muslim or christian families would do, he later accepted her sister's decision after considerable pressure.<sup>84</sup> However, it is necessary to indicate here that the fact of his sister being a muslim did not seem to have damaged their sibling relationship. During the political crisis which led to the detention of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, she stayed in Ibadan near him while Mrs. H.I.D. Awolowo took care of the home. Furthermore, Chief Awolowo helped her sister to fulfill one of the obligations of her religion by sending her on pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>85</sup> Chief Obafemi Awolowo's relationship with her sister must have endeared many muslims to him.

## CONCLUSION:

From the 1950s onwards, Nigerian politicians used a variety of factors to struggle for and sustain themselves in power. One of such factors was religion. While Chief Obafemi Awolowo abhorred the use of religion to canvass for support, he subsequently succumbed to it after he had successfully contributed to the dismemberment of a religious party which was a threat to the survival of his party and his position in the Western Region. Chief Awolowo's unmitigated attack on the National Muslim League sufficiently demonstrates his determination to consolidate his power in the region. However, his condemnation of the party should not be misconstrued to mean that he did not like muslims. The main issue at stake was power politics. Indeed, in his pursuit of political power, his religious persuasion as a christian did not deter him from employing Islamic sentiments to swell his supporters in any part of the country. This has also been shown by his unsuccessful attempt to exploit religious sentiments in the Northern Region for political advantage. It should be pointed out clearly, that Chief Obafemi Awolowo possibly resorted to religious sentiments in his political career because his political opponents in the struggle for power also exploited religion, most especially Islam, to acquire political power.

The establishment of the Western Region Pilgrims' Welfare Board in 1958 as posited in this paper was a political move. nevertheless, it was an important decision that made the pilgrimage to Mecca less burdensome. It was established at a time when Chief Obafemi Awolowo needed the support of the people of the region, no matter their religious backgrounds to promote his desire for a higher political office at the Federal level. In his relations with his muslim colleagues, it does not appear that their religion was important to him. Their loyalty in the struggle for political power appears to have been paramount in his mind. In fact, their loyalty to him earned some of them high positions in the field of politics.

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41. I am very grateful to Dr. R.O. Lasisi of the University of Ilorin and other indigenes of Oyo for this information.
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49. The Action Group won a total of twenty five seats through its alliance with parties based in the Northern Region.
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 One of the songs sung by the Muslim supporters of Chief Obafemi Awolowo during his visit to the Mosque was:  
     Ni so nimosalasi, ni so n' mosalasi  
     bi o kirun b'okirun ni so n' mosalasi  
     Awolowo baba Olayinka  
     ni so n' mosalasi.  
 Meaning:  
     Lets go to the mosque. Lets go the mosque  
     It does not matter whether you pray or not  
     Awolowo father of Olayinka  
     Lets go to the mosque.

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53. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99. See also Y.A. Quadri "The Tijaniyya In Nigeria: A case study" Unpublished Phd Thesis University of Ibadan. 1981, p. 255.
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55. Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims in Western Nigeria had been performing pilgrimage to Mecca since the late nineteenth century. On the tradition of pilgrimage to Mecca see Umar, al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition In West Africa*, Khartoum University Press, 1972; J.S. Birks, *Across the Savannas to Mecca: The Overland Pilgrimage Route from West Africa*, C. Hurst & Company, London, 1978. On the law establishing the pilgrims board, see *Supplement to the Western Regional Gazette*. No. 39. Volume. 5th June, 1958, Part A.
56. *Western House of Assembly Debates*, 27th March 1958, p. 487.
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Ogunluyi, Alhaja Humuani Alaga, Alhaji L.B. Augusto, Alhaji L.A. Opa-  
leye, Dr. (now Professor Saburi Biobaku (Secretary to the Premier).  
The Late Alhaji L. Augusto replaced the Late Alhaji Jibril Martin as  
Chairman when the latter died in Mecca in 1959.

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72. Obafemi Awolowo, *Adventure In Power: The Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law* Book II, Evans Publishers, 1957, pp. 124 -125.
73. Awolowo, *My March Through Prison*, p. 282.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 291-29.
75. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* p. 528.
76. Awolowo, *The Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law, op. cit.*, p. 72.
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## The Influence of Religion on Awolowo: An Insider's View

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JUSTICE ADEWALE THOMPSON

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### INTRODUCTION

To those of us who are living witnesses to the trials and tribulations of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (SAN) and to those of us who are his admirers, supporters, friends and inveterate and unshakable devotees, the 9th day of May, 1987, was a day of national calamity — a day when the sun appeared to have set in the east instead of the west — a day of doubt and sorrow, not for Awo but for Nigeria.

"All that live must die passing through nature to eternity." Yes, Shakespeare was right when he expressed this eternal truth through the mouth of immortal Julius Ceasar but those of us who believed so much in immortal Awo did not believe he could die until it happened on that fateful day, 9th May 1987. Somehow, it never dawned on us that we were not in control of his life. We had always held ourselves out to accept the impossible that Awo would continue to live at Ikenne as a veritable oracle for the silent solution of all the problems of our national life, be it political, economic, social or religious.

Now that he is gone, it is our duty to rise up to the challenge which the new era will bring. If the registration of voters went wrong, there is no one around again whose voice could command such respect as to cause the authorities to be moved. If there is rigging anywhere at any time, there is no single voice again which could muster the courage to

Speak the truth against the culprits. If our census figures are manipulated, no respectable voice will tell the world that such figures are not acceptable. If the Nigerian economy deteriorates again as it did in 1983, there is no one to point this out even at the risk of being branded a saboteur.

When the black man suffers any set back he turns to religion — a line of least resistance, whereby he supplicates negatively to God for deliverance. He expects God to descend like Zeus from mount Olympus with implements of war to rescue him. He forgets that God is the "fons et origo" of everything that is on earth, including the good and the bad, and, inasmuch as the good and the bad cannot exist without His authority, He will not take sides in any controversy until it develops into a crisis. At that stage, He will be obliged to intervene not in favour of any one side but to establish the validity of His own law as promulgated by Him for the sustenance of His stupendous and limitless Universe. The ethical merit of our claims and counterclaims will then be considered and those on the right hand path will win while those on the left hand path will lose whatever the strength of their arms for "the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong". It is on this note that I enter upon the task of unfolding to the world my own personal knowledge of the religious proclivities of immortal Awo.

#### 1. THE BEGINNING

Awo was born into a family in which the three religions known to Africa were practised with unremitting fervour. His father was a christian at a time when Christianity was in its infancy. In those days, the 1890's, it was indeed an achievement in Nigeria to have a father who was educated in the christian tradition. His mother was also a christian but his grandmother whom he adored and who regarded Awo as the reincarnate incarnation of her own father, was a devotee of the traditional religion of the Yorubas — The Ifa religion established by an antediluvian sage—Orunmila.

At page 16 of his book "My Early life" Awo said:

Granny did not share my father's belief in one God and faith in Jesus Christ. But unlike many a parent at the time, she and her husband Awolowo displayed an exemplary tolerance."

.... It was the practice with Granny to get the Ifa priest to consult the oracle on certain occasions, especially when a child was born to or by one of her own children ... father always made sure that he was not in the house when the divination took place

Nature does nothing in vain. The environment in which the immortal Awo grew up has been specially conditioned to accommodate the experience required by a person who was destined to take far-reaching decisions affecting the religious life of the people of Nigeria. On Friday 18th September 1987 I was travelling along the road to Ikenne and just before the entrance of the magnificent factory of Tayo Carpets, I had to caution the driver to stop in order to give way for a procession of aboriginal religious dignitaries, male and female. They were venerable elders of the town adorned in their traditional attire. No one need tell you what they were. Their very bearing proclaimed their role as custodians of the traditions of Ikenne town. These were the relics of the religion of Awo's grandmother and they are very much around today as they were in the 1890's. There are misguided and ill-equipped citizens who found themselves in positions of power too soon. They were the ones who mounted a campaign against what they called 'secret societies' and attempted to convince Awo to join in the crusade. Awo refused knowing fully well that although he was a Christian he has had sufficient interaction with these people from his youth to know that the Ogboni cults are not inimical to society, and that on the other hand, they are the governments of our 'indigenous society.

The testimony is in Awo's own words:

Speak the truth against the culprits. If our census figures are manipulated, no respectable voice will tell the world that such figures are not acceptable. If the Nigerian economy deteriorates again as it did in 1983, there is no one to point this out even at the risk of being branded a saboteur.

When the black man suffers any set back he turns to religion – a line of least resistance, whereby he supplicates negatively to God for deliverance. He expects God to descend like Zeus from mount Olympus with implements of war to rescue him. He forgets that God is the “fons et origo” of everything that is on earth, including the good and the bad, and, inasmuch as the good and the bad cannot exist without His authority, He will not take sides in any controversy until it develops into a crisis. At that stage, He will be obliged to intervene not in favour of any one side but to establish the validity of His own law as promulgated by Him for the sustenance of His stupendous and limitless Universe. The ethical merit of our claims and counterclaims will then be considered and those on the right hand path will win while those on the left hand path will lose whatever the strength of their arms for “the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong”. It is on this note that I enter upon the task of unfolding to the world my own personal knowledge of the religious proclivities of immortal Awo.

#### 1. THE BEGINNING

Awo was born into a family in which the three religions known to Africa were practised with unremitting fervour. His father was a christian at a time when Christianity was in its infancy. In those days, the 1890's, it was indeed an achievement in Nigeria to have a father who was educated in the christian tradition. His mother was also a christian but his grandmother whom he adored and who regarded Awo as the reincarnate incarnation of her own father, was a devotee of the traditional religion of the Yorubas – The Ifa religion established by an antediluvian sage—Orunmila.

At page 16 of his book "My Early life" Awo said:

Granny did not share my father's belief in one God and faith in Jesus Christ. But unlike many a parent at the time, she and her husband Awolowo displayed an exemplary tolerance."

.... It was the practice with Granny to get the Ifa priest to consult the oracle on certain occasions, especially when a child was born to or by one of her own children ... father always made sure that he was not in the house when the divination took place

Nature does nothing in vain. The environment in which the immortal Awo grew up has been specially conditioned to accommodate the experience required by a person who was destined to take far-reaching decisions affecting the religious life of the people of Nigeria. On Friday 18th September 1987, I was travelling along the road to Ikenne and just before the entrance of the magnificent factory of Tayo Carpets, I had to caution the driver to stop in order to give way for a procession of aboriginal religious dignitaries, male and female. They were venerable elders of the town adorned in their traditional attire. No one need tell you what they were. Their very bearing proclaimed their role as custodians of the traditions of Ikenne town. These were the relics of the religion of Awo's grandmother and they are very much around today as they were in the 1890's. There are misguided and ill-equipped citizens who found themselves in positions of power too soon. They were the ones who mounted a campaign against what they called 'secret societies' and attempted to convince Awo to join in the crusade. Awo refused knowing fully well that although he was a Christian he has had sufficient interaction with these people from his youth to know that the Ogboni cults are not inimical to society, and that on the other hand, they are the governments of our 'indigenous society.

The testimony is in Awo's own words:

By the then prevailing social standards, father descended from an illustrious and noble ancestry. His great grandfather held the double Chieftaincy titles of Oluwo and Losi. In Ijebu Remo, the instrument of authority which was the equivalent of the British Parliament and Cabinet, was the Oshugbo, the Oba; the Chiefs could hold deliberations as a Council, but any decision taken by the Council must receive the imprimatur or approval of the Oshugbo before it could take effect. The Oba was the King and head of all the community and he presided over the meetings with his Chiefs. In Ikenne as in most parts of Ijebu Remo the Oluwo is next in rank to the Oba, but it is the former who presides over the meeting of the Oshugbo.... on the demise of the Oba, the Oluwo acts in his place. The Oluwo title which was held by father's great-grandfather is a public title whilst the Losi title, one of the Chieftaincy titles which I now hold is a family title. The former could rotate from one recognized ruling family to another, whilst the latter remains in our family to be held by any worthy success or on whom the Oba may confer it.

Continuing our discussion on the making of the man Awo for his eventual role of ruler and liberator, even a fool will not fail to agree that a person of the character of immortal Awo, (truthful to himself and truthful to all, forthright, incapable of deceit, guile or hypocrisy, who has been nurtured in a family so well entrenched in the religious traditions of his people by means of his noble birth) is not the type of ruler who would succumb to any clamour by light hearted religious fanatics with politically motivated ill-will to ban what they termed 'Secret Societies'. Immortal Awo himself was Losi of Ikenne, a family title conferred on him by the Oba. In other words, by virtue of his birth, even if he had risen to become a Bishop, he was entitled to that title although it may not then be conferred for obvious reasons.

In 1976 immediately after the assassination of Gen. Muritala Mohammed, there was hue and cry in the Country as to the banning of what they described as 'Secret Societies'. I

did not see and have not yet seen what connection the existence of "Secret Societies" had with the commission of the offence of High Treason by a non-member, but whatever the reason, which remains still in the Crypts of the conscience of the clamourists, we were led to strain our thinking faculties to excogitate the following factor which is the total eradication of the indigenous religious traditions of our people so that the received religions of Islam and Christianity could take complete control of the social behaviourism of the people thereby making the blackman a whiteman in black epidermis where he is a christian, or an Arab of a negro where he is a muslim.

#### TRADITION AND RELIGION

In our *African beliefs, science or supersitition?* (page 124), we did mention that Tradition makes us what we are and religion leads us as we are to the throne of God.

The demise of immortal Awo and the organization of this conference by Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd. have created the forum for us to warn the remainder of Uncontaminated Negroes of Africa, that we shall never succeed in our political, economic or religious aspirations unless we go back to the traditions of our ancestors.

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the year 4 BC and martyred by crucifixion in the year 29 AD., but it was at Antioch in Asia minor now known as Atakaya in Southern Turkey that his disciples were first called Christians and that was in or about the year 41 AD., about 12 years after the death of Christ. It was then a town under the Roman empire. At that time — 41 AD, there was no Christmas. It was in 440 AD that the Pope ordered that the birthday of Christ which was and is still unknown, be celebrated on 25th December to harmonize the pagan traditions of the people of Europe with the Christian calendar. The feast of Saturnalia of Rome was celebrated between December 17th

and 23rd and the feast of Santa Claus or St. Nicholas came up during that period which was the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere – the Winter Solstice.

The stability of Christianity was guaranteed by this marriage between Religion and Tradition. The Christmas Trees, Christmas cards, the Christmas presents, father-Christmas and other Customs peculiar to this period are not recorded in the Bible but they are so much a part of the Christian religion that any failure to observe them tends to defeat the very essence of Christmas. These however are the pagan ceremonies attached to the feasts of Saturnalia and Santa Claus. Christianity as a religion was meant for the gentiles as the Jews claim that they are already in direct communication with Yarweh and therefore would not need a mediator. As a gentile religion, it is a flexible religion and does not discriminate between one gentile tradition and another. This fact has been proved by the transatlantic negroes who having refused to abandon the gods of their native land received the blessing of the Pope to Christianize their ancient gods into Christian Saints. Thus in Cuba and parts of Brazil you have in the Roman Catholic Churches effigies representing St. Obatala, St. Ifa, St. Sango, St. Ogun, St. Yemoja, St. Oduduwa.

It is when you adhere strictly to your own tradition (whatever religion you might have received) that you will be able to resist the brain-washing of external cultures seeking first to possess your psyche as a condition precedent to the possession of your gold or your oil. I have confined myself to the Christian religion to which I belong, because I do not wish to give the impression by means of this discourse that I have any opposition to the Islamic faith some members of which could be highly sensitive in these matters. However, it is not unfashionable to see a perfect specimen of the negro race claiming to have descended from Mesopotamia or some other non-negroid countries and regarding the traditions of Islam as the only passport for good living and salvation in the life hereafter.

The point we are attempting to make here is very serious.

There is a binding natural obligation on all negroes to support the OAU and other international organisation in their effort to eliminate poverty and disease from the continent of Africa by promoting the political and economic freedom of negroes in Africa who are under one kind of serfdom or the other. Now, a negro ruler who has lost touch with his African tradition as a result of over westernization is likely to compromise the essential factor to victory should this be in conflict with the tradition of his received religion. In the same manner a negro ruler who believes that his ancestors came from Mesopotamia, will not hesitate to organize a total sell-out where the interest of his Middle East "ancestors" conflict with the struggles of Negro Africa.

We are therefore to conclude under this heading that immortal Awo has been so conditioned from the womb of his mother to remain a solid defender of the struggles of negro Africa because nature himself has planted his feet rather deep in African tradition so much so that neither the glamour which Christianity possesses in its teachings nor the attractions of Christian education was able to deflect Awo from his fundamental objective as the most consistent and indomitable leader of the struggles of negro Africa.

## II. THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF AWO

Chief Awolowo was one of those who did not permit his own religious persuasion to affect his traditional capacity for giving others the benefit of the doubt. It is in the field of religion that fanatics are the most bred. A fanatic has been defined by a sage as someone who doubles his pace having forgotten his aim. These men are around and when you encounter them, they seem to believe that the world would have come to an end if they had not sustained it by the mode of worship they had professed. The Lósi of the Ikenne is also the Baba-Ijo of St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Ikenne, and the Patron of that prestigious and dynamic society of Agbeni Methodist Church -- The Wesley group.

I am not in possession of the fact that Awo worshipped consistently at any church in Lagos but if a Baptist Church had been somewhere near his residence at Park Lane Apapa, Awo could become a member of that Church without the slightest detriment to his allegiance to the Methodists at Ibadan and the Saint Saviour's Anglican Church at Ikenne.

Awo introduced the Pilgrim's Welfare Board into Nigeria for the benefit of muslims going to Mecca, at a time when the most fanatical islamites knew not what to do. During the hectic days of the Action Group campaign to win the hearts of the Lagos populace, I had the privilege of accompanying Awo and other AG dignitaries to worship with our fellow muslims at the Central Mosque (Jimoh Lane) in Lagos. We were obliged to remove our shoes and our hats and to sit on the level of the floor in supplication to God (Allah). As premier of the Western Region he did not abhor the discipline imposed by the Mosque and none of his ministers dared oppose the visit on religious grounds.

Awo was very generous to religion. My experience as a committee member to two Lagos Churches involved in purchase of two pipe organs enables me to appreciate better, the magnitude of Chief Awolowo's generosity, when he purchased a pipe organ for St. Saviour's Anglican Church Ikenne. I was staggered by the magnitude of the generosity of Awo for making such great financial outlay for the purchase of the pipe organ. As if the acquisition of the organ was not enough, Awo procured the services of a competent organist in the person of Mr. Kayode Oni who of course was glad to serve gratis for Awo. Mr. Kayode Oni is of the NTA. Awo himself testified to his competence when he told me this short story about Mr. Kayode Oni who was in Awo's entourage when Awo visited Jerusalem in 1980.

At a Sacred Church in Jerusalem reputed to have been built on the site of the birth place of St. John, the divine of the Book of Revelations, there was an organ which had been in disuse for over 50 years but which sometimes respond to melodies when the maestros from Europe and America

visited the place and placed their stamp on the keyboard. As the pilgrims were going round, the Catechist and guide saw Mr. Kayode Oni sitting at the organ which looked innocently playable. The man called on him to leave the organ alone as no one could play it. Awo was attracted to the scene and told the Catechist that he should leave Kayode at the organ. The Catechist retorted that only the Handels and Bachs and Mozarts could make music from the organ. Awo said he told him that after Mozart, the Catechist should add the name, Kayode Oni to his list of experts. By this time the whole group of pilgrims from every part of the world had congregated to watch this young negro attempting to play a 50 year old disused organ in an ancient church in Jerusalem. When Mr. Kayode Oni finished, he was carried shoulder high by the pilgrims who had all joined to sing one of the favourite hymns of Awo which he played so well on the organ that the Catechist was forced to ask for his name again which proved that he was ready to add his name to the list of the greats who had played the organ.

#### THE CHAPEL

In Awo's residence at Ikenne there is a chapel upstairs which is one of the most beautiful places of worship I have ever seen. When on taking me round the house on the completion of the edifice, we arrived at the chapel, I was struck with awe at the expensive decorations and was forced to remove my shoes (not because of the immaculate carpeting) but because the place was a consecrated ground.

The rationale behind the building of the chapel was as explained by Awo himself: "Tell me 'Dewale, we have built a good place for ourselves, why should we not reserve the best room in the house for God? On this note we engaged in an excursion into the deeper aspects of religion and mysticism. If God is, as we have held him to be the most revered, then He must occupy the most prominent part in the inner recesses of our hearts; this is the speculative part of the subject but we need also the operative part of it to act as constant

reminder that God has been entrenched in the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of our hearts. The Chapel in the house is that element of reminder which can never fail.

#### AWO ENJOYED THE HYMNS

In our *Philosophical Exercise* (1982) we did say under the heading "Ten Reflections on man" That "a person who could sing and enjoy the hymns is more likely to have his or her prayers heard". My first experience of Awo's mastery of the hymns was at the celebration of his 70th Birthday in 1979. It was a festival of congregational hymns at St. Saviours Anglican Church Ikenne. I watched Awo as he sang and enjoyed the hymns as they were being rendered. One hymn that spoke more eloquently than the greatest orator on Awo is hymn no 709 from the Methodist Hymnal sung to the tune of Falcon Street.

1. And are we yet alive  
And see each other's face?  
Glory and praise to Jesus give  
for His redeeming Grace
2. Preserved by power divine  
To full salvation here  
Again in Jesus' praise we join,  
And in His sight appear
3. What troubles have we seen  
What conflicts have we passed  
Fightings without and fears within  
since we assembled last
4. But out of all the Lord  
Hath brought us by his Love  
And still He doth His Help afford  
And hides our life above

5. Then let us make our boast  
of His redeeming power  
Which saves us to the uttermost  
Till we can sin no more

6. Let us take up the cross  
Till we the Crown obtain  
And Gladly reckon all things loss  
So we many Jesus gain

As we sang in that beautiful Church that beautiful morning with every true Awoist in celebration mood, I was particularly lucky to have sat next to Chief Adeyiga Akinsanya who sang the tenor of the tune Falcon Street so beautifully that I was transported by the delectable melody to the scenes of 1962, 1963 and 1964, when treachery, calumny, malice, cruelty, abuse of power, misuse of power, arrogance, "Iscaiotism" all combined to cast the shadow of gloom on the nation for what they did to Awo.

Between 1966 and 1979 there was another set of detractors which Awo himself had analysed at pages 6 and 7 of *Path to Nigerian Greatness*:

There was no quarrel at all between us and as far as I know, there was no disagreement between me and them as to political goals or methods of attaining them. For my part, I still regard them as friends in every social sense of that word and I have no cause to believe that they have ceased to regard me as such. They have not cared to state the reason for their action. These associates so far remain veiled and unspoken.

However, two real reasons are discernible from their political manoeuvres and utterances in private and public at different stages since 1966. I am satisfied that one real reason for their unfriendly attitude toward me is that they no longer cherish my leadership simply because they too believe that they can and should lead in their own right.

Accordingly, since 1966, they have been organizing sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly, support for themselves in opposition to me. Each of them aspires to be Head of the Governments of the Federation the very office they know to which I aspire. The other real reason is that after about two decades of exclusion from power they no longer want to be in opposition and the way to power in their calculation, is inter-ethnic alliance in which leadership is comended to a particular ethnic group.

Over the years, and inspite of their protestations to the contrary, they have lost all sense of ideological direction and faith in the noble cause dedicated to the equality of all ethnic groups - large and small - in the affairs and governance of Nigeria. They know that this attitude of mind is in direct conflict with my thinking and avowed political norms and can only be exhibited in circles where I have no direct influence and in which they exercise leadership.

"And are we yet alive, and see each other's face?" must of necessity remind me of some of these men whom I know too well and who for fear of being badly oggled, avoided the ceremony but would have sent some hypocritical letters of congratulation and tainted gifts to Awo to prove to Awo that they were not opposed to his person but only to his policies. Copies of which letters they would have distributed among borderline Awoists as baits to convert them to their fold.

Another hymn on the programme for the day which spoke a silent language clear and unambiguous to all the Awo loyalists who have fought on his side the perennial battle for truth and justice, against all the terrors and tribulations of a gargantuan establishment adorned in the infernal paraphernalia of Belial, the prince of EVIL himself, is hymn No.898 in the Methodist Hymnal. I shall only reproduce Verses 1 & 2 here, as they are the most relevant.

1. Once to every man and nation  
 Comes the moment to decide  
 In the strife of truth with falsehood  
 For the good or evil side  
 Some great cause God's new messiah

Offering each the bloom or blight  
 And the choice goes by forever  
 'Twixt that darkness and that light

2. Then to side with truth is noble  
 when we share her wretched crust  
 Ere her cause bring fame and profit  
 And 'tis prosperous to be just  
 Then it is the brave man chooses  
 While the coward stands aside  
 Till the multitude make virtue  
 of the faith they had denied

This hymn was sung to the delectable tune of Bithynia. The message was well conveyed and I am sure it was very well received by all.

One of the favourite hymns of Awo was "All hail the power of Jesus name" (Ancient and modern 217 Tune Diadem). The hymn was sung with fervour by the mighty congregation of well meaning citizens of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Bendel and Kwara States and distinguished visitors and friends of Awo from every part of the country at the service of commendation for Awo held at the Liberty Stadium Ibadan on Sunday 31st May 1987 at 1p.m.

#### AWO AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Although Awo was carried away by the writings of Robert Ingersoll, T.H. Huxley, Thomas Paine and other Rationalists, to believe that he could be an agnostic in the 1930's and 40's; he was not really in doubt as to the existence of God and the powerful influence of God's will in God's own universe.

The point is well made by Awo himself in *'Awo' his autobiography* at page 77:

Eventually I returned to the Holy Bible and to the Christian fold. Throughout the period of my oscillation between agnosticism and christianity, my wife stood immovably for the latter. Her constant admonitions and steadfastness did more than anything else restrain me from going beyond the point of no return.

Awo's return to the fold was total. Every sunday you will find him in Church either at Agbeni or at Ikenne always in the company of Mama, Chief Mrs. Awolowo; and one is bound to wonder, how and why a person of such a strong character and depth of learning could submit so sheepishly to his religious practices. The answer to this is to be found in the next section.

#### AWO AND BELIEF IN GOD

There is no doubt that Awo believed in God. To prove this, it is unnecessary to look for those areas of his rational outlook which support the existence of God. It is sufficient (and indeed the most convincing proof) is for us to know what he has said about God in relation to his travails in an effort to establish an egalitarian society in Nigeria:

I am profusely thankful to God for giving me the strength and the grace to rise each time I had fallen and for so lifting me a lot after a fall, that I am now what I am. Indeed, through all my life, it has pleased God to make me survive and triumph over all the vicissitudes and travails be they personal, social and political.

This belief in the power of God to rescue him from all "the vicissitudes and travails" must have been founded on some facts which Awo himself could not explain. What has come to mind in this connection was the revelation in the *'Travails of Democracy'* of how Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe as President of Nigeria had intervened to prevent him from being sent to the North during the period of his incarceration. This fact which was made known to Awo only recently

was a miracle seeing that it was the combination of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe's NCNC and Sir Ahmadu Bello's NPC that formed the government of the Federation in which Awo was leader of the opposition. Awo paid glowing tribute to Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe for that act of humanitarianism but we should not omit the interplay of the unknown factor in such events. Suppose someone had lost the file so that Zik could not have had the opportunity of evaluating the facts in order to make the best choice - Calabar? Suppose Zik had gone out of the country at the material time? I am sure that Awo was introspective enough to know that the X factor had played its part.

The easiest thing for those in power to do was to "dispose" of him in a manner which could seem natural. There will be conflagration all right as there was in the case of Lumumba but all will die down after the outburst and life would have continued without him. But somehow, those in power did not do that even though the degree of hostility and personal humiliation pointed to that direction. It may be that no one was willing to take the responsibility of unleashing an inexorable Karma of misfortune on himself and so perhaps what they expected was suicide or mental infirmity. In either case, the fact that they did not resort to murder, was an act of God.

The above is secondary when we know that Awo himself has "confessed" to personal communion with God. In *The Path to Nigerian Greatness* at page 52:

First I thank God for preserving my life to this day and for the innumerable mercies which it has pleased Him to bestow on me all my life. I am particularly thankful that he has enable me to know Him - as He really is - and to commune with and draw inspiration and guidance from Him in my hour of need, either on my own - including my family's account, or on account of my fellowmen. Time was when attainment with Him was accidental. It is not now. I now testify to the fact that attainment and communion with the infinite source of wisdom and power can be consciously planned and attained. And to be in attainment

with this force whether accidentally or consciously, is to have access to the gifts of insight of objectivity and clear and constructive thinking and of capability to solve problems - be they private or public - of the most intricate character. But there are preconditions for communion with the Divine source; you must constantly seek (and herein lies the narrow path) to cultivate the attributes of tolerance, sympathy, loving kindness, unselfishness, desire to benefit others, and high ideals.

The above is a rather important revelation which we are bound to accept with unquestioning credence but not without the need to lay the necessary foundation. St. John the Apostle had declared in his Gospel Chapter 1 Verse 18 that "no man hath seen God at any time" What Awo said was that he was able to *know* God. This element of perception was what was emphasized by Bishop Berkeley (1685 - 1753):

We may even assert that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men .... not that I imagine that we see God (as some will have it) by a direct and immediate view .... we do at all times and in all places *perceive*, manifest tokens of the Divinity. .... But though the Lord conceal Himself from the eyes of the sensual and lazy - yet to an unbiased and attentive mind nothing can be more plainly legible than the intimate presence of All-wise Spirit who fashions, regulates and sustains the whole system of beings.

There is therefore a gulf of difference between 'Knowing God' as Awo did and "Seeing God" as St. John denied. Awo added - as He really is - This is an enigmatic assertion which connotes that that knowledge carried with it the ocular visualization of the Deity. Our concept of that statement does not deviate from the central theme already discussed, in that knowledge of God as He really is, presupposes the conquest of ignorance founded on the dogmatic inaccuracies of the fathers of religion and that statement rather than implying a face to face dialogue with God represents the liberation of the psyche from the shackles of mundane error as a reward for an importunate desire to link up with the

source of ultimate reality.

Awo gave certain preconditions for attunement with God. These have already been corroborated by Bishop Berkeley:

For although the Lord conceals Himself from the sensual and Lazy, yet to an unbiased attentive mind nothing can be more plainly legible than the intimate presence of an All-wise spirit.

From this, we may deduce that Awo had an unbiased and attentive mind contrary to the villifying slogan of his detractors that he was vindictive. Claims of success in our earthly career have no merit until we are dead, when the whole life would have to be considered by a jury of world opinion, armed with all the facts from cradle to grave. For Awo, such a jury had pronounced the verdict of a noble and unselfish life; How could it be otherwise, when those who "nailed" him inspite of "manifest errors on the face of record", stampeded to pay him glowing tributes at his funeral? Awo's unbiased mind had permitted him to "know God" and I am sure that the Deity would not have conferred that privilege on a vindictive person. The truth is that none of those who accused Awo of vindictiveness had 'known God' to be able to publish it and so we are bound to speculate that these elements are what Awo had described them; victims of the psychological disease known as "projection" defined in Awo's own words as follows:

Because of the infernal (most of them undisclosed) acts they deliberately committed against me, in their efforts to destroy me, and because they so totally failed in those efforts, they have not been able to forgive themselves. And because they do not forgive themselves, they project their failure in this regard to me.....

Consequently, and this is much more pleasant, they accuse me of being vindictive and unforgiving

#### AWO AND MYSTICISM

Until the Rosicrucian Order (Amorc) staged an unprecedented ceremonial at Awo's funeral, many did not know that

Awo was a Rosicrucian, who followed the mystical teachings with the zeal and enthusiasm peculiar to him. It was clear from his testimony of communion with God that he had done all his lessons thoroughly and had reaped the reward of his industry and faith. One factor however remains to be considered. If Awo had known God and had been able to cause Him to solve all his personal and family problems, why did God deny him, so to say, the opportunity of mounting the throne as President of Nigeria?

The truth however is that God did not deny Awo, it was man who denied him. Are we then to say that man is more powerful than God in God's own universe? The answer is No! God is more powerful than man in God's own Universe. What really happened has been explained already and which I shall reproduce hereunder to prevent any misunderstanding:

God is the *fons et origo* of everything that on earth is, including the good and the bad. In as much as the good and the bad cannot exist without His authority, He will not take sides in the controversy until it has developed into a crisis. At that stage, He will be obliged to intervene, not in favour of anyone side, but to establish the validity of His own Law as promulgated by Him for the sustenance of His stupendous and limitless Universe. The ethical merit of our claims and Counter claims will then be considered and those on the right hand path will win while those on the left hand path will lose whatever the strength of their arms

It is clear therefore that if all of us had agreed that Awo was the answer to all our political woes he would have been voted as President of the country. On the otherhand if the issue had developed into a real crisis, God would have intervened in favour of Awo. The issue did not develop into any crisis. We chose to avoid the crisis because we were too keen to preserve the *status quo* and so we surrendered to the determination of opposing groups who were ready to go to war should we call for a showdown. In other words, we were afraid to die for the noble cause which Awo stood for

An object in a state of rest will be there for ever until someone, some catalytic force, propels it in one direction or another.

Awo himself was conscious of this principle when he said in his *Problems of Africa* at page 53;

Newton's Law of Inertia states that everybody perseveres in its state of rest or of moving uniformly in a straight line, except in so far as it is compelled by impressed forces to change its state

The fundamental issue militating against Awo's rise to the Presidency is contained in Awo's *Path to Nigerian Freedom* Faber and Faber London 1946, at page 51;

At the conference of the Northern Chiefs in 1942 a letter written by the West African Students Union in London came up for discussion. The letter touched on many problems affecting Nigeria as a whole and the writers appealed to the Northern Emirs and their people for cooperation with those in the South in tackling these problems. The Emirs' comment on this appeal for cooperation, as contained in the official report of the Conference is as follows, "Holding this country together is not possible except by means of the religion of the prophet..... If they want political unity let them follow our religion.

This statement made in 1942 is now obsolete in view of the provisions of section 35(i) of the Constitution of Nigeria but if we are to be true to ourselves, are we sure that the idea is dead? Many Nigerians are afraid to tell or acknowledge the truth in this regard because of the inconvenience this could engender. But the most valid support for the continued existence of Nigeria is the recognition of such areas of potential danger and our courage to tackle them on the conference table. Temporary advantages obtained by brushing aside the truth will become sour in the end when the fith beneath the carpet rears its head because it could no longer be suppressed. The fallacy which our colonial masters sold to us was that a Multi-ethnic state can only exist where one ethnic group

succeeds to dominate the rest and weld them together into one.

The example of Great Britain was given, but today, Great Britain is experiencing the most drastic transformation with the need to solve the Irish problem, and as much as possible ensure that Scottish Home rule is an academic exercise. This policy has failed in Cyprus where the Turks and the Greeks had lived together for 300 years. They had to break when the Turks no longer would accept Greek dominance or vice versa.

That the 1942 statement will perform the magic which federal character, NYSC scheme and other schemes of the Federal government, have failed to achieve, is unrealistic. But is it possible to have one religion in this country? The answer is No. therefore, another formula must be found which could only be explained and not defined because of the delicacy surrounding it.

When Isaac was induced by betrayal, to bless Jacob instead of Esau he was able though blind to recognize that the hand was that of Esau but the voice was that of Jacob. Isaac was bold enough to say it out. That perfidy has changed the course of the history of the Middle East for ever and I believe that a similar situation connived at or acquiesced in, in Nigeria could perpetuate the dominance of one religion over the others. To the nationalist, it matters not what religion is on top. This is true, I myself do not see any difference; most of us became what we are in religion because we were born into that particular faith and so it matters not to a true Nigerian what religion predominates in the country; but the real problem which we are bound to encounter in the 1942 formula or any other formula founded on religion is the demise of the racial tradition of the negro race and the substitution therefore, the traditions of Arabia or Rome.

The reason why we are still what we are - a half-way house between Ife and Rome or Arabia, is because the primordial divinities of our ancestors are still there at Ife to whom we could turn for comfort and succour in times of

terrestrial crisis. The adoption of one religion for the whole country means the severance of the only surviving connection between us and our ancestors and we shall be obliged to call on the divinities of Rome or Arabia in times of terrestrial crisis and these divinities woven already into Christianity and Islam will not support us on our own soil or any where else in any conflict between us and Rome or Arabia. In times of crisis, the Islamites will surely evoke the aid of the several elemental forces known in the occult books of the Koran. An "Arabian Nights" tradition would arise to make the terrestrial battle more complicated for those who are blind. In the same manner the fathers of Christianity who deleted the 7th to 10th books of Moses from the Bible and banned them as apocrypha could resort to these pages in times of terrestrial crisis.

These books have been banned by Canonical Order only. They existed as part of the original Bible and are still available in their purest forms in the proper places. There are reproductions of these books on sale in this country and other parts of the world. Our warning is that these copies have been deliberately mutilated to prevent the uninitiated from making illicit use of the potencies derivable therefrom. The Islamites on the other hand have not concealed any of their Arabian Mysticism from their negro proselytes and so we have a situation in Africa whereby the Christian who has been forced to abandon the worship of his ancestral terrestrial divinities, becomes helpless in times of terrestrial crisis.

We should not forget that God has given to the African Christian these terrestrial gods as weapons of survival in his own environment and God expects the African to use them; but instead, the African Christian adopts the rather negative doctrine of supplication to God for aid when he ought to be positive by making use of all the forces at his disposal to sustain the crisis in order to attract the attention of the Almighty God to look into the matter. It follows therefore that the tenets of Christianity as are being practised in Africa would only sustain a peaceful condition. In times of crisis,

the African must look elsewhere and his *Ogun, Obatala, Sango, Yemoja, Orunmila, Oshun, Obaluwaiye, Aja, Esu* are ready to fight on his side. After victory the African Christian in the process of reconstruction will be the most sought after, as his grimoire for the invocation of celestial potencies is the most effective for constructive purposes.

We have seen why Awo did not attain the presidency. While the Islamites had the advantage of the unmitigated use of the terrestrial gods of the Koran the Awoists having abandoned their own terrestrial gods, failed to muster the required Newtonian "opposite reaction" in the Astral plane in order to sustain the struggle in the physical plane and so, those who had mustered the required Astral forces, knew how futile it would be for the Awoists to attempt any showdown. They therefore proceeded with the rigging with such an unprecedented recklessness, which left the whole of the thinking populace aghast.

Once to every man and nation  
comes the moment to decide  
In the strife of truth with falsehood  
For the good or evil side...

The truism in the above hymn is sometimes misunderstood. In our terrestrial existence the idea of goodness is idealistic. What is here with us is evil. To be precise, 90% of the world is evil, only 10% could satisfy the criteria for goodness and so in times of *crisis* when one section is faced with the possibility of extermination, or where the process of deprivation whether political or economic, erodes the very root of the survival of the people, anything that could be done to save the souls of the people will have to be evaluated as part of the 90% of evil which pervades the Earth. However, philosophers believe that the survival of *homo sapiens*, in the eyes of the cosmic hierarchy, is predicated on his aspiration to become part of the conclave of goodness, this we submit, is another matter involving the astral, mental and spiritual

bodies of man and not his physical or terrestrial body which is immersed in this deluge of 90% evil we call physical existence.

Mrs. Thatcher's people brought Christianity to Nigeria and so she is presumed to be more knowledgeable on the subject than some of our people who are noon-day converts. In spite of all the doctrines of the Christian faith, Mrs Thatcher did not allow the Argentinian Generals to seize the Falkland Islands for good. She declared war and won. If she had remained passive by praying to God for aid, the Argentinian Generals would still be in illegal occupation of that British territory.

#### THE MANNER OF AWO'S TRANSLATION

*The following was the Statement I made, on the demise of Awo:*

#### STATEMENT OF MR. JUSTICE ADEWALE THOMPSON ON THE TRANSLATION OF CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO (SAN)

When I heard the tragic news at Calabar, I could not believe it until I arrived at Ikenne.

As the event was inconsistent with the intimate discussions I had with him, I decided to make some investigations and these are my findings.

1. It is not quite correct that Chief Awolowo had a premonition of his death.
2. What happened in the case of Chief Awolowo was a firm decision of the evolutionary personality to terminate the incarnatory personality so that the evolutionary personality (higher self) could continue the work unfettered in a higher arc of existence co-terminus with his mission on Earth. As a person approaching individuality (Sainthood), the purity of his style of living could bring the evolutionary personality nearer at the time of withdrawal making it possible for his words and actions to be involuntarily suggestive of premonition.

3. Only God knows the actual time of death.
4. What I know he did, was to predict *the manner of his death*.
  - (a) that he will not die at sea or in the air but on land
  - (b) That he will not die in any accident or civil commotion.
  - (c) That he will die in a manner comforting to his supporters.

I did not understand this aspect of the matter until he gave 'V' sign on his death bed, which is a sign of the immortality of the ideals for which he lived.
5. The 'v' sign enjoins us to keep the Awo ideals alive and these are
  - (a) Free Education — Awo has accepted some amendments to the scheme to prevent abuse;
  - (b) Health — Free but without detriment to ,
  - (c) Fundamental Human rights — Awo does not accept any compromise here;
  - (d) Welfare of the people — Awo does not accept any compromise here also.
6. *Secret of his translation*: Chief Awolowo's translation was a great cosmic event which entailed the conlocation of some hierarchic forces in Nigeria on 7th May 1987. in Nigeria on 7th May 1987.
7. The secret of Awo's translation is to be found in the book of Isaiah Chapter 38 verses 1–8 even though the number of years was shorter than that of the King in the book of Isaiah.
8. The difference was that the extension was granted in the case of Awo as a result of the supplications of the good peoples of Nigeria — (many millions) who wanted his life spared 'so that he could put the house in order before he is withdrawn.'
9. It is therefore a sign of ingratitude to God for any one to mourn for Awo.
- 10 We should mourn for ourselves as citizens of a dis-

obedient nation who failed to take advantage of the 'extension' which we have prayed for.

- 11 *Another incarnation?* Since he could not complete the job in this incarnation it is likely he will come again to complete it *but in a different manner.*
- 12 To obtain maximum benefit from the incarnations, the nation must keep the Awo myth alive by adopting his ideals as stated in paragraph (5) *supra.*
- 13 That was what he meant by giving the 'V' sign as his Soul and divine spark left the body or incarnatory personality for the realms of light.
- 14 The 9th day of May 1987 is therefore the beginning of the 'Glorious dawn' and this is confirmed by the numerical strength of that day.
- 15 It is to be assumed that we are not permitted to disclose more than this. To do otherwise will offend the laws of nature.

In the light of what we have said already, we shall explain further the meaning of paragraphs 10 and 11 of the above Statement. Here was a man who has been prepared by God to give us the right type of enlightened leadership in order to attain our goal of a prosperous and powerful nation capable of championing the cause of black Africa in all its ramifications. It was obvious that the generality of the people preferred him but certain elements in control of the instruments of coercion remained adamant and un-compromising. They would not have him and were prepared to do everything possible to reject him.

Awo himself had testified to some of the atrocities perpetrated against the democratic process by this group

I now know that it was not accidental that there was widespread short supply of ballot papers in practically all the polling stations which the UPN agents were able to man so effectively as to prevent the replacement of official ballot boxes with those already stuffed by the NPN.

I now know that the mass arrest of UPN polling and counting agents in the Northern States in the early hours of Friday 10th August 1979, the day before the Presidential election, was ordered by top functionaries of the FMG in order that NPN and FEDECO officials might have underserved opportunity to rig the vote tally and score higher percentage in favour of NPN's Presidential Candidate

It happened in 1979. It happened again in 1983 with increasing virulence including the rigging of the Voter's list to contain imaginary names. At polling stations, by not posting presiding officers to Polling Stations in UPN dominated electoral districts, and by short supply of ballot papers and other voting materials at such polling stations.

I have read it somewhere that the innocent man appointed to preside over the newly appointed National Electoral Commission was disappointed in the attitude of some Nigerians who have declared their unwillingness to vote at this year's Local Government election. I have called him "innocent" because he knew nothing about what such people had suffered. In my area at Idi-Ishin, during the gubernatorial election of 1983, the polling station was deserted by the Presiding Officer. It was predominantly a UPN Constituency. We had to organize someone in the area - a retired head of the Catering Department of Obafemi Awolowo University, Chief M. A. George, J. P., to be the Presiding Officer. As for voting materials, none was made available. We had to go to the Iyaganku Police Station in Ibadan, from where they were supposed to have been deposited by FEDECO Officials. None of these officials could be seen anywhere. Instead, a Volkswagen Van containing the Voting materials was being driven in and out of the Police Station by someone who had been schooled to do so. As a result of a confidential

information, we knew that the van contained voting materials and the crowd stopped it as it came again into the premises. The driver abandoned it and took to his heels. The crowd (about 1000) who had come from every part of the large constituency, forced open the van and removed the voting materials to their respective polling stations. Polling, which officially began at 7 am, did not start in these areas until 12 noon.

A person who has been subjected to such unnecessary hardship in order to exercise his right to vote and who having voted knew that the result had been altered by the very persons officially commissioned to conduct the elections and who are still at large as if they had not done anything wrong, would be a fool, if the authorities called upon him again to vote and he agreed so to do. Where is the guarantee that the registration will not follow the pattern of the earlier ones — fictitious names loaded into the voters' register which will be used to compile loaded polling boxes to be switched among the genuine ones at counting stations?

The taciturn attitude of each military administration to the rape of democracy by the rigging of the electoral process does not inspire confidence anymore in the ability of anybody in Nigeria to conduct a free and fair election and so Professor Awa should sympathise with the people instead of castigating them. Those who expect Awo to come back to Nigeria should bear these facts in mind.

It is the fashion for humanity to atone for their sins by wishing to have the cheated Avatar back so that they could repair the damage already done to their own Karma. Thus, the Christians preached a second coming of Christ to give them the opportunity of saying "sorry" for what happened in 29 AD. In the same manner some elements would wish Awo to re-incarnate in Nigeria in order to complete the unfinished business. Whether this will happen or not is in the hands of providence. For my part, I would vote that Awo should incarnate elsewhere in the cosmos where people who are being cheated would fight and die for their rights and trigger

off a crisis situation which will halt the perpetrators of such iniquities.

# From Agnosticism to Spiritual Eclecticism

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J. ADEFILA

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The spiritual life of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo has been variously characterized by various commentators and writers. Many are of the opinion that he was indeed a great Christian. For instance, on the occasion of Awolowo's 71st Birthday Anniversary, March 6, 1980, Mike Omoleye confidently asserted: 'Awo the Christian needs no introduction anywhere in the Christian world'.<sup>1</sup> This is by no means an exaggeration. Nonetheless, what many casual observers may not realize is the fact that at one critical stage of his life, Chief Awolowo almost ended up being an outright agnostic.

In spite of the strong appeal that agnosticism had for him however, Chief Awolowo did not deny the existence of God. But, for most of his adult life, he continually had recourse to sources other than the Christian Bible in his struggle to have communion with God. This attitude on his part we have chosen to describe as "spiritual eclecticism". It is our intention in this paper not only to examine the historical development of Awolowo's spiritual ideas and practices but also to identify those forces or events that significantly influenced his religious world view and his spiritual conversion 'from 'agnosticism' to 'eclecticism'..

## II. HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND

Obafemi Awolowo was born into a Christian family on March 6, 1909. His father, Sopolu was among the first adherents of Christianity at Ikenne. Apart from converting four of his own brothers, Sopolu fearlessly attacked paganism. He even acted the part of an iconoclast as he led a team of Christians to destroy the shrine of *Oluwaiye*, the god of small pox. Indeed, he was openly contemptuous of medicine men and belief in witchcraft and wizardry.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, it was through the influence of such a committed christian father that Chief Awolowo was "made to realize quite early in life that Christianity was, of a sure-y, superior in many respects to paganism".<sup>3</sup>

Unlike his father however, Obafemi's mother, Efunyela remained for quite some time a nominal christian in obedience to the injunction of her mother who had dedicated her to *Oluweri* (owner and Ruler of the Rivers). It was only after the death of her mother that Efunyela got baptized, adopting the name Mary.

By his own admission Awolowo was under the overwhelming influence of his paternal grandmother, Adefule (a.k.a. empress). In so far as granny was concerned, there was no flirtation with Christianity; she remained firmly committed to her *Ija* worship.<sup>4</sup> One reasonable inference one might draw from this fact is that the 'overwhelming influence' credited to the "empress" must have had a religious dimension to it. It would seem that granny's pagan influence competed favourably with Sopolu's Christian influence, at least to some extent. As we would discover later in this study, Obafemi subscribed whole-heartedly to the use of African *juju* up to a certain period of his adult life.

## III. HIS SCHOOL DAYS

Right from early childhood, Obafemi had demonstrated a remarkable measure of critical mindedness towards religious matters. In spite of his father's pious injunctions, young

Obafemi had his own way of subjecting religious ideas and practices to his own critical appraisal. Thus, for instance, even as a child, he resented having to pray according to rules. He recalled the fact that:

On arrival at school, we lined up outside and later marched in to the tune of a school song. Then prayer. This would have been a pleasurable item but for the rigid rules with attendant threat. *You must close your eyes, and must not talk or whisper to your neighbours whilst it lasted. To break any of these rules was to invite one form of punishment or another.*<sup>5</sup>

In 1920, when Awolowo was only 11 years old, his father died of small pox attack.<sup>6</sup> This tragic event immediately terminated young Awolowo's dream of attending the prestigious CMS Grammar School in Lagos, come January 1921. That was the beginning of his tale of woes as he and his mother were literally abandoned by relatives of the deceased father. At one critical point, young Awolowo wept bitterly and bemoaned his fate, wondering, "why did father die so early?"<sup>7</sup> As Mike Omoleye rightly comments, from the time of this tragic event on, "the protective umbrella on his (Awo's) head was torn thereby exposing him to all seasons of life".<sup>8</sup>

After a break of about one year in his educational career, Awolowo resumed schooling at Abeokuta. For our purpose in this study, it is pertinent to note the variety of his religious experiences as he constantly moved from one mission school to another. Between 1921 and 1927, young Awolowo's schooling career took him through as many as seven different mission schools. These included Roman Catholic School, Itesi, Ibara Anglican School, Ogbe Wesleyan, Itesi Wesleyan, Baptist Boys High School, the Salvation Army School and Imo Wesleyan School.<sup>9</sup>

In some of these schools, deliberate efforts were made to convert Awolowo from one denomination to another. For instance, at the Roman Catholic School, Itesi, his benefactor, one Mr. Gladstone Coker not only gave him the name Jeremiah.

but actually sought to convert him to Roman Catholicism. In so far as Awolowo was concerned, Mr. Coker's zealous efforts in this regard did not matter much, as long as his schooling continued uninterrupted. To him at that point in time, Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism probably bore no significant difference from each other. By the same token, young Awolowo actually practised Salvation Army religion whilst schooling at the Salvation Army School. According to him, he wore the Salvation Army uniform on Sundays and Public Holidays – like the Empire Day, for instance.<sup>10</sup>

From the foregoing, it is easy to understand why, in later life, Chief Awolowo felt quite at ease being a staunch member of the Agbeni Methodist Church, Ibadan whilst back home at Ikenne, he remained a committed member of St. Saviour's Anglican Church. The foundation of his liberal attitude in denominational matters must have been laid during his formative years at School.

In the mean time, Awolowo passed the Government Standard V in June 1926, took up a job as a Pupil Teacher at Imo Wesleyan School and in 1927 entered Wesley College, Ibadan for a 4 year Teacher's Higher Elementary course. Unfortunately however, he hated the set up at Wesley College so much so that he pulled out of the institution after spending only one year.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. AWO'S SPIRITUAL CRISIS AND FLIRTATION WITH AGNOSTICISM. 1928–1946.

The years immediately after 1927 when Awolowo voluntarily pulled out of College witnessed what has rightly been termed a "spiritual crisis".<sup>12</sup> The crisis prevailed especially during the period 1930 to 1946 when, according to Francis Ogunnodede, Awolowo "oscillated between belief and unbelief, between christianity and agnosticism".<sup>13</sup>

Before the crisis actually set in, Awolowo had already cultivated the habit of reading good books. Whilst working as a probational teacher at the Wesleyan (now Methodist)

School Ogbe, Abeokuta, he read books written by such authors as Shakespeare, Dickens, R.L. Stevenson, Emerson, Lord Avebury, Sir Walter Scott, etc. For his philosophical orientation, he relied on two books; *The Human Machine*, (which deals with applied psychology) and *It's Up To You* (which expounds the philosophy of the 'Jar of Life' - a philosophy in which Awolowo firmly believed).<sup>41</sup>

After a brief career in the teaching service, Awolowo switched over to secretarial work and took up a job as a shorthand typist in Lagos from March 1930 to August 1930 when he lost the job. The tragic loss of this job marked the beginning of his spiritual crisis, as he was compelled by circumstances to reflect rather critically about life in general. For 19 solid months, he remained jobless. Recounting his bitter experience during those months of joblessness, Awolowo writes:

The nineteen months were among the most trying periods of my life. My most cherished hopes had been dashed. My span of life up to then, though short, had seen some ups and downs with more downs than ups. I had many moments of anxious reflection

One important consequence of Awolowo's 'anxious reflection' was that he intensified his excursion into the literary world of great authors, reading many books as he could afford to buy or borrow. Perhaps the most significant volume he read at this time was the collection of *Essays and Lectures* of Robert G. Ingersoll who has been described as "a matchless moralist and humanitarian, as well as a literary giant".<sup>15</sup> Because Awolowo found Ingersoll's arguments so cogent, incisive, irresistible and replete with scientific and classical illustrations he (i.e. Awo) could not resist buying most of what the latter had to offer.

Among other things, Awolowo was particularly fascinated by Ingersoll's denunciation of God's 'partial dealings' with his children whereby the Israelites always received preferential treatment at the expense of such other nations as the

Canaanites, the Amorities, Jebusites and Egyptians. In Ingersoll's opinion, such acts are "revolting to civilized conscience, and in diametric opposition to the ethical standards generally accepted by man." This led him to the conclusion that "either there was no God at all or if there was one, He was either not good, or not the father of us all".<sup>17</sup>

By the time Awolowo had completed reading and digesting such 'cogent and incisive' arguments as these, he had become what he himself described as "a hearty admirer of agnosticism".<sup>18</sup> Although he did not completely write God off as non-existent, he had nonetheless bought enough of Ingersoll's ideas to make him conclude that:

down the ages, different groups of men have at different times created their own God in their own warped image, and .....so long as these dogmatic erring fanatics continued to project their own selfcreated God instead of the true God, so long would there be room for rational men with the courage of their conviction to feel impelled to repudiate the manmade God.<sup>19</sup>

In his predicament as a jobless young man, Awolowo could not help admiring critical ideas about God and must have reached the conclusion that, although God exists, He probably did not care much about him. Otherwise, how could God have allowed his beloved father to die so early? Why did he (Awo) have to experience more 'downs' than 'ups' in his brief earthly existence?

These and many other probing questions must have agitated his young but inquisitive mind so much so that he continued to vigorously pursue his mental excursion into the world of rationalists. His fascination with agnosticism impelled him to read such other books in this new found field as T. Huxley's *Evaluation of Species*, Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* and *Bible on Hell*. He also became a regular reader of the *Rationalist Review*. It was probably during this period of his spiritual crisis that he enrolled as a member of the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC)

Awolowo's spiritual crisis continued to deepen towards the end of the 1930's and early 1940's. It was during this period that his business ran into serious problems as he had incurred huge debts and bankruptcy became threateningly imminent. Matters progressively grew from bad to worse until finally, his property had to be auctioned publicly by his creditors to pay for debts incurred in his cocoa business.

A direct consequence of that tragic event was his refusal to be on speaking terms with God. He obviously became grossly disillusioned about God's disposition towards him in his prevailing precarious situation. He simply could not comprehend why God, whose line he had been trying to toe, could have opened wide his eyes and allowed his whole property to disappear in auction sales while He (i.e. God) felt rather unconcerned.<sup>20</sup>

It is evident that Awolowo had been trying to achieve communion with God through various ways. Among other things, he habitually read the christian Bible for spiritual guidance even though his fascination with rationalist criticism had caused him to seriously doubt the authenticity or validity of many claims about God in the Bible. It is therefore not surprising that the Bible was, to him, at best one of the books of "inspired writings" to which he continually had recourse for one spiritual need or the other. One of such needs arose in 1938 when had cause to "revenge against a neighbour who had grievously offended" him.<sup>21</sup> Concerning that incident, Awolowo writes:

.....as far back as 1938, my Inner Self spoke to me in clear and impressive language that revenge does not pay... In that year, I had planned a kind of revenge against a neighbour who had grievously offended me. I had decided to act after breakfast on the morning of 1 July, 1938. During meditation before breakfast, I used to take *a Bible or any book of inspired writings* and open a page. I would read the first passage that caught my eyes as the message for me for the day.<sup>22</sup>

As it turned out on that particular occasion, the book that caught Awo's fancy was not the Bible but Amenhotep's *Unto Thee I Grant The Economy of Life*. Having discovered from this book that "Revenge gnaweth the heart of him who is infected with it, while he against whom it is intended remaineth easy", Awolowo resolved never to seek vengeance against any man not even against his bitterest enemy.

As we have mentioned earlier on, Awolowo's search for communion with God during this period of spiritual crisis had impelled him to join the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC). But when his property got sold in a public auction, his attitude towards the order was adversely affected. Not only did he begin to adopt a hostile attitude towards God, he also "gathered all his occult books or Rosicrucian manuals, went to the backyard of his rented residence and burnt them one by one".<sup>23</sup>

Even though he burnt his Rosicrucian manuals, Awolowo did not call it quits with Rosicrucianism. Meanwhile, his hostility towards God continued unabated. Thus, for instance, in an article titled "Hints to the Clergy" which he published in the *Daily Service* in 1942, Awolowo came to the conclusion that man does not need God for anything; that God has ordained it that way; that God neither answers prayers nor has He the need to do so. He asserted that it is the quality and amount of our own work and efforts, good or bad, that procures success or failure for us in life instead of prayer. To find scriptural support for this viewpoint he quoted St. Paul's warning to the Galatians: "Be not deceived God is not mocked; for whatever a man soweth that shall be also reap".<sup>24</sup>

According to Awolowo, this article (of all the ones he wrote as free-lance journalist) evoked most controversy of them all. To the Christian public at that time, (and even now) Awolowo's view point was tantamount to heresy. In their reaction, as Awo recalls:

The Christian churches felt outraged, and I remember that churches of the Anglican confession devoted one Sunday

to controverting my heresy, and, I believe, to praying for the redemption of my soul as well.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, Obafemi Awolowo's penchant for making controversial statements was not unfamiliar to the reading public at that time. Three years earlier, in 1939, he had written an article which must have caused no small stir among Christians of those days. In that article titled "Making Use of Juju",<sup>26</sup> Awolowo brilliantly extolled the intrinsic cultural values of traditional African medicine or *Juju*. Having condemned the white man's blanket disapproval of anything African, he asserted that "there are innumerable things which our European brethren (and in fact the whole world in general) can learn from us. One of such things is the use of *Juju*."

According to Awolowo, *Juju* practices originated from "discoveries of certain scientific facts the explanation of which had been lost through the deliberate distortions of some perverted geniuses". He therefore advocated that a research be instituted in order to ascertain the origin of these *juju* practices and to identify the forces which lend them power.

It is not clear from the article whether Awolowo himself made use of *juju* for any purpose at this time. But, judging from his strong advocacy of research into *juju* practices, it appears that he at least had the intention of using *juju* if only for positive objectives especially in the field of politics. In his considered opinion, should Nigeria attain independence eventually, the only class of citizens qualified to rule would be the heathens. This was because they had the powers by which they not only could commit murder, burglary and what have you with impunity, but also power by which they could rule the country.<sup>2</sup> He therefore asserted that "we can only succeed in attaining independent nationhood by understanding these things thoroughly and ensuring that they are used only for good, as they were meant to be".<sup>26</sup>

Evidently, Awolowo's interest in the use of *Juju* was not restricted to mere academic discussion. He, in fact, did not

await the results of his proposed academic research before he began to procure a wide variety of *juju* for his personal use. But, as he confided in Chief Wunmi Adegbonmire not too long ago, he eventually resolved to abandon the use of African *juju* when it became obvious that it was of no consequential value to him any more. According to Chief Adegbonmire, Awolowo took this crucial decision sometime in the early 1950's. And to demonstrate the seriousness of his decision, he (Awo) dumped two suitcases — full of all sorts of *juju* into the Ogunpa stream in Ibadan.<sup>29</sup>

The last three years of Awolowo's period of spiritual crisis were spent in the United Kingdom where he had gone to obtain a degree in Law. Whilst there, he consistently boycotted church attendance. When he visited Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, London, it was purely for the purpose of sight seeing. Rather than attend church services, he chose to attend some of the Sunday meetings of the South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall, London. Paradoxically, it was Awo's experience with this Rationalist oriented society that prompted a reversal in his views about Christianity.

#### V. FROM AGNOSTICISM TO SPIRITUAL ECLECTICISM, 1946–1987

At Conway Hall, as Awolowo vividly recollects, each meeting followed the pattern of a church service with some minor variations. Prayers were offered whilst songs selected from *Hymns of Modern Thought* were usually rendered in familiar church tunes. The writings of great scientists, agnostics and atheists like Darwin, Huxley and Wells were selected for reading in place of Biblical passages.

Following a critical appraisal of the whole set up at Conway Hall, Awolowo came to the conclusion that it was patently an imperfect and irrational imitation of the Christian mode of worship.<sup>30</sup> In his opinion, such practices proved that ~~human~~ beings naturally love rituals and ceremonies, that whether they believed in God or not, they always like to

worship and venerate something, a flag or a shrine, the tomb or effigy of a dead hero or the person and presence of a living one or other forms. For this reason, he began to re-evaluate Christian ideals and practice as compared with agnostic, rationalist or atheist concepts. In the end, he returned to his Christian faith and practice when, according to Francis Ogunmodede, he discovered to his chagrin the shallowness and irrationality of rationalism.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from this Conway experience, Chief Awolowo's eventual return to the Christian fold was significantly influenced by his wife, Chief Mrs. Hannah Idowu Dideolu Awolowo. Concerning her restraining influence on him, Awolowo writes:

Throughout the period of my oscillation between agnosticism and christianity, my wife stood immovably for the latter. Her constant admonitions and steadfastness did more than anything else to restrain me from going beyond the point of no return.

It is true that the late Chief Awolowo did not go 'beyond the point of no return' — into the realm of outright agnosticism. It is also true that at one point in time, he became disillusioned about the views and practices of rationalists. But, a close study of his writings and speeches up to the time of his death would reveal the fact that he did not actually abandon rationalism as the basis of his philosophy of life, even whilst he continued to be steadfast in his observance of Christian religious practices. And for the rest of his earthly existence, he remained what one might describe as a 'spiritual eclectic' in the sense that he carefully selected and used spiritual ideas he considered best from various sources.

On several occasions and in many of his writings Chief Awolowo made it clear that he drew spiritual inspiration from various sources in his life-long quest to achieve communion with God. For instance on August 18, 1978, Chief Awolowo declared:

I have learnt from a study of the lives of Great Religious Leaders and Prophets like Buddha, Jesus Christ, and

Mohammed, as well as great political leaders like Amenhotep IV, Pharaoh of Egypt (1360–1350 B.C), Ghandi and Nehru (both of India) that whilst one can be flexible about means and methods one must be absolutely rigid or immutable about goals, principles and ideals once one is convinced that one is right.....<sup>33</sup>

In *My March Through Prison*, he also states clearly that he derived inspiration and guidance from four books which he considers vital and indispensable. These are (i) the Bible (ii) *Unto Thee I Grant the Economy of Life* (iii) *A Private House of Prayer* and (iv) *Path to Power*.<sup>34</sup> It was these four books that his wife brought to him on request when it became obvious to him that he might be remanded in prison custody at the end of the first day of his treasonable felony trial on November 2, 1962.<sup>35</sup>

It is noteworthy that Awolowo mentions the Bible first among his favourite books. Obviously, he was a dedicated student of the Bible. In most of his writings and public addresses, he quotes liberally and copiously from the Bible in support of one view point or the other. Some of his public lectures centred on purely theological issues. For instance, his address to the Ministerial and Laymen's Retreat of the Methodist Church of Nigeria at Igbobi College on 5th September, 1970 is titled "God and Mammon are Mutually Exclusive".<sup>36</sup> Similarly, his address to the Lagos Fellowship of African Ministers at St. Paul's Anglican Vestry, Breadfruit, Lagos on 25th April, 1970 is titled: "There is silent but poignant grief in many hearts and the Church must influence for good, our earnest search for solutions to economic, political and social problems."

From time to time, Chief Awolowo had recourse to the Christian faith for spiritual guidance and encouragement in times both of joy and sorrow. Thus, for instance, whilst in prison custody awaiting the verdict in his appeal against conviction, he wrote a lengthy letter to his wife, to prepare the latter's mind for the impending verdict. Among other things he wrote:

It is our ardent wish that the appeal should be in my favour; so be it! If not then God's will be done; and *as true Christians* we have no right to murmur, complain, or show resentment against God's will. Let us therefore, wait patiently and calmly for the Will of God to be done.<sup>38</sup>

Also, in answer to his wife's agonising query as to why Segun, her first child died on July 10, 1963, Awolowo responded:

I don't know, you don't know, and we will never know. But God knows. And our faith in the merciful wisdom of God who knows why Segun died should be enough consolation for us as Christians.<sup>39</sup>

When, eventually, Chief Awolowo was transferred to the Calabar Prison, he continued to maintain a very close touch with the Bible in his confinement. It was at the time that he decided to complete the reading of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation — a task which he had begun at Ikoyi. Although he did not succeed in completing this self-imposed spiritual assignment, he nevertheless read through the first five books of the Bible (commonly called the Pentateuch), Matthew, Luke, John, Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of Paul and Peter. In addition, he read copious passages assigned in the *Daily Bible Reading*.<sup>40</sup>

It is pertinent to note that Chief Awolowo's habitual reading of the scriptures was indeed part of his grand scheme for achieving his ultimate goal in life, that is, to attain "a fully integrated personal development".<sup>41</sup> To this end, he considered it imperative to develop his physical personality, his mental or intellectual personality and his soul personality.

According to Chief Awolowo, this subject had engaged his attention throughout his adult life. It was in pursuance of his objective in this regard that he became an avid reader of the Bible. But it would seem that the Bible was, to him, rather inadequate for the purpose of achieving a full development of soul-personality. In his opinion, the development of soul-personality appears the most difficult of the three areas of self-development, viz; physical, mental/

intellectual and soul. Whereas physical and mental exercises are tangible and perceptible, soul or spiritual exercises are not. This is because spiritual exercises deal with the metaphysical realm, the realm of the cosmic and the domain of God. Hence, Awolowo's intense interest in mysticism and cosmology, subjects about which he read far and wide.<sup>42</sup>

By definition, spiritual exercise consists of thinking. In Awolowo's opinion, the only way to exercise the mind is "constantly to engage in clear decisive, calm, deliberate, sustained and constructive thinking with a definite end in view, which end should benefit the thinker as well as others".<sup>43</sup> Evidently this is the kind of spiritual exercise that Chief Awolowo regularly engaged in every morning in addition to physical and mental exercises. For these exercises Chief Awolowo required absolute privacy so that he could engage in them uninterrupted. Hence his habit of sleeping in a separate room apart from his wife.<sup>44</sup>

The ultimate objective of spiritual exercise is for the thinker to know the truth, and that truth, 'the only truth', is that the body of man is indeed the temple of God or the universal mind; that indeed man has been created a little lower than God.<sup>45</sup> Awolowo states further that:

When we know the truth and, by an act of faith or by a process of rigorous and systematic reasoning, are unshakably convinced of it, we automatically enter into the regime of mental magnitude, properly and eminently equipped with a considerable measure of intellectual comprehension and cognition, insight and spiritual illumination.<sup>46</sup>

Awolowo's view in this regard obviously derives from Rosicrucian (AMORC) teachings. According to Kenneth U. Idiadi, the Grand Regional Administrator of the AMORC in the English speaking world and its president in Nigeria, "the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC) teaches mysticism or Union of God as the essence of religion" Mysticism, he explains, is "the direct, intimate and immediate awareness of the first cause of God through the domain of self".<sup>47</sup>

Evidently, this was a major preoccupation of Chief Awolowo who was regarded not just as a 'mystic' (i.e. one who seeks Union with God) but an 'adept' (i.e. a person who, having gone through a system of study which is systematic..... has assimilated the principles into his system for daily and effective living).<sup>48</sup>

An essential part of the mystic's search for union with God is to achieve self-mastery. This explains why Chief Awolowo places so much premium on 'a proper knowledge of man'. In *The People's Republic* he declares:

The sole object of our discourse in this book is man ... A proper knowledge of man, therefore, and a thorough appreciation and competent application of the principles which must govern his physical culture, his mental development, and his spiritual self-realization, is indispensable to any efforts for promoting and guaranteeing his general well-being and happiness.<sup>49</sup>

For man to achieve self-realization, it is imperative for him first to know the truth. And, according to Awolowo, the 'only truth' is that God has made man "a little lower than God".<sup>50</sup> He also believes that the knowledge of this 'only truth' can be attained either by faith or by a process of rigorous and systematic reasoning; that having attained this knowledge, man will automatically enter into what is known as 'the regime of mental magnitude' where he would be free from (i) the negative emotions of anger, hate, tear, envy or jealousy, selfishness or greed; (ii) indulgence in the wrong types of food and drink, and in ostentatious consumption and (iii) excessive or immoral craving for sex.<sup>51</sup>

To demonstrate the fact that man is naturally equipped to achieve these lofty ideals, Awolowo characteristically turned to the Bible and quoted the famous exhortation of Christ to the Jews:

"You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free".<sup>52</sup>

Chief Awolowo seems to find in this regime of mental

magnitude solution to various human problems. Thus for instance, he believes that the solution to those problems that led to the fall of the First Republic would be found in the emergence of good leaders in public life. In his considered opinion;

good leadership involves self-conquest, and self-conquest is attainable only by cultivating, as a first step, what some applied psychologists have termed 'the regime of mental magnitude'.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to this prescription which has its basis in applied psychology, Awolowo recommends that public leaders should also observe the golden rule' handed down by 'the greatest teacher and prophet of all times', that is, "Always treat others as you would like them to treat you, that is the Law and the prophets".<sup>54</sup>

Concerning his own personal problems, Chief Awolowo believes that by attaining the regime of mental magnitude, he had already solved them. In one of his notebooks titled "Me and Myself" (part of which was tendered as Exhibit Q at the Treasonable Felony trial), he recorded his 'struggle against nervous disorders which started in 1944 and continued intermittently but in lesser and lesser degree up to date'.<sup>55</sup> It was during meditation on 5th August 1955 that he found answers to his search for the cause or causes of the said nervous disorders. He identified seven causes, and these are: (i) Self-doubt concerning his personal ability; (ii) Severe self-condemnation and deep regrets of the past, especially the years 1938-44; (iii) regarding the years 1938-44 as suggestive of a life of permanent difficulties and failures; (iv) fear that his family might suffer financial hardship should he die; (v) fear of persecution by an Ibo/NCNC totalitarianism; (vi) fear that his followers might not be able to cope with problems arising from (v); and (vii) occasional fits of irritability - negative moods which constituted a drain on his personal magnetism and which impaired his physical and spiritual strength.

Chief Awolowo claims to have already abjured the various

negative feelings and habits enumerated above. And concerning the last item (i.e. the fits of irritability), he declared triumphantly and with self-confidence, "The defect is perfectly within my control. I am the Master of my fate. I am the Captain of my Soul."<sup>56</sup>

Here, Chief Awolowo clearly exhibits his implicit faith in man's ability to grapple successfully with human problems. It would in fact seem as if he had already elevated man to the level of auto-sufficiency.

Concerning death, Chief Awolowo's view are particularly revealing of his Rpsicrucian, orientation. On hearing the tragic news of Segun's death on July 10, 1963, for instance, he suffered pain because, as he puts it, he was Nature's biological agent' who had played an active part in bringing Segun into the world. But, in spite of the pain he suffered, he "did not sorrow" because "I have been taught that there is no death as such".<sup>57</sup> This view point was recently corroborated by the AMORC President in Nigeria, Kenneth U Idiodi, when, in answer to a question on death, he firmly asserts:

Yes, there is no death. To the AMORC death and birth are transition — the great transition. In between them is a conscious interlude here on the earth plane. Birth. . . to us on this side, is death to people on the other side. Death is a change from one plane of existence to another. The personality continues to live.... it does not REST IN PEACE. It continues to progress. ...death is nothing but transition from one place to another, improvement and self mastery.<sup>58</sup>

Given this background doctrinal belief on death which Chief Awolowo firmly held, it is not surprising that he calmly received the news of Segun's death. He had no difficulty consoling his wife on that tragic occasion because, as he points out, she knew about his attitude to 'so-called death'. Besides, Hannah was considered "a devoted and genuine practising christian", who is "highly versed in Bible passages and christian teachings to the same effect."<sup>59</sup>

It is against the foregoing background knowledge of the

Rosicrucian teachings about death that one can really understand Chief Awolowo's statement on the occasion of his 78th Birthday Anniversary. The prophetic statement which he made only two months before he died reads:

What I am celebrating actually is the imminence of my transition to eternal life. Although my desire to serve has not been fully realized here on earth my accomplishments in that respect are a sort of internal joy to me. *I have a strong conviction in life after death and the possibility of my continuing to serve even after death.*<sup>60</sup>

Commenting on this statement later, Kenneth Idiodi inferred that Awolowo "certainly would want to reincarnate at a propitious place to be able to fulfil the height he has aimed for."<sup>61</sup>

It will be noted that in his book *My March Through Prison*, Awolowo declared that he had always had before his mind objectives for a fully integrated personal development; that he had always pursued these objectives; and that "since my goal is perfection, I had never really been satisfied with my achievements".<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, he must have taken consolation in the belief he obviously shared with his fellow Rosicrucians that "there is always an opportunity in the cosmic scheme of things for these things that you have not achieved to be achieved sometime in the future".<sup>63</sup>

#### VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have attempted to trace Chief Awolowo's spiritual life history from childhood to his death at the ripe old age of 78. Among other things, we have observed the fact that during his childhood days, he was significantly influenced not only by his christian father and pagan grandmother, but by the various denominational mission schools he attended in rapid succession. It was during these formative years of his life that his father died -- a tragic event which not only disrupted his educational career but gradually gnawed at the very foundation of his christian faith. Hence the second stage of his spiritual life (1928

1946) during which he almost became a committed agnostic as he declared total war against God for allowing him to suffer so much deprivation early in life. His frantic search for solution to his many problems led him not only to join the Rosicrucian Order (AMORC) but also to try his hands on African juju practices.

During the third and final stage of his spiritual development, we find Chief Awolowo staging a come back into the Christian fold. This was due primarily to the restraining influence of Mrs. Hannah Awolowo who remained firmly committed to her Christian faith whilst her husband oscillated between agnosticism and Christianity. An equally important factor in this spiritual conversion was his disenchantment with rationalism as preached and practised by the South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall, London.

For the rest of his earthly life however, Chief Awolowo's views and actions continued to be profoundly influenced by his Christian background whilst, at the same time, his philosophy of life remained firmly rooted in Rosicrucian (AMORC) teachings. In fact, he died, still believing that he would reincarnate elsewhere to continue his life of service to mankind.<sup>64</sup>

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4. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 28. (Emphasis is mine).
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

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8. M. Omoleye, *op. cit.* p. 8.
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12. F. I. Ogunmodede, *Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Socio Political Philosophy: A Critical Interpretation*. Rome, 1986, p. 38 ff.
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43. O. Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 227.
44. George Mbah, "The Mystical Life of Obafemi Awolowo", *Megastar*, Vol. 1, No. 4 June 1987, p. 18.
45. O. Awolowo, *The People's Republic*, p. 230.
46. *Ibid.*
47. George Mbah, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
48. *Ibid.*
49. O. Awolowo., *The People's Republic*, p. 211.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 230. This definition of "The truth" is significantly different from that of the Bible which centres around Jesus Christ and not man. In John 14:6 Jesus confidently asserts: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, p. 231. The quotation comes from John 8:32, and it actually means that a saving knowledge of Christ (who is *the truth*) will set man free from the bondage of sin. In v. 36 of the same chapter, Jesus clearly spells out this fact when he says, "If the Son (i.e. Himself) therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed".
53. O. Awolowo, *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Ibadan, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 158.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-196.
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61. George Mbah, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
62. O. Awolowo, *My March Through Prison*, p. 266
63. George Mbah, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
64. *Awo: Souvenir*, p. 20. His conviction in this regard obviously contradicts the Biblical statement that "...it is appointed unto men *once* to die, but *after this* the judgement." (Hebrew 9: 27).

## Awolowo and Cultural Revival

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S.O. ARIFALO

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Obafemi Awolowo was a controversial figure. His thoughts, words and deeds are subjects of intense polemics among scholars even after his death. One aspect of his eventful life that has been hotly debated in recent times is his attitude towards culture. Two eminent scholars, Femi Osofisan and Biodun Jeyifo had asserted that Awolowo had no cultural policy or programme. Osofisan, like many other eminent Nigerians paid a condolence visit to Ikenne after the death of Awolowo. Having studied the "momentos" on the walls of Efunyela Hall and surveyed the entire fertile intellectual life of Awolowo, Osofisan lamented that after all said and done the man had no cultural policy for the country. His words:—

He (Awolowo) devoured hundreds of books of economics, philosophy, mysticism, he consumed volumes of reports and white papers and developed programmes and manifestoes. He was a man of tremendous erudition but he asked for books that they should enlighten, not to entertain or seduce. In none of his policies will you find the enunciation of a cultural programme for the country.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, in a two part article in the *Guardian*, Jeyifo contended that Awolowo did not pay any serious attention to culture. He wrote:

.... Awo grappled intellectually with the big problems. Except in the area of culture, you look in vain in all his writings for any discussion of culture, cultural matters or cultural policy beyond the most cursory remarks given rather parenthetically.<sup>2</sup>

Odia Ofeimun, who was closer to Awolowo than Osofisan and Jayifo posited that Awolowo had a cultural policy which was based on his political philosophy. He was of the view that if it would be said that Awolowo lacked a cultural programme, it was a matter of distance from him by the artists who admired him.<sup>3</sup> To support his claim he quoted the following passage from Awolowo's *The Strategy and Tactics of the Peoples' Republic of Nigeria*. "Arts and culture to my mind are the tap roots of any society. If they die or decay, the society concerned would have to develop parasitic characteristics in order to survive. The most healthy and most virile societies are those whose arts and culture develop and grow with time. In the particular instance of Nigeria, the development and diffusion of our traditional arts and culture are among the means for national strength and cohesion. They should therefore be encouraged in a big way and sufficient fund to the end — for the festivals of the arts throughout the country — should always be provided."<sup>4</sup> This profound statement by Awolowo was neither the first nor the only one which he ever made on culture. The present writer thinks that Awolowo had a cultural policy and that he consciously and persistently promoted certain aspects of Nigeria culture. An examination of this policy is the aim of this paper. But before doing that we should get our bearings right by adopting a working definition of the term "culture".

Culture is an elusive term to define because it refers to the way of life and values of human beings which vary widely in kind and in degree. Its meaning changes from time to time even in the same society.<sup>5</sup> At times one hears about a person being described as cultured or uncultured. This is

usually an indication as to whether or not a particular individual is socially adjusted, or refined or is a cultural deviant or a social misfit.<sup>6</sup> In recent times it is being said that a culture of silence is emerging in Ghana because the public is no longer contributing its views to the national debate on social and political issues. This is to show the varying meanings which are often attached to the term culture.

Raymond Williams traced the ever changing meaning of the term culture through the 18th century to the 19th century when it came to connote a whole way of life of a people – spiritual, intellectual and material.<sup>7</sup> T.S. Eliot, while agreeing with Williams' definition of culture as a whole way of life, included under the canopy of culture:

all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the 12th of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleyday cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, beetroot vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar. <sup>8</sup>

If this exotic and exciting definition is applied to our society here, nearly everything Awolowo ever embarked upon would qualify to be called culture. In this paper, however, we will like to use culture in a more precise manner to include traditional heritages, language, literatures, the arts, music, history and anything that may promote these things – e.g. education. We have included education because it is the superstructure on which culture is built.

#### EARLY MANIFESTATION

Awolowo's attitude to culture may perhaps be examined from two perspective – his theoretical pronouncements or statement of intentions and the actualisation of his ideas. Awolowo probably made his first known pronouncement about African cultural heritage in an article published in *the West African Review* in December 1939.<sup>9</sup> It was titled "Making use of Juju". In the article, Awolowo said that he

was dismayed by the attitude of the European colonial powers in Africa who did not find it worthwhile to turn their attention to the wealth of knowledge which Africa had in store for the world. He wondered why educated Africans themselves did not consider it possible to make some good out of what was generally regarded as devilish. He then blamed the introduction of christianity and the African educated elite for this palpable negligence. He declared:

The default on our side, of course, is partly due to the fact that the voices from the pulpits since the introduction of christianity into Africa have always admonished us to close our eyes to the practice of our forefathers, and partly to the fact that we seem to prefer in any case Europeanism to Africanism and thus every mistake in Britain is a style in Nigeria.<sup>10</sup>

He then went on to identify the practices of traditional medicine as part of the wealth of knowledge from which the world could learn something from Africa. He said that the practices of traditional medicine were found everywhere in Africa and that they had been perfected to an elaborate degree in Yourbaland. If traditional medicine did not work effectively in other parts of Africa, they have been found to be effective in Yorubaland, Awolowo argued. According to him, it was a great pity that traditional medicines have been erroneously branded as crude, atrocious and inhuman when they have not been thoroughly investigated. He offered an explanation for this situation:

The truth is that through some process of deterioration our immediate ancestors had lost the comprehension of the heritage handed down to them by their more cultured, more humane fathers, and consequently what were meant originally to be used for beneficial purposes were afterwards employed to achieve devilish ends.<sup>11</sup>

Awolowo then postulated that the practice of traditional medicine must have originated from discoveries of certain scientific facts, the explanation of which had been lost

through deliberated distortions by some perverted geniuses. He then suggested that a research be instituted into traditional medicines to ascertain their origin and the forces which gave them potency. There followed a detail discussion of six types of the practice of traditional medicine which include, the use of charms and incantations.<sup>12</sup>

Awolowo then concluded the article with an astonishing suggestion that if Britain decided to grant independence to Nigeria at that time the government of the country should be entrusted into the hands of the practitioners of traditional medicine because "they have the power by which they could not only commit murder, burglary with impunity, but by which they could rule us".<sup>13</sup>

Here a few observations are pertinent ; first, it is clear that Awolowo believed in the efficacy of traditional medicine and had implicit confidence in the power of the practitioners. Judging by the way in which he eulogized and glorified the practice of traditional medicine, he had not "frowned on the banal fetishism, witch-culture and gloating barbarism".<sup>14</sup> This period would appear to be a period of confusion in his chequered career. Of the period, F.I. Ogunmodede writes as follows:

.... between 1930 and 1946 Awolowo had a serious spiritual crisis and dangled along the rough sea between belief and unbelief and between christianity and agnosticism. <sup>15</sup>

This was the period in which he was having what he called his "literary and mental excursion"<sup>16</sup> with R.G. Ingersoll, T.H. Huxley and Thomas Paine. It would appear that Awolowo was then experimenting with many incompatible ideas some of which he later jettisoned as he matured. When in 1977, this writer confronted him with the article in question, he roared with laughter and said that he must have been most unscientific in those days. He, however, stood by his call for a research into traditional medicine.<sup>17</sup>

Second, it is very difficult to reconcile his romantic ideas about the ability of the traditional medicine men to

govern the country if the British should leave, with the implicit confidence he had in the Nigerian Youth Movement of which he was an ardent supporter. In fact, Awolowo was not just an ordinary member, he was the Secretary of the Ibadan branch of the Movement. He saw the Movement as a vigilant and dynamic organisation<sup>18</sup> containing the most forward-looking men in the country. One of the objectives of the movement was complete autonomy within the British Empire. The traditional medicine Man would not fit into the scheme of the N.Y.M. They would be strange bed fellows.

Third, the most critical and the most important aspect of the article was his call for a research into an aspect of African heritage. It was an act of courage. It was revolutionary in an age when Africans were constantly urged by the colonial rulers and missionary to reject African way of life, lock stock and barrel. A contemporary of Awolowo, one Ayo Kolade, whose views could be taken as representative of the general opinion of the period, in a rejoinder to Awolowo's article, castigated him and regarded the practice of traditional medicine as an activity which belonged to the dim and almost forgotten past. He wrote:

It is strange at the present state of the world's civilisation a research into the realms of devils of fetish which are devoid of concrete realities should find an ardent advocate in any cultured society.<sup>19</sup>

However, what Awolowo did in the article in question could not be regarded as a policy or a programme. He merely expressed an opinion and offered a suggestion which in any case could not have been implemented by the government of the day. The N.Y.M., a political organisation to which he belonged had a broad conception of culture. Under its cultural and social charter, it urged the government to make elementary education free and compulsory. Therefore, the implementation of the kind of research he envisaged lay in the future.

Awolowo's next important pronouncement on cultural

matters was made in his influential and controversial book, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, which was written in 1945 and published in 1947. In his autobiography, published in 1960, he told us that it had all begun way back in the 1930s. By then his earlier admiration of Gandhi, Nehru and Subha Bose had developed and matured into an adoption of their idea of changing India's provincial boundaries along linguistic lines, thereby assuring each ethnic group its cultural identity in any political arrangement<sup>20</sup>. From this point, Awolowo emerged as a political theorist who argued in *Path to Nigerian Freedom* that "Nigeria is a mere geographical expression"<sup>21</sup> and not a nation. He stated that there were differences in languages, cultural backgrounds, social outlook, indigeneous political institutions and stage of development. He saw all these as incompatibilities which would militate against unification in the country. He then preferred a federal constitution, which would allow each ethnic group to develop along its own lines, as the only constitution suitable for Nigeria.

#### ACTUALISATION OF IDEAS

Awolowo took the first practical step to encourage the Yoruba to develop culturally, economically and politically along their own lines by forming a Yoruba cultural organisation. The organisation was the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, (the society for the descendants of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba), which was formed in London in 1945.<sup>22</sup> The *Egbe* was later formed in Lagos in 1947 and formally inaugurated in Ile-Ife in June 1948<sup>23</sup>

The formation of the *Egbe* and later the Action Group (AG) party by the leaders of the *Egbe*, gave Awolowo the desired opportunity to actualise his ideas about the development of Yoruba culture. Awolowo's political career was intricately interwoven with the fortunes or misfortunes of both the *Egbe* and the AG. He was the principal motivating personality behind the formation of both. He was Secretary

General of the *Egbe* from 1948 to 1954 when he became the first Premier of the Western Region. He was President of the AG which formed the government of Western Nigeria from 1951 to 1962. Through the instrumentalities of the organisations, Awolowo tried to implement his cultural programme.

Among other things, the *Egbe* was: to explore the means of introducing, and as soon as possible to introduce and cause to be introduced mass and compulsory education among the people of Yorubaland, and to foster the study of Yoruba language, culture and history.<sup>24</sup>

The *Egbe* strongly believed that the most effective means of combating ignorance, disease, superstition, fear, envy, hatred, clannishness, disunity, "tribalism", selfishness and backwardness were education and enlightenment.<sup>25</sup> But the *Egbe* as a cultural organisation in a colonial setting, could neither introduce or force to be introduced mass and compulsory education. In the prevailing circumstances, what the *Egbe* did was to launch a £100,000 endowment fund in aid of scholarship awards.<sup>26</sup> In 1948 the *Egbe* awarded ten university scholarships to Yoruba students.<sup>27</sup> The scholarships were tenable at the University College, Ibadan. In 1949, the *Egbe* made seven more scholarship awards. In the same year the *Egbe* awarded twenty-one secondary school scholarships.<sup>28</sup>

The contribution of the *egbe* in this respect may look modest, yet it was significant and worthy of note. It was the first time ever that any group of people in Yorubaland would make such awards. This contribution would be fully appreciated when it is realised that at this point in time the Nigerian Government Scholarship Scheme launched in 1937 was abandoned at the outbreak of the Second World War. When it was resuscitated in 1943 only one was available,<sup>29</sup> and by 1945 only a total of 69 had been awarded in the whole country.<sup>30</sup> Many of the recipients of the *Egbe's* awards later became teachers in secondary schools in Yorubaland. This was a contribution to the efforts to ameliorate

the chronic problem of unqualified teachers in schools in Yorubaland. Some of the beneficiaries of the *Egbe's* scholarship scheme, who are now holding important positions in the country today, perhaps, would not have had the opportunity of tasting higher education but for the *Egbe*. Indeed, the *Egbe* could be seen as a precursor of the AG Government of Western Nigeria, which had to amend dramatically and drastically the 1952 budget which it inherited from the colonial administration to vote £80,000 for two hundred university scholarship.<sup>31</sup> By 1960, the government had awarded 1,188 post-secondary scholarships in Nigeria and overseas.<sup>32</sup>

Actually, what Awolowo would have liked was free education at all levels. The award of scholarships was a mere palliative not a cure. Education was a matter that was very near his heart. Writing in 1947, Awolowo defined education in terms of a cultural process which would involve the entire man. He saw "education as the process of physical and mental culture whereby a man's personality is developed to the fullest".<sup>33</sup> According to him, an educated man would be fearless, confident, self-reliant and would be "a citizen of the world, free from narrow prejudices".

Awolowo placed the highest premium on education. He stated that one of the three basic principles which led to the formation of the AG was "the education of all children of school-going age, and the general enlightenment of all illiterate adults and illiterate children above school-going age".<sup>34</sup> This was the seed of the free education scheme. Awolowo believed that all the people must have a minimum level of education if the country must have an enlightened citizenry for rapid social, political and economic development. In a country where the vast majority of the people were not in the position to educate their children up to the primary school level, not to talk of university level the purpose and goal of education would not be achieved unless it was made free for everybody at all levels.<sup>35</sup> This was why the AG. Government of Western Nigeria launched the

### Universal Free Primary Education in the Region in 1955.

The scheme has been described as "the greatest educational revolution at the time in Africa South of the Sahara and North of the Limpopo."<sup>36</sup> It is doubtful whether there was such a revolution North of the Sahara and South of Limpopo. However, after the successful implementation of the scheme in the West, Awolowo became the great champion of free education at all levels in the country. In 1966 he became the first political leader in Nigeria to suggest that free education should be written into the constitution of the country. Indeed, it was included in the 1979 constitution with a proviso. In chapter two, section eighteen of the constitution, it is stated that the Government would provide free education at all levels "as and when practicable". This limited concession was a triumph for Awolowo.

The Universal Free Education Programme was Awolowo's greatest achievement. It was also his greatest contribution towards the development of culture. Education forms the basis for the development of culture.

Shortly after the inauguration of the Egbe in Ile-Ife in 1948, it set up a number of committees including the literature Committee. The committee was mandated to compile an up-to-date history of the Yoruba, to promote the writing of Yoruba literature by arranging competitions and awarding prizes to encourage the development of the Yoruba language, to undertake research into Yoruba philosophy, arts, science and herbal medicine.<sup>37</sup> The establishment of this committee was a fulfilment of Awolowo's cherished dream of 1939 when he called for a research into traditional medicine.

To demonstrate the *Egbe's* strong determination to promote the development of Yoruba language, it made Yoruba the medium of expression in all its meetings. Lectures and talks organised by the *Egbe* had to be delivered in Yoruba, except when the speakers were non-Yoruba speakers. The journal of the organisation, *the Egbe Omo Oduduwa Monthly Bulletin* was published in English and Yoruba. Perhaps the reasons for the insistence on the use of the Yoruba language

on these occasions were to encourage the growth and development of the language and to demonstrate the suitability of the language as an effective vehicle for social and political inter-course at a period when it was fashionable to be an ardent English speaker, when the English language was forced down the throat of Nigerian School children and when failure in the English language meant total failure in the school certificate examination. Further more, the use of Yoruba was to enable members not literate in English to participate in *Egbe's* meetings and deliberations. In addition to the insistence on the use of the Yoruba language, the *Egbe* enjoined its members to wear the Yoruba traditional attire to all its functions.

The Literature Committee organised Festivals of the Arts during the month of September every year.<sup>38</sup> The festivals included singing of Yoruba songs, rendering of poems in Yoruba, story telling; the exhibition of carvings, drawings and paintings. Participants in the festivals were usually drawn from the Yoruba-speaking areas of the Western Region.

In addition to what the Literature Committee was asked to do, certain individuals were given specific assignments. For example, the Timi of Ede, *Oba* Laoye I, one of the greatest exponents of the Yoruba talking drum, was asked to do a research into Yoruba drums while J.O. Ajibola, an ardent student of Yoruba culture, was to work on Yoruba musicology.<sup>39</sup> In his research, *Oba* Laoye traced the genesis of some important Yoruba drums, their dynamics and examined their adaptations to modern needs. He did a comparative study of the different types of drums used in many parts of Yorubaland vis-a-vis those used by other cultural groups like the Edo, Itsekiri and Igbo. He was able to observe cultural and historical links between those ethnic groups. He saw the drum as a common feature in Yoruba culture and the drummers as performing an essential function in Yoruba society. He advocated the teaching of Yoruba traditional music in schools.<sup>40</sup>

As a result of the initiative and motivations of the *Egbe*, the study of Yoruba language and literature was given a great impetus, D. O. Fagunwa had blazed the trail in the writing of Yoruba prose with the publication of *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irumole* in 1939. To this he added other works such as *Ireke Onibudo* (1949) and *Igbo Olodumare* (1949). J.O. Ajibola published his *Yoruba Proverbs* in 1949. Yoruba poetry received a big boost. The philosophical poems of J.S. Sowande, alias Sobo Arobiodu<sup>41</sup> began to be greatly admired and listened to with great delight whenever they were read over the radio. Yoruba scholars like J.F. Odujio and Laosebikan began in earnest to write Yoruba text books for use in primary and secondary schools in Yorubaland. The AG Government of Western Nigeria, under the leadership of Awolowo, took the cue from the *Egbe* when in 1954 it set up a committee to examine scientific terminologies in the Yoruba language.<sup>42</sup> This was to explore the possibility of writing science books in Yoruba. By all these, the Yoruba language was made to occupy an enviable position on the school curriculum. The enthusiasm of the *Egbe* was not limited to the Yoruba language, The *Egbe's* Literature Committee constantly stressed the urgency to have an up-to-date history of the Yoruba people as "the existing histories are biased, full of discrepancies, half-truth and untruth".<sup>43</sup> In this way the *Egbe* stimulated interest in Yoruba history. Existing works on Yoruba history and culture acquired new significance. The most important of such works were: Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yoruba*, written in 1897 and published in 1921, Olumide Lucas' *Religion of the Yoruba*, written 1948 and N.A. Fadipe's doctoral thesis, *The sociology of the Yorubas* completed in 1939, which the *Egbe* made an abortive effort to publish. Apart from the interest aroused in these works, the period between 1948 and 1955 saw the harvest of many local historians and chroniclers. These people were usually educated men who tried to glean the history of their people from myths, legends, folk-tales and praise songs. Such writers

often supplemented earlier works with theirs or tried to correct what they regarded as erroneous ideas in them.<sup>44</sup> Today, their works constitute major sources of materials on the history of the Yoruba people. Prominent among such works are A.K. Ajisafe's *History of Abeokuta* (1948), S. Ojo Bada of Saki's *Origin of the Yorubas* (1952), *Itan Oyo ati Afijio* (1954), E.A. Kenyo's *Awon Olori Yoruba ati Isedale Won* (1952) and Father A. Oguntuyi's *A Short History of Ado-Ekiti* (1952).

In addition to this, the cultural activities of the *Egbe* led to the publication of a journal such as *Odu* (A journal of Yoruba and related studies (edited by S.O. Biobaku, H.O. Beier and L. Levi). The journal was described as "an interpreter of the culture of the Yoruba and their related peoples to these peoples themselves and to the world at large."<sup>45</sup> That journal lived up to its aims and objectives. It soon became one of the most important and authoritative vehicles for the dissemination of researched information about the Yoruba people and their past.

The cultural renaissance championed by the *Egbe* profoundly affected the attitude of many Yoruba people towards their cultural heritage. Many Yoruba began to appreciate things of Yoruba. They began to take greater pride in bearing Yoruba names and wearing Yoruba attires. It became fashionable to wear *aso-oke* (locally woven materials). The Yoruba leaders so popularised Yoruba traditional dresses that they were gradually being adopted as the national dresses of Nigeria. That was why Increase Coker was able to state as follows in 1955: ".....Yes, we are developing a national costume. What used to be an exclusively Yoruba tribal costume is developing in popularity and usage into a Nigerian National costume".<sup>46</sup>

The *Egbe's* enthusiasm for the revival and preservation of Yoruba history and culture reached its climax when in 1957, the Government of Western Nigeria was induced to launch the Yoruba History Research Scheme. The Government voted £40,000 for the project under a five Year Development

Programme.<sup>47</sup> The scheme was to be directed by S.O. Biobaku, who was then the Registrar of the University College, Ibadan.<sup>48</sup> He was to act in his private capacity as a historian of the Yoruba people.

In his speech at the launching ceremony, Anthony Enahoro, the Minister of Home Affairs, whose ministry was to supervise the scheme, stated that the scheme was an attempt to discover the true origin of the Yoruba people and to produce an authentic record of their past by means of archaeological excavations, analysis of anthropological data, recording of oral traditions and a careful study and appraisal of documents and traditional ceremonies.<sup>49</sup>

Awolowo's speech on that occasion was a clear indication of the importance he attached to the revival of Yoruba culture. He began by saying that the present way of life of the Yoruba people gave a strong indication that they had an ancient and illustrious past — a past, which because of lack of written records was shrouded in legends in an incoherent fashion handed down from generation to generation through oral traditions. Continuing, Awolowo declared:

Man does not live by bread and politics alone. Indeed, man's economics and political instincts would become dull or behave wildly and aimlessly like a runaway horse unless they are blended and suffused with the cultural instinct in him.<sup>50</sup>

Speaking about the efforts of earlier historians and scholars in Yoruba history, religion and culture, Awolowo pointed out that the works of Arts of Ife were still the subject of controversy, that the origin of the Yoruba and how they came to their present habitat were matters which still had to be settled to the satisfaction of many inquisitive minds. He then concluded by saying:

In order to remedy those defects before they are too late, to give Yoruba people, Nigeria and the world in general, an authenticated history, this scheme has been instituted by Government in default of private endowment.<sup>51</sup>

This elaborate and ambitious project was the brain child

of the leaders of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*. As a cultural organisation, it lacked the resources to carry out this project. It therefore persuaded its close ally, the AG which incidentally, was in power in the region, to undertake the project. In launching the scheme, the AG Government of Western Nigeria became the first government in the country to undertake such project. This was a clear evidence of Awolowo's commitment to cultural matters, His interest in the history of his people was never in doubt. He was admired for this both at home and abroad. The Nigeria Year Book of 1958 wrote as follows:

His (Awolowo's) interest in the history of his people has resulted in the setting up of a commission on the origin of the Yorubas, a project also welcomed enthusiastically by the Sudanese Government according to the Prime Minister, Sayed Khalil, during his December visit to Nigeria.<sup>52</sup>

After the formal launching of the scheme, its Director, Biobaku began to organise conferences on Yoruba history from time to time in different parts of the Region.<sup>53</sup> Specialists on Yoruba culture, history, literature, language, religion and sociology, were usually invited to present papers. Participants were urged to collect oral traditions from the elderly people in their different communities, to write the histories of their areas and to encourage the teaching of local history in the schools in their areas. At these conferences a lot of Yoruba cultural awareness was kindled.

From about 1959, the Scheme began the publication of a Yoruba literary journal called *Olokun*. The aim of the journal was to develop the Yoruba language in all its ramifications. The early issues of the journal were edited by I.A. Akinjogbin. The journal published Yoruba poems, short stories and book reviews. It also published articles on diverse topics ranging from "the teaching of mathematics in Yoruba" to "the Yoruba language and Nigerian independence". Most of the big names associated with the study of Yoruba language, prose and poetry published articles

regularly in *Olokun*. They included I.A. Akinjogbin, A. Babalola, I.O. Delano, A. Faleti, A. Olabintan, O. Esan, D.A. Adeniji, Wande Abimbola and Oladipo Yemitan. The list is much longer. The journal certainly gave a big boost to the development of the Yoruba language. Indeed, what *Odu* had done for Yoruba history and culture *Olokun* has done for Yoruba language and literature.

Even though the Yoruba History Research Project has not produced an authentic history of the Yoruba, it has produced a book titled *Sources of Yoruba History*, which was edited by S.O. Biobaku and published in 1973. Apart from the activities of the Yoruba History Research Scheme, the AG Government of Western Nigeria had a programme for the collection and collation of folksongs and folklores from every division of the region. The assignment was given to a unit under the Mobile Free Cinema Scheme of the Government.<sup>54</sup> By 1959, the Government had acquired 40 cinema vans and 6 cinema barges.<sup>55</sup> In addition to entertainment, the vans and barges carried enlightenment to every nook and corner of the region. Thus, the Government was actively promoting cultural awareness in the region. It should not surprise anyone to hear Awolowo saying:

Of all the governments in Africa, the Western Regional Government is the largest film producer, having the largest government cinema audience as well.

Awolowo was not indifferent to other aspects of culture. In fact, he had significant admiration for Yoruba sculpture. This will be seen presently. Under the British colonial rule and the impact of christianity, Yoruba sculpture declined tremendously. An effort to arrest the decline was undertaken in the early fifties by a group of dedicated Roman Catholic priests under the leadership of Father K. Carroll. The group gathered together, carvers, potters, weavers, bead workers and leather workers in Oye-Ekiti of Ondo State. The Fathers tried to infuse christianity into traditional Arts, which for centuries had depended on the patronage and inspiration of traditional religion.<sup>56</sup> When the

Oye project was beginning to make an impact, it fizzled out. All hopes of revival of Yoruba sculpture seemed lost.

This was soon reversed. When the £370,000 Parliament buildings were completed in Ibadan in 1956, Awolowo as the Premier of the then West, ordered that the decoration of major furniture in the buildings be done by traditional Yoruba craftsmen.<sup>57</sup> One of the carvers on the Oye project, Lamidi Fakeye was commissioned to carve "5 thrones and 1 table for the House of Assembly" and "3 large wall Carved Panels and 2 large Relief Doors for the Executive Council Chamber". This move was hailed as a step in the right direction. Father Carroll wrote:

If this precedent is followed it would create a body of craftsmen integrated with modern life and a solid foundation for the flowering of a specifically Nigerian "Fine Arts".<sup>58</sup>

Indeed, the precedent was followed as many institutions and private individuals in the region began the commissioning of the carving of the doors of their buildings. For instance, when the ten-storey building of the newly established Co-operative Bank was completed in 1957, Felix Idubor was commissioned to carve its doors.<sup>59</sup> In view of what has just been said, we do not need any further evidence to convince us of Awolowo's commitment to cultural revival.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper we have discussed, first, how in 1939, Awolowo demonstrated his cultural consciousness by suggesting that a research be instituted into traditional medicine. In the prevailing circumstances in the country the call for the research was premature. It fell on hostile or on deaf ears. But the unique thing was that he made the call at all. Second, we examined how he emerged as a convinced Federalist. His argument was that because of the apparent diversities in the country only a Federal system of government was suitable for it. According to him, such a constitution would allow each ethnic group to develop its own unique

cultural characteristics along its own lines. Third, we saw how he tried to put his ideas into practice by forming the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* first and later the AG party.

As a result of the cultural crusade launched by the *Egbe* and the AG many Yoruba people began to cultivate the desire to revive and refurbish Yoruba cultural heritage which had been polluted by Western European influences. The Yoruba people were encouraged to admire and cherish things that were peculiarly their own. Both the *Egbe* and the AG had shown that the Yoruba could be proud of a culture that was not dead and buried in a Museum but still alive and living. One cannot agree more with Atanda when he writes:

On the whole, the sense of solidarity and cultural revival developed by the Yoruba in the wake of nationalist agitation had helped them to remain a people proud of their past achievements.<sup>60</sup>

From all that have been said it should be seen that the charge, that Awolowo had no cultural programme or that he was only marginally interested in cultural matters, could not be sustained. It is true that he did not devote chapters to culture in his monumental works. This was because he did not see culture as a matter for political rhetorics but something that needed immediate attention. He acted promptly on cultural matters. In short, Awolowo's cultural programme was part and parcel of his political actions. He was in the vanguard of the cultural revival crusade in the country.

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