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SEVEN YEARS OF IBB

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VOLUME SIX

NEW POLITICAL CULTURE

Edited By Dr. M. T. M. Minna

Seven Years of IBB

Volume 6

93-1789

New Political Culture

Edited by
Dr. M. T. M. Minna
General Editor : Prof. Ade Adefuye

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FOREWORD

Seven years of IBB is to my mind a most commendable attempt to undertake a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the work and achievements of an incumbent head of state and government. The seven volume work with a picturesque compendium analyses virtually every initiative undertaken by the Babangida administration since coming to power in August 1985.

The contributors to the work have presented a well researched and analytical appreciation of the regime's bold effort at restructuring of the economy; its imaginative political initiatives designed to usher in lasting democracy and the administration's creative reorientation programmes intended to inculcate a new political culture conducive to the survival of democracy, and to the democratic way of life. They have also proffered suggestions on how to remedy the lapses they observed and identified.

The volumes cover Politics and the Transition, The Economy, Foreign Policy, Labour and Social Development, Arts and Culture, Education and Rural Development, and New Political Culture.

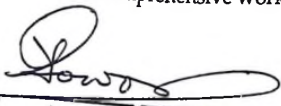
The editors have rightly observed that the Babangida Administration more than most embarked on a number of radical reforms in its seven years of existence. Each of the reforms embarked on by the Babangida administration, for example, the Structural Adjustment Programme, or the Transition Programme is major enough to occupy the full time of any administration. Yet the administration had made commendable efforts in realising the objectives of the reforms. The reforms became necessary as a result of the down- turn of the economy since the late seventies and due to the changing political landscape during that time. What must be remembered is that the political environment in the early 1960's soon after independence, was a period of consolidating Nigeria's independence politically and economically rather than indulging in any reform exercise at the time which would not have been acceptable. That is why, understandably, the first civilian political leadership was too preoccupied with maintaining a fragile political system to contemplate introducing anything radically different from what was bequeathed to it by

the colonial regime. Inevitably, the unstable condition brought about a political change early in the life of the nation through military intervention for the first time.

Successive governments, especially our government after the civil war, did try to embark on reforms aimed at building a more united and economically strong and less dependent Nigeria where our economy is controlled by our nationals. The Economic Development Plan, the series of projects we executed and reforms we introduced in the early 1970's for example, our immediate post-war initiative at reconciliation and reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction, the 3R's, the Universal Free Primary Education and the Economic Enterprises Indigenization Policy were all attempts to address some of the questions that the Babangida administration, to his credit, took up with so much courage and decisiveness than his predecessors. Other governments too did recognize the need for reforms and in fact pursued policies meant to realize the objectives of the reforms. Little, however, has been recorded about the contribution of these governments other than what government-sponsored publications have done.

It is in this regard that I find the initiative of the publishers of this very comprehensive study very encouraging. It is an acknowledgement of the great contribution made by a leader to the socio-economic and political development of our fatherland. I hope that similar studies will be undertaken on the tenure of our leaders so that our future leaders will be encouraged to strive to do their very best being conscious of the fact that history is recording them even as they are still on the saddle.

Seven Years of IBB is an essential reading for any understanding of where Nigeria is today and from the foundation laid, what we hope it will be in the 21st Century. My congratulations to the Authors / Editors for a comprehensive work well done.


(Gen. Dr. Chief F. Gowon)
The Rare Age of Life

AWAITING THE VERDICT OF HISTORY

History is a product of continuous interaction between man and environment. Seven years is nothing much in the life of a nation particularly one with the size and complexity of Nigeria. But a seven year period during which fundamental assumptions were challenged and modified, when phenomenal changes were effected in Nigeria's social, economic and political scene, and during which issues hitherto reserved for the esoteric class, corporate bodies, and campus egg heads became subjected to public debate and reactions deserve to be carefully documented and rationally analysed. The 1985-92 period is one that will be a fascinating subject in Nigeria's history books. Historians and social scientists will find the sheer weight and volume of decisions taken, their immediate and lasting effect on the country's outlook, economy and body politic too attractive to ignore. Even before the Babangida regime signs off, the men who captained the ship of state the policies they enunciated, the manner of implementation, the intended and accidental consequences are already being studied.

There has so far been a tendency towards an approach that is essentially biographical; one that seeks to explain the actions of the regime in the light of the vision of the leader. In the **Prince of the Niger**; Chidi Amuta analysed the 1985-92 period from the background of the knowledge of General Babangida's biographical condition because according to Chidi it is by so doing that we may be able to appreciate the deeper roots of the decisions that he had to make and policies he had to pursue. The Orphan at fourteen who through dint of hard work and perseverance came to occupy for seven years the highest position in the country's political hierarchy knows the difference between poverty and wealth, ignorance and knowledge, opportunity and the lack of it. Babangida was said to have for a long time been deeply concerned with the problems of Nigeria out of a patriotic commitment and consulted widely even before coming to power with those who ought to know about the

multidimensional nature of Nigeria's socio-economic and political problems. These along with his personal experience must have influenced his attitude and policies. Events in the life of a nation are no doubt shaped by the perception of the leaders. These perceptions are in themselves influenced by personal experiences.

But it will be misleading to assume that the Babangida factor was the sole determinant of events in the 1985-92 period. Admittedly the regimented command structure of the armed forces compel instant obedience and does not leave much room for arguments and counter arguments particularly with superiors. But Babangida realised that the office of the Chief of Army Staff is not exactly like that of the President. In his maiden address Babangida denounced the Buhari-Idiagbon duo for disregarding the principle of discussion, consultation and cooperation. There was the Armed Forces Ruling Council, the Council of States, the Council of Ministers and the Presidential Advisory Council all of which were consultative bodies at different levels. Even though Babangida left no one in doubt as to who was in charge, the occasional change in aspects of policy formulation and implementation were clearly the result of inputs of individuals and groups to whose opinion Babangida deferred.

There were frequent changes in key personnel of government during the seven year period. But there were a few individuals such as Abacha, Aikhomu, Akilu, Chu Okongwu, Olikoye Kuti, Olagunju and to a lesser extent Jubril Aminu, Alhaji Alhaji, and Bola Ajibola who made inputs into policy formulation and who have clearly influenced events to some degree. Thus if a biographical approach were to be adopted to the study of the 1985-92 period, it will certainly not be complete without a biographical study at least of Vice President Aikhomu and General Sani Abacha. These two individuals will share with Babangida the praise and blame for the successes and failures of the regime.

But whatever judgement is pronounced must be against the background of the circumstances in which Babangida and his team found Nigeria. It is the environment and circumstances that make the man

and the government. It needed a defeated Germany suffering from the implementation of the Versailles treaty to produce a Hitler. Without a regimented and classless society which existed in the Soviet Union, there would not have been any need for Gorbachev to bring about Glamost or Perestroika. The Babangida era would not have had a "raison detre" had the massive corruption and prostitution of democratic values of the Shagari era not been succeeded by the authoritarianism and lack of proper economic focus of Buhari.

The seven books on seven years of IBB seek to record and analyse the interaction between men, ideas, circumstances and environment in the effort to make Nigeria a better place. The approach here is factual and analytical. It is an attempt to document and interpret actions taken by individuals who believed that the objectives suitable to be pursued in the Nigeria of August 1985 are those economic reconstruction, social justice and self reliance. The emphasis on the Nigerian situation before Babangida is one of the central issues being stressed by the editors and contributors of this series. We believe that any attempt to interpret and analyse contemporary situations should begin with an insight into the past. The present is a product of the past. Any balanced analysis of the Babangida era must take cognisance of the Nigerian situation before August, 1985. We need to know where we are coming from in order to appreciate where we are. Some of the critics of Babangida regime conveniently ignore the fact that by August 1985, a combination of the fall in world oil prices, inadequate policies of the past, and rising debt obligation produced a difficult economic situation which adversely affected both external and fiscal balance, they demonstrate a lack of awareness of the fundamental flaw in the structure of the economy which although made worse by the corruption and incompetence of the 1979-83 era needed much more than the "tough-guy posture of Buhari-Idiagbon". The situation called for a fundamental restructuring of the one legged economy operating within the parameters designed by the Breton Woods institutions as a result of which by 1985 44% of the revenue had to be spent on debt servicing.

The Structural Adjustment Programme was adopted by the regime following public rejection of the proposed IMF loan. The programme

was aimed at solving Nigeria's economic problem at its roots. The administration was of course aware that the positive results of SAP might be long in coming while the immediate effect would bring pains to the populace thus making the government somehow unpopular. But the regime realised that it was necessary to plan for Nigeria's long term future beyond the usual four to five year term after which the "buck is passed on". The situation called for courage to take on the established class who benefitted from the existing flaws in the economic structure e.g. import license and even some elements of the lower and middle class who had been accustomed to the usual 'government by patronage and subvention'.

Babangida's worst critics will find it difficult to accuse him of lack of courage to take decisions "Posterity will forgive us for taking wring decisions but will not forgive us if we fail to take decisions". SAP had not been very popular with the populace. The regime however sees it as central to our national economic and political recovery on the long run. It was prepared to be unpopular in order to bequeath an enduring foundation to the future generation of Nigerians.

The manner of implementation of certain aspects of SAP has been a source of concern. Some of the unavoidable extra budgetary expenses have tended to limit the gains of the programme. The long term nature of the measures taken are such that the positive effects cannot be that much visible as of now. But it will be hard to deny the fact that there is already evidence of a radical change in our consumption habits, an inculcation of maintenance culture, an acceptance of the idea of self employment, an increase in food production, the increase in local sourcing of raw materials, and of fundamental reorientation in the psyche of the Nigerian citizenry.

The domestic and international environment during the end of 80's was such that the only realistic approach to the problems of Nigeria was the adoption of SAP. The state of the Nigerian economy in 1985 was similar to those of many African and third world countries. Between 1985, Africa's economic performance recorded an average annual growth rate of GDP of only 0.4 percent capital income which was already low at the end of the 1970 had steadily declined by about

2,6%. Social services and welfare especially education, public health and sanitation rapidly deteriorated. This is why by 1988 about 30 Africa countries had to adopt structural Adjustment Programmes with the support of the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover the mid 80's coincided with the global resurgence of conservative economic and political philosophy and the final act of communism; a period dominated by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The slogan then was and still is less government in business. What this means is privatisation of many government economic establishments which as has been rightly argued, are best left to the business class. If the former Soviet Union can now be talking of practising a free market economy, the Babangida regime must have right in refusing to get involved with unsequential commercial ventures. It was correct to see its role as that of maintaining law and order and thereby create an enabling environment that would protect investment and encourage productive planning on a sustained basis.

One of the unavoidable consequences of SAP is the economic strain it brought on the middle and lower classes who had to pay higher rates and utility prices arising first from the liberalisation of foreign exchange which devalued the Naira, and secondly the commercialisation of some public parastatals. The government realised the human dimension and the need not to marginalize the greater majority of the population. Babangida was aware that weaker segments of our populace could perish under the yoke of the emergence of a free market regime hence the various ameliorative policies and programmes that they pursued. The President promised that deliberate efforts will be made to ensure that those reform measures that have been put in place to cushion the difficulties at both the urban and rural communities are fully implemented. It was this concern for the welfare of the masses that brought about the establishment of programmes such as the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures DFFRI, People's Bank, Community Bank, National Directorate of Employment and Better Life. Details of the manner of operation and effects of these establishments which have now become established aspects of our national life will be found in the volumes of this project. They constitute what can be described as the "Human Face of SAP" and to a considerable extent

an unconscious implementation of African alternative framework to structural adjustment programmes for socio-economic recovery and transformation as advocated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa ECA.

The manner and style of Foreign policy implementation is one area in which the Babangida regime distinguished itself from its predecessors. While still retaining the essentially Afrocentric focus there has been a clear emphasis on the need to relate foreign policy to the domestic economic situation. The adoption of Economic diplomacy as the policy thrust meant that issues related to trade and investment came into sharp focus. While still placing emphasis on block unity, efforts were made to strengthen economic links with Africa and the diaspora. The volume on foreign policy will show that foreign policy is one area in which it will be extremely difficult to contest Babangida's claim to success. His performance and achievement as ECOWAS and OAU Chairman, and elections into the top positions at both the Commonwealth and United Nations are among the visible proofs. The technical aid corp programme (TAC) Introduced by the regime has brought so much goodwill to Nigeria in the receiving countries. There is virtually no programme that has ever positively projected Nigeria among the ordinary people in foreign countries. The positive contribution of TAC to the economic and social life of the receiving countries has reinforced Nigeria's image as the mecca for all black people and a country which means for all the black people what Israel means to the Jews.

The elaborate political transition programme is predicated on the belief that the Nigerian situation as at August 1985 was directly attributable accountability. Democracy as practised by absence of politicians of the first and second republics could not be described as the government the people, for the people. The administration pledged itself to the establishment of a new political order in which not only the letter but also the spirit of the constitution would be adhered to. There was the realisation that for the dreams of SAP to be realised, a stable political order was a necessity, "Our strategy" said General Babangida "has been to pursue a co-ordinated and multi pronged approach to our developmental problems. Our

economic problems also have their political under currents. You cannot. solve one without the other".

In seeking to create the new political order, there a was clear obsession with getting the system rooted with the majority of Nigerians. Right from the establishment of the political bureau to the inauguration of the constituent assembly, the creation of new local governments and the elections held into the local governments, state and national assemblies, there was this apparent preference for power to be seen to be derived from the people. It was in reaction to the often repeated allegation that the essence of people's power was often lost in the irregularities that feature in the manner in which electoral votes were cast and counted, that the regime opted for the controversial open ballot system. It was also the desire, to ensure that there is no return to the ethnic politics of the past that the regime decreed the formation of two grass root based political parties after dissolving the 13 political associations formed because they were mere recreations of the first and second republics. With the two parties controlling an almost equal number of states and with neither of both parties having a two thirds majority at the national assembly. it is reasonable to expect that the politics of the third republic will be one of consensus and compromise since no side would be able to go it alone.

It is tempting to regard a publication of 7 years of IBB by the DAILY Times as a mere government propaganda. Such an attitude is understandable given the fact of the government's control of majority shares in the company. The editors and contributors of the present volume are aware of the fact that the sheer weight and volume of activities that took place within the past seven years are such that would normally attract observation and comments particularly after the regime might have handed over. This is not an attempt to whitewash the Babangida era.

What we have tried to do has been to present the facts and analyse them as rationally as possible. We believe that whatever criticisms one may have against the regime will have more to do with implementation than the formulation of policies.

It will be difficult to fault the objectives of SAP. It was the only rational option considering the state of Nigeria's economy in 1985. The fact that 30 African and third world countries are implementing structural adjustment policies attest to the inevitability of the programme given our circumstance. The human face of SAP were the ameliorative programmes such as DFFRI, Better Life, NDE, People's Bank, Community Bank. Like all other aspects of SAP the manner of operation of some of these projects could have been better if not for the inconsiderate ambition and greed on the part of some Nigerians. The reckless manner in which loans were dispensed at the People's Bank, the unsubstantiated claims of DFFRI, the general attitude that government money is there for the taking limited the success of the implementation of some of these otherwise well-conceived programmes.

The chapter on DFFRI, while emphasising the revolutionary nature of the concept in articulating a national programme of rural transformation acknowledged the fact that actual implementation of the programmes had been flawed on several fronts and plagued by several implementation failure. But this, does not rule out the fact that DFFRI, established 25,000 ton storage facilities in selected urban locations, facilitated the procurement and distribution of fertilisers, constructed hundreds of thousand of feeder roads, and executed water supply projects. Despite its shortcomings DFFRI brought some of the good things of life to some elements of the rural community. The same goes for the much criticised Better Lifer for Rural Women Programme. The proposal to get it incorporated within the ambit of the National Commission for Women has the potential of depersonalising the programme and detaching it from the families of state and national political leaders. Whatever might be its shortcomings, the programme has launched 7,635 cooperatives, 997 cottage industries, 1,751 new farms and gardens, 1187 new shops and markets, 419 women's centres and 163 social welfare programmes. Perhaps of more importance is its success in arousing the social and political consciousness of Nigeria's womenfolk. The award of the prize for the sustainable end of hunger to the first lady in August, 1991 accorded the programme the international recogni-

tion and justification that it deserves.

It is obvious that the downturn in the economy which is a world wide phenomenon has resulted in the decline of the quality of social services e.g health and education. Teaching hospitals despite some of them having been designated centres of excellence lack necessary equipments. Some Nigerians have since been in the habit of going abroad to receive medical treatment. Critics of the Babangida administration are inclined to emphasise only this aspect of health sector but will carefully ignore or refuse to mention the fact that the government has been quite successful in its primary health care programme which emphasises the provision of essential medical and health facilities to the community. The primary health care programme deals with diseases and ailments that afflict the majority of Nigerians who live in the rural communities. The teaching hospitals deal mainly with the diseases of the affluence. One is not attempting to justify or rationalise the decline in the quality of health care. What is being said is that the government had tired to focus more on the requirements on the wider populace within the limits of resources available.

The chapter on education makes it clear that the sector took some beating during the Babangida era. But as the editors and contributions of these volumes have pointed out, some the problems which the regime faced and which tended to ignite negative feelings were inherited. The politicisation of university education by which every State Governor wanted to be Visitor started during Shagari era. The Babangida regime regrettably did not arrest the trend. Even State governments that have Federal Universities located in their territories did not feel satisfied until they had their own. Then there came universities of technology and agriculture despite the existence of faculties of engineering and agriculture in the existing ones. Meanwhile the decline in the value of the Naira coupled with the army of competing demands made it difficult for the government to meet its obligation to the universities with regards to funding. Nigeria's best brains left their natural habitat (campuses) either for the private sector or "checked out" to other countries.

With the proliferation of merchant banks and the ease with which less educated Nigerians made money, the value and virtues in reading took a drive. It took a spirited and most constructive industrial action by Dr. Jegale Academic Staff Union of Universities to get the government to agree to improve conditions of service of teachers and fund universities adequately.

The important thing is that by agreeing eventually to ASUU demands, the Babangida regime has laid a foundation for the survival of the country's university system. The drift from the country's universities to the other sectors is beginning to cease. As the opportunities for easy money begins to decline, the educated man is likely to get the appreciation that he deserves from the society. It may take some time before the impact of the agreement reached between ASUU and government is felt. This may perhaps be one of the positive effects of the Babangida administration that will take some time to manifest itself on the society.

The Babangida regime had its shortcomings. The situation in the mid 80's till now is such that no regime could do without. In confronting the situations that it met the regime exercised sound judgement particularly in the selection of personnel to face the challenges. With Olikoye Kuti in Health, Jubril Aminu in Education, Ajibola at the Justice Ministry, Kalu Idika Kalu in Finance, Babangida picked those who on paper seemed most qualified for the job. This is not to say that this attitude permeated every section of the public service. But with ministerial appointments Babangida seemed to have been a stickler for quality. As a systemsman, he left most of the implementation to his ministers who on some occasions even initiated policies. Some of the confusions that occurred in some national sectors such as the changing of school calendar, implementation of second tier and fuel distribution are more attributable to the ministers even though as President Babangida takes all the praise and blame.

It has not been an easy seven year period. The problem inherited were formidable. But equally formidable were the determination and resolve not only to overcome the problems but also to lay

foundation for a greater tomorrow. The editors and contributors have attempted to present the problems and analyse efforts made to confront them. Whatever may be one's individual attitude to the personalities, it will be necessary to remember the magnitude of the problems which were largely inherited before one can be in a position to estimate the success of the efforts made to combat them. There is also the fact that because the regime chose to act with an eye for the distant future and plan for generations yet unborn, the effects of some of the measures it took are not yet discernible. The regime like all others before it will have to wait for the judgement of history.

Prof Adé Adefuye
Nigerian High Commission
London . 1993.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It was ambitious in conception. Seven Books on Seven Years of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, each having seven chapters, looked like an impossible order, especially when then Managing Director Chief Tola Adeniyi also directed that it be completed within four months.

The idea of the books had occurred to Chief Adeniyi, in London, early in 1992. Before he returned from that trip, his first as "Sole Administrator" of the Daily Times of Nigeria PLC, he had discussed the idea extensively with Professor Ade Adefuye, Deputy Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. Extensive notes had been made, suggesting book subjects and chapters, as well as book editors and chapter writers. Professor Adefuye was, naturally appointed General Editor of the series. The first announcement of the project was made in the *Sunday Times* on March 1992.

I became involved in the project, when Chief Adeniyi, in a memo, asked me to take charge of the project. After discussions with our then Books Editor, Mr. Paul Akegwure, it was agreed that we needed to mobilise more fully the considerable intellectual power that resides in our Editorial Department, if the task was to be accomplished. A committee that included the Editor, *Daily Times* and most members of the Editorial Board, as well as the Books Editor and the Editor Times Home Studies, was set-up.

Then followed, in consultation with the General Editor, a somewhat drastic revision of book chapters, to cover more areas of the Babangida Revolution, and of Editors and writers on the basis of interest and ability to deliver. Then commissioning and re-commissioning, when some who had accepted failed to deliver. The Managing Director's fascination with the figure 7 was to prove somewhat problematic. But the committee persisted, cajoling contributors and Editors to submit copies, and looking for, and persuading new contributors, on the many occasions we had cause to re-commission chapters.

Co-ordinating this project has been a most educative experience for me. For that, I want to thank Chief Tola Adeniyi, Chairman/Chief Executive of Daily Times of Nigeria PLC for the opportunity. I should also thank our General Editor, Professor Adefuye for his keen interest and advice at every stage of the project. My thanks too to our contrib-

utors, and especially our Editors who had to attend several meetings in Lagos in the process of producing this series. His Excellency General Yakubu Gowon, at our request, wrote the Foreword. I thank him.

But perhaps this project might have been as impossible as it looked at the beginning without the exemplary commitment of members of the committee. Their enthusiasm was touching. So I must thank specially: Gbenga Odusanya and Dayo Alao who oversaw the production of the books; G. G. Darah, Omar F. Ibrahim, Ayo Olukotun, who wrote, edited and constantly revised theirs, and other contributors' copies; Tunji Okegbola, our brilliant and indefatigable Librarian who not only compiled the compendium, but also the indexes of all the books; Mallam Kabir for the cover design, staff of the Times Books & Periodicals Department; for industry and the numerous other colleagues who offered advice, suggestions and sometimes, sympathy.

For all of us who have participated in this project, this has been, I believe, a worthwhile experience. Believing that a good deal of the truly revolutionary programmes of the Babangida administration were either misunderstood or under-appreciated, we had set out to record and analyse the achievements of this period, in an attempt to place them in their proper perspective. It is perhaps indicative of the enthusiasm which developed, that we ended up with eight Books — The Seven Books, plus a Compendium.

It should, however, be stressed here that this is not a government information project. Although government officials, like many other citizens, knew about what we were doing, no government official asked for, or read any part of the series before they were published. Fully conscious that the debate about Babangida's place in history will rage for many years after the man has gone, we made efforts to invite contributors to write on subjects about which they are knowledgeable. What the contributors and the Editors have written represent, I believe, their observations and objective assessment of a period in Nigerian history, about which no patriot can be indifferent. This is our contribution to the prospective debate. I am assured by the General Editor, that Editors and contributors are prepared to bear sole responsibility for all errors of fact and judgement in this publication.

Onyema Ugochukwu,
Chairman,
Co-ordinating Committee. xvii

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important problems that faced Nigeria as a nation since its Independence some thirty-two years ago was lack of a viable, enduring and positive political culture. During the colonial period, politicians from all nooks and corners of the country were agreed on the struggle for Independence. To this end they severally and collectively struggled against the British until Independence was finally achieved. Although they were resolved that Nigeria should remain as a united polity, irrespective of our differences, the politicians have never been able to evolve political parties and plan politics such that would ensure an enduring republic. The first republic (1960 - 1966) did not travel far before it was beset with all sorts of problems, violence, rigged elections, bogged up census, corruption and above all, lack of political tolerance and accommodation, led to the intervention of the army in a coup in Jan., 1966. Even with the Army on the political saddle, we had to fight a civil war (1967 - 1970) to keep the country as one entity and polity. From 1970 when the civil war ended to the collapse of the second republic in 1983, the country has had two Military Governments (1970-75; 1975-1978) and one Civilian administration (1978 - 1983).

The Second Republic was more a repeat performance of the events of the first and hence the third Military Government was ushered in. (1983-1985). None of these past administration tried to evolve a political culture for the nation.

It is the Fourth Military Government (1985 - present 1992), the Babangida administration that considered it very important and necessary to have a radical departure from the past in our political development. It tried to diagnose some of our political ills and to come out with what it considers as appropriate remedies. We lacked a positive political culture, for instance, and so through a transition programme the government establishes certain policies and institutions to help towards the evolution of a third republic that would be well entrenched with viable political norms and good behaviour.

This sixth book (titled *New Political Culture*) on the seven years of General Babangida's rule is about some of the most important institutions and policy decisions implementation. These were to evolved or implemented through some elaborate political transition programme which would serve as learning or training process for both the political elites and the general public towards a viable third republic.

The first chapter is on the Political Bureau, an institution which was launched in January of 1986 and tasked with the responsibility of, among others, producing the blue-print of new political model(s), and also to work out a realistic implementation programme for the consideration of the Babangida administration. The chapter discusses the political and constitutional super-structure of Nigeria since Independence until the coming of I.B.B. Government in July of 1985. The various far-reaching recommendations of the Bureau to the government, such as restructuring of the country with the creation of more states, more local governments, founding of two political parties, review of revenue allocation formula, having a viable and acceptable census and creating a platform for political education, etc, were highlighted and analysed.

The government did consider seriously most of the recommendations of the bureau's report and implemented them with some modification. Among those considered and implemented was the founding and establishment of two political parties, the Social Democratic Party (S.D.P.) and the National Republican Convention (N.R.C) for the purpose of partisan political activities.

The second chapter dwells on the two political parties sponsored by the government after making a good review of past political parties and their roles in the political development of Nigeria especially before and after Independence and during the two republics. The two parties were meant to be of grass-root disposition, with members having equal rights and status - thus providing a very revolutionary departure from what obtained previously. The chapter analyses the manifestos, the structure, the funding and the constitutions of the

two parties and how they were expected to operate towards the evolution of the third republic. The chapter concludes with some observations from both those who are pro and anti two party system especially as they were founded and funded by the government.

Chapter three deals with the Local Governments and the reforms introduced by the Babangida administration towards an enduring grass-root democratic third republic. The chapter traces the history of local government administration in Nigeria before, during and after the colonial administration, and the roles and impacts they had in the political development of Nigeria. Both civilian and military governments since 1960 up to 1985 have introduced reforms but those under the I.B.B. administration were far-reaching and radical. Important among those highlighted are making local governments autonomous and the third tier of governance in the country; direct funding of them by the Federal Government, and linking them (in accordance with the Political Bureau report) to the grass-roots new political dispensation of two party and presidential system of government. The socio-economic importance of local governments and overall rural developments in the country especially as juxtaposed with other developmental institutions such as the DFRRI, the People's Bank of Nigeria (P.B.N) and Community Bank (C.B) were analysed.

An important revolution in the new political process of grass-root democracy introduced by the Babangida administration was the open-ballot system of electing officials or representatives to various political elective posts in the three tiers of government viz Local Government, State and national levels. The fourth chapter discusses the open ballot system, its background, and its pros and cons in the context of the new grass-root political re-orientation. By the time this chapter was written, the open ballot system had already been tested and with a measure of success in the local government, gubernatorial and national assembly elections. The Presidential election was yet to be held, though presidential primaries were held twice and were cancelled by the government because of serious allegations and irregularities.

The fifth chapter deals with the Centre for the Democratic Studies (CDS), an institution set up to present some of President Babangida's major political ideas and strategies in the search for a new political order. The centre, another product of the Political Bureau report, has as its mission, the cultivation of a democratic political culture through the process of political learning, training, institutional adjustment and the re-orientation of political attitudes and behaviour. The centre had, therefore, conducted political training programmes and research into sources of anti-democratic behaviour with a view to correcting them. The chapter discusses, in details the various structures and programmes of the centre and the training session it has so far provided for the various political segments of the nation such as political party leaders, gubernatorial candidates, governors, senators elect, state and local government legislators etc, etc.

While the C.D.S. deals with ideas and tries to impart them to evolve better attitudinal political behaviour and hence a political culture to withstand the test of time and circumstance, the National Electoral Commission (N.E.C) was commissioned to cater for the political parties and to conduct free and fair elections within the context of the new political re-orientation. Chapter six deals with the N.E.C and elections, guidelines and regulations governing the processes of this new political order and re-direction. In its analysis, the chapter pointed out that although N.E.C is not necessarily new institution per se in the context of Nigerian politics, yet the roles and powers given to it by the government make it a very powerful machinery towards the evolution of a new political culture.

The establishment of the National Population Commission in 1988 and the subsequent conduct of Census in November, 1991, were part of the transition programme towards the third republic. Conducting of Census and the emergence of national population figures have been very crucial in the political development in Nigeria. The seventh and last chapter therefore, is discussing, in comparative perspective, the 1991 Census which results came as a surprise and shocker to a large spectrum of the Nigerian Society. The low figures provisionally announced and the unexpected and unbelievable

indication that there are more men than women (instead of the reverse) in Nigeria, gave rise to the shocker but not any serious protest. However, the scientific conduct of the counting and the empirical analysis produced in this chapter to support the provisional figures released, showed the extent to which the I.B.B government was committed towards the evolution of new order and orientation in our political activities, views, attitudes and behaviour.

Finally dear reader, it is not the intention of this book to give judgement as to the success or failure of the items discussed. To do this is to be very subjective, partial and unfair to both I.B.B. and posterity. History will do this more accurately for us. However, one incontestable fact is that President Babangida has a vision and has vigorously set out to concretize this vision to a solid reality, the impact of which has not escaped anybody in Nigeria during these seven years of his rule and administration.

Chapter I

BACKGROUND TO THE POLITICAL BUREAU REPORT

By - *Segun Ayobolu.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

On December 31, 1983, Nigeria's second attempt at democratic governance collapsed like a pack of cards the way the first civilian regime had done seventeen years earlier. The disintegration of the second republic and the consequent return to the political stage of the fabled "men on horseback" did not occur suddenly and unexpectedly. Rather, the seeds of the decay which led to the collapse of the shaky political edifice on the heads of the civilian political class had been sown right at the inception of the second republic. It was not surprising that the same old evils of corruption, indiscipline, ethnicity, political intolerance, electoral fraud and violence which combined to wreck the first republic played an even greater role in undermining the second.

Professor Richard Joseph aptly captures the evolutionary process of political decay in the second republic in the following words:

*"Quite fundamentally, therefore, Nigeria in mid-1983 was the delegitimizing of its competitive party system as well as with the more threatening situation, that officials of the state were losing the capacity to compel compliance with their dictates. A different kind of authority- embryonically present in the midst of the civilian rulers in the form of the militarized police, armed forces personnel assigned to peace-keeping duties and retired officers given bureaucratic supervisory tasks- was obviously available with its alternative set of governing norms, practices, personnel and institutions. In short, constitutional democracy in Nigeria was not just overthrown three months after the general elections of 1983, it had also by then been substantially eroded from within !"*¹

The civilian political class had thus adequately prepared the ground for Nigeria's Politicised military elite to willingly seize control of the centre stage of the country's political life by the former's suicidal refusal to operate within the constitutive and regulative framework of the experimental democratic process.

In the words of Ikejiani and Ikejiani "In his first broadcast to the nation, Major-General Buhari accused the political leadership of the second Republic of financial mismanagement, thuggery and rigging in the 1983 elections, corruption and indiscipline. He proclaimed that the corrupt and insensitive leadership of the last four years had been the source of immorality and impropriety in Nigerian society since what happens in any society is largely a reflection of the leadership of that society. He maintained that *"corruption has become so pervasive and intractable that a whole ministry has been created to tame it."*²

The civilian political class and especially the NPN Federal government at the centre "had simply mismanaged the country into economic bankruptcy and quagmire through a series of shady contract - awards, and doubtful importation of everything and anything".

Continuation
The bitterness of Nigerians with the civilian politicians and perhaps the hasty celebration of the return of the military was clearly acerbated by the linkage by the masses of the country's dwindling economic fortunes and their own personal increased impoverishment with the blatant and reckless kleptomania of the civilian political class.

But the remarkable speed and seeming tenacity with which the Buhari/Idiagbon regime squandered the goodwill it initially enjoyed among Nigerians is now part and parcel of our political history. One reason for the quick souring of the romance between the initially perceived messianic regime of Buhari and Idiagbon was what has been characterised by some journalistic commentators as that government's 'harsh, headmaster approach to governance'.

Having identified indiscipline as the principal cause of the country's economic crisis and deep moral malaise, the Buhari/Idiagbon regime apparently went all out to infuse discipline into the body

1. Richard A. Joseph, *Democracy and pretendal politics, spectrum*, Ibadan, 1987, P. 183.

2. Ikejiani, Nigeria; political imperative, Fourth Dimension, 1986, P. 210

3. Kintle Amuwo in Victor Ayeni and Kayode Soremekun, *Nigeria's second Republic*, DAILY TIMES, p.276

polity with military decisiveness and a times unabashed brutality. The impression was, perhaps unintentionally created, that the sins of the civilian pilots of the Nigerian state in the four years preceding 1983 was being visited on the generality of the Nigerian people.

The regime launched a largely militarized and draconian programme which it christened, 'War Against Indiscipline'. Members of the security forces were used to maintain, if necessary by force, orderly queues for scarce essential commodities and public transportation vehicles in urban centres. A large-scale retrenchment exercise in both the public and private sectors was embarked upon as part of the regime's economic austerity measures.

Series of taxes and levies were imposed on the already heavily burdened working class by the federal and state governments. Leading members of the discredited political class were clamped into detention without trial. The freedom of the press was openly trampled underfoot especially by the promulgation of the infamous decree four which prohibited the press from publishing anything damaging to a public officer even if such information was true. More ominously, the regime barred any discussion of the country's political future and gave indication of implementing any transition to civil rule programme.

Some analysts have argued that the policy and attitudinal orientation of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime ought to be sympathetically viewed against the background of crass indiscipline and immorality of the civilian regime it overthrew. There may well be some truth in this assertion. But it was clear before its collapse that the harsh, inflexible style of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime was unlikely to last long in a dynamic, federal society like Nigeria and one at that which had been used to four years of free democratic expression no matter how imperfect. Something simply had to give and it did. The duo of General Muhammadu Buhari and Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon were shoved aside in a palace coup on August 27 1985 and the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida was brought into being.

Unlike its predecessor, the new regime sought to tackle the country's political, economic and social problems in a more subtle, systematic and coordinated manner. The regime reiterated from the onset its commitment to handing over the reins of state power to a democratically elected government. Yet, it demonstrated an eagerness to avoid the weaknesses of the transition process which culminated in the ill-fated second Republic.

Having stated its determination to ensuring that it is the last military regime in the country's political history, the Babangida regime was poised to implement a gradual and elaborate transition process which would serve as a learning process for the political class as regards the inculcation of values capable of ensuring an enduring liberal democratic Third Republic.

And it was to fashion out such a programme as well as determine the structures and supporting values of an enduring Third Republic that the Political Bureau, first broached in President Babangida's 1986 speech, was established.

In his address at the inauguration of the Political Bureau at Abuja on January 13, 1986, President Ibrahim Babangida gave an insight into the *raison d'être* for setting up the Bureau and it is certainly appropriate to quote him at some length at this point.

According to him, "we are all familiar with the political conditions which brought about military regimes. Invariably military administrations have come about as a result of bad government; indeed, our present economic predicament can be attributed to the nature and practice of partisan politics. It has contributed, in part, to the increasing cynicism and apathy of individuals, economic mismanagement as well as the apparent social chaos and disorder in our society. It has also adversely affected our capacity as a nation to realize our vast economic potentials. This administration would therefore like to shift our attention to the need to create a relevant political system. Consistent with our stated philosophy of government, we are committed to popular participation in the

process of evolving a viable political order".

"Today", the President then announced, "we commence the search for a new political order. The setting up of the Political Bureau is the first step. As part of the strategy towards evolving a viable political order, I expect the ensuing debate to capture the nature of the threshold of the transition process. In particular, I expect the debate to come up with suggestion as to how we can evolve a political system which can enable us to aspire to a predictable political life. I believe the time is now ripe for us to have a system which can guarantee an acceptable and painless succession mechanism. Finally, I would want the debate, as far as possible, to be rooted in a truly Nigerian political experience. Thus, I would expect the debate to identify and clarify issues in a manner as to ensure a higher political order that is capable of sustaining our enthusiasm for a healthy future".

The importance of the Bureau and its work as perceived by the administration was underscored by the President's assertion that it was not expected to serve merely as a debating agency. Rather, he said, "apart from monitoring, analysing and documenting the national political debate, the Bureau will provide an objective and indepth critique of our past political experience in order to serve as background for the debate. It will also produce the blueprint of a new political model (or models) for the consideration of the Administration. It shall be its responsibility to eventually place options before this Administration as well as work a realistic implementation programme for the agreed model".

Selected as members of the seventeen man Bureau were distinguished social scientists

and administrators as well as representatives of special interest groups such as Labour and Women. The bureau comprised Professor S. J. Cookey (Chairman), Professor E. O. Awa, Professor A. D. Yahaya, Dr Haroun Adamu, Mallam Ibrahim Halilu, Mr Paschal Bafyau, Professor Oye Oyediran, Professor Tunde Adeniran, Professor S. E. Oyovbaire,

Dr Bala Takaya, O. E. Uya, Prof. Sani Zahradeen, Mrs Hilda Adefarasin, Mrs R. Abdullahi, Dr Ola Balogun, Dr Edwin Madunagu and Dr. Abdullahi Augie (Executive Secretary). Two of the members, Drs Ola Balogun and Edwin Madunagu however withdrew from the Bureau for personal reasons before the completion of its work.

The Political Bureau's wide-ranging terms of reference as enunciated by President Babangida were as follows:

- (a) Review Nigeria's political history and identify the basic problems which led to our failure in the past and suggest ways of resolving and coping with these problems.
- (b) Identify a basic philosophy of government which will determine goals and serve as a guide to the activities of governments.
- (c) Collect relevant information and data for the Government as well as identify political problems that may arise from the debate.
- (d) Gather, collate and evaluate the contributions of Nigerians to the search for a viable political future.

In the following sections of this paper, we shall examine salient aspects of this historic document under the following rubrics:

- 1.2 The bureau and the political economy of Nigeria
- 1.3 The political economy of Nigeria
- 1.4 Conclusion: Towards the evolution of a new political culture.

1.2 THE BUREAU AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NIGERIA

Following its review of the nation's political history from the pre-colonial era to the present, the Political Bureau report undertook in chapter three an extensive analysis of Nigeria's colonial and post-colonial political economy. It was on the basis of this that the Bureau

proposed in chapter five what it described as "a new political economy for Nigeria".

President Babangida himself had underscored the importance of a careful examination of the political economy to the work of the Bureau in his address at its inauguration. "As you very well know", he noted on that occasion, "every socio-economic order has a political arrangement appropriate to it. It will be the duty of the Political Bureau to suggest the blueprint that will promote socio-economic development of our country".

Its focus on the country's political economy could thus be described as the pivot around which the entire Political Bureau report revolves. For its analysis, findings and recommendations regarding the economic sub-structure of the society dictated to a large extent its propositions concerning the political and constitutional superstructure for an enduring democratic polity.

The Bureau noted that the political economy of the various communities which made up pre-colonial Nigeria were largely agricultural and peasant based. The various state systems, it observed, maintained trade relations based on agricultural and manufactured goods which they produced by themselves. The pre-colonial political economy was thus essentially a self-reliant one even though the extent of markets, level of skills, degree of development of productive forces (etc) posed obvious limitations.

A major distortion in the pattern of autochthonous development of the pre-colonial economy, the Bureau noted, was marked by the introduction of the slave trade between Nigerian state systems and Europe up to the middle of the 19th century. The slave trade which "disrupted and depleted populations, stunted the development of productive forces, and undermined the normal patterns of growth of the state - systems", began the under-development - generating incorporation of Nigeria into the world capitalist economy.

This process of Nigeria's immersion in the world capitalist economy on an unequal and dependent basis was continued with the termination of the slave trade as a result of changes in the requirements of European capitalism in the first half of the 19th century, the introduction of the era of so called legitimate trade when crops such as vegetable oils were exported for European industries and the ultimate formal colonisation of the country by Britain between 1879 and 1960.

The Political Bureau captured the essence of the colonial political economy when it stated that "The political economy of the colonial state was intended to subjugate, dominate and exploit the Nigerian people and their resources. It was deliberately and rationally orientated outwards by the requirements of the British and European capitalist economies. The political economy concentrated only on economic activities beneficial to the colonial state, and was thereby disarticulated, domestically. It promoted the interests of its centres of activities - the urban settlements - and thereby neglected the rural mass settlements. The colonial economy was therefore grossly uneven".

Given the role of the colonial political economy in the "development of under development" in Nigeria, it is significant that the Political Bureau report reveals the inability of the post-colonial state to "alter this nature and character of the colonial political economy especially during the first decade of independence. If anything, it entrenched greater dependence upon the world capitalist system, as well as the domestic disarticulation and inequity"

Major features of the post-colonial economy, according to the Political Bureau included foreign domination and control of major investment activities, inhibition of domestic accumulation and reinvestment of capital by Nigerian entrepreneurs as a result of the prevalent repatriation of profits, dividends and interests by multi-national corporations, the comprador and non-productive character of the indigenous business class who merely served as middlemen

between foreign capital and domestic interests and the conversion of the state into a means of private accumulation of public resources. It was these inherent limitations of the post-colonial economy that aborted the possibility of the effective utilisation of the massive oil-revenues of the seventies to combat the daunting problems of underdevelopment. Commenting on this, the Political Bureau noted that "the oil boom sparked off an oppressive culture of importation in the course of which the ports became congested and the country had to pay a fortune in demurrage. All interests converge on the appropriation and consumption of oil revenues, but not on production, investment or on any concern for effective development of productive forces."

Professor Aaron Gana captures poignantly and succinctly the conclusion reached by the bureau as regards the implication of the character of the country's political instability. In his words, the Bureau "distilled from the massive data it obtained that the root cause of political instability in Nigeria, as in most of Africa, is the very foundation of all politics - the economy. According to the panel, "capitalism, the dominant ideology in Nigeria has tended to foster poverty, ignorance, disease and squalor in the ranks of the masses" making them vulnerable to the manipulations of the power elite..

As a result of its critique of the political economy of colonial and neo-colonial capitalism in Nigeria, the Political Bureau recommended the adoption of the socialist ideology as the basis of a new political economy for Nigeria.

"To turn the present economy around and institute a framework for the emergence of a new social order" the bureau argued, "we require ideology and development which are simultaneously promotive of the new social order and transformative of the present one. The basic doctrines of the new social order are self-reliance in economic production and political development and social justice and equity in distribution, exchange and participation. Thus, the form of ideology should be predominatly socialist and self-reliant."

The government in its white paper however rejected the socialist option proposed by the Bureau arguing that it did not possess any mandate to 'impose' any ideology on the nation. Some analysts contend that it may have been unrealistic of the Bureau to expect a government which was already implementing market - oriented economic reforms to make a complete turn around and start executing socialist programmes. Some others have also argued that given the class character and ideological orientation of the Nigerian military as a whole and the Babangida regime in particular, the rejection of the socialist alternative should not have come as a surprise. ✓

Some of those who are critical of the decision of the government to disregard the bureau's call for the adoption of a socialist ideology argue that it would not have amounted to an 'imposition' as claimed by the government since the bureau's recommendation was supposed to be a reflection in the first place, of the view of the people as expressed during the political debate.

Scholars of a more radical persuasion such as Professor Gana indeed go to the extent of asserting that taken outside the context of the political economy of socialism advocated by the bureau, the acceptance of its other recommendations, "provide no more than an edifice whose foundations are as fragile as the materials used. Thus it is that this elaborate and comprehensive exercise in political engineering is undermined by the very contradictions of its theoretical premise"

But there are those who depart fundamentally from this viewpoint. As they are concerned, the Bureau's recommendation of a new political economy in the direction of socialism took little account of the increase strength of international finance capital, the decline of the second world of the socialist bloc, the fragility of Third World state structures and the peculiarities of the Nigerian polity.

8. Ayanbun I. Gana, *The limits of political engineering*, Covenant Press, Jos, 1990 P.15

9. Report of the Political Bureau, op cit, pg. 73.

They would also argue that the non-adoption of the socialist philosophy by the Babangida regime does not necessarily render useless the other political and constitutional suggestions of the bureau which were accepted by government and which it has since been implementing as the basis of its political engineering effort. This constitutional and political superstructure will form the focus of the next section.

1.3 The Political and Constitutional Superstructure

The three main issues to which we shall direct our attention in this section are the recommendation by the Political Bureau of the retention by the country of a presidential form of government, a federal type of constitution and the adoption of a democratic two-party system.

In suggesting the continuation of the executive presidential system of government as was the case in the second republic, the bureau noted the difficulty in maintaining the hiatus between real and formal authority inherent in the parliamentary system of government, the system - weakening clash of personalities and interests capable of arising therefrom and the inherent instability of parliamentarism which allowed for unprincipled carpet crossing in the first republic.

Other advantages of the presidential form of government over the parliamentary as observed by the bureau include its allowance for constitutional limitation of the tenure of office of the president to one or two terms as well as the symbolic advantage of enabling the chief executive to serve as a focus of national unity, a political leader in his own right as well as give leadership and a sense of direction to the country.

In the light of these factors, the bureau had no hesitation whatsoever in recommending the presidential system as "the best for Nigeria"

and that "the advantages of this form of government outweigh the disadvantages."

Nevertheless, the Bureau admitted the fear that the presidential system with its emphasis on a strong executive could be easily abused leading to dictatorship and tyranny. But it was confident that "a politically conscious society aware and jealous of its right to choose those who direct public affairs," could prevent any such distortion of the presidential system.

In order to strengthen the executive and avoid the shortcomings of this branch it recommended, among others, that executive powers be vested in the chief executive of each tier of government and that ministers and commissioners should be appointed on the bases of competence and merit without prejudice to the principle of "federal character" and subject to confirmation of the relevant legislature.

It was also of the view that members of the federal and state executives should attend the sittings of the federal or state legislature as special members and that "the creation of any major governmental agency or department of the state and federal levels should be subject to the approval of the appropriate legislature". The idea was that the executive be made accountable to the people not only directly by also through the legislature.

As regards the issue of a suitable constitutional arrangement for the country, the Bureau exhaustively considered the options of confederalism, unitarism and federalism and unequivocally settled for continuation with the latter.

According to the report, "Either by direct agitation for or in opposition to confederalism, the debate witnessed very strong commitments to the maintenance of the country as a federation. Most contributions and suggestions for a variety of reforms were made on the assured assumption that the country will continue to exist as a federation".

The Bureau however received various demands and arguments for a re-organisation of the federation. Among these were demands for creation of new states, restructuring the existing federation to coincide with the old 24 provinces, converting the existing local government areas into states making for a two-tier federalism re-organising the political system on the basis of development centres as new units of administration and reorganising the boundaries of some of the existing states and local government areas.

While appreciating "the expression of a sense of structural alienation and the manifest need to correct the ills of certain aspects of the existing system," the Bureau did not see "any other accommodating and healthier arrangement for Nigeria than the continuation of the system of federalism". As a result it recommended the continuation of the present three - tier arrangement of government namely, federal, state and local.

Two issues which bear significantly on the country's federal structure and which were examined in considerable detail by the bureau were the twin problems of revenue allocation and state creation.

The Bureau's position on revenue allocation reflected its desire to ensure a more vibrant financial position for the third tier of government which is regarded as "the basic unit for the administration and development of the country to which more constitutional responsibilities should be assigned in our new dispensation".

In this respect, the Bureau recommended that local governments be allocated not less than 20 per cent from the federation account as well as the creation of a local government Joint Account in each state "into which all funds, including state contribution of not less than 10 per cent internally generated revenue, meant for the local government in that state should be put and disbursed to them directly."

Another significant innovation of the Bureau as regards the issue of revenue allocation was its call for the setting up of a permanent national revenue and fiscal commission to monitor the accruals from and disbursements of revenue from the federation account, review periodically revenue allocation formulae and principles in operation to ensure their conformity to changing realities and determine the remuneration appropriate for political office holders such as members of the executive and legislative branches of government.

The debate on the question of state creation was one of the most intense and contentious in the exercise of the Political Bureau. The Bureau itself found it difficult reaching a consensus on the subject. It was divided between those who advocated the retention of the previous nineteen state structure in existence during the work of the Bureau, the creation of only two more additional states, Katsina and Akwa Ibom, and those who wanted six new states added to the previous nineteen, namely, Delta, Wawa or Enugu, Kogi, Sarduana, Katsina and Akwa Ibom. It is apposite to note that eleven additional states have since been created by government bringing the number of states in the country to thirty.

The Bureau was however emphatic on the need, after satisfying to a certain extent clamorous demands for creation of new states, to impose a 25 year moratorium on states creation exercises to enable the country "to settle down politically and tackle other more fundamental issues of national development which have tended to be swept under the carpet."

Having exhaustively examined the various arguments advanced before it as regards the desirability or otherwise of adopting a zero-party, one-party, multi-party or two-party system, the Bureau opted for the last although it recognised the genuineness of fears expressed in some quarters that the two - party system could accentuate the

existing North/South dichotomy and the problem of religion. To avoid such an undesirable situation, it was suggested that both political parties to be created accept the national philosophy of government and that the differences between them should be the priorities and strategies of implementation of the national objectives.

Other suggestions made for a viable non-sectional two party system were that membership of the parties be open to all Nigerians irrespective of religion and ethnic grouping, the national executive organ and principal officers of each party reflect the federal character of Nigeria and that the two parties be firmly established in at least two - thirds of the local government areas in each of the states including the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja).

Referring to our discussion on the rejection of the socialist option in the preceding section, it is pertinent to note here that the acceptance by government of the democratic option preferred by the Bureau makes it possible for the people of Nigeria to install a "socialist oriented" government in power through the electoral process if they so please.

1.4 Conclusion: Towards the evolution of new political culture

Perhaps realizing that the socio-economic arrangements and political structures it proposed for a viable Third Republic can only be sustained by a supporting set of positive values brought about through a deliberate process of national orientation, the Bureau suggested in this respect the immediate initiation of a comprehensive, coherent and sustained programme of social mobilisation and political education aimed towards, among others awakening the consciousness of the mass of the Nigerian citizens to their rights and obligations, inculcating in them the spirit of patriotism and commitment to social justice and self reliance and making them realise that

"the sovereignty and the resources of the nation collectively belong to them and that it is their right and duty to ensure that they at all times take necessary steps to resist any attempt to deprive them of these valuable right."

The National Directorate of Social Mobilisation (MAMSER) set up since 1987 has been carrying out this important task of mobilisation. The degree of success achieved in inculcation of these new values in Nigerians may go a long way in determining the durability of the on going socio-economic and political engineering experiment. Even if this is not the case, however, the report of the Political Bureau, in the words of Professor Aaron Gana, "is a historic document that will, in future, inform the politics of some other Republics - 4th, 5th or even 10th". But let us pray that our Third Republic will be the enduring one we desire.

Chapter 2

TWO PARTY SYSTEM: THE IBB LEGACY

By - Emeka Nwosu

"Political parties that enjoy internal consistency in philosophy and action hold the key to the sustenance of democracy in any country, including Nigeria. That is why this administration opted for a two-party system, in which each of the parties shall be a well-established, internally cohesive and competently organised entity with decent and enduring arrangements for adequate funding throughout the transition period and thereafter."

- President Babangida on a nationwide broadcast to the nation on October 7, 1989.

Introduction:

Prior to the termination of the second republic on December 31, 1983 by the military and the emergence of President Ibriahim Babangida on the national political scene on August 27, 1985, the politics of the first and second republics was conducted along multi-party lines.

A close study of the defunct republics revealed that the major political parties that competed for power in the country were merely an approximation of the major ethnic interests in the federation. In effect, the political groups only qualified as parties in name and form. In reality, however, they were no more than ethnic associations pandering to the whims and caprices of the dominant premortal interests in the federation.

Although some of the political parties made some strenuous claims to national character and representation, their actions, conduct and electoral performance suggested something else to the contrary.

Perhaps, it was against this background that most informed Nigerians and political analysts saw the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), Nigerian Peoples Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) (all major parties of the First Republic) as more of regional political associations than political parties.

Although the NCNC made enough effort to shed itself of ethnic colouration, it was largely identified as an Igbo-dominated political organisation. The NCNC drew the bulk of its support from Igbo ethnic group while the Igbo State Union constituted the main motive force for the party.

The NPC on the other hand was geo-politically circumscribed from birth. The name itself was even suggestive of its origin and interests of focus. The NPC was the political metamorphosis of a northern cultural association. Its major objective was the promotion and

defence of the interests of the Hausa-Fulani and North.

The Action Group (AG) which was the major political party in the West had its origin in a Yoruba cultural organisation known as Egbe Omo Oduduwa (the descendants of the founder of the Yoruba tribe). The AG did not make any pretence as to its mission, the advancement of Yoruba interests in the Nigerian federation.

Given the leadership structure and support space of these organisations, it appears clearly evident that they fell far short of the requirements for true political parties. The parties did not endure as they were seen by many dispassionate Nigerians as champions of narrow ethnic interests. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that these political groupings were the major casualties of the first military incursion into the political arena in January, 1966.

A 13-year military interregnum that followed the collapse of the first republic gave birth to the second republic which was inaugurated on October 1, 1979. The political structure of the second republic was almost an exact replica of its predecessor, a clear indication that the 13 years of the military on the political saddle did not in any way enrich or advance the political culture of the country.

The five parties that were registered by the military to contest for power in 1979 were, from all intents and purposes, a mere re-incarnation of dominant political parties of the first republic. It was rather intriguing to note that the leaders of the new political parties were the same leaders of the defunct parties.

For instance, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was the leader of the NCNC in the first Republic became the leader and presidential candidate of the newly formed Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). Similarly, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Mallam Aminu Kano the leaders of AG and NEPU in the first Republic were at the helms of the newly established Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) respectively.

The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), like the defunct NPC, drew the bulk of its leadership and membership from the North. Its presiden-

tial candidate, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who later emerged as the president of the second republic was a former leader of the NPC in the first Republic.

The Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, the apostle of "politics without bitterness", was only a breakaway faction of the NPP.

The Basis For Two-Party System

Certain political trends have become discernible as politicking in the first and second republics showed some convergence of thoughts, ideas and beliefs along two broad political tendencies. For instance, in spite of the major and mushroom parties that dotted the political landscape of the first republic, all the partial forces coalesced into two different alliances.

The AG and NCNC with the other smaller political groups forged an alliance, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), to wrestle power from the ruling Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), formed between the NPC and a breakaway faction of the AG the United Nigeria Democratic Party (NDP) led by Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola.

The NCNC which had in 1989 teamed up with the NPC to form the Central government, pulled out from the government over disagreements on the results of the regional elections in the Western region in 1964. The NCNC thereafter went into alliance with the AG to fight the NPC-led Nigerian National Alliance.

The same political scenario was almost replayed in the second republic. At the core of the first half of the second republic, some political parties had joined forces to oppose the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which had attracted to itself many splinter groups from the opposing parties.

The NPP, UPN, GNPP and PRP teamed up to form the Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) with the main objective of taking power from the NPN. This was the state of affairs before the collapse of the second

republic via a military intervention on December 31, 1983.

From the account of our political past, it could be easily deduced that the nation has tended to revolve around two mutually opposing political view-points which for want of a better choice of language can be categorized as the "conservative" and "progressive" forces.

If the Babangida administration therefore decided to establish two political parties, it was perhaps in keeping with the ever-recurring political trends in our history. In a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Nigeria, the two-party system was welcomed as the best step forward for lessening tensions and building a harmonious nation.

The findings of the Political Bureau which the government set up in 1986 to ascertain the best philosophy of government for Nigeria and the political wishes of Nigerians indicated that two-party system was the choice of the people. After holding consultations round the country with interest groups, and opinion leaders, the Bureau recommended a two-party system for the country. This recommendation was accepted by government.

The formation of the two government-sponsored parties

President Babangida on May 3, 1989, lifted the ban imposed in December 1983 by the military on political activities. Nigerians were once again given the mandate to organise political parties and engage in partisan politics. The federal government however did not leave anyone in doubt as to its desire to guide and regulate the emergent democracy of the third republic on its own terms.

While lifting the ban, on partisan politics, the president effectively banned the political actors of the defunct republics from participation in politics. The ban was enforced through the prohibition from participation in politics Decree 25 of 1987.

The field was thus thrown open to those Babangida referred as new breed politicians. These were new crop of individuals who had neither participated in the politics of the past nor associated with any

wrong doings in the public or private sectors.

The new breed politicians were encouraged to form political associations which must meet certain stringent conditions. The conditions amongst other things included the payment of non-refundable registration deposit of ₦50,000 the establishment of functional offices in all the wards, local government and states of the federation including the federal capital territory, Abuja.

The associations were also required to reflect the federal character in the composition of their leadership. They were also expected to recruit their membership from all parts of the country. The membership registers which must show evidence of the residential address, occupation, sex and passport size photograph of each member were to be submitted to the National Electoral Commission (NEC) for verification.

At the end of the 3 month deadline which was given for registration, about 50 political associations emerged.

However, only 13 collected and submitted registration forms to NEC. They included the Peoples Solidarity Party (PSP) led by Alhaji Mohammed Arzika, Nigerian National Congress (NNC) led by Chief Emmanuelliwuanyanwu Peoples Front of Nigeria (PFN) led by Dr Farouk Abulaziz, Liberal Convention (LC) led by Alhaji Abba Dabo, Labour Party of Nigeria led by Dr Frederick Fasehun, Republican Party of Nigeria formed by local government chairman, All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) led by Alhaji Garba Hamza.

Others include People Patriotic Party of Nigeria, (PPPN) led by Dr Paul Ukpo, Nigerian Peoples Welfare Party (NPWP) led by Chief G. B. A. Akinyede, National Union Party (NUP) led by Chief Fola Akinrinsola, Ideal Peoples Party (IPP) led by Dr Peter Ighofose, United Nigeria Democratic Party led by Capt. Tunde Ajayi (rtd) and Patriotic Party of Nigeria.

Out of the 13 associations only six were recommended to the government for consideration. In their order of rating, they were PSP (43.90%) NNC

(42.62%) PFN (41.20%) LC 34.08%) NLP (17.90%) and RPN (17.00%). In the report submitted to government on September 26, 1989 NEC noted that virtually all the associations derived their roots from the politics of the first and second Republics in varying degrees.

Other findings reported by NEC included the following:

1. There was little substantial difference between the Associations as reflected in their manifestoes and policy papers. More critically they failed to offer concrete and viable solutions to the socio-political and economic problems of the country.
2. All the associations had poor financial base and therefore stood to be hijacked by wealthy individuals within them.
3. Virtually all the associations were rent by factionalism as a result of power struggle which portend ill for the Third Republic.
4. In terms of actual scores in the verification exercise there was little difference between them, either in their membership size and spread or in their administrative organisation or in their manifestoes and essays.

Short of asking President Babangida to disband the associations, the verification report however provided the government the rationale for the dissolution of the associations and the decision to establish two brand new political parties.

In recommending the six associations, NEC made some critical observations which obviously questioned the competence and viability of any of the political associations to lead this country. These certainly informed NEC's exhortation to the government that it "may wish to consider any other variables which in its wise counsel, would make for greater political stability in the Third Republic."

NEC observed that all the associations performed poorly and indicted them for making exaggerated claims about their membership size, organisational strength and for having connections with discredited political formations of the past.

In a nationwide broadcast, after the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) had considered NEC's report, President Babangida gave

options before the government, the President announced that the AFRC had decided to establish two new parties anchored on the philosophy of what he called "Grassroot Democratic Two-Party System". The new system, observers noted, had no parallel in democratic history any where in the world. It was seen as purely an indigenous conception for the peculiar socio-political problems of the country.

It is perhaps pertinent to cite in details the pronouncements of the President on the formation of the two parties.

"After a careful study by the AFRC of the various options, we have become convinced that further efforts should be made to enable all the political groups and individuals re-enter the political arena with equal rights and opportunities. As of now, no political association has passed the tests as informed by our vision of a new political order.

"The AFRC has, therefore decided that all political associations and qualified political aspirants be given another chance of forming and establishing virile party structures and cogent programme platforms for electoral competition. All over the world, people look for unique solutions of their peculiar problems.

"The AFRC has come to the conclusion that our political problems require radical solutions. These may be traumatic to the present systems. But we have come to the conclusion that it may be necessary for us to jolt the system a bit, if we are to successfully establish a new two party system.

"To postpone or evade this responsibility would on our part be an act of indecision, cowardice, and lack of will to try to take our future into our hands.

"The AFRC is convinced that something revolutionary in our thinking needs to be introduced, given the context of the failure of all our experiments. Only the Grassroots Democratic Two-Party System, provides the kind of revolutionary departure we need for establishing a mass two party system.

"Government is aware of the disadvantages of this model and shall take necessary steps to solve such problems. Given the immediate history of the formation of political parties in Nigeria, government has no option but to resort to establishing democratic party structures.

"Therefore in fulfillment of the transition to civil rule Decree, the AFRC has approved the registration of two political parties with immediate effect. These two political parties shall be called:

- a. Social Democratic Party (SDP)
- b. National Republican Convention (NRC)

With this proclamation, the two parties, the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention, as we have them today, came into being.

The AFRC's decision, expectedly, was greeted with mixed reactions. To those that laboured hard to organise the disbanded political associations, it was a big disappointment, and naturally they were unhappy with the turn of events. Some other politically neutral sections of the society welcomed the decision and expressed optimism that it would lead to the establishment of a more enduring and viable democracy in the third Republic.

Professor David Iornem, the national publicity secretary of the banned PSP described the decision as "a political coup", contending that himself and his colleagues did their best, within the short time available, to form viable political parties. He lamented that the efforts were wasted.

Reacting for the dissolved LC, the national secretary, Chief Ojo Maduekwe in a depressed mood said. "we feel greatly honoured for being allowed to expend our financial, intellectual and material resources towards helping to found a truly democratic process in Nigeria".

In a cautious reaction Mr Yomi Edu one of the leaders of the defunct PFN described the decision as "a bombshell" He however expressed

concern on the workability of the new system.

Chief M. K. O. Abiola, the wealthy publisher of the Concord Newspapers who did not belong to any of the dissolved association said the decision was a welcome development.

In his words: "The decision of the AFRC is a true political surgery. The measures will truly see the end of any future need for the military to intervene in Nigerian politics."

The decision of the federal government to ban the political associations and create new parties attracted criticisms from political observers and a cross section of the academic community.

It was seen as an imposition and undemocratic action. It was argued that the traditions in other democracies was that political parties are the creation of the people who share common political values and ideology. Parties are therefore established by the people to compete for political power and form government.

From the action of the AFRC, the situation appeared to be in the opposite direction. Rather than allow the people to form parties which will ultimately seek power and form government, in the Nigerian instance, the government formed the parties for the people. This was considered unusual. And many saw this as a denial of the rights of the Nigerian people to freedom of association.

Those who opposed this view-point saw the government decision as a courageous, bold and decisive effort to tackle the country's peculiar political problems. Indeed, to this school of thought, it was a positive political revolution that would usher in a stable socio-political order.

Objectives of the Grassroots Politics

The grassroots democratic two-party system adopted by government was anchored on certain objectives which the president itemised in his broadcast to the nation on October 7, 1989. The epoch-making speech delivered from Abuja, the new federal capital has since been

dubbed the "Abuja Declaration".

The objectives as outlined by the President are as follows:

- a. To provide a grassroots basis for the emergence of political parties.
- b. To establish a grassroots or mass platform for the emergence of new leadership.
- c. To give equal rights and opportunities to all Nigerians to participate in the political process irrespective of their wealth, religion, geo-political backgrounds and professional endeavours.
- d. To de-emphasize the role of money in politics
- e. To reduce, to a minimum level, the element of violence in our electoral process.
- f. To preclude the emergence of political alliances along the same lines as in the First and Second Republics and, therefore, give Nigerians a new political structure within which to operate.
- g. To ensure the emergence of a new, more dedicated and more genuine leadership cadre, which will not be a mere proxy for old political warlords.
- h. To chart a new pattern of political recruitment and participation which will enhance Nigeria's stability.
- i. To establish strong institutional structures which will not only sustain future governments, but also be strong enough to stand the test of time and
- j. To establish a political system that will be operated according to the spirit and letter of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Abuja Declaration also dwelt in details on the organisational structures of the government-sponsored political parties. Their membership was thrown open to all interested Nigerians from the age of 18 and above. One distinct feature of the two parties was their grassroots character. The local government ward was made the main base for political participation. Any person wishing to join any of the two parties was expected to register in his ward of residence. And those seeking positions in the party at whatever level were expected to first test their popularity at the ward level.

This was one major feature of the two parties that was completely absent from the political parties of the past. The structure of parties in the First and Second Republics unlike the grassroots parties did

not provide for any official representation at the ward level.

The experience before Babangida's political transition programme was that parties were formed from the centre by political elites and later taken to the states and local governments. But this time around, the opposite was the case.

The building process for the two grassroots parties started from the wards. From the ward, the scope of political participation expanded to the national level through the local government and the state.

A new system of congress was introduced at each level of political participation. Thus there was congress at the ward, local government and state levels. At the national level however, was the National Convention which is the highest authority in the party. The composition and objectives of these organs are articulated below under the sub-heading: "Party Structures".

The grassroots character of the two parties was further highlighted by the President's directive that all members are equal "founders" and "joiners". The President, in announcing the establishment of the parties proclaimed: "We now have a clean state and new political parties which can provide the turn around for all Nigerians, rich or poor, irrespective of their individual loyalties or geo-political locations. In this new grassroots mass party experiment, we are all equal "founders" and "joiners".

Legal Framework For The Parties: Constitution And Manifesto

The President in the historic Abuja speech, mandated the National Electoral Commission (NEC) to prepare draft constitutions and manifestoes for the parties. The draft documents were to be ratified by the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC).

It was only in the draft manifestoes that NEC was asked "to reflect an ideological spectrum, one a little to the left and the other, a little to the right of the centre." The SDP was dubbed the party to the left while the NRC was a little to the right. The emblems and colours for

the two parties were derived from the nation's coat of arms and national colours of Green-white-green. The SDP was assigned the green colour with the horse in our coat of arms as its emblem. The NRC, on the other hand, was given the white colour and the Eagle in the nation's coat of arms as its emblem.

The government directed that the constitution of each of the parties must reflect the following guidelines:

- a. The constitutions of the two parties must be identical.
- b. Each constitution shall emphasize Representative Democracy, Republicanism, Presidentialism, Federalism, foreign policy goals, non-adoption of any religion as state religion, Fundamental Rights, basic freedoms and the two party systems - all issues contained in the 1989 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- c. Each constitution shall provide modalities for accountability of an annual congress or convention.
- d. The constitution of the two parties shall provide for the same:
 - (i) number of major offices, i.e., members of the executive committees
 - (ii) mode of financial accountability; and
 - (iii) machinery for disciplining members
 - (iv) set of national values underwriting its programmes

NEC was further directed to ensure that the draft manifestoes of the two parties not only reflect the ideological spectrum but also "different programme emphasis". Each of the party manifestoes was also expected to clearly spell out programme contents preferred by each party on the basis of guidelines and the constitutional provisions on the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

Funding of the Two Parties

In its determination to ensure that the parties remain grassroots oriented in character and unamenable to hijack by "money bags", the government decided to fund the parties throughout the transition

period.

The government disallowed financial contributions by any individual or groups to party treasury. NEC was asked to specify the mechanism for fund raising by political parties at a later stage in the transition programme.

After the parties had been fully established, NEC in a directive, permitted wealthy party members wishing to give financial assistance to the parties to do so but with a firm order that such as assistance must not exceed N100,000 ceiling.

The President also defended the decision of the government to build secretariats for the parties at local government, state and national levels.

He said: "Our decision to build political party offices at this time is quite convenient as the new political parties can now settle down to these buildings and conduct their respective businesses. They will be spared the "hostage politics" of the past whereby people hired out premises to a political party and used that fact to amass influence and patronage.

The decision attracted a lot of reactions from political practitioners as well as observers and commentators. There were quite a lot of Nigerians who argued that the government had no business getting itself involved in the funding and running of political parties. They contended that there was quite a number of problems, especially economic, requiring the attention of government that the issue of funding ought to have been left with party members to address, like it is practised in the advanced democracies in the world.

The decision by government to fund the two parties was without any parallel in Nigeria's political history. What obtained in the past was the allocation of statutory financial grants to the parties according to the size of their representation in the National Assembly. In other words, the party with more seats in the national parliament got more grants than those with lesser seats.

It was therefore a bit surprising when government, in its avowed determination to ensure a clean break from our political past decided to fund the parties wholly. Some analysts questioned the rationale for the funding in a country that is characterised by an unprecedented economic recession, alarming rate of unemployment, runaway inflation, high cost of living and scarcity of food. To this school of thought, the fund ought to have been channelled to these areas and other productive sectors of the nation's economy.

There were, however, many Nigerians who welcomed the action of government and argued that it would go a long way in ensuring that the parties were not taken over by wealthy Nigerians who may have some hidden political agenda.

In the same vein the decision by government to build offices for the two parties attracted criticisms. It was considered unnecessary in spite of the explanations offered by government.

The argument again was that the millions of naira that had been pumped into the construction of the secretariats of the parties at local government, state and national levels ought to have been invested in other areas where they would be beneficial directly to the greater majority of Nigerians.

It is further argued that if party members are desirous of owning secretariats, they could raise money amongst themselves to do so.

Again the use of public money to build offices for the parties was considered unfair to Nigerians who are not party members. And the group is in majority.

Party Structures: Composition and Objectives

The following organs are provided for the two parties by their respective constitutions which have similar provisions.

Congresses, Conferences and Convention

- 1.Ward Congress . .
- 2.Local Government Area Congress
- 3.Local Government Area Conference
- 4.State Congress
- 5.State Conference
- 6.National Conference
- 7.National Convention.

Ward Congress

Composition and Objectives

The ward congress is composed of registered members of the party in the ward and it is held as and when necessary. The quorum is one-fifth of the registered members in the ward.

The congress is empowered to:

- (i)Elect ward delegates to party congresses
- (ii)Elect members of the ward Executive Committee
- (iii)Organise primaries for the nomination of local government chairman
- (iv)Select candidates for councillorship election
- (v)Approve the budget for the ward
- (vi)Receive reports of officers of the ward
- (vii)Receive external auditors' report, and
- (viii)Any other business tabled by a registered member.

Local Government Area Congress

The congress is composed of all members of the ward Executive Committee, all members of the local government executive committee, chairman, and councillor of the local government council belonging to the party, and ten members elected by the ward congress from each ward within the local government area. The Congress is empowered to:

- (i) Elect members of the local government executive committee of the party
- (ii) Elect local government party delegates to state congress and national convention, and
- (iii) Ratify the results of the local government area primaries.

Local Government Area Conference

The conference is composed of all members of ward executive committee, all members of the local government committee, Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor of the local government council belonging to the party and all members of the State House of Assembly and the House of Representatives who are all party members representing constituencies in the local government area.

The conference is empowered to:

- (i) Approve budget for running local government Administrative Headquarters of the party
- (ii) Receive Report of External Auditors, and
- (iii) Receive and consider the reports of the activities of the local government executive committee.

State Congress

The membership of the state congress includes the chairman and all other members of the Executive Committee; the governor and deputy governor if produced by the party; three delegates from each ward elected by the ward congress; the chairman and the secretary of each ward; chairman of local government councils of the state who are members of the party, all councillors, legislators at the State House of Assembly and the National Assembly who are members of the party, and all members of the Federal Executive council and Special Advisers from the state who are members of the party.

The State congress is saddled with the following functions:

- (i) To elect officers of the state executive committee
- (ii) To elect delegates to party conferences
- (iii) To organise gubernatorial primaries, and
- (iv) Ratify the results of local government primaries.

State Conference

The membership of the State Conference is composed of the following:

- a. The chairman and all other members of the Executive Committee
- b. The governor and deputy governor if produced by the party
- c. The chairman and the secretary of each ward; chairman of local government councils of the state who are members of the party.
- d. The chairman and the secretary of each ward
- e. All councillors, legislators at the State House of Assembly and the National Assembly who are members of the party
- f. All members of Federal Executive Council and special advisers from the state who are members of the party.
- g. All members of the state executive council who are members of the party and
- h. Members of the National Executive Committee of the party who are from the state.

The state conference is empowered to:

- (i) Approve budget of the party in the state
- (ii) Receive, consider, ratify and approve reports from and decisions from the state executive committee
- (iii) Receive reports of officers of the party
- (iv) Receive external auditors' report and
- (v) Ensure regular meetings of the state executive committee.

National Conference

The National Conference is a major policy-making organ in the two parties. It is composed of the following:

- a. All members of the national executive committee
- b. All ministers and special advisers to the president who are members of the party, and
- c. All members of the State executive committees.

The National conference has the power to:

- (i) Consider and determine policy matters for the party;
- (ii) Demand and receive reports from national executive committees and from any other committees or organs of the party and take appropriate decisions on their reports or recommendations;
- (iii) Create, elect and appoint any committee it may deem necessary, desirable or expedient and assign to them such powers and functions it may deem fit and proper;
- (iv) Examine the policies and programmes by the governments in the Federation from time to time in order to determine whether or not they are in conformity with the principles, policies, programmes, aims and objectives of the party and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;
- (v) Examine the actions taken or legislations being proposed or passed by any Government, legislative house or local government council and determine what further actions the party should take;
- (vi) Examine the actions and policies pursued and legislation made in order to ensure that they are in accordance with the principles, policies, programmes, aims and objectives of the party, and if not, make recommendations or take such actions as are necessary;
- (vii) Secure at all elections the return of as many party candidates as possible, so as to generally have control of the legislative and executive branches of the Governments in the Federation;
- (viii) Consider reports from Federal, State and Local Government branches of the party and take such decisions as are necessary to protect, advance, or consolidate the gains and interests of the party.

- (ix) Exercise control and take disciplinary actions on all determined appeals brought before it by any member or organs of the party;
- (x) Exercise control and take disciplinary actions on all determined appeals brought before it by any member or organs of the party;
- (xi) Determine the type, nature and membership of standing committees to be set up by the party's National Executive Committee;
- (xii) Delegate any of its powers to the National Executive Committee or any organ of the party;
- (xiii) Exercise such other powers and authority as are vested in it by the constitution of the party.

National Convention

This is the supreme authority within the party and it is composed of the following:

- a. The President and Vice-President if produced by the party;
 - b. All governors and Deputy Governors who are members of the party;
 - c. All members of the National Executive Committee.
 - d. All members of the National Assembly who are members of the party;
 - e. All ministers and special advisers to the President who are members of the party;
 - f. All State legislators who are members of the party;
 - g. All State Commissioners and Special Advisers to the Governors who are members of the party;
 - h. All members of the State Executive Committee;
 - i. Five delegates from each local government area of the federation.
- The National Convention is empowered to:

- (i) Elect national officers of the party;
- (ii) Ratify decisions of the National Executive Committee on disciplinary matters referred to it;
- (iii) Raise adequate funds for the management and sustenance of the party;
- (iv) Review or amend the constitution of the party from time to time;

and

(v) Ratify the results of Presidential primaries.

Executive Committee

Executive committees exist at the four organisational levels of each of the parties. Thus, there are executive committees at ward, state and national levels. There is also an executive committee for the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abuja.

The Executive committee which is composed of such officers as Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer etc. is charged with the responsibility of the day to day running of the affairs of the party at the various levels.

Conclusion

The grassroots democratic two-party system engineered by the Babangida administration is revolutionary both in character and content. It has the potential of altering and re-ordering the inherited colonial values and traditions of democracy in the country.

Although the impact of the system is yet to be fully appreciated, it would seem that the Babangida administration has succeeded through the system to change the face of Nigerian politics.

The base of political competition, at least, has been shifted from the centre to the ward. The ordinary man, who hitherto had no say in the recruitment of political leadership under the present dispensation, is the pivot of political activism. This development, to all intents and purposes, is a welcome legacy for which the Babangida administration would be remembered for a very long time to come.

The two-party system of politics was presumed by its advocates to possess the potential of re-ordering the politics of Nigeria from its ethno-religious orientation to issue-dominated politics. With the turn of events so far, it may be difficult to argue that the two-party

system has achieved this objective.

Although the 1991 gubernatorial election results showed that the two parties had good spread across ethnic and religious boundaries, the results of the 1992 presidential primaries showed that the country had not transcended tribal and religious politics, and the north-south dichotomy.

Only a few of the competing presidential aspirants won in states outside their immediate geo-political environment or catchment area. The results to a considerable extent reflected primordial ties and ethnic and religious loyalties.

There is the widespread belief that with time, the two political parties would succeed in approximating the envisaged dreams of the authors. With more years of the practice of two-party presidentialism, it is hoped that whatever shortcomings that exist now would fade into oblivion.

Chapter 3

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS

By - Dr. M. T. M. Minna

Local government has been recognised as one important "instrument for rural transformation and for the delivery of social services".¹ Its development has passed through some stages of reforms perhaps reaching its climax with the extensive changes introduced by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida which makes it a distinct level of government with clearly demarcated boundaries, well clarified functions and elaborate provisions.² To situate the uniqueness of the reforms introduced by the Babangida administration in his seven years stay in office one has to survey the stages of development of the local government system in Nigeria.

The history of local government system in Nigeria dated back to the formative period of large-scale kingdoms and empires in the pre-colonial period. The provincial systems operating in Borno and Oyo empires as well as the emirate system of the Sokoto Caliphate exhibited rudimentary conception of local government administration. When the British super-imposed their rule on the people of Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century they sought to utilise the existing machinery of governance which they found in operation, with some modifications though. To this end traditional rulers were given relative autonomy to run the local administration of their various areas.³ This system of indirect rule, as it is popularly known, degenerated into a direct rule through indirect means⁴ because the traditional rulers became mere local agents of colonial officers.⁵ The role of Emirs, Obas and chiefs as the sole native authorities in their domain made them very autocratic and dictatorial to the extent that seldom were the views of the populace sought in evolving and executing any policy or project. This problem led to many accusations showered on the indirect rule system.

The 1930s witnessed a reform in native administration. Now the position of chief-in-council was created to provide the leadership in native authority system. However, the agitation for further reform

was not abandoned. This is because the councils so created in each native authority became ineffective as the members were not popularly elected. They were merely nominated by traditional rulers and confirmed by colonial officers. So in the 1950s when the cloud of decolonisation waxed wide and the emergence of political parties let loose the desire of people to participate in electing their leaders, the desire for further reform in the native authority system arose.⁶ The government appreciated this need for change in the system. To this end it recognised the importance of traditional rulers in the process of native administration and at the same time made provision for the participation of people in local administration.⁷ One shortcoming of this arrangement which led to further disenchantment was subjecting the extent of this principle of popular participation to the discretion of each native authority.⁸ To further complicate the situation was the extension of the function of regional Ministries to supervise the affairs of native administration. This development led to friction between native authorities and regional governments which degenerated into a source of political instability. The conflict between the premier of Northern region, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto and the Emir of Kano, Sir Muhammadu Sunusi⁹ is a good example. Similar conflicts in other parts of the federation, especially where two opposing political parties were active, greatly contributed to the political upheavals of the first republic.

The above arrangement survived the collapse of the first republic in 1966. The Military administration under General Yakubu Gowon curtailed the powers of native authorities in 1968 when the Regional governments took over control of N. A. courts, and the N. A. police and prisons were integrated with Nigeria Police Force and the Federal prisons.¹⁰ General reorganisation was also carried out on native authorities. N. A.s were renamed local government authorities.¹¹ The role of traditional rulers was recognised in local administration but their constitutional status in local authorities were changed. "All local authority councils became chiefs and councils"¹² which signifies that all chiefs must recognise the majority decision of the council, two-thirds of which members were elected. Thus steps towards more democratic local government administration were being laid.

With the Military coup de tat of July 1975, the new government under General Murtala Ramat Mohammed made a commitment to reform the existing local government system. After thorough review of previous reform recommendations, the government issued a blueprint titled Guidelines for Local Government Reform in which an attempt was made to solve all the shortcomings of previous reform efforts; the main aim of this reform is "to entrust political responsibility to where it is most crucial and beneficial, that is to the people"¹³ Other changes which the 1976 reform provided included:

(i) The complete democratisation of Local Government post. This has tactfully removed the control of local government from traditional rulers.

(ii) The abolishing of provincial and divisional administrations which in essence means the removal of the control of local governments by state governments.

(iii) The proliferation of local governments to 301. This number was arrived at based on the principle that each local government was expected to serve a population of between 150,000 and 800,000.

(iv) The allocation of 10% of the total federal revenue to local governments.

However, these positive objectives of the reform were not achieved in full. One of the reasons for this is that state governments continued to exercise excessive control on local governments. Even though election into local government posts were conducted in November, 1976, the provision which allowed state governments to opt for indirect election was what further entrenched their control over local governments.¹⁴ Secondly, states also undermined the financial viability of local governments by diverting statutory allocated grants to local governments as well as "encroaching on their revenue yielding functions like markets, motor parks, tenement rating, liquor licencing"¹⁵ etc. Thirdly, the grants from federal and state government were not released in full. For example, in Sokoto state in 1978, out of the twelve million Naira allocated to local governments by the state government grant, only seven million Naira was received.¹⁶ Fourthly, the existing state ministries of local governments with

powers to post administrative staff to various local governments hindered the autonomy of local governments. Fifthly, the approved uniform service scheme between local governments, Federal and state civil service had not been implemented. As a result, "many categories of junior local government staff such as market keepers, undertakers, parks and garden attendants had remained unrecognised. In addition graduates and other trained professionals were unwilling to take appointment with local governments because they did not know where their career would lead them to"¹⁷

The problems so listed above were what negate the proper functioning of the local government system in both the Murtala/Obasanjo regime and the second republic. Upon the coming of Major General Buhari to power in the military coup de tat of 31st December, 1983, the new government made a pledge to effect a reform in the local government system. A committee under Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki was appointed to look into the problems of local governments administration and recommend solutions. The committee made tours all over the country and collected memoranda. In its report the committee identified the problem of local governments to emanate from operational factors "arising directly from the behaviour and attitudes of the persons who operated the system." These "operational problems prevented the even distribution of amenities in local government areas."¹⁸ The committee therefore recommended the de-centralisation of local government services through the establishment of development area offices with delegated responsibility to provide some basic services within every local government council area.

However, the government of Buhari was swept away in another coup of August, 1985 which brought General Babangida to power. In his attempt to restructure the society, Babangida committed himself to solve the problem of local government system in Nigeria once and for all. With the report of Dasuki Committee at the disposal of government, the Chief of General Staff then set up a 10-man committee on 8th May, 1985 to produce a national scheme of service for all cadre of local government employees.¹⁹ As if this was not complete,

the government set up the Political Bureau in January, 1986 and entrusted it with the search for a new political order for the country. It is to the credit of Babangida that he collated the reports of the Dasuki committee, the Political Bureau and that of national service scheme for local government employees, studied them and came with a far-reaching package of policy reform aimed at giving complete autonomy to local governments in Nigeria.²⁰ The comprehensive nature of the reform would be seen from the fact that it takes care of most of the problems and shortcomings associated with all the previous reform efforts especially that of 1976. The following are some of the changes brought about by the reform package:

(a) Taking into consonance the discrepancy in the size of local government areas in the country as well as linguistic and ethnic barriers involved and in order to accelerate rural development efforts and forestall the controversy over the number of local government areas which in the second Republic led many a state government areas²¹ the Federal increased the number of local governments in the country to 453 in 1988 and to 500 in 1991.

(b) On October 1, 1988 state ministries of local governments were abolished and state governments were directed to terminate their joint service with local governments. This measure ended the friction between the two tiers of government in the state. This development also allows the truly elected representatives of the people the free hand to implement their programmes. They would no longer operate under the shadow of state governments. "They have been set free from the crushing administrative, political, financial and psychological controls of their past"²²

(c) The remitting to states of annual local government grants was stopped. Henceforth local governments are to get their grants directly from the Federal government. This policy helps a great deal in ending the financial strangulation which many local governments suffered from state governments.

(d) For the enormous task of grass root development and in order to

salvage the local government of shortage of funds the federal government reviewed the grants allocated to local governments. To this end, the government increased the grant from ten per cent to fifteen per cent in 1989 and to twenty per cent in 1992.

(e) The release of the national scheme of service for local government employees in 1988 afforded the local governments the chance to promote their staff up to GL.15. It also gives them the power to employ professionals such as engineers, architects, legal officers, health officials etc. The local government could now finance other programmes like primary education, health services, development of agriculture, construction of roads and drainage and could also explore constitutional avenues of raising revenue.

(f) The power given to elected local government chairmen to appoint their own local government secretaries had made them real chief executives in the domain; while the creation of local government assemblies made the separation of power and responsibilities complete as to make local government a distinct third level of government in the country.

(g) The scrapping of local government service commission in January, 1992 made the local governments autonomous with regards to issues of discipline, promotion and even appointment. This has thus terminated the channel through which state governments controlled and influenced local government.

One major breakthrough of this reform is evident in its linkage with the new political process in the country. Already the government has integrated the new local government system into the presidential system of government. The executive arm is comprised the chairman, the vice-chairman, supervisors and secretary to the local government. While the legislature is composed of the councillors who formed themselves into assembly with an elected speaker. There is also a head of personnel management designated as the clerk of the legislative council. His duties include keeping records of proceedings of the council and also liaising with local government secretary

for the day to day affairs of the administration

Secondly, the political process expected to usher in the third republic has been tied up with grass-root support. Any contestant to any elective political office must muster support from his ward and local government first before being eligible to pass through the primaries of his party. This arrangement has made both the people at the grassroots and the local government very important in determining who becomes what in the various governments of the third Republic.

This is so evident because while the Presidential aspirant must garner enough votes from the states, such states could not support the presidential aspirant without local government backing.

In the sphere of economy, the establishment of governmental organs like DFFRI, PBN, CB, Better Life Programmes and Women Commission and the coordinating of their activities in consultation with local government has helped in opening up rural areas for development. Local governments now have departments for better life which mobilise rural women in matters pertaining to politics and economy with a view to making them well informed, productive and self-reliant. The Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN) and the Community Bank (CB) became very much handy in helping and promoting rural economic activities and grass-root developments - very important platforms of socio-rural transformation, thus strengthening the objectives of which local government were meant to achieve.

The MAMSER has greatly contributed in the enlightenment campaign and has made the rural people more demanding for development projects and programmes from their various states and especially local governments. This has put local governments under severe pressure and in serious competition with DFFRI, for instance. Moreover, the federal government policy of direct funding of all local governments, put them in a position to open up their rural areas for various developmental projects such as feeder roads, water supply, health care service etc. The transfer of primary schools and teachers from the states government to local governments surely shows the

great role local government are playing within the new political structure of the country. From this perspective also, the small scale industries that are dotting up the various towns and villages are rapidly changing the social life pattern of our rural dwellers. And the role and contributions of the local government in these social changes/transformations cannot be easily quantified. Little surprise, therefore the clamour for creation of more L.G.A by various communities throughout the federation.

Despite these achievements, however, there are some shortcomings in the reform. The government introduced the reforms without any induction course for the staff of local governments. It is also argued that many local government councils, are unable to pass bye-laws because of either lack of standard procedure to guide their deliberations or for absence of legal draftsmen to guide them in preparation of bye-laws.²³ The result of this is that many of the local government legislative councils have degenerated into "courts of inquisition against the executive."²⁴ So rampant are these attempts for impeachment that the federal attorney general and minister of justice, Clement Akpamgbo urged for the proper invocation of the procedures for impeachment. And on May 26, 1992, the Vice President Augustus Aikhomu warned that the impeachment clause as provided by the 1989 constitution and Decree 15 of 1989 was never meant to be arbitrarily used in order to cajole local government executive into dancing to the tune of legislators.²⁵

Also just like some new states created in 1991 and 1992, the viability of many local government financially is now in serious doubts. Many local governments cannot generate more than 5-10% of their needed money from local revenue sources. Thus the majority of local governments heavily depended on the direct subvention doled out by the Federal government for their financial survival. Under the Babangida military administration there is no fear of financial strangulation of any local government, as subventions are directly sent to local government accounts when due. But there is however legitimate fear expressed that, once politicians take over from the military, the possibility of emasculating local governments in oppo-

sition to the party in power at Abuja, becomes more ominous, like it happened with some State governments in opposition to the NPN government at Lagos during the second republic. There is therefore the serious need for some means to avoid this and for local governments themselves to become less dependent on the Federal government's financial father-christmas charity.

In conclusion, following the evolutionary stages of local government system in Nigeria and the reform efforts embarked upon during some specific historical epochs, the changes introduced by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in his seven years as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has succeeded in removing them from state control, in making them financially stable, and in ensuring their autonomy. These measures have made local government a real third level of government in the country following the federal and state governments respectively. And what's more, this is greatly contributing towards the entrenchment of grass-root democracy in the new political development of Nigeria and, above all, in the social transformation of rural communities. Certainly there is still room for further improvements, but an un-mistakeable progress has been made and registered under the Babangida administration in the local government administration.

ENDNOTES

1. Report of the Political Bureau (Abuja: MAMSER, 1987) p. 120
2. 1976 reform of local governments was towards achieving there objectives but were not realised.
3. For details on this, see S. O. Okafor, Indirect Rule (Lagos: Nelson Africa).
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6. Ahmadu Bello, My Life (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1962) pp.73-75.
7. A. D. Yahaya, The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria (Zaria: At A.B.U. Press, 1980) p.54.
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9. O. F. Ibrahim, The Fabric of Rule: A study of the position of Traditional ruling families in the politics of Kano State, Nigeria, 1960-1983 Ph.D. Thesis, State University, New Jersey, pp.167-175.
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11. Yahaya, The Native Authority...p.196
12. Yahaya, The Native Authority...pp.197-198
13. Guidelines for local government reform (Lagos: Government Printer, 1976) p.1
14. L. Adamolekun, "The ideal of local government as a third level of government" in L. Adamolekun and L. Rowland (ed) The New Local Government System in Nigeria (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1979) p.5.
15. Report of the Political Bureau...p.120
16. Daily Times, Thursday 14th February, 1978.
17. New Nigerian, Friday 8th May, 1985 p.16
18. Report of the Political Bureau...p.120
19. New Nigerian Friday, 8th May, 1985 p.16
20. President Babangida's Speech on 1st October, 1988.
21. Due to this Unilateral creation of local governments by various states governments during the second Republic as many as 700 local government areas emerged.
22. Newswatch Magazine "Crisis of Reform", June 15, 1992
23. Newswatch Magazine...p.10
24. Newswatch Magazine...p.9
25. Newswatch Magazine...p.12.

Chapter 4

OPEN BALLOT AND DEMOCRACY

By Mr. Tony Iredia

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria's electoral process there is hardly any term that has elicited as much controversy as the Open Ballot System. Although many Nigerians are familiar with that system of voting because its use dates back to the earliest times, it assumed prominence both in its scope and modalities when it was adopted for use during the transition to civil rule period (1987-1992). Its first use during the period was in June 1990 at the Congresses of the two political parties where they openly elected officers from among their members. It was extended to the Local Government Area and State Congresses in July 1990 and later to the National Conventions of both parties in August 1990.

One month later, the nation's electoral body - the National Electoral Commission (NEC) after considering a number of issues including the hitch-free nature of the elections into party offices through the Open Ballot System, decided to use the system for the conduct of elections into Local Government Councils nationwide scheduled for December 8, 1990. Professor H. N. Nwosu - Chairman of the Commission announced the decision after a full meeting of all electoral Commissioners throughout the Federation on September 21, 1990. He told the nation as follows:

"You will recall our experiences and results of the last ward party elections. For the first time in the history of our country's political life, we adopted the form of democratic choice that is familiar with our people. The grassroots people understood and participated enthusiastically in electing party officers in a simple and uncomplicated manner. The results of that election led to a reappraisal of our voting system and how best to involve the majority of Nigerians in this national exercise. Considering the fact that the local government as the third tier level of government is nearest to the majority of our popula-

tion it was decided to once again adopt the same method which is familiar to our teeming population. The choice of a system most appropriate in our circumstance at this stage of our national development (cost effective and credible) is the open ballot system. NEC will therefore apply this system in the coming local government elections”.

Many people were grossly disappointed at the decision because according to them it was tolerable for a political party to openly elect its officials - an event which is a purely internal matter to the party, the adoption of the system for a public election was deplorable. Some people said it was obsolete and out-dated, and called on Nigerians to reject it because according to them it was no more in use in any nation in the world. Kenya which in 1986 adopted it discarded it in 1990. But because the alternative method - the secret ballot system - which is supposedly modern had failed to halt brigandage, arson, rigging and political instability in Nigeria since independence the Federal Military Government endorsed the use of the Open Ballot System “on trial” for the Local Government Elections as proposed by the electoral body. Consequently on December 8, 1990, Councillorship and Chairmanship candidates were openly elected into Local Government Councils throughout the nation. The elections were peaceful and virtually hitch-free. The results were released immediately and there was a consensus that the Open Ballot System had restored credibility to Nigeria’s battered electoral process.

Thereafter; many people who hitherto were opponents became adherents of the Open Ballot System. The subsisting opposition to the system was restricted to the elitist minority - an opposition that was rather loud and persistent. It was difficult to ignore this and to retain the system for other elections, more so as the system was adopted for use only on the basis of trial. At the same time, many people now preferred it. To retain the system would hurt the vocal elite and perhaps reflect a poor image of Nigeria as an obsolete nation to the international community. To reject the system on the other hand would hurt the majority of the people and restore a system that could once again give birth to political instability. It was to resolve

this dilemma that a national conference on Nigeria's Balloting System was organised by the National Electoral Commission in March, 1991. The 3-day conference which took place in Kano drew participants from the electoral body; Federal, State and Local Governments; Transition Agencies; the two Political Parties; Voluntary Organisations and Professional Bodies; the law enforcement agencies as well as members of the public.

The objective was for all these groups which have different roles to play in the electoral process to identify the balloting system best suited for elections in Nigeria. At the end of the conference it was resolved that although Open Balloting was not an elegant system, it was for the time being the better option in view of the literacy rate, the absence of a national identity card system and the vast and difficult geographical terrains of Nigeria.

Following from this, the use of the Open Ballot System was again extended to the next set of elections in the Transition programme - the Governorship and House of Assembly elections which were held nationwide on December 14, 1991. Again the elections were peaceful and successfully conducted. It looked as if the Open Ballot System had come to stay although elitist opposition to it did not abate. Shortly after, the President, General Ibrahim Babangida in a nationwide broadcast addressed the issue again. He reiterated his government's acceptance of the system but directed the National Electoral Commission to modify it so as to make it acceptable to all. This directive reopened the call by a segment of the society for an end to the Open Ballot System. The argument of this group was that efforts should be made to evolve a system that would not disenfranchise any person especially community leaders, a type of hybrid of the Open and Secret Ballot Systems, was advocated.

The National Electoral Commission in response to the Presidential directive began to collate suggestions from members of the public. While this was in progress a rather significant change occurred in April, 1992. At the instance of the two political parties, elections into the National Assembly fixed far way for November, 1992 were

rescheduled to a much earlier date - July 4 , 1992. This meant that whatever modifications were evolved would not affect the conduct of the July elections into the National Assembly.

This is because any change in the voting system would naturally require a long period of public enlightenment and the nearness of the elections made it difficult for the electoral process to accommodate this. NEC was thus left with one option - to respond to the call for modifications to the open ballot system by fine-tuning it. In this connection, the Electoral Commission reduced drastically the time which voters hitherto spent at voting centres. In 1990 when the open ballot system was first used, a total of 4 hours was devoted to preliminary matters such as accreditation and briefing on the processes and procedures to be undertaken before actual voting. This was now reduced by 1½ hours. In addition, the agents of the parties were no longer to act as mere observers on election day. They were now to follow the events of the day closely and at the end of it sign the statement of result. Each agent was to be given a copy of the result. All votes scored were to be recorded in words and in figures in the result forms. The forms themselves were redesigned to prevent them from being used to manipulate the results of elections. In the new forms, provision was made for the recording of the total number of people registered in one centre; the total number accredited on voting day; and the total number of accredited voters present at the point of the counting of votes.

It was also arranged for security agencies to escort electoral officials and materials particularly result forms from one collation centre to another to ensure that they were not diverted to unauthorised venues to be swapped or altered.

In the interim, the controversy over the Open Ballot System was shifted to the issue of modification. Some said that the fine-tuning done by NEC before the National Assembly Elections was not far reaching enough to redress the defects in the system which they complained about. Others did not even think that there was any need to modify or fine tune the open ballot system because according to

them it was acceptable to the masses - the large population of the people. The open ballot system having thus accentuated the polarisation of the Nigerian Society will itself remain a controversy for a long time, and while the controversy subsists, we must now return to the more fundamental issue of what the open ballot system actually means.

DEFINITION AND ORIGIN

The open ballot system is a process whereby eligible citizens vote for the candidate of their choice at an election in full public glare instead of doing so secretly inside structures provided for the purpose. This means that the choice of the individual is known by every person who is present at the voting centre.

This system of Open voting can be in several forms such as:

- (a) Voice voting
- (b) Raising of hands
- (c) Public acclaim
- (d) Queueing.

The first three forms have always been and are still generally in use in Club, College or Association elections. The raising of hands in particular is popular and is ironically in use in democratic settings like legislative Houses made up of members who were themselves elected through the secret ballot system. The last form is what was adopted for public elections of Nigeria as from 1990 over which an unending controversy developed. Part of that controversy was the contention that open voting and open balloting could not be the same because according to some people, none of the open methods of voting involves the use of a ballot and there can be no balloting system without a ballot. This opinion is predicated on what has become popularised as the origin of the word ballot - a word which is said to originate from the Italian word 'ballots' or French word 'ballote both of which refer to a ball or paper or ticket or some symbol with which votes are cast.

Since the method now adopted by NEC was one in which the choice of the individual was known from which queue he joined it was said not to involve the use of a ballot and as such could not be a balloting system. This argument which is only a recourse to the restrictive definition of the word ballot by the Oxford English Dictionary ignores the wider definition which equates the term 'ballot' with 'to vote for'. Certainly, the wider definition is preferable because irrespective of the method of voting, the objective is for the voter to identify his choice among the competing candidates.

In addition, except the wider definition is adopted, the origin of the open ballot system may also be misconstrued. Some have traced the system to the Greek City States of the early times; some say it originated from France while others insist that the system was first used in Venice, Italy. These claims however, concern Europe and not necessarily the entire world.

A search for who first used the Open Ballot System in the world would no doubt be an irrelevant voyage into unverifiable accounts of world history. That is a fruitless journey which this paper should not undertake. The Europeans who claim to be originators of the Open Ballot System have merely taken advantage of the fact that they developed documentary records before others. What is not recorded is usually forgotten due to the fragility of the human memory and taken as never existed. For this reason, the black race cannot compete favourably for the credit of who first introduced Open Balloting. This is not surprising because in many things, Africa is deprived of its well deserved credits due to the absence of documentary records of the lives of its early inhabitants. There are even examples of African achievements which are still fresh in the memories of its people which others have claimed. An example is the claim that the British introduced the indirect rule system to West Africa, when several centuries before they came to the region, Mansa Musa of Mali, Askia the Great of Songhai and Idris Alooma of Kanem Bornu - unpublicised empire builders of African descent had used the same system to govern their conquered territories.

This trend of using only available records as the sole determinant of when an event first took place, and also the fact that there could be obvious false claims confirm that to trace who introduced Open Ballot to the world would be a barren exercise.

As a result, this paper is only concerned with placing in its proper perspective, the evolution, development and use of the Open Ballot System in Nigeria. In this regard, it is instructive to recall that before the advent of the white-man, Africans had their own forms of socio-political orientation and methodology which the people operated peacefully and successfully. According to African history, a viable, credible and simple method not only of selecting but also of removing leadership was one of those things which the early Africans evolved. A former colonial Governor of Northern Nigeria, Sir Brian Sherwood-Smith attested to this when he wrote in his book 'But always as friends' that:

"The people had long been accustomed to choosing a representative, some local worthy men who they knew and trusted by public acclaim at the village meeting place under the shady tree or in the open space before the village Head's house".

But because the colonialists who invaded Africa confused westernization for civilization, they adulterated African socio-political systems, ostensibly to introduce 'modern methods' whose relevance to the norms and social values of the indigenes they did not assess.

The electoral system which Sir Brian found in Nigeria was the open ballot system as designed and operated by the people before interacting with the white-man. The ingenuity in that indigenous system laid in the fact that it did not encourage the multi-electoral malpractices which the White-man's method was to give birth to. It is conceded that the Open Ballot System of the early times was rather simplistic and not designed for the expanded electoral constituencies and increased voting population of today.

It needed constant modifications for it to remain relevant and adequate as a voting system. Unfortunately, Nigerians did not have the opportunity to continue to use the system, let alone to improve upon it. Instead, their Colonial masters introduced another method - the secret ballot system. Secret balloting like other things introduced by the British, was a finished product adopted by Nigerians who had neither the knowledge of the processes of its production nor any input to make to it. If Nigeria was not distracted from the balloting system its people were accustomed to, she certainly would have with time improved upon it. In fact as other nations did, she could have, with improved technology, adopted a new balloting system. This was not to be; the secret ballot was virtually imposed on her without the necessary frame work for its operation being in place. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that Nigeria's electoral problems centre around her adoption of a new voting system without evaluating its compatibility with the norms and social values of the people or the level of their development. The point to be noted is that the electoral process in Nigeria could not have been as battered as it became if its development had followed a natural course.

After all, every nation in the world today had to first use the Open ballot system before it could institutionalise secret balloting. Even then, the change from the former to the latter followed a long and tedious search. A good example is France where even after the famous revolution of 1789, the electoral law still retained the open oral voting system. Two years later, when secret voting was introduced, virtually every powerful section of the French society reacted adversely. The result was that when a new constitution was fashioned in 1793, voters were given the option to decide whether to vote openly or secretly. Although the French have since assimilated the tenet that to be democratic, elections must be through secret balloting, it was only in 1930 that a law introduced the use of the ballot paper and envelope.

In other words, from 1791 when the secret ballot system was first introduced and fiercely attacked till 1930 when the use of the ballot

paper was formalised, it took over 100 years for the French to develop its present voting system which appears acceptable to them. The situation was the same in most of what is referred to today as advanced countries. After countless years of nationhood, most of them were only able to abolish open balloting in this century.

The political situation in Nigeria on the other hand did not follow this world-wide trend of a long drawn-out, gradually phased development. What happened in Nigeria was that the British introduced the secret ballot system and although Nigeria found insurmountable problems in its implementation, she clung to the system perhaps to establish that her electoral process was in line with international practice. But as indicated earlier the Nigerian society was not ready for the secret ballot system. The logistical infrastructure for the hitch-free operation of system was not in place at the time of its adoption. And without prejudice to the bold steps taken by the Babangida administration to among other things address the nation's poor communication system and low level of literacy, the necessary framework for the successful operation of the secret ballot system in Nigeria is still not fully in place.

This explains why in 1990 after several years of electoral blunders the people looked back into their past to re-adopt the voting system they understood - the open ballot system. To appreciate this recourse to the so-called obsolete system, it is necessary to recapitulate the ugly story of Nigeria's electoral process from 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the former British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria to 1990 when the method of voting changed from the secret to the open ballot system.

NIGERIAN ELECTION BEFORE 1990

In the early years of the colonial administration there were no elections in the strict sense. Ahmadu Kurfi, a one-time Executive Secretary of Nigeria's electoral body in his book 'The Nigerian General Election 1959 and 1979 and the aftermath' captures a vivid account of the trend of the early elections in Nigeria.

According to him, from 1914 to 1954 electoral activities were virtually non-existent; leadership was selected rather than elected. The legislative council was purely advisory. The Nigerian Council as it was called was made up of 36 members - 6 of whom were unofficial African members. In 1922, this was replaced by a legislative council made up of 46 members out of which the unofficial African members were 10. Although legislative Council were set up in 1946 in the three regions - North, East and West into which the country was divided, the African power continued to be in the hands of the British colonial administrators.

The first federal elections to be held in Nigeria took place in 1954. It is not too clear why the elections were called federal because there was nothing federal about them.

Chapter 5

THE CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC STUDIES AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW POLITICAL ORDER

By Prof. Omo Omoruyi

A. INTRODUCTION

There is one underlying assumption to the discourse in this Chapter. It is that President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida had a clear perception of the complexities of political and economic problems and challenges facing the country he eventually came to lead. He had that perception prior to his emergence as Nigeria's Head of State in 1985. The ideas, strategies and machineries subsequently put in place, by his regime, not only for the resolution of these problems, but also for the achievement of eventual democratic rule, cannot be located outside this nexus. What cannot, however, be contested here is whether or not, as a result of the unfolding nature of the Transition to Civil Rule, these ideas and strategies would become dogged with problems of implementation. Nor could one foresee the necessary implications and changes for the nascent political order that such problems would bring about.

The primary purpose of this Chapter is two fold: firstly, to present some of President Babangida's major political ideas and strategies in the search for a new political order. Secondly, to use the Centre for Democratic Studies as the pivot of analysis of these ideas and strategies. This is based on the Centre's demonstrated place as a practical embodiment of some of these bold ideas as well as a tool for their effective implementation.

Before going any further it is pertinent to attempt a clarification of certain concepts which are usually taken for granted but, which constitute inexorable pillars in this discussion of political order. Order means "a good disposition of discrepant parts, each in its fittest place".¹ This definition by the Roman philosopher Augustine is prone to the problem of polemics because of the relativity surrounding the question of "good" and "fittest". Hence order in this purposive sense is necessarily a relative concept. In other words

while order in this Augustinian sense exists only in relation to given goals, certain of these goals state out as elementary or primary.² For the sake of pointed clarification, Bull similarly asserts that "the order which men look for in social life is not any pattern or regularity in the relations of human individuals or groups, but a life such that it promotes certain goals or values".³ Again the relationship between order and goal attainment is clear. It is this definition that underpinned our purpose in this chapter, which is the explication of the central role of the Centre for Democratic Studies as an institution in the promotion and realisation of the vision of a new political order.

The Babangida administration has in so many ways clearly demonstrated its commitment to the goal of democracy for Nigeria. Democracy in its classical usage demotes a state or community in which government is vested in the people as a whole. Ordinarily, it means that form of government in which sovereign power rests with the people and is exercised either directly by them or by those elected by them.

Further still, for the man, Babangida,

"Democracy is however, not just the presence of political or governmental institutions. Democracy is a state of mind. To believe in democracy, people must believe in equality. Inculcation of democratic attitudes in the people is therefore essential to the democratic operation of governmental institutions."⁴

From this statement taken from President Babangida's famous broadcast of October 7, 1989 one question could immediately be posed: what special appeal does democracy hold for a military leader, a professional soldier, representing an institution, the army, which is viewed by many as politically and institutionally conservative with its members "untrained in the tactics and strategies of civilian rule and political management"?⁵ Therein lies the enigma called Presi

dent Ibrahim Babangida. Like Kamal Ataturk the military leader who founded modern Turkey, Babangida is believed by his admirers to have developed his ideas of nation-building "not on an abstract plane, but as reaction to certain concrete events, as he himself perceived them".⁶ It is against the background of the foregoing perception of the man that for import of his repeated assurance that his administration is "committed to ensuring that democracy survives in this country" becomes totally appreciable.⁷ Answering the question posed earlier would also make manifest, the latent attributes of dynamism, vision and statesmanship which form the basis for the man's conception of a new democratic political order, both in terms of ideas as well as the strategies set in motion for the realisation of these ideas.

Babangida and the Search for Democracy

This emergence of President Babangida at the helm of affairs in Nigeria in 1985 was significant in the history of the country. It was a watershed marking not only a radical break with the "accidental" occupation of the apex state position by previous leaders, but also a typical manifestation of the "square-peg-square-hole" leadership praxis.⁸ Here was a leader who, as a result of having been involved in the upper levels of previous governments, was able to identify what the priorities were from the onset. This ability was reinforced with a demonstrable belief in, and commitment to, the unity and survival of Nigeria.

President Ibrahim Babangida in private and public life had demonstrated that commitment. He has a family life and background that represents cultural unity for Nigeria, and had participated actively as a soldier in the Civil War which prevented the dismemberment of the nation from 1967 to 1970. Similarly, his active involvement in the immediate post-civil war government had also provided him opportunity to make his mark in Nigeria's post-war national socio-economic reconstruction. President Babangida could therefore not be said to have "overshot his mark" or to have pulled a surprise when in 1986, only a few months after assuming office, he took the first step

that is pointed to his unflinching commitment to a "political reconstruction" of Nigeria. He instituted the Political Bureau as the first "transition body" to seek out the philosophical benchmarks for ensuring a durable democratic polity in Nigeria.

The Report of the Political Bureau had noted that:

"the poverty and inadequacy of previous programmes of transition had presented us with the objectionable experiences of a succession of republics, ruled by ill-prepared and inept civilian politicians supplanted by military, even if benevolent, dictatorships".

This was a damning criticism of our not-so-glorious past characterised by the rape of national interest by egotistic political leadership in the First and Second Republics. What was supposedly democratic governance had been reduced to a mere exercise in political dilettantism. Starting with the First Republic, unbridled corruption, ethnic centric leadership and economic mismanagement took the place of probity, accountability and government responsibility to the welfare of the mass of the citizenry. Events in the Second Republic were a recrudescence of the First. There was no abatement, and military intervention became the norm. Thus when the Political Bureau concluded that "this vicious circle of musical chairs has to be broken once and for all", the mandate was being given for a thorough reawakening to be characterised by the radical reorientation of political values, from "self-seeking politics" to "service oriented politics", within the framework of a stable polity.

Towards this goal, Babangida found an abiding ally in the search for democracy - that form of government that equates right with duty, leadership with responsibility, and power with consent. The solution to the nation's political crisis, Babangida became convinced, did not lie on frequent regime interruption resulting in the forced abdication of state power by civilians and their replacement

military rulers. Fundamentally, even though a soldier he is yet a committed democrat and nationalist at heart whose obsessive dream became one thing; to ensure that his administration is the last military regime in Nigeria. This military leader became convinced that democracy is the most daring experiment in man's faith that has even been or can even be tried. There may be strains and stresses. Its development, and its essence, nonetheless, requires caution, tolerance and patience, and President Babangida is not ignorant of this.

As a man of vision and courage, President Babangida therefore set in motion a pioneering and meticulously worked out plan of democratization via civilianization as a model for other Third World countries. The Centre for Democratic Studies was to be at the heart of that meticulous plan. In the considered opinion of president Ibrahim Babangida, the ills and weaknesses of the past such as electoral malpractices and thuggery, which derailed previous attempts at democratic governance, were only "the ultimate manifestation of the absence of a democratic attitude of mind".¹⁰ Politics is no doubt an interactive game between humans in which conflicts must of necessity arise. However, such conflicts can be minimised if both the leadership and the followership have more than a passing interest and commitment in the affairs of the nation. The interest of the two leadership and followership - could be dialectical, but in democracy they are in fact mutually reinforcing to one another, thus carefully preventing acts that could lead to systemic disequilibrium. It is in such terms that democratic political attitudes become a matter of conscious learning, a quality that can be inculcated through training. It is in such terms that President Babangida's vision in establishing the Centre for Democratic Studies can be properly explicated and understood.

B. THE CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC STUDIES: ORIGINS

The creation of the Centre for Democratic Studies (hereinafter referred to as the Centre), was not a fortuitous event. It was, rather a carefully thought out goal of the Babangida administration, as

foregoing discussions vintage. The Centre's birth was foreshadowed by the report of the Political Bureau in 1987, and became central to the entire Transition to Civil Rule Programmes. The Centre is, however, not one of the "Transition Agencies" because its singular mission in the permanent cultivation of a democratic political culture is both unique and original in the political history of Africa and Third World. The goal of democracy and democratic governance is not a one-time affair, but matter for all-time intellectual, research and strategic programming, similar to what obtains in the old established Liberal Democracy of America and Europe.

As earlier demonstrated, the fore-runner of the Centre for Democratic Studies was the Political Bureau of 1986 to 1987. Imbued with the historic mandate of diagnosing the latent ills that continued to filibuster the country's attempts at democratic governance in the past, and seeking out ways of preventing the re-occurrence of short-lived civilian regimes, the Political Bureau, had agreed that the solution did not lie in "the one-second, photo finish total handing over of all instruments of government at a parade".¹¹ In the alternative, it recommended

"a broadly-spaced transition in which democratic government can proceed with political learning, institutional adjustment and a re-orientation of political culture at sequential levels of governance, beginning with local government and ending at the federal level".¹²

This recommendation acted as fillip to the elaborate arrangements made by the Babangida administration, for a gradual disengagement from the political process. The theoretical foundations of the Transition Programme is that learning must be continuous and continuously greater in order to overcome the pathologies of our political past. Ingrained in this assertion is the belief that attitudinal and behavioural changes of political actors which are clearly anti-democratic can be changed for good. Therein, then lay the kernel-rational

that germinated into the Centre.

The Centre for Democratic Studies, received its first historic baptism in the famous October 7, 1989, Presidential broadcast titled "Dawn of a New Social-Political Order" also commonly known as the Abuja Declaration. Referred to in that broadcast as the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institution, the President stated that the Centre:

"will be an organised research unit that will seek out and identify sources and types of anti-democratic attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in Nigerians and devise measures to correct them through our educational, bureaucratic and political institutions".¹³

Since that initial mandate, and on implementation, the Centre has been rechristened the Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS) and its goals and objectives properly articulated and redefined. The Centre took off immediately in October, 1989 with a skeletal staff of four under the author who was then Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin.

The decision of the Federal Military Government to set up the Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS) arose from the demonstrable fact that democratic political life is a learned and acquired behaviour because no one is born a politician or a democrat for that matter. As a learned behaviour, political life must be amendable to the rules governing learning. It means that whatever had been learned or acquired during the process of up-bringing can be reinforced or unlearned through a programmed political education. This is the twin mission of the Centre: To conduct training programmes to reinforce democratic political behaviour and to conduct research into sources of anti-democratic behaviour and attitudes with a view to correcting discovered pathologies through training. The Centre works to achieve a Nigerian variant of the universal phenomenon - democratic Life, and her training materials compare with universal standards.

It is not a mere accident of occasion that the Centre and the political parties were born at the same historical moment in the of the Babangida administration. The reason for the birth of political twins - the two party system and the Centre for Democratic Studies - arose from the fact that membership in the two parties part of the pursuit of democratic life, must be pursued through the process of political learning. The Babangida government firmly believes that inducing Nigerians to imbibe a democratic culture and must only be pursued with the facilitative involvement of training institution like the Centre for Democratic Studies. The Centre thus becomes a necessary instrument for ensuring the growth of the two party system and for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

With the creation of the Centre, the Babangida administration elevated the Nigerian democratic experiment, this time around, to the ranks of an elite international league of similar institutions in the established democracies of the world. The Centre became the first of its kind on the African continent, with its forebears in countries like the United States of America, Canada, Germany, and Sweden where similar bodies have long been devoted to the research, study and promotion of the democratic ethos among their citizens and around the world.¹⁴ The entire debt for this historic move is owed to the visionary leadership of the President, General Ibrahim Babangida, a military leader who, rather than be circumscribed by the regimental and authoritarian tenets of his professional constituency - the military - has successfully shorn himself of that constriction. He became a military leader who opted instead for a political philosophy that builds its pillars on equality, consultation and consensus.

THE CENTRE'S STRUCTURE AND PROGRAMMES

The organisational structure of any institution is largely a reflection of its goals and the methods it applies towards the attainment of its goals. The Centre is a quasi-academic agency charged with the onerous responsibility of charting the course of Nigeria's quest

stable democratic polity. This is to be done mainly through the two instruments of Research and Training side by side with efficient day-to-day administration on a sound policy basis. The centre is therefore structured into four major Departments. These are the Departments of Research and that of Studies, the Department of Administration and several Units such as Publications and Information under the Director in the Director-General's Office. At the apex of the Centre's structure is the Governing Board. The Board is made up of men of experience from the public service and the world of academics as well as the Chairmen of the two political parties. This composition ensures a healthy balance of theoretical with practical experience in policy-making as well as the bi-partisan political representation necessary to insulate the Centre from external political influences. The Governing Board has as its first Chairman the well-known national and international personality, Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule, Dan Masanin Kano. The Board sits at least four times in a year and takes major policy decisions on the development of the Centre.

It is however, the Director-General, who is also a member of the Governing Board, who as Chief Executive implements policies agreed upon by the Board, takes charge of the day-to-day management of the centre. The Director-General is the pivot on whom the wheel of the Centre rotates. He has powers to delegate functions to Directors and staff, and the co-ordination of the various activities of the different departments comes under his purview. The Director of Administration of the Centre serves as the Secretary to the Governing Board. It is also his department that ensures that the wheel of administering men, money and materials is kept going. The Department of Administration also takes care of staff welfare, personnel and other accoutrements.

The Department of Studies is manned by a Director and Directing Staff. Based on findings from the research projects of the centre, and from other sources, that department mounts workshops, seminars and other training programmes of the Centre nation-wide. In keeping with the mandate of the centre which clearly enjoined it to

conduct research into sources of anti-democratic behaviours and attitudes, the Department of Research staffed by a Director and Research Fellow and Research Assistants concentrates solely on this responsibility of working out and executing research proposals.

The Centre's programmes and activities must of necessity cover the thirty states of the federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory. For purposes of effective nation-wide logistic coverage, the center therefore has four Zonal Offices headed by Zonal Co-ordinators and liaising between the Centre's main Campus at Abuja and the states in each of the four Zones into which the country has been divided. The North-East Zone has its office in Bauchi, the North -West in Kano, the South -East Zone, Owerri, and the south - West Zone in Benin.

As far as programming is concerned, the Centre is a quasi-non-governmental organisation, the fact of its creation by government fiat along side the two political parties notwithstanding. A brief overview of some of its programmes so far will be useful at this point. Subsequently, this Chapter will go into greater detail and depth on the interaction that has taken place between the Centre and various categories of politically salient groups in the new political order. Since its inception, over 250,000 new breed politicians from the National Chairmen of the two parties with their colleagues at the National, State, Local Government and Ward Levels, State Legislators, Gubernatorial and National Assembly candidates, Governors-elect have at various times been exposed to courses run by the Centre. The Centre's goal is the pursuit of bi-partisan appreciation of democracy inextricably linked with the development of the two party system as the corner stone of democracy in Nigeria.

The Centre trained officers of the two political parties (National, State, Local and Ward Officers), and the Local Government Councillor, who, in keeping with the Transition to Civil Rule Programme were elected under the party system in December, 1990. This was followed by elected officials at the state level later in 1991 and at the Federal level in 1992. They also participated in the Centre's Campaign-

Management Programme mounted nation-wide commencing with the Gubernatorial candidates at Bwari, Abuja on the 11th of November, 1991 and ending with the State Assembly candidates organisation, four zones (Benin, Owerri, Kane and Bauchi). In 1992, the Centre has given much attention to the State Legislation in recognition of the need to properly induct this country's political office holders, into the demands of the legislature in a Presidential system of government.

The Centre has continuously been exposed to interaction with many groups in Civil Society on a regular basis. The Centre worked with the Political Correspondents and Editor of the primary and electronic media, who are exposed to the demands of democratic life. Our interaction with the General Editors on the Nigerian variant of the process of decentralization via the Transition to Civil Rule Programme convinced of the need to make that kind of Workshop a regular event.

The Centre also responded to the invitation of the First Lady, Mrs Maryam Babangida, that it should address the continuing powerlessness of women in political decision-making as a follow up to the gains from the Better-Life Programme. The Centre thus started its women's programmes in 1991 with a workshop which explored the sources of women's political powerlessness and came up with political strategies for overcoming them and enhancing their political competence. The Centre then moved to another stage of interacting with women politicians (past and present) and aspirants on how to get involved and win. Since then the Centre has continued to develop special programmes for women and Youth, Labour and Business as some of the politically significant groups in civil society, in keeping with the imperatives of political pluralism.

The Centre's research efforts continue to yield results, and she has stored data on the profile of the new-breed politicians which clearly indicate that they are better endowed than their counterparts in the First and Second Republics. There is also a wealth of data on the electoral behaviour of groups in Nigerian society, and voting patterns across the country since the Transition period. Currently, the

Centre is preoccupied with the critical issue of how to reduce the political salience of ethnicity and religion factors which have been the bane of our political life in the past.

C. THE CENTRE AND THE POLITICAL CLASS

The Political Parties

Political party and party competition are the bedrock of the democratic process any where. It is indeed noteworthy that the two political parties - the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) - emerged in October, 1989 out of the ashes of the thirteen political organisations. The reasons for this unique development have been clearly stated at great length, and in no uncertain terms by the President himself in his famous broadcast of October 7 that year. The thirteen political associations on thorough scrutiny, fell short of the expected prerequisites for the new political order as conceived and visualized by the Babangida administration. It is necessary to refresh our memory by quoting at great length a few of the disturbing findings which necessitated the abrogation of the thirteen associations. According to Mr President:

"Some of the most disturbing aspects of the political process during the pre-registration period were indeed sonorous echoes of our historical experience. Old lines of cleavage - ethnic, geopolitical, religious and class surfaced in bold relief in the new political associations. These "newbreed" associations, which were expected to transcend those lines of cleavage and promote issue-based politics, instead relapsed into debilitating in-fighting, each group within itself. Most worrisome was the fact that the political

associations paid little attention to organisational structures at grassroots level. In short, the people were, taken for granted, and no premium was placed on their views, which the political aspirants simply brushed aside and assumed to be of little consequence. The associations merely revolved around leadership and personalities".¹⁵

A new order cannot be built on faulty bricks, nor should new wine be put in old bottles. It became necessary for government to take the bold step of initiating the two political parties. It was unusual step, but one advised by the peculiar experiences of Nigerian political history, as well as the contemporary circumstances of the time in the established pitfalls of the thirteen associations. The NRC and the SDP were midwived by government as an attempt at cutting the party-system adrift from the primordial loyalties and organisational pitfalls which would, abinitio, weaken the foundations of the new democratic experiment. Government also hoped thereby to stimulate mass participation through grassroots party organisation which is a sine qua non of effective democratic governance.

There may indeed be few precedents to the creation political parties by government but it was a worthwhile experiment given Nigeria's perennial record of invidious elite manipulation which made previous political parties mere extended estates of the privileged few. The negative political trend had been condemned by many a political analysts in this country. Hence the creation of the two party system by government based on the notion of "equal founders and equal joiners" was widely welcomed with optimism. The reasons behind government decision to have two parties that were centrist in nature, and not three or four or five or more, were also clearly articulated by Mr President on the same occasion. The staggering number of the political associations that sought to become political parties, as well as their inherently divisive nature constituted cause for alarm. There was clearly a need for a high degree of aggregation of political

interests which at the same time would reduce the potential pulling apart of the system by centrifugal forces at widely opposite ends of the ideological and political spectrum. Government also made provision to ensure that registration and requirement of membership, as well as organisations for the two parties would start from the bottom of the socio-political ladder. Guideline for these provisions were spelt out in detail in Decree number 27 of 1989 and with this singular act, the new political order was set on a Grassroots Democratic Two-Party System.

In the constitutional characterisation of the two parties, little room was given for irreconcilable political differences. This was deliberate, in order that the system may be piloted on the course of the politics of harmony and consensus - a sure basis for democracy in the new political order.

The creation of the Grassroots Democratic Two Party System by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration is another bold act that places him on parallel plane with such a man as Kemal Ataturk, the popular founder of modern Turkey. As Ataturk advised the leaders of the two political parties in the Turkey of the 1930s which he also initiated,

"I am now a father. Both of you are my children. As far as I am concerned there is no difference between the two of you. What I want from you in the Grand National Assembly is an open debate upon national issues"¹⁶

This exhortation could have been taking place in the Nigeria of today under President Ibrahim Babangida, because it reechoes the regime's commitment to party democracy and the emergence of democratic governmental institutions.

Given the antecedents earlier discussed, it was only natural that the first task of the Centre's pioneer staff of highly motivated academics and administrators, was that of nurturing the embryonic stages of the

two political parties. On January 10, 1990 precisely, Mr President had the singular opportunity of inaugurating the Centre's first training programme which was for National and State Administrative Secretaries of the NRC and SDP at the International Conference Centre, Abuja. These administrative secretaries were neither party members nor politicians for that matter. They were civil servants of tested experience who were deployed from the public service to ensure the administrative take-off of the two parties in terms of membership registration, ward, state and national level machinery.

The staff of the Centre who as pioneer saw their work as a challenging but honourable experience taking the risk of being involved in a bold venture which had no counterpart or reference point on the African continent. The nation, and indeed the entire world, wondered then what the Centre was going to do with the conversion of traditional public officers to political operators. The Centre did it and did it marvellously. It initiated the process for the production of cards, registration forms and the working out of the modality for registration and modality for differentiating between the two political parties. This success of this dedicated early staff meant that the idea of the Centre and the government-initiated Two-Party System both became reality.

The result of their efforts is that today the two parties took off successfully and subsequently elected their officers at the Ward, Local Government, State and Federal levels. The Centre proceeded to perform the feat of organising workshops throughout the country in May and June 1990, spanning the Wards, the Local Government Areas, the States and culminating at the National level in August 1990. It was at the conclusion of these training programmes for the elected party officials at all levels that the Administration felt confident that members of the new political class - call them new breed - were ready for the responsibility of pioneering a new political order.

The Centre's interest in grassroots party-building continues unabated. This year (1992) in May it refocused its attention on grassroots party organizers from the thirty states of the federation and the Federal

Capital Territory, thanks to a financial support from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of Germany. This level of political practitioners met again for three days put through the rudiments of Grassroots Democracy, Party Constitutions, Theory and Practice of Party Organisation and Structure, Membership Drive, Party Finances and Conduct of Party Meetings. In this wise the Centre demonstrated that its training of political class is not a once-and-for-all affair, but a continuing exercise.

The successful election and training of party officials at all levels resulted in one achievement; the institutionalisation of a new form of party politics and mass participation in the country's body politics. For a populace previously subjected to debilitating bouts of political greed and self-centered leadership, the new political dispensation is a signal of hope of the horizon. It is aimed at redirecting people's creative energies, and mobilizing them towards genuine national development. It is a tall ambition made real, arising out of the President's sincere belief that those who wished to serve the nation were to take their inspiration from "the genuine feelings and desires of the nation".

The Centre and the Elected Local Government Functionaries

Having successfully put the political parties on course, the Centre continued to fulfil its mandates through the step-by-step induction and training of elected political office holders, as the three-tier civilian democratic structure was put in place. The first level of elected non-party political office-holders were the Local Government Chairman and Councillor in the then 453 Local Government Councils nation-wide. They were not only the first set of elected civilian government functionaries in the journey towards 1993, they were also the first set to be elected on the basis of the two political parties. Of even greater import, they were the first to be elected under the novel open ballot electoral system.

The Centre had monitored the elections of December 8, 1990 which brought out this level of official nation-wide. Her reports recorded

a positive outcome which tended to put to rest the cynical sentiments of some who believed at the time, that the choice of open ballot was a bail for precipitating crisis in order to make 1993 unrealistic. In the opinion of the Centre, the elected chairman and councillor had their leadership position legitimated through an electoral system that had proved less corruptible than previous electoral experiences in the country.

The open ballot election was devoid of violence. No politician would have asked for a more conducive condition under which to assume political power. The open ballot system may very well have been a gamble then, but it was not an irrational political decision given the political history of the country. The December 1990 elections was a salute to the courage of those who went through the "initiation" process - winners and losers; the electorate at large; officials of NEC and allied agencies; security agencies; Youth Corps members etc.

The Training Workshop that followed immediately after the elections for the elected chairmen and councillor nationwide was originally intended to hold before the Local Government elections. By that initial conception, the Workshop would have served the purpose of "certifying candidates competent to contest the Local Government Elections". This was the original idea behind the Centre's Certification of Competence Programme consistent with the belief of the President, Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that those who aspire to govern this country must show evidence that they are competent to do so.

That the training workshop held after the elections was a result of circumstances which were fairly well known at the time. The major reason was that the Workshop could not hold before the elections precisely because the two parties were bogged down with so many litigations over candidature, such that neither of the parties was in a position to present a complete and authentic list of their candidates for the elections. It was simply unthinkable to mount a Workshop without a clear picture of who the participants would be. This problem must however be taken in good faith as part of the healthy

signs of the democratization programme as a learning process. It did not detract from the significance of the training exercise, for, local governments are simply too pivotal in the quest for Grassroots Democracy in Nigeria that the Centre's systematic learning programme must of necessity focus on them. The Centre's purpose in mounting the Workshop was to enhance the political competence of the local government officers. It was not a qualification for being a politician since they were already politicians in their own right, having gone through the process of registering for a party of their choice and taking the fateful step of running for elective office.

During the course of the Workshop, the officials were exposed to the rudiments of governance at the Local Government level. The objective was to sensitize them as elected political office-holders to some of the realities of governance at the most crucial level of government in this country. Participants were reminded among other things of:

- (a) the Meaning and Purpose of grassroots democracy;
- (b) the Status of Local Government in the Nigerian Constitution;
- (c) the Extent of Autonomy which the Constitution guarantees local government;
- (d) the Powers of Local Government;
- (e) the Process of Administration at the Local Government level, and
- (f) Finance and Financial accountability at the Local Government Level.

The results of the Local Government elections were a clear evidence of departure from the politics of the past. Except for one or two cases, the pattern of electoral behaviours showed a balance of political strength between the two parties. There was clearly no evidence of a one-party dominance. During the training, the Centre called special attention to a pattern which it considered a potential source of legislative conflict in the future. This was the many cases in which elected Chairmen came from a party which they were to head. The Centre realised that the possibility of a majority in the Local Government Council holding the Chairman who is not from the majority party to ransom, is not a remote possibility. The Centre tried to

educate grassroots politicians to the possibility of a "divided government" which could result from split ticket voting by voters. The danger inherent in this managing divided Government was very real and the Centre's trainers were properly briefed to emphasize that the problem was not insurmountable. Emphasis was placed on accommodation, compromise and consensus. It is in the nature of any social experiment such as the current programme of transition to civil rule that problems must of necessity crop up. This is the implication of the characterization of the Transition programme as a learning exercise. Relevant behavioural and attitudinal requirements for running a presidential system of government at all levels were gradually inculcated.

The Centre's perspective of the problem identified above is that all (Chairmen and Councillors) should see themselves as legitimate representatives of the people sworn to defend the interest of the people first, and foremost. The mandate of the Chairman is no more weightier than that of a Councillor. A situation where an actor denies other actors the fulfillment of their *raison de etre* is not conducive to the realisation of the promise of democracy. Democracy is predicated on consensus building and the relentless search for solutions to problems thrown up by the liberalisation of participation in the political process. The Centre reminded the Local Government operatives that a situation where the legislative process is stalemated as a result of the uncompromising stance of elected political office holders negates the obligation of these elected officials to the people who voted them into power. The idea was to persuade elected Local Government officials to allow good reason to prevail in their legislative acts thereby reinforcing the nation's collective faith in the possibility of a rejuvenated Third Republic.

The workshop, for which the Centre trained about 500 trainers nationwide, was successfully completed by 20th December 1990 and reports were turned in to base at Abuja. A significant point deserving of mention is that the Centre does not miss the opportunity of such nation-wide training exercises to collect data for its research. Questionnaires designed by the Research Department were administered

on trainees thus providing a veritable data bank on the personal profile, democratic attitudes and party involvement of political office holders at each level. The same had been done with the West, Local Government, State and National level party officers during their own training in May and June of the same year.

The Centre and the Gubernatorial Politicians

The Centre's contact with the gubernatorial category of politicians in the new order has taken two forms: firstly as participants at a Policy Briefing and Campaign Management workshop soon after the primaries of October 1991 and secondly as Governors-elect on December 28, 1991 two weeks after the gubernatorial elections and shortly before their swearing in as Chief Executives of their respective States they participated in a Transition Workshop. The Centre was thus moving on, appropriately, to the next level of the democratization via-civilianization programme.

The Centre's decision to include Policy Briefings or State-of-the-Nation inductions in its programmes of training for politicians of the new order, was properly within the mandate given by President Ibrahim Babangida. The Centre is expected to ensure that methodological procedures and/or strategies for attaining identified goals are related, in the words of Mr President,

"to the realities and the trade-offs between probable resource availability and competing demands ... so as to facilitate unambiguous choices by the electorate."

This highly philosophical and didactic statement of Mr President was on the occasion of the launching of the Manifestoes and Constitutions of the two political parties - NRC and SDP - on December 4, 1989. It is this statement that foreshadows the Policy Briefing which commenced with the workshop the Centre held for the National Leaders of the two parties and continued with the gubernatorial candidates. Put in the context of the December 4 statement, the

Centre had to embark on Policy Briefing for National Leaders of the two political parties between 18th and 20th February, 1991. That was the Centre's first attempt at apprising National Leaders of the two political parties with the realities of existing resources and facilities by those who are knowledgeable about the correct and current state of the nation in the Defence, Security, Economic, Health and Education policy areas with a view to informing party leaders and advising them in the promises they make to the electorate at large. The Centre felt that Gubernatorial Candidates should not be left out, and their turn came in November 11-12 1991, when they however got more than mere Policy Briefing. The gubernatorial candidates were also given what the Centre calls Campaign Management.

Consistent with the intended regularity of the briefings, however, the Centre in November 1991 chose to concentrate on a few strategic policy areas. National Security, Police, Petroleum and Central Bank, tailored to suit the Governorship candidates as they wage the Gubernatorial campaign. At that occasion a future briefing for Governors-elect to accommodate other diverse areas of our national life was scheduled for the 28th of December, 1991. The Centre intended the Governors-elect to be exposed to the demands of Decree 12 of 1989 as it relates to the powers, functions, duties to be performed during the Transition period by the democratically elected civilian Governors, the House of Assembly and their relationship with the Federal Government which later formed the basis of Decree 50 of 1992. It was to provide a proper grounding of the State Governors on the demands of the constitutionally enshrined powers within the Transition period as enunciated in Decree 12 of 1989 and in the Constitution that would later come into force in 1993. As at the occasion of November 1991, Decree 50 which enhanced the provisions of Decree 12 was not yet out.

The November Workshop was a forum for mutually beneficial dialogue and exchange between the current managers of State affairs and the heirs-apparent to political power. It was intended to afford the latter group the rare opportunity of correct and current knowledge of the state of the nation as reflected in the policy areas of

discussion, a reflection in that regard, of the late Mallam Aminu Kano's challenge, in 1977, to the then Military Government to publish the content of what was left in the kitty. The Centre believed that the "pretenders" to the throne should be taken into confidence as to the correct state of the nation. The future Governors needed such knowledge and the Babangida Administration, quite unlike previous governments; colonial, civilian or military, was willing to give that knowledge and did it through the instrumentality of the Centre. Such a knowledge, was intended to prepare the gubernatorial politicians for the challenges of political programming and electioneering campaigns which loomed in the horizon and which would help to moderate the language of political discourse especially as it relates to the matching of promises with existing verifiable resources.

A significant element of the Transition Programme of which the November event was a testimony is the evolving Culture of Dialogue. Dialogue is a phenomenon necessarily implied by the democratic imperatives of contestation. By promoting the culture of dialogue, this Administration has decisively confronted the negativity of the politics of hysteria where actors tend to frustrate the goal attainment of other actors, a feature of the Second Republic. Dialogue will only lead to the politics of moderation with political actors facilitating the goal attainment of other actors. The Centre has been in the forefront of efforts to promote the culture of dialogue (as a basis for reaching consensus) between the two political parties. This was always basic to the preparation and delivery of its modules in the previous year from the training of the appointed administrative secretaries, elected party executives, as well as the local government chairmen and councillors.

The unceasing promotion of the culture of dialogue through the instrumentality of Policy Briefing has the potential of creating a bipartisan basis for policy formulation and power exercise. This is why the idea must be commended and embraced in the Transition period and beyond. The stability of the Third Republic may very well depend on the capacity of political actors to find a common basis for policy differences through constant and continuous dialogue. There

is also a need to develop a threshold of consensus on vital national issues.

The Centre's Policy Briefings were not exercises in brainwashing. Participants were encouraged to feel free to join issues with government officials who lead discussions in the various policy areas. The Centre had to emphasize that although the participants were acknowledged politicians, there was a need to isolate those matters of national life that are clearly above politics. SECURITY is one, as are OIL and MONEY. It is the Centre's goal that bi-partisan consensus should be built around our nation's survival in all its ramifications. The aim is to remove certain issues or segments of some issues outside partisan politics. This is in keeping with what Mr President had touched upon in his thought-provoking address to the Constituent Assembly in 1988 which commentators then called "no go areas". A bi-partisan threshold of consensus on the nature and use of power and on sensitive issue, is a must if we are to ensure the survival of the Third Republic.

The Campaign Management aspect of the workshop flowed logically from the Policy Briefing, and the modules covered the following subjects; Foundations of an Effective Campaign, Campaign Strategy, Conducting a Campaign and Electioneering Campaign Cook-Book. In the same month November 1991, the Centre took this aspect (Campaign Management) of the programme, round the country to State Assembly candidates, with workshops conducted at its zonal centres.

The Governors-elect forum of 28th December, 1991 which was declared open by the Vice President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, represented the Centre's second and historic contact with the gubernatorial level of politicians. The Workshops consisted of a package in three parts touching on the Constitution, Revenue Allocation and Inter-governmental Relations. The Centre was convinced of the need for Governors-elect to be exposed to the constitutional requirements with regard to powers and functions of States vis-a-vis Federal and Local Governments, and

The aim of the Workshop was therefore to prepare the Governors-elect adequately for the job ahead as Governors and make their work more rewarding, fruitful and beneficial to the people. It was also fortuitous that by the time of this Workshop Decree 50 which spells out the functions and organs of government at the State level had been released. The Attorney-General of the Federation, Prince Bola Ajibola, was present in person to brainstorm with the intending state Chief Executives on this crucial document.

The Centre and the State Legislators

Interaction with the legislative arm of the State across the country, in the form of training workshops and dialogue, has been undertaken by the Centre on three different fora. The Centre was convinced of the need to give special and repeated attention to state legislators for a number of highly cogent reasons:

On the first score, Nigeria's previous political history of frequent regime interruption had left the legislature at state and national levels with the most truncated and battered history. This had given rise to what the Centre perceived as "status inconsistency" or "status insecurity", as will be explained later in this section.

Secondly, the Centre had to intervene and help clarify issues in the light of some foreboding signs that soon emerged on our political horizon shortly after the inauguration of the state Assemblies in January 1992. These disturbing signs appeared mainly in the relationship between the newly elected civilian State Governors and their equally new legislative houses. There were many reported cases of abuse of executive powers as well as of misuse of legislative authority. Thirdly, there were serious procedural problems which the Centre took note of in the operations of the state assemblies. These resulted from the problems of transiting from a Parliamentary mentality (as still enshrined in the Standing Orders of the Assemblies) to the truly Presidential System as required by the new

dispensation.

The first contact with the State Houses of Assembly was made through nation-wide workshops conducted in situ for all the State Assemblies from January 28 to February 10, 1992. The law-makers were taken, step by step through the rudiments of Legislature in the Constitution, Legislative Procedure in Nigeria, Processing A Bill into Law, Legislator - Constituency Relations. The Centre seized the opportunity of this training programme within the context of the modules, to drive home some home truths to the Legislators. The Legislators had to be reminded that Legislatures in a Presidential system of government enjoy a large measure of autonomy which the parliamentary form of government does not allow. Consistent with the principles of separation of powers, assemblies are autonomous both in terms of functions and personnel. Legislatures in a Presidential system of government are rule making bodies and legislators as rule makers are distinct and separate from the Executive arm of government.

The Centre emphasized that this autonomy gives a distinct character to our Assemblies as it permits the discharge of legislative functions without fear of executive intimidation. Yet, as the Centre had to intone, government is a web of interlocking relationships. The Centre then emphasized to the newly elected legislators that the Legislature, in other words, cannot function in isolation. The Centre also emphasized that this also applies to the Executive. Herein lies the problem of Legislative/Executive relationship in a Presidential governmental arrangement i.e. between the autonomy conferred on each arm of government in virtue of the principle of separation of powers and the imperative of cooperation given the logic of government as an interactive process. The Centre's preoccupation throughout this workshop was to emphasize that the stability of our polity will depend on the balance which the Legislative arm and the Executive arm are able to strike between the competing demands on the two arms. This is even doubly significant in situations where the rational and sophisticated choice of the voter had resulted in placing one party at the helm of Executive affairs and the other party in

dominance in the State Legislature resulting in a divided government. The Centre emphasized that divided government is not unusual with Presidential system of government and cited examples from the United States of America to educate our new legislators.

The Centre's trainers had to emphasize that the legitimate, rational choice of the people must be respected because democracy demands so. The Centre pointed out to the legislators that since they all swore to ensure a democratically stable polity, they must accept the implied need for cooperation in the dilemma posed by the people's rational action in splitting their vote. The Centre used this forum to send a message to the Legislators and Governors alike that the dilemma thrown up by a divided Government is not, and should not be, an invitation to stalemate and chaos. The lessons of Nigeria's experience during the 2nd Republic must indeed inform actions in the Third Republic. The new democratic order demands that Legislators of the various State Assemblies must give their Chief Executives the latitude within which they can function effectively in executing the laws of the land. Chief Executives, on the other hand, must appreciate that democracy triumphs with minimal executive proclamations, and they cannot and must not assume the rule making function. The Centre repeatedly advised that executive pronouncements be tempered or moderated by a due recognition and appreciation of the sensitivity of the legislative arm of government. The Centre pointed out the deleterious consequences of a Legislative arm of government pitched in battle against the Executive, and the paralysis such a battle could cause both for the functioning of government and the overall development of the state and its people, which must dictate rationality in behaviour on both sides of the legislative/executive divide.

The Centre also took advantage of the nation-wide training to revisit its position that elected office holders be freed from the demands of party political considerations in the discharge of their responsibilities to their wide multi-party constituency, and to advise against excessive control of elected political office holders by party machineries. The Centre's position is that the beginning of wisdom in the survival of elected representatives, be they Governors or Legislators,

pull of constituency demands and the dictates of their conscience as to what is good and desirable.

In the process of the workshop, the Centre observed that the calibre of our legislators today is greatly enhanced by the injection of newblood of fine intellectual credentials. There are many more professionals in the different Assemblies today than at any period in our political history; but they are also more youthful in terms of age. The Centre was also opportuned at this exercise to express its view that legislative threats and other acts of abuse of legislative process intended to attract concessions which were beyond the means of the State can constitute an abuse of legislative privilege, and advised that such should not be allowed to form part of the norms of folkways of the legislature.

Of high priority in the Centre's message was also the view that law-makers must not be estranged or removed from their roots in both spatial and temporal senses. This is one area not quite understood by the legislators. The Centre was conscious of the fact that the conception of Assembly work in terms of physical movement of Assembly men and women and their families to urban locations of Assemblies detracts heavily from the grassroots philosophy of our democratic political order. Assembly men clearly understood the advice of the Centre that Assembly men and women must live the experiences of the people they represent in order to be able to appreciate the burden of the responsibility thrust on them by their election.

The second occasion for dialogue between the Centre and the State Legislators was on 19th March, 1992 when the political leadership of the 30 State Houses of Assembly were invited to Abuja. Having already covered much ground in the February exercise, the sole aim of the March dialogue was to face squarely, the observed problems of "status inconsistency" and "status insecurity" which had clearly affected the conduct and behaviour of state legislators in the embryonic stage of the State Assemblies. The Centre was provided opportunity at this occasion for joining issues with the Speakers,

Deputy Speakers, Majority and Minority Leaders, Finance Committee Chairmen, and Whips of the various Houses of Assembly on a number of dilemma areas. The first dilemma issue is the fact that the new legislature is apparently faced with two contradictory notions of its powers. One is that the Constitution clearly takes the Legislature as the first arm in the three-arm system of government (the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary). It gives it power over money i.e. over spending and raising of money. Yet it does not know that this power over money covers matters of policy and by extension monitoring implementation of projects whose funds it approved. It is in the light of this that the Centre put together a package specifically designed to deal with finance matters, appropriation and auditing and other problem areas.

It was also at this occasion that other controversial areas were taken head on and resolved. One such was Government's amendment of Decree 50 through Decree 4 of 1992 which removed the powers of confirmation for Commissioners from the State Legislatures. It was none other than Mr President himself, who found time to honour the occasion, who opened discussion on this issue. According to Mr President, Government had cause to promulgate that amendment in order to allow Chief Executives of States to constitute their Executive Councils without reference to the Houses of Assembly. Mr president acknowledged that Government was neither unaware of, nor insensitive to, the reactions of Honourable Legislators over this issue and assured the political leaders of the Assemblies that Government reaffirms its belief in, and commitment to, a strong and virile legislature capable of meeting the challenges of its constitutional injunction. Mr President further assured them that Government's action in promulgating Decree No. 4 of 1992 was intended to anticipate a crisis of governance in some States which could interfere with the Transition programme. Mr President pointed out that the Decree itself derived its rationale from Decree 12 of 1989 which empowers the Federal Military Government to promulgate Decrees necessary for the learning process within the Transition period. The leaders of the State Assemblies bought the President's explanation

that Decree No. 4 of 1992 was borne out of certain historical and contemporary experiences in the States and the need to protect democracy, as a learning process.

Another area of crisis which was put to rest was the existing uncertainty over the relationship between the political leadership of the State Houses of Assembly and the administrative staff of the Assemblies. In the words of Mr President, the crisis must of necessity.

"be resolved in favour of the political head, in consonance with the reform of the civil service and, above all, the Constitution and Decree 50 of 1990. For the avoidance of doubt, the Honourable Speaker is the number one law maker, the Chief Executive and by extension, the Accounting Officer of the State Legislature. All Assemblies should set in motion the machineries for administration of the legislatures. Furthermore, the principle of separation of powers also means that the personnel of the three arms are separate; they are not inter-changeable. Clerks and other staff of Assemblies must have their career protected and guaranteed".¹⁷

The March Forum with the political leadership of the State Houses of Assembly was therefore significant and successful event in so many ways. Legislators went home with a great deal more confidence to face the challenges of their duties of law-making. Several grey areas were cleared. By May 1992, however, the Centre again saw the need to take action on the apparent lacuna that became clear in the State Legislators' procedural approach to law-making and conduct of House sessions. It was apparent that months after their inauguration, many legislators still saw themselves as parliamentarians after the

British model. There was little use of the Committee System in the processing of bills. There was instead too much use of the open House as talk-shop for the passing of resolutions and motions which have no effect in law. The Centre's May programme had the expressed purpose of inducting law-makers in the pre-eminent use of the Committee System in legislatures of the Presidential System.

In this regard, the Centre recognised the need for a re-organisation of the legislative system and a reorientation of the legislators in-keeping with the demands of the Presidential System of Government instead of adhering to the Parliamentary or Westminster System of Government. This would be in keeping with the constitution which would come into effect in 1993. The Centre's aim was to emphasize that the presidential System makes it possible to have good and speedy legislation. The Centre emphasized to the law-makers that in law-making, both time and timing are very important because policy-making must meet people's needs at an auspicious point in time because if it comes late, it could be a veritable waste of scarce public resources.

The May exercise was based on the recognition that unfortunately, by an act of oversight the Constitution had created a mismatch of goals with methods. The Centre recommended that the Legislature should modify the existing Standing Orders predicated on the parliamentary system for use in a presidential administration. This mismatch which started with the 1979 Constitution, therefore, deprives the new presidential administration at the state and local government levels the benefits of speed and despatch which the founding fathers had intended. It therefore became necessary and mandatory on the Centre to streamline the methods with the goals if the full benefits of the presidential system must be realized now and in the Third Republic.

The Committee System was being recommended by the Centre in order to ensure a productive use of Legislator's time and ensure that there is an in-depth research into the needs of the society. The implications of this orientation are obvious. Legislators and the

constituents want to know the implications of the laws that are passed to meet such needs. The result of this will be effective and efficient policy-making and a better governance of the society. The Centre believes that the effectiveness of the State Assemblies will be improved with greater use of Committees. Members of the State legislatures would be provided the opportunity to spend their time concentrating on the ramifications of each law, rather than spending too much time passing motions or resolutions that have no effect of law. The Committee System that was being proposed would also introduce professionalism into legislation because members of the Committees would be appointed on the basis of their specialisation, expertise and willingness to learn. The Centre advised Legislators not to be jacks-of-all-trades.

The Centre also enjoined that as much as possible the Assembly Committees should be realigned with the ministries in the Executive branch and that member of committees should, as much as possible, specialise on a functional area of government enterprise like Education, Agriculture, Health, Social Development, Finance, Justice, etc. Such specialization then helps members to understand and interpret submissions by experts who testify before the committees. The Centre also advised that Assemblymen should not allow themselves to be faulted on the floor of the House or in Committee Hearings on the basis of lack of information. It is important that Assemblies and Assemblymen be well informed.

In the Centre's view, the Committee System also makes it possible to take advantage of professionals through public hearings. Thus competent professionals can volunteer or be invited to committees to give testimonies in the process of considering a legislation. Such hearings help in improving the quality of legislation. It also affords the public of necessary inputs into the legislative process. Such linkage between the legislature and the public creates a political rapport with the legislature and improves political understanding. In addition, Committees help the Legislature to work in small groups and utilize time more efficiently on issues which would have taken long debates in a large Assembly. The Centre for Democratic Studies therefore

strongly commends the adoption of the Committee System to all levels of government because it is in line with the Presidential System and because it improves the quality of legislation. The quality of law-making after the third contact between the Centre and the State legislators in May 1992 has improved considerably.

The attempt to strengthen the legislative arm in the face of what appears to be the overpowerful executive did not quite go down well with some of the new civilian Governors who sometimes saw themselves as successors to the Military Governors with all the powers. They did not also see how the Assemblymen who won their elections on their platform could turn round and challenge their omnipotence. Some of them were not able to separate the persons who they helped to office from the institution of the legislature, President Babangida's injunction notwithstanding. Some of the new civilian Governors did not see the merit in the characterisation of modern Presidential system as one imbued with check and balance. It should be further commonsensical definition of check and balance that only things of equal weight can balance which by implication means that the three arms of government - legislative, executive and judiciary - must possess equal weight with respect to their respective functions in order to be able to check and balance one another. A weak legislature can neither check nor balance a strong executive. The doctrine of coequality as pertaining to the three arms of government means that each arm should be allowed to exercise its own function to the fullest.

The Centre appreciates the many areas of friction between the legislature and the Executive. One which is easily misunderstood has to do with the doctrine of legislative oversight and investigatory powers of the legislature.

It has brought the State Executives of Enugu, Borno, Katsina, Adamawa and Cross River into conflict with their respective State Legislatures. The Enugu State House of Assembly invited Chief Nduka Eya, Special Adviser to Governor Okwesilieze Nwodo, to answer some allegations made by workers of the Presidential Hotel, Enugu. Chief

Eya failed to go but allegedly sent a letter to the House saying that the issue fell within the powers of the Executive. Consequently the House issued a warrant for his arrest. Chief Eya finally appeared before the House and was fined N300.00 for contempt of the House.

The Cross River State House of Assembly, intent on exercising the same power, issued an invitation to a civil servant. The Governor, Mr Clement Ebri was worried that invitations were sent to his Director-General, Commissioners and even Civil Servants, through the Mass media to appear with documents, sometimes of utmost secrecy and sensitivity, for public display and scrutiny.

We have only mentioned these two cases as illustrative because they offer the best materials for the interpretation of the investigatory powers of the State Assembly. It is important to note that even the United States Constitution did not specify the powers of investigation. The first investigation was held in 1792, the American Supreme Court delivered the landmark judgement saying that investigations were often indispensable to the effective exercise of "all legislative powers" granted to Congress by the Constitution. Since then, the congressional investigative power has been wide berth by the judiciary. In May 1975, the Supreme Court ruled that subpoenas issued by investigating Committees may not be limited by courts, even where constitutional rights may be endangered. The Justices said that the Constitution bars courts from interfering with a subpoena that is issued within the "sphere of legislative activity" of a committee or member. Furthermore, the Supreme Court said that courts may not question the motives behind a congressional subpoena.

Even the power to punish for contempt was not granted by the American Constitution. However in 1821 the Supreme Court confirmed the power of Congress to punish a person for contempt of its authority. Since then Congress has held contemptuous refusal to appear before a Committee, to answer questions before a Committee, or to produce documents for a Committee.

Investigatory powers are being used more frequently than ever

before. From 1789-1938, a period of almost fifty years congress conducted just about five hundred investigations as against four hundred and ninety-six in the two years of 1967-68. In 1975 Senate budgeted \$19.4 million for investigation by the twenty-two Standing Committees while the House authorized \$21.2 million for twenty-one Committees. In 1973 the Senate Watergate investigating Committee alone was authorized \$2 million to conduct its inquiry.

The Nigerian Constitution has avoided the problems created by the lacunae relating to investigative powers in the American Constitution. It has enshrined two clauses authorizing investigations specifying subject matter, even though elastically; defining purpose; and identifying possible witnesses in a rather omnibus fashion. Every Governor and Legislator must learn Sections 126 and 127 of the Constitution by heart and take it to heart.

The State House of Assembly can conduct investigation on:

"any matter or thing to which it has power to make laws; and

"the conduct of affairs of any person, authority, Ministry or Government Department charged, or intended to be charged with the duty of or responsibility for:

"executing or administering laws enacted by that House of Assembly, and

"disbursing or administering moneys appropriated or to be appropriated by such House."

These are very powerful clauses. The House can investigate any matter or thing within its legislative competence as well as the conduct of affairs of any person, authority, Ministry or Government Department charged or intended to be charged with the duty of or responsibility for executing or administering laws enacted by that House and disbursing or administering moneys appropriated or to

be appropriated by such House. The subjects of investigation are wide-ranging and does not even exclude the Governor where a House decides to disregard decorum and executive courtesy.

The Constitution says that House investigative powers are exercisable only for the purpose of enabling the House:

"to make laws with respect to any matter within its legislative competence and to correct any defects in existing laws; and "to prevent and expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it".

This clause has a long reach and is fairly loaded. By granting the power "to correct any defects in existing laws," it has conferred the power of legislative oversight. Thus the House of Assembly can oversee the implementation of policy and administration of government. It can do this through the Casework Approach of Committee Hearings and Ombudsman functions of hearing petitions. But it can also do performance audits and evaluation studies. Some State Legislatures in the United States even appoint a Legislative Auditor to audit State Government Accounts. Examples of such States are California, Colorado, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin. However, under the Nigerian Constitution such performance audit is done through the requirement of Section 123(2) which states:

The Public accounts of a State and of all offices and courts of the State shall be audited by the Auditor-General of the State who shall submit his reports to the House of Assembly of the State concerned; and for that purpose the Auditor-General or any person authorized by

him in that records, returns and other documents relating to these accounts.

Thus the legislature can review expenditure of funds. Similarly, if the legislature is to make policies and appropriate monies more effectively, it has to perform oversight and consider how and how well, executive departments and agencies are working.

The power of evidence of the House of Assembly under its investigatory powers is also very wide (Section 127). It has powers:

“(a)to procure all such evidence, written or oral, direct or circumstantial, as it may think necessary or desirable, and to examine all persons as witnesses whose evidence may be material or relevant to the subject matter;

“(b)to require such evidence to be given on oath;

“(c)to summon any person in Nigeria to give evidence at any place or to produce any document or other thing in his possession or under his control, and to examine him as a witness and require him to produce any document or other thing in his possession or under his control, subject to all just exceptions; and

“(d) to issue a warrant to compel the attendance of any person who, after having been summoned to attend, fails, refuses or neglects to obey the summons to the satisfaction of the House of Assembly or the Committee, and to order him to pay all costs which may have been occasioned in compelling his attendance or by reason of his failure, refusal or neglect to obey the summons, and also to impose such fine as may be prescribe for any such failure, refusal or neglect; and any fine so imposed shall be recoverable in the same manner as fine imposed by Court of Law”.

It is clear from the above that the House of Assembly can summon all persons or any person in Nigeria as witnesses to testify at any place and produce any document or other thing in his possession and under his control. The power of evidence does not limit the House to only political functionaries of government. It covers any person in

Nigeria who could be required to produce any document or thing and the alibi of secrecy or confidentiality will not suffice to disobey the order. In almost all cases to date therefore the Houses of Assembly have been operating within the powers conferred on them by the Constitution. The Katsina State House of Assembly has powers to request the Governor for the Handing-over Notes he received from his predecessor in office. Similarly the Adamawa State House of Assembly has powers to invite the Secretary to State Government, Mr Zakka Nagga to enlighten it on the proposal to create new districts.

To conclude, it is necessary to state that the Centre's interaction with the political class in the democratization process, is by no means over with the state legislatures. As the first tier of government structures is being put in place at the national level, the Centre's training and dialogue programmes are also being tailored to suit the learning needs and demands of political incumbents at that levels. Already on May 30th, 1992 the National Assembly candidates of the two political parties, together with their campaign managers were guests of the Centre for in-depth discourse on management techniques as prescribed by the demands of the new political order. The objectives of that exercise were, (i) to enhance the political campaign and image-making skills of the political parties. (ii) to eliminate the style of violence and bitterness between candidates and parties by promoting the culture of dialogue. Meanwhile elaborate plans have also been made, to put those of them who scale through the July 4 elections and become Senators and Members of House of Representative through another of the Centre's Policy-Briefing programmes. This will be accompanied with training on the intricacies of legislative work in the Congressional System, as is characteristic of the Presidential System. Given the large number of intended participants from the House of Representatives alone, the Centre hopes to organise them in four batches in keeping with the four-zonal arrangement of the Centre.

The induction of National Assembly men would take a modified system of lectures and visit to policy areas. The presidential aspirants

themselves will also in future be "students" of the Centre for campaign Management, Policy-Briefing and debate on constitutional issues. In this wise the Centre will continue to project its mandate into the Third Republic and beyond, by serving truly as "a foundation head of democratic thought and culture from which will drink all those who aspire to govern this country."¹⁸ The Centre also for all times, remains an intellectual power-house for the political class, because her training programmes have become a continuous affair reviewed and remodelled according to identified needs and specific demand from all categories of political office holders.

ENDNOTES

1. For a conceptualisation of 'Order' by Augustine.

See his book, The City of God, Book XIX, Chapter XIX (Everyman's Library, 1950) P. 249

2. Hedley Bull nonetheless agrees with Augustine on the relativity of Order to given goals. However, he categorized these goals into elementary or primary. See, The Anarchical Society; A Study of Order in World Politics. Macmillan Education Publishers, London, 1985, P.4.

3. Ibid, P.4

4. See General Babangida's address to the Nation titled "The Dawn of a New Socio-Political Order" broadcast to the nation from Abuja, on October 7, 1989, P.16.

5. Odetola, Olatunde; Military Regimes and Development: A Comparative Analysis in African Societies, George Allen and Unwin; London, 1982, P.4.

6. For more on this analogy of Ibrahim Babangida to Kemal Ataturk, idolized Founder of Modern Turkey. See Mertin Heper, The State in Turkey Eothen Press, 1985, P.49.

7. General Ibrahim Babangida "Dawn of A New Socio-Political Order" op, cit.

8. "Accidental" here is used to denote the circumstances that brought the former Nigerian leaders to power. It is on record that Tafawa Balewa would not have become the first Prime Minister of Nigeria if Ahmadu Bello had indicated interest in the position. British Parliamentaryism which Nigeria practised at the time, provided for the occupation of the post of Prime Minister by the leader of the majority that wins in the parliament. At that time, Ahmadu Bello was the NPC leader and Tafawa Balewa his deputy. General Ironsi too

was not prepared for the headship of the nation when it came. A coup had taken place, without his knowledge, and it was only in an attempt to restore law and order that he was "thrust" into the position of Head of State. Generals Gowon and Murtala Muhammed reportedly were "asked" by the successful coupists to rule. In other words, it is only General Ibrahim Babangida that really made up his own mind to lead the government on take-over in 1985.

9. Report of the Sylvanus Cookey-led Political Bureau submitted to the Federal Government in 1987.

10. General Ibrahim Babangida, "Dawn of a New Socio-Political Order", op. cit.

11. Report of the Political Bureau, Op. cit.

12. Ibid, P.21.

13. General Ibrahim Babangida "Dawn of a New Socio-Political Order", Op. cit.

14. Similar agencies to the Centre for Democratic Studies which work for the promotion of Democracy on a bi-partisan approach are the US National Endowment for Democracy and the Canadian International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. In Germany the three political parties each have their Foundations (e.g. the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation of the Social Democrats but all funded by Bonn and bound together by the basic value-consensus of the German democratic welfare state.

15. General Ibrahim Babangida "Dawn of New Social Political Order" Op. cit.

16. Cited in Martin Heper, The State Tradition in Modern Turkey, op. cit.

17. General Ibrahim Babangida CFR, Address presented on the occa-

sion of the opening ceremony of the Workshop for Political Leaders of the 30 State Houses of Assembly organised by the Centre for Democratic Studies, Abuja, 19th March, 1992.

18. Omo Omoruyi mni, Address delivered at the Opening Ceremony of CDS Workshop for Political Correspondents, November 28, 1990.

19. See Micheal Kunczi, Communication and Social change, Published by the Media and Communication Department of Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, Bonn, 1992, P.25.

20. "The Nature and character of the Nigerian Media" Module delivered at the Centre's Workshop on Political Reporting for the Nigerian Guild of Editors held at CDS Bwari - Abuja, August 7-8, 1991.

21. J. A. A. Ayoade; Criteria and Constraints of Conceptual and Terminological Analysis: An African Perspective in F. W. Riggs(ed), Proceedings of the Conference on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis in the Social Sciences Frankfurt: Inleks Verlag, 1982.

22. Ibid, P. 72.

23. Ikoku, S.G.; Nigeria's Fourth Coup D'etat Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1985, P.64.

24. Allen, I. L. "Social Integration as an Organising Principle" in Gerbner, G(ed) Mass Media Policies in Changing Cultures: New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977, P.240.

25. Fauconnier, G: Mass Media and Society Leuven: Leuven University press, 1975, P.107.

26. These instances were also cited in Newswatch Newsmagazine January 27, 1986, P.18.

27. ECA (Economic Commission for Africa) source indicate that for

most African countries women dominate to the tune of up to 60% and more in the agricultural producing sector. For Nigeria it is 69%, for countries like Zaire it is as high as 94.55% (E/ECA/ATRCW/RCIWD 4/3, p.27).

28. Browning, G. K., Women and Politics in the USSR Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1987.

29. For a Penetrating Insight into the vicissitudes of Womanhood, See Ahmed Abdullahi's article, "African Women" in African Concord Magazine Vol. 5, No. 25, October 22, 1990.

30. Reports on the 1990 Local Government Elections Centre for Democratic Studies, CDS, Bwari-Abuja.

31. By mid-1991 a call by the NLC leadership for all Unions to support one of the political parties, had evoked criticism by the President of one of the largest unions Sylvester Ejiofor of the Civil Service Workers Unions, who described it as a unilateral and arbitrary decision of a section of the National Executive.

Chapter 6

NEC AND THE NEW POLITICAL ORDER

By Sunday Olagunju

One of our greatest problems as a nation is that of building a political culture which will regulate our behaviours in politics.

There is an urgent need to inculcate new values, politically educate the adult, socialise the young, and mobilise the masses for participation in the New Order that the present regime had proposed.

Such new and viable political Order should be strong enough to withstand the shocks of political crises, while being flexible enough to adapt to desirable changes.

The new socio-political order must also deter the re-emergence of the kind of political insensitivity, intolerance, gross indiscipline and mismanagement which characterised past political activities in the country.

In pursuit of this goal, on January 13, 1986 the government inaugurated the Political Bureau.

The Political Bureau submitted its Report on March 27th, 1987 and the committee set up consequent upon the recommendations submitted a white paper on May 18th, 1987.

Steps taken so far by the present regime in fulfilling the programmes in the Transition to Civil Rule had its genesis from the recommendations of the Bureau.

For example, the Bureau recommended the establishment of three key institutions believed to be important in the regime's quest for the evolution of a new socio-political order in the Nigerian society.

These institutions include: the Directorate of Social Mobilisation otherwise referred to as MAMSER 'National Electoral Commission,

NEC and a Constitutional Drafting Committee.

Apart from MAMSER, which was a new creation by the regime, the other two institutions had existed in the past, though in different names, but performed similar functions.

Often times it has been argued that Nigeria's political bane goes beyond mere problems of electioneering to include the fundamental difficulties that beset the evolution of a truly Nigerian political parties from the outset.

Yet it was apparent that you could hardly blame the evolution of such political parties or the emergence of such tribal leadership, at least, judging by the fact that the politics of such period was based on two fundamental factors: namely:

- (a)Protests against foreign domination and
- (b)Apprehension against tribal domination or ethnic subjugation.

Historically, therefore, political parties formed in Nigeria prior to independence in 1960 and from independence to the collapse of the 2nd Republic in 1983 lacked national outlook and because of the lack of such vital ingredient, actual conduct of elections became a rather uphill task.

Nor could our political problem be blamed on the type of political systems the country adopted since the attainment of self rule.

So far, two systems, the British West-Minister System, otherwise referred to as the Parliamentary system, and the American Presidential type had been tried in the nation's quest for a stable polity.

But as great political scientists like Edmund Burke and Voltaire would say, it is not the system of government that a particular nation adopts that matters, but the wisdom and characterisation of those called upon to administer such particular system of government.

Looking therefore at the conduct of elections for purpose of establishing a government at any given point in time, cognisance must be taken of two important factors:

The first is the historical evolution of the people that make up such polity and second the extent to which such historical antecedents could be used to advance the course of national building.

Whereas, it has been emphasised that the process of national building is much more easier in countries like Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe etc where the people fought for decades to get rid of colonial domination, the same situation may not necessarily be the case in countries where constitutional talks preceded independence.

However, there are exception to this rule. The question then arises: What can we blame the electoral problem of Nigeria on? Here two schools of thought had emerged to ponder on the situation.

The first school of thought believed that as at the time the country attained self rule in 1960, we had not the adequate education nor enough socialization to conduct a free and fair elections, let alone established an institution to do so.

Second, another school of thought was of the opinion that nations that obtained their independence through constitutional talks are more often than not denied the emergence of a truly national leadership that could be acceptable to the people.

And in the Nigerian situation, because of cut-throat competitions by the tribal and ethnic leaders that emerged after independence, strict adherence to good electoral process was played down and made trivial in the quest for and determination by combatants to control the centre because of the largesse likely to accrue to the tribe or ethnic group that produced the leadership at the centre.

At least, studies in Nigeria's political process since independence in

1960 to date by political thinkers and analysts, had helped to arrive at this rather emphatic point of view.

Be it the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) or National Electoral Commission (NEC), the nomenclature notwithstanding, Electoral Commissions are set up everywhere primarily to organise, undertake and supervise all elections to the governmental offices available in a given polity at a given point in time.

In Nigeria, for instance, NEC has been mandated and authorised by the decree establishing it to:

(a) conduct elections to the offices of the President, the Governor, Membership of the Senate, House of Representatives and the House of Assemblies of each state of the federation.

(b) It is also to arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of political parties, and to publish a report on such examination and audit for public information.

(c) Arrange for the registration of persons qualified to vote and for the maintenance and revision of the register of voters, and

(d) To ensure that the register of voters is prepared and maintained in such form as to facilitate its use for the purpose of elections to local government councils.

The Electoral Act also defines the persons who are eligible to vote and be voted for in the elections.

As you know, before you can vote, you must have your name registered in the Register of voters and before you can register as a voter, must be of the age of 18 years and upwards, a Nigerian citizen owing no allegiance to any foreign government and subject to no legal incapacity.

The legal incapacities include:

(a) acknowledgment of allegiance obedience or adherence of a voter to a foreign power or state.

(b) imposition of sentence of death or in respect of an offence involving dishonesty of imprisonment of a term exceeding six months or such other punishment as may lawfully be substituted and the voter has not at the date of election suffered the punishment or received pardon.

(c) disqualification under this Act in respect of corrupt practices and other electoral offences at elections.

Right from the first general elections in 1951 the issue of free and fair elections became a bone of contention. The Electoral Commission of this period failed not out of intention, but through lack of experience to draw from.

Lacking in precedence, FEDECO found it too difficult, if not, impossible to cope with the multi-party system that was then the political vogue, and unfortunately, the commission was soon turned into a tool in the hands of politicians.

Because the various ethnic groups into which the country was divided wanted their kinsmen to rule at the centre at all cost, the conduct of elections became mere formalities as various other avenues were hatched to ensure such victory.

In 1979, for instance, apart from political intransigences arising from die-hard contestants, the then Electoral Commission (FEDECO) became a house divided against itself.

The then Executive Secretary Alhaji Amadu Kurfi was so powerful as to negate the power and influence of the then chairman of the commission, rtd Justice Ovie Whiskey, the then NPN controlled government capitalized on this division within the house to use

FEDECO as pawn in the chess-board of politics, ironically, to the detriment of free and fair elections and the society.

It was perhaps in the apparent desire to break such social-political jinx that the government decided to appoint an Executive Chairman in the case of the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

TYPES OF ELECTIONS

Between 1959 and 1991, Nigeria adopted various forms of elections as follows:

(a) Multi-ballot box-secret ballot - voting system for the 1959 Federal elections.

(b) Single ballot box-single ballot paper-secret balloting system in 1979 and 1983.

(c) Single ballot box secret/open ballot system in 1987.

(d) Open voting system in December 1990 local government elections.

It is important to distinguish amongst the various systems in order to further elucidate on their meaning.

The 1959 federal election was the first nation-wide direct election to be conducted in Nigeria in accordance with the uniform principles and methods.

The voting system used was secret ballot. One ballot box was used for each candidate on which the symbol of his party was imprinted. The voter was given a single ballot paper to cast for the candidate of his choice. The voter, after being identified had his thumb or forefinger dipped in a bottle of indelible ink so that he could not come back and vote under another name.

A mark was also placed against his name in the voter's register before he was given a ballot paper to go into the polling booth to vote.

In the polling booth, the voters saw a ballot box for each candidate marked with his symbol and if he had supplied one, his photograph. Perhaps, a major drawback of the multi-box system was that because the ballot box containing the ballot papers of each candidate was known, it was quite easy to tamper with the contents.

There were allegations of acid or other corrosive chemicals being poured into the ballot box of an opponent in order to destroy the contents or sometimes the ballot box could disappear altogether.

Conversely, the ballot box could be exchanged with another one stuffed with ballot papers and labelled in favour of a candidate. This could be done by simply removing the symbol/photograph from one box and placing it on another. Because of the malpractices associated with the multi-box balloting system, the Electoral Commission of 1979 FEDECO decided to adopt the one ballot box system. One ballot paper was designed on which was printed the symbols of all the then registered political parties contesting the elections. The ballot paper was to be thumb printed in secret in a screened compartment, folded and inserted in a ballot envelope by the voter, brought out and then dropped in a single ballot box which was placed outside the polling booth in the full glare of all present-polling officials, polling agents and other voters who happened to be around, hence the name in some quarters - secret open ballot system.

The adoption of one ballot paper and one ballot box for all candidates eliminated the practice of destroying the contents of the ballot box or stealing the box itself, for whatever happens to the box and its contents would affect all candidates.

The balloting system used during the 1983 election was by and large adopted during 1987 local government election conducted and supervised by the National Electoral Commission.

Apparently, election malpractices were allegedly perpetrated on both occasion with the connivance of electoral and security agents.

The generality of the voters lost faith in the election process. But this

was not to be unexpected, because at the end of elections held in 1951,1954,1959 and 1983 there were hues and cries about election malpractices or rigging by the contestants and /or their agents as well as field election officials.

This no doubt necessitated the demands for changes in the voting or balloting system in order to eliminate or minimise such alleged election malpractices and ensure conduct of free and fair election.

RIGGING

Rigging as an act is as old as the conduct of elections in the country. Using aphorism, riggers are often accused of rigging the people's votes and therefore stealing their wishes and determination to elect their choice and therefore the government of their aspirations.

Whether in the 1951,1959,1964,1979,1983 or even the 1991 or 1992 elections, the singular complaint by both the voters and contestants alike was the rigging of elections by some unknown people.

The act of rigging often takes varied ways and methods that nonetheless had the singular motive of diverting victory in an election to undesired and undeserving politicians. For example, there had been complaints of ballot boxes found in women's bellies, in men's baggy trousers, in Agbada, in robes, and in the booths of cars.

Rigging also takes the form of hiding already stuffed ballot boxes in bushes and in private home. They smuggled ballot boxes in polling and counting stations. They cast many votes instead of one each. They voted fraudulently, bribed electoral officers; polling and counting officers.

If these methods failed to make them win, they go to the extent of announcing unauthorised, yet wrong election results.

Riggers in their unbridled desire to win elections at all cost often go

to the extent of working wrong arithmetic in case of dispute over figure or even attempts to pervert and subvert the constitution, if only, to produce the ends they sought to achieve.

By their inordinate ambition, such people caused the wrath of the people, provoked their anger and the result had been arson, murder, chaos and suffering of innocent people.

Right from 1966 when the first military coup took place, and excepting a brief interlude of 1979 and 1983 when civilians took over, the military has been in power, justifying of course, their continued stay on the inability of the civilians to conduct free and fair elections to usher in the right calibre of people.

THE 1964 FEDERAL ELECTION AS CASE STUDY

Polling in Nigeria's first independent election in December 1964, for example, ended amidst wide allegations of malpractices.

The alleged malpractices ranged from brisk polling in the Northern Region to a total boycott in the East. In the then Federal territory of Lagos, there was polling only in Lagos North. Polling was partly boycotted in the then Mid-West. In the west, polling booths were destroyed in many places.

The United Progressive Grant Alliance (UPGA) , which comprised the Action Group (AG), The National Council of Nigeria and Citizens (NCNC) and the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), boycotted the election because of some alleged malpractices.

For example, the (UPGA) described the election as a farce which had degenerated into a purely Northern Regional election.

The party drew the attention of the then Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to the difficulties of obtaining nomination papers from electoral officers in Yola, Maiduguri, Mubi, Jos, Bauchi, Kano, Funtua Katsina, Gusau, Kafanchan and a host of others.

Some electoral officers were also accused of not making themselves available for consultation with the UPGA candidates.

A week to the election 78 candidates were returned un-opposed with NPC having 63. The UPGA maintained that the avalanche of the un-opposed which descended upon the nation was enough evidence of gerrymandering and attempt to return the NPC to power through rigging.

Although the then chairman of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) Mr Eyo Esua promised to wade into the issue, matters were hardly made better.

The election resulted in a serious constitutional crisis leaving the nation without a government for three days. Even though the NNA had an overwhelming majority, it could not form the government.

WHAT ZIK SAID THEN

The then president, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe whose constitutional rights was to invite the leader of the political party that commanded the majority in parliament to form the government, could not do so.

He said "I find it extremely awkward to exercise the power to call on any person to form a government.

"The evidence before me shows that there were refusals of peaceful assembly in a supposedly free and fair election, curfews were imposed in many towns thereby vitiating the objective of a free and fair election, road blocks were mounted and trenches dug to prevent entry of political opponents, many political opponents had been imprisoned and several others killed and political opponents had been forcibly prevented from filing nomination paper"

This showed the height of absurdity into which the conduct of elections had degenerated in Nigeria and the reason why past chairmen of Nigerian electoral commission such as late Eyo Esua, the

late Chief Micheal Ani and retired Mr Justice Victor Ovie Whiskey, had to leave office as disgraced men .

Ironically, studies by both the local and foreign experts, showed that election rigging has its genesis in secret ballot system which the nation adopted since attainment of self-rule.

Launching a book titled "Election contest: candidates Companion" in 1989, the former Executive Secretary of the defunct electoral Commission (FEDECO) Alhaji Amadu Kurfi, who was the electoral officer for Kontagora North Central Federal Constituency in 1959 elections, attributed most election frauds to secrecy with which balloting is practised.

"Secret ballot system is a situation whereby a voter is allowed to indicate his candidate through thumb - printing while alone in the polling booth", he explained.

He argued that anything could happen to whatever is done in a hidden place. Alhaji Kurafi was of the opinion that to forestall election rigging which had been providing a vital ground for the interruption of democracy in Nigeria by the military, that an open ballot system election, whereby the electorate would indicate its choice in the presence of all.

According to him, the open ballot system was adopted in 1951 elections when electorates lined up behind their candidates, adding that if modified, could lead to a free and fair future elections in the country.

GOVERNMENT DETERMINATION TO DO AWAY WITH THE PAST PITFALLS.

Right from the outset, it would appear that Babangida regime was determined to do away with the past pitfalls to a truly and open democratic process in order to usher in a new socio-political order for the country.

Attestation to this could be found in the establishment of the two grassroots political parties - the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republic Convention (NRC); and the establishment of the National Electoral Commission (NEC) with Executive chairman and given wide powers to operate with.

For example, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) is empowered by Decree 8 of 1989 to provide the rules which shall govern the qualifications to vote and be voted for at elections.

Decree 27 of 1989 empowers NEC to monitor the activities of the two political parties.

This explains the rationale for the request by the commission to the parties to submit their guidelines to it for approval.

Also in keeping with Decree 27 which empowers NEC to monitor the activities of the two political parties, NEC will monitor the primaries so as to ensure that they are conducted according to the guidelines and in the spirit of grass root democracy.

NEC is also to ensure that each party adhere strictly to the provisions of the constitution and approved guidelines and that all the various organs as well as individual member of the party (from the ward level to the National level) are given opportunities to participate.

This unprecedented exercise is a reflection of government determination to ensure a right march towards grass roots democracy where all Nigerians would participate in their choice of their representatives.

This is a departure from the former practice in which the party chieftains selected their candidate which in many cases were imposed on other members of the parties.

ADOPTION OF OPEN BALLOT

In adopting the open ballot system for the 1991/92 elections, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) told Nigerians that it did so after studying elections in Nigeria from pre-independence to the Babalakin report.

The commission said that it identified the causes of electoral malpractices in the country and became convinced that the panacea for electoral malpractices in the country rests squarely on the adoption of an open balloting system.

By open ballot, it means in a nutshell, that voters are accredited by identifying their names on the voters register and such names are ticked.

Voting is done one by one as the accredited names are read out and the voters stand behind their candidate of choice.

Counting is done in the open and aloud. The result is written on a piece of paper.

Where another election is to be conducted immediately after like that of the council chairman following councillorship, the voters are ordered again to mix up and names called out again.

All elections are first conducted and results noted on a piece of paper. When officials return to their tables, such results are transferred to the appropriate forms. Voting was conducted at the same time all over the federation. Where lies the difference between past elections and that of 1990? NEC gave a simple answer. Openness of the conduct and complete witnessing of the voting and counting process by the electorate.

According to it, Nigerians were not bad losers as was shown by the 1990 experiment.

In its estimation, where the rules of the content are clear to all contestants the umpire is unbiased and impartial, voting is openly

done, counting too is openly done and recorded, the winner sees it openly, it will take the brazen mischief of a cruel idiot not to accept defeat," NEC said.

NEC adopted what it therefore designated an "Open Ballot" system for the December 1990 local government election.

According to NEC publication No 7 of 1990, the Open ballot system was chosen for the December local government elections in an effort to restore confidence in the electoral system.

NEC was rather emphatic that because the system was simple and direct, it was expected to prevent election malpractices such as:

- (a) Impersonating
- (b) Multiple voting
- (c) Stuffing of ballot boxes (with ballot paper)
- (d) Swapping of ballot boxes and
- (e) the use of fake ballot papers

Ordinarily, open balloting could be defined as a system of voting whereby the voter votes for the party or the candidate of his choice in the full glare of everybody, while secret ballot is a situation where the voting is done in a secluded arena, away from the public.

By implication, the voter that uses the former makes his choice a common knowledge, whereas in the latter the choice is restricted to the voter unless he decided to reveal it.

It has been argued in some quarters, especially by the National Electoral Commission (NEC) that the Open ballot would check election rigging, political manipulations, malpractices and other misdemeanor by the political adventurers.

Also it was argued that this system would save cost because printing of ballot papers, purchasing of ballot boxes and constructing polling booths would be jettisoned.

Much as the above points could not be trivialised, it is believed in certain quarters that some fundamental issues have been overlooked.

First, it was believed the open balloting, as at inauguration was a flagrant contravention of the 1989 constitution which spelt it out clearly that "elections to all elective posts shall be by secret balloting"

Second, section 32, sub section 11 of the 1989 constitution on fundamental human rights states that, "nobody having been known to be a citizen of the country shall be put to ridicule and publicly embarrassed during the performance of his legitimate or civic duty"

In this instance, the proponents of secret balloting claimed that losers of the 1990 local government elections were openly disgraced and ridiculed. This happened when few or no voter queued behind them during the voting period - they were subsequently booed by the political supporters of their opponents.

Third, it has also been argued that the open balloting system of voting can lead to open confrontations and chaos amongst the contestants and their supporters. Also, it can create bad blood amongst friends and relations because a political aspirant might not understand why a close relative or associate of his should queue behind his opponents. Hence, political bigotry, self aggrandisement might be the attendant consequences.

Fourth, it could also lead to rowdiness and chaos, the secret balloting supporters feared. They claimed this could arise from impatience of the voters on the queue and attempts by people to jump queues.

Fifth, since voting is open, it is anticipated that there would be every

opportunity for victimization. That is, voters could be influenced by position of the opinion leaders of the community or the political heavyweights of the society. Eventually, any defiant voter might be prone to victimization and reprisal. It is also believed that open balloting, apart from being a primitive method in modern democracy is a subtle vindication of our colonial masters claim that we are backward and not ripe for political independence when we got it.

Apparently influenced by their position in the last Local Government elections the National Republican Convention has not been in support of open ballot. They claimed the system disenfranchised majority of the supporters who mostly come from elite group, and for a truly democratic society to be in place everybody must exercise his civic right of voting.

Reference was even made to the exclusion from voting of Mr. president, the Vice president, AFRC members, governors and some other executive members, of the government,

Time wasting, considering the time spent on accreditation, which does not allow the voter to leave the polling station until after voting.

In the alternative they propounded the open secret ballot system. According to the National secretary of the Party, Dr Doyin Okupe, it is a system whereby the accreditation is done openly while all the voters are on a single line and provided with two ballot papers, one of which would be marked or thumb printed by the electorate for the party of his choice. He would then drop the marked one and keep the remaining one.

The above proposition is not without its shortcomings. For instance, keeping of the other ballot paper could still be used as the litmus test by their "political godfather" to determine the party the electorate voted for.

The Social Democratic Party, has all along been in support of the open balloting. The party claimed the system is a clear departure from the

past electoral processes has been the most peaceful, rigging, free and successful. It is also found to have put the political harlots in check. since the election is open it becomes pretty difficult to get gratifications from any politician without voting for him or his party.

In the words of the president, the secret ballot has failed us and the overwhelming success of the open balloting has made it mandatory for us as a peace loving people to embrace it.

However, the opponents of the open ballot predicted that the system could be bastardized and chaotic after the military might have handed over power to civilians.

That is, there might be intimidations, victimization, coercion of identified political opponents, if the open balloting is employed when a civilian government is in power.

This argument could be salient, if we consider the fact that the bane of our political system in Nigeria has always been the difficulty in voting an incumbent civilian government out of power. In 1979, Obasanjo regime successfully handed over to Shagari. But trouble started in 1983, when a civilian had to conduct the election.

From our previous experience, it has been proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the failure of past elections was not caused by the voters but by the desperate politicians and unpatriotic electoral officers.

Nigerians are convinced that rigging of elections was not at the voting centres but at the collation centres, where the results altered and ballot boxes disappeared or multiplied in order to favour one political party to the detriment of others.

It has also been established that all these atrocities cannot be perpetrated without the connivance of our law. There is also no gain saying the fact that in a society, the success or failure of any system depends solely on the operators. What is wrong in our body politics is not the

system (open or secret balloting), but the modus operandi of the system.

If the operators are just, the secret balloting would have worked as in other developed countries. Also, the electoral commission should be independent of any government. Going by the recent utterances of Nigerians, including the leaders of the two political parties, the open balloting is a welcome development. It is obvious the masses want a change even desperately too.

MODIFICATION OF OPEN BALLOT

But much as the government had accepted the open ballot system, it thus appeared that there were rooms for modifications to the system. Presenting his 1992 budget on January 1st, 1992 the president called upon NEC to modify the open ballot system.

At a workshop in April 1991 organised by the two political parties and the Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS) suggestions were made for the modification of the system, but it would appear that NEC ignored the advice. Many of the problems associated with the open ballot system, especially during the October 19 Party primaries were alleged to have arisen at the collating centres.

GOVT'S ACCEPTANCE OF OPEN BALLOT

In accepting the open ballot system for the 1991/92 elections, the federal Government said that its action was motivated by the desire to put behind us memories of past electoral maladies that had bedecked democratic process in the country.

Speaking on the open balloting, the then special adviser to the Vice President on political affairs, and now Minister of Information, Professor Sam Oyovbaire had announced government's determination to accept the system based on the following understanding.

*This administration is interested in an electoral system, including

the method of voting, which guarantees free and fair elections. The electoral system should enhance the basis of popular acceptance of electoral results and legitimacy of elected governments and the democratic process.

*The electoral system must not only be free and fair, it must also be seen or perceived by the electorate and the political parties to be so.

*The electoral system must guarantee the security, social and psychological interest of all Nigerians.

*The electoral system should enhance the individual's spectrum of liberty and freedom of choice without hindrance or fear.

*The electoral system must serve the general interest of the people and must be acceptable to the electorate.

*As much as possible, and without prejudice to past system, the electoral system should be cost-effective in human, physical and monetary terms.

Democracy is a system of government, where every person is free to express political choice within the law, and without hindrance, fear, intimidation, victimization and violence. We need a balloting system that, as much as possible, guarantees and enhances democratic process and democratic values where figures were reportedly falsified.

BRITAIN'S DESIRE TO ADOPT OPEN BALLOT

There was a pronouncement by the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr Christopher Mac Rae that Britain may in few years time take a cue from Nigeria to adopt the open ballot system.

Mac Rae told the NEC chairman Professor Humphrey Nwosu, during a courtesy call to the latter that the most important thing was for the electoral system to be acceptable to the generality of the

society.

He said that no society in the world has created a perfect democracy. The revelation by Mac Rae if anything, further showed that contrary to opponents of the Open Ballot that the system retarded electoral advancement, the adoption of the system could provide the needed solutions to the past electoral problems.

THE CONCEPT OF PRIMARIES

The basic concept of holding primary elections, popularly known as primaries by political parties is to help to choose party stalwarts, who are likely to be the flag bearers of the respective parties in a pending general election.

Such party stalwarts are persons who have charismatic qualities in their communities, that is at the grassroots level. They include men and women of note who have during their span of life rendered selfless service to their people.

In the game of politics, such people have large following and support and can easily influence their people to their side and advantage in any contest. Such men and women are persons of high calibre and creditability and therefore good materials and assets to their party in any elections.

This concept of primaries holds good in both the Westminster (United Kingdom) Parliamentary System and the Washington - (U.S) presidential system which Nigeria is now experimenting.

The primaries, this time around, will afford all the members of the two parties at all levels especially those at the grassroots the opportunity to decide who their nominees would be.

As you all know, as provided for in the constitutions of the parties, there will be two kinds of primaries. The first is the direct closed primaries, open only to members of the two parties who are in good financial standing. A party member so qualified can only vote in his

own party's primaries. Voting will be in all the wards in the state at the same time for both parties to determine who among the contestants should carry each party's flag at the gubernatorial election. In this exercise, victory will be decided by majority votes and the victor must have scored at least one third of the votes in two thirds of the local governments in the State. Where no victor emerges, there shall be a run-off for the two-leading candidates.

The second type of primaries is indirect closed primaries for the selection of each party candidate for each of the House of Assembly constituency in the State. Those eligible to vote are members of the Local Government Congress, including delegates elected for that purpose for each ward in the local government.

One question which has generated much comments from the public and the politicians is whether or not NEC should conduct the primaries. This is so because of the misunderstanding of the objectives of the primaries. Some people have mixed up the concept of the primaries with that of an election proper. Consequently, many people have been calling on NEC to conduct the primaries. There is need to clarify this point.

First of all, the primaries scheduled for the two political parties is an internal exercise (within the parties) whereby each party will nominate its contestants for the elections scheduled for the last quarter of this year. The conduct of the party primaries is not the responsibility of NEC. It is true that NEC helped in synthesizing the constitutions of the 13 defunct political associations from which the constitutions of the two political parties emerged. To that extent, NEC was greatly involved and that involvement gave it the opportunity to know very much about the constitution of the two parties. It is clearly and unambiguously stated in the constitution of each party that the National Executive Committee of each party will issue guidelines for the conduct of primaries. It is also stated in the constitution that the State Congress of the party should organise the primaries. From this, you will see that NEC is not empowered to conduct the party primaries and will therefore not usurp any functions not allocated to it.

However, in keeping with Decree 27 which empowers NEC to monitor the activities of the two political parties, NEC will monitor the primaries so as to ensure that they are conducted according to the guidelines and in the spirit of grassroots democracy. NEC will also ensure that each adheres strictly to the provisions of its constitution and approved guidelines and that all the various organs as well as individual members of the party (from the Ward level to the National level), are given equal opportunities to participate.

From all indications, the concept of the primaries has been adopted by NEC to further reduce the incidence of election malpractices arising from the unwieldy nature of contestants in any given election.

CONCLUSION

It is glaring within the last two years, that the establishment of the present Electoral Commission (NEC) marked a clear departure and development over past electoral commissions (FEDECO).

Both in responsibilities, actuality of performance, organisation, and directional ability, NEC has exhibited a clear and unambiguous understanding of the role of such body in a given polity.

Past electoral bodies failed for a number of reasons:

- (a) immaturity of the players and lack of experience to draw from;
- (b) absence of nationalism on the part of the leadership;
- (c) absence of neutrality of the government in the affairs of such body and above all, lack of understanding of the role of such body as unbiased umpire during election.

RECOMMENDATION

The road of free and fair elections in the future can be guaranteed if the independence of the electoral commission is guaranteed, especially in the appointment and payment of salaries of its members.

In this case, such independence could only be guaranteed if the electoral commission's autonomy is enshrined in the constitution of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The idea is to ensure that the body is not manipulated by an ambitious president or party in power to satisfy the whims and caprices of a few elements to the overall disadvantage of democratic process and as such, the entire nation.

Chapter 7

THE 1991 CENSUS OF NIGERIA - A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By Prof. R. K. Udo

INTRODUCTION

The 1991 population census was one of the major projects in the Political Transition Programme of military administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985-1992). The Political Bureau, set up by the administration in 1986, had identified census as one of "the special issues that have in the past generated deep political emotions that threatened the survival of the nation". However, after an exhaustive review of the problems of past censuses since independence in 1960, the Political Bureau recommended that a national census should "be conducted possibly in 1988, before military disengagement in 1990" (Cookey, 1986). The Bureau went further to recommend that an independent and completely autonomous National Population Commission of eight members be established by amending sections 144 (3) and 193 of the 1979 constitution. Government accepted these and other related recommendations, but later fixed the census date for the fourth quarter of 1991.

I consider government decision to conduct a census in 1991 to be a bold and wise step. It was a bold step because since independence in 1960, census has been associated with controversy and political tension. A failed census in 1991 and the ensuing controversy could derail the Political Transition Programme. It was precisely such reasoning that informed the refusal by General Obasanjo's regime (1976 - 79) to conduct a national census before the return to civil rule in 1979. The fear of political unrest was also responsible for the refusal of the Shehu Shagari administration (1979 - 83) to order a census for 1983. The decision to conduct the census was wise because since the cancellation of the 1973 census, the country has had to rely on population figures projected from the 1963 census, which was itself controversial. The position in July 1987, when President Babangida ordered a census for 1991 was that for almost twenty-five years, the country had to rely on very faulty projected population.

Any serious seminar or conference on any aspect of the national development efforts in which the problems created by lack of reliable census figures did not feature. A large number of citizens, notably academics, administrators and businessmen were therefore greatly in support of government decision to conduct a census in 1991. Many outside agencies and governments such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Governments of Japan, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom also express support for, and provided assistance in materials and personnel to ensure the success of the census. But there were also many prominent Nigerians and organisations who spoke against the timing of the census exercise which some of them described as one of the false steps taken by the Babangida administration in its programme to disengage the military from politics (Obe, 1988).

Nigerians who were completely opposed to conducting a census in 1991 were probably much fewer than those who were merely cynical about the exercise. The cynics included some senior citizens who had been involved in organising previous census, many serving and retired senior military officers, some academics and many prominent politicians. Their argument was that there was no change in the socio-political situation that led to the dispute and cancellation of the 1962 and 1973 censuses or to the litigation over the 1963. The widespread rigging and falsification of election results during the general elections of 1983, and the Local Government elections of 1986; appeared to justify the fears of these cynics that census fraud would mar the 1991 census exercise. Thus as late as September 1991 one of the cynics, a retired Major General in the Nigerian Army stated that census '91 was a waste of public funds since the exercise had no chance of succeeding.

A greater proportion of those completely opposed to the conduct of a national census in 1991 were politicians who were itching for the military to surrender power and return to the barracks. They

considered the census exercise to be ill-timed because of its proximity to the general elections. In the event of large-scale census fraud similar to what happened in 1962, 1963 and 1973, they feared that the resulting dispute would create considerable tension. Such a situation would present an excuse for the military to refuse to hand over political power to politicians. Some politicians even suggested that the inclusion of the census project in the political Transition Programme was part of the much talked about 'secret agenda' by the military to perpetuate itself in power.

When Alhaji Shehu Musa was appointed Chairman of the National Population Commission, many of his political associates were unhappy. They saw the appointment as a ploy by the military to destroy his reputation via a failed census and thereby ruin his chances at the polls. Some of them, however, admitted that if the census should succeed, it would be a big boost to the political chances of Alhaji Shehu Musa.

Such was the setting under which the National Population Commission commenced work in April, 1988 to prepare for the 1991 census. The task before it was to produce accurate and acceptable census figure. In addition to addressing the technical aspects of the project, the commission had to take positive and right attitude towards the census. Some of the distinctive activities of the commission are considered in this presentation. Comparisons are made with past censuses especially those of 1962, 1963 and 1973. But first the publication in March, 1992 of the preliminary figures of the 1991 census and the public reactions to the figures from about March to July, 1992.

The Provisional Results of the 1991 Census:

The 1991 national population census of Nigeria took place from Wednesday 27th to Friday 29th November, 1991. All citizens were required to remain indoors during the first two days so as to reduce the incidence of call-back visits as well as to check census migrations. At the end of the second day, it was clear that it would be difficult to carry out complete enumeration of people in many parts of the country, especially in the large metropolitan areas of Lagos, Kano

and Ibadan. Government therefore decided to extend census enumeration to 12 noon on Saturday 30th November, 1991.

About three and a half months later, on March 19th, 1992, the National Population Commission submitted to the President at Abuja, and the Armed Forces Ruling Council for consideration and approval. Thereafter the provisional results were distributed to the press. The following day, the Chairman of the National Population Commission resigned his appointment to seek office as the President of Nigeria. Some politicians who felt threatened by the sudden entry of Shehu Musa into politics, thereafter sought to find fault with the 1991 census figures in the hope of wrecking his chances at the polls.

The provisional results of the Census is presented in table 1. The total population of 88.5million was far below the United Nation projected figure of 120 million, based on the 1963 Census. Many Nigerians were surprised that the total population was less than 100 million and some of them asked the government to reject the figure as inaccurate. Some critics capitalised on the higher male population of 44.5 million claiming that there were in fact more females in the population. The main thrust of the controversy over the 1991 Census figures centred around the relative size of the populations of the Northern states and the Southern states. This happens to be the basic issue that sparked off the census controversies of 1962, 1963 and 1973. This and other objections are considered in the brief review of the various censuses of Nigeria from 1911 to 1991.

THE POPULATION OF NIGERIA: 1911 TO 1991

The size of the population of Nigeria has since the early colonial period, been a matter of interest and controversy. The controversy that has greeted the publication of the 1991 provisional Census result is therefore not unique. Here is a country with extensive areas of large depopulation of people during the civil wars and slave raids of the 18th and 19th centuries.

With only 15 percent of the land areas of West Africa, Nigeria supported as many as 54.80 per cent of the population of the sub-

The 1931 Census:

In 1926 Mr. S.M. Jacob was appointed as the Government Statistician, a position that also made him Chief Census Officer of Nigeria. This made it possible for the 1931 Census to be centrally planned and co-ordinated. There was, however, a separate administrative arrangement for the Census of the Eastern Provinces (Iro, 1987, p.45). Unfortunately, the 1931 Census was beset with many problems of such dimensions that made it difficult for the exercise to qualify as a Census from the technical view point.

As a result of the world wide financial depression, the Colonial government decided to restrict the Census of Southern Nigeria to Lagos, but was over-ruled by the Colonial Office in London. The one-day enumeration in Lagos took place on 23rd April, 1931, and in order to reduce cost, questions relating to occupation, civil condition and physical infirmities were deleted from the questionnaire. The items canvassed in Lagos for 1931 were therefore less than for 1921. Outside Lagos, there was no census in 1931 in the Western Provinces except in Egbaland which is close to Lagos. In the Eastern Provinces, preparations for the census sparked off a major riot amongst market women in Aba, Owerri, Onitsha and Abak, who had been misled into associating the Census with the taxation of women. Consequently the 1931 Census for the Southern Provinces was reduced to a compilation of recorded data. Some of materials were out of date and unreliable, and many inconsistencies appeared in the course of compilation. There was no indication as to how some estimates were obtained and in some areas the proportion of children to adult males was anomalous (Jacob, 1931). The exercise did not therefore meet the definition of a Census.

In Northern Nigeria the situation was much better in spite of lack of funds and a locust invasion which affected the entire territory. The Regional Census Officer was Mr. N. J. Brooke. Unlike in the Southern provinces, enumeration was carried out in most of the Provinces of the North and an intensive enumeration covered parts of Zaria and Katsina Province. There is no indication that enumeration was by sight and of course the exercise covered several weeks.

The total population of Northern Nigeria was given as 11,434,924 while that of Southern Nigeria was 8,493,247.

The 1952/53 Census:

It is quite clear that the 1952/53 Census did not meet the basic requirement of simultaneity for a national Census. The scope and extent of Census migrations that occurred was considerable in view of the experience of the 1963, 1973 and 1991 Censuses, all of which were conducted simultaneously throughout the country. Yet, in spite of this handicap, the 1952/53 Census was the first comprehensive enumeration of people in all urban and rural localities throughout Nigeria. The number of items canvassed was much less than for the 1973 or the 1991 Census (Table 3).

The 1952/53 is also important as a base to check the greatly inflated Census figures of the 1963 Census, the cancelled 1973 Census documented research work to show that there was massive census fraud in various parts of the country during the 1963 census. The controversy over the purported low figures of 88.5 million for 1991 has made necessary a recourse to the 1952/53 Census figures as a base to check other Censuses. Thus Frank Hobbs (1992) of the United States of America Bureau of the Census in his review of the 1991 Census results has concluded that only the 1952/53 is consistent with the 1991 Census, even though there was an under count of about 2.5 percent or more in 1952/53. Using the 1952/53 Census figures of 30.4 million and the estimated growth rate of 2.3 percent at that time, he obtained a projected population of 38.7 million for 1963 (compared with the inflated figure of 55.6 million). Projecting 38.7 million further, using the U.S. Census Bureau estimates of fertility, mortality and international migrations, the figures obtained for 1991 was 86.2 million which is slightly less than the 88.5 million returned by the National Population Commission.

Concerning the coverage and accuracy of the 1953 Census, the reports filed by the three Regional Census Officers at the request of the Government Statistician and Chief Census Officer indicated that:

- (i) In the Northern Region some Census officers indi-

cated that the coverage was nearly complete and most believed that count was more than 95 percent accurate. The regional Census officer believed that accuracy rate was 97 percent.

ii) In the Western region, some Census officers estimated 90 percent 95 percent count Others claimed a complete .under counting certainly occurred in a few areas, especially where there were boundary or chieftaincy disputes overall there is no reason to believe that population of the region was not achieved

iii) In the Eastern region claims to accuracy must be made with diffidence, but it is estimated that in total the figures are correct within 3 percent.

The 1962 Census

The first Census in Nigeria after independence in 1960 took place in 1962 and not 1963. This is an important basic fact which many people who seek to compare the 1963 Census figures with those of 1991 appear to forget or to ignore. It happens that any assessment of the 1963 Census which takes no account of the 1962 Census cannot be a fair or perceptive exercise. This is so because the 1963 census of 5th to 8th November, took place about eight months after the Government cancelled the 1962 Census for 1963. The basic preparation for the 1962 Census including the list of historical events were carried over to the 1963 Census. More importantly the political controversy and tension caused by the failed Census fraud of 1963, featuring the inflation of Population figures of many localities in various parts of the country.

The 1962 Census took place from May 13th to 27th, a period of two weeks. It was cancelled after a heated and prolonged controversy which featured charges and counter charges of Census fraud in the three political units of Eastern, Western and Northern Nigeria. The Chief Census Officer, Mr. J.J. Warren was a lawyer who had helped to conduct the pre-independence election of 1959. He has no training in demography and was therefore greatly handicapped in organising the Census .

At the time of the 1962 Census, Nigerians had become aware of the importance of Census in the quest for political power and as a factor in bargaining for basic social services like portable water, access road and electricity. Thus while in 1952/53 many people avoided the Census enumerator, the position in 1962 was one of over-enthusiasm for the census. The 1962 pre-Census campaign to sensitize people to help ensure an accurate and acceptable census compares favourably in intensity with that for the 1991 Census. The main difference was that the 1962 Census campaign in each Region (state) were led by politicians under a civilian Governor (Regional Premier) while that of 1991 were led by state Commissioners under a state Military Governor, in each of the three Regions of 1962. Ministers and parliamentarians from the Federal and Regional legislatures were directed to carry out Census tours to persuade people to offer themselves for enumeration. Amongst other things the politicians stressed that the Census would be used for determining legislative representation in the forthcoming 1964 Federal elections and for the provision of amenities as well as for siting industries. The response to the campaign was overwhelming in that they were enumerated. It was, however, unfortunate that the emphasis placed on material development of densely populated localities encouraged Census migrations from the cities to rural areas. There were also numerous cases of deliberate double counting by dishonest enumerators who sought to boost the size of the population of their natal villages or towns.

During one of the census tours, an administrative officer announced the discovery of a village of about 20,000 people which he claimed had never been registered for parliamentary elections. This incident which occurred in Eket Division of Eastern Nigeria had inflated its Census figures. Further, a few days after the census had started, a fishing village of about 1,000 people was reported to have been discovered in Uyo Province of Eastern Nigeria. It is tempting to attribute the discoveries of these settlements to the fact that the pre-Census demarcation of the country into enumeration areas was not as thorough as in 1973 and 1991. This may well be so. However, the large number of localities reported to have been left out during the

1991 Census suggests that there also some political motives in the discoveries. In the case of the 1991 Census, these discoveries were made after the publication of the provisional Census result for various Local Government Areas; but at a time when the locality figures were yet to be edited for processing.

The Census period of over two weeks (13 - 31 May, 1962) was rather long and was justified by the need to ensure complete enumeration. Further, the first three days of the Census were work free days, May 13th, being a Sunday and May 14th and 15th having been declared public holidays. The objective of complete enumeration may have been achieved but multiple enumeration was greatly facilitated by the long duration of the exercise. The information canvassed in the Census schedule are shown in Table 3. The Post Enumeration Survey planned along with the Census was never carried out.

It was a strange but unfortunate coincidence that the 1962 Census started on the same day that Western Nigeria was plunged into a major political crisis that eventually led to military intervention in Nigerian politics. The effect of that crisis on the Census was that at the end of July 1962 when Census enumeration schedules from other parts of the country had been returned to Lagos, counting was still going on in parts of Western Nigeria. Some returns from the Region were sent to Lagos as late as 31st October, 1962 (Iro, p. 60).

The collation of the 1962 census figures was carried out independently at the Regional capitals by the Regional census Officers. The first set of figures submitted at Lagos came in from the the Northern Region which recorded a total population of 22,015,049. The Regional Census officer Brigadier H.W.D. Macdonald indicated clearly that the percentage increase from the 1952 Census figures of 16,840,479 was 31 percent. The Regional Census officer, Mr. R. K. Flover considered the percentage increase to be too high and unacceptable, and proceeded to investigate it, since the Post enumeration

survey (PES) which had been planned was never carried out. Mr. Floyer submitted the figures for the Eastern Region along with a detailed report which indicated "gross overcounting" in Abak, Awka, Bende, Brass, Calabar, Eket, Degema, Enyong, Obubra, Opobo, Uyo and Onitsha Divisions.

As soon as he received the report from the Eastern Region, and with figures from only five of the 62 census districts of the Western Region, Mr. J. J. Warren, the Federal Chief Census Officer prepared and submitted a report on the census to the Federal Minister of Economic Development; Mr. Waziri. Five months had elapsed since the end of the census enumeration and yet the preliminary figures had not been published. Meanwhile rumours were circulating that the Eastern Region, where two villages had been 'discovered' during and after the Census, was trying to dominate the country politically by falsifying the Census figures. There were also some allegations that there were many irregularities in the Census in the Northern Region. And so on December 5, 1962 a member sought clarification on the Census, from the Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Warren, the Chief Federal Census Officer. The report stated that figures recorded for the greater part of Eastern Nigeria during the census were false and had been inflated. It concluded that there was "no alternative to conducting a complete re-enumeration in the majority of the divisions of Eastern Nigeria". The debate that ensued was acrimonious and several members walked out in protest. The Census controversy has started.

When eventually the total figures of 10,950,000 for the Western Region were available, it showed an increase of 72 percent over the 1952/53 figures of 6,359,000. More importantly the grand total of 23.28 million for Southern Nigeria showed that Southern Nigeria had a larger population (51.40%) than Northern Nigeria (48.60%). This fact along with the very high percentage increase for Eastern and Western Nigeria was unacceptable to Northern politicians. It was therefore not surprising when in January 1963 the team that carried out the verification of the Census figures for Northern Nigeria returned a new total figure of 30,862,202. The revised Northern

Nigeria figures meant that Nigeria would have a total population of 54,144,249 in 1962. It also meant that percentage increase for Northern Nigeria from the 1952 Census figures would be 83.3 percent, no longer the 31 percent returned by Brigadier MacDonald in July 1962. The new percentage increase for Northern Nigeria was therefore 12.3 percent more than that of Eastern Nigeria, which sparked off the controversy and 11.3 percent more than that of Western Nigeria.

How did the Northern Nigeria review team arrive at a revised figure of 30,862,202 which meant an additional 8,847,153 people? There was no indication that new villages were discovered as was reported for Eastern Nigeria. And how come that those who considered 70 percent increase to be high readily accepted 83.3 percent increase? The puzzle solves itself when it is realised that 30,862,202 is exactly 57 percent of 54,144,249! As shown in Table 2, the population of Northern Nigeria in 1931 was exactly 57 percent of the population of Nigeria while the proportion in 1921 was 56.4 percent and that for 1952/53 was 55.4 percent! The relative balance between North and South had to be maintained, internal migrations notwithstanding.

The Prime Minister was greatly displeased with the handling of the census issue by the Minister of Economic Development. The recrimination between Northern and Eastern Nigerian politicians over the 1962 Census were to feature prominently four years later during the dark days before the Nigerian civil war (1967 - 70). In February, 1963, the 1962 census figures were nullified at a meeting of the heads of Governments. Census matters were transferred to the office of the Prime Minister. A new Census was ordered to take place in 1963.

The 1963 Census:

For a period of about 28 years, Nigeria had to rely on the 1963 Census figures and the projections from it for economic planning and for the political re-organisation of the polity. The controversy over the 1973 Census which led to its cancellation contributed to the importance that the 1963 Census data has assumed. Projections

based on it suggested that the estimated population of Nigeria in 1990 was about 120 million. When however the 1991 Census showed that there were no more than 88.50 million people in the country, many people would not readily accept the figures which they considered to be too low. It was difficult for example for some people to explain why a constituency with a list of about 12,000 registered voters in September 1991 should record a population of no more than 10,500 persons in December, 1991! The politicians and those they paid to inflate the list of registered voters cried foul, and made repeated references to the 1963 Census figures as if they were an extract from the Holy Book. Hardly any commentator or critic remembered the immediate antecedents of the 1963 census. Habits die hard. So it has been with Nigerians who have had to live with the 1963 Census figures for 28 years. But how reliable were the 1963 population figures, especially in view of the events leading to the cancellation of the 1962 Census. If this question had been addressed dispassionately, there would have been no need for most of the cases filed in 1992 at the Census Tribunal by some State Governments and Local Governments.

About two weeks after the nullification of the 1962 Census, the Prime Minister constituted a five member Board to conduct the 1963 census. The Board consisted of one representative of the Federal Government and each of the three Regional Governments as well as a Secretary appointed by the Federal Government. All the members, excepting the Secretary were of the grade of Permanent Secretaries. The membership of the Census Board was increased to six later in 1963 when the Mid-Western Region was created. It is not clear why the Prime minister did not appoint a Chairman for the Census Board. Rather the Chairmanship rotated among the members. The sensitive political situation created by the 1962 census controversy may have informed the decision not to appoint a chairman. A United Nations expert on Demography, Mr. H. A. Fell, who had served as adviser during the 1962 census was retained to prepare and present technical papers to the Board.

The Census Board had only eight months to prepare for the 1963

Politicians and other citizens who claim to be 'stunned' by the 'low' 1991 Census figures of 88.5 million take refuge in the Census figures of 1963 which were very much inflated. The National Population Commission has taken pains to explain that there is no basis for comparison between the 1963 and 1991 census. In doing so, the National Population Commission has never made a direct or implied statement concerning the competence or integrity of members of the 1963 census Board. Unfortunately the secretary of that Board who is neither a demographer nor a cartographer has made an unnecessary and futile attempt to explain off the large-scale census fraud of 1963. In doing so he has forgotten, or does not appreciate the implications of, the fact that many Census enumeration areas selected for the post enumeration survey (PES) were disclosed long before the Census enumeration. What this means is that the main check against inflation during Census was sabotaged before the count. It is also on record that the Census Board obtained a demographer, Miss K. Jupp from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to assist in the production of the final figures. This was so because "the time at the disposal of the Board to produce the computer print-outs for the demographic tests was so short that the Census Board could not cope, and these tests were not applied to verify the accuracy of the census figures" (Iro, 19 p. 73). It is therefore absurd for any one to seek to compare the handling of the 1963 census result with that of the 1991 Census.

In 1963, the census Board decided that only those seen by the enumerator should be counted, hence the need to send women enumerators to count women in purdah in parts of the Northern Region. But it is idle for any Nigerian including the secretary of the 1963 Census Board to claim in 1991 that counting by sight in 1963 produced an accurate Census. The massive fraud and rigging that have characterised the counting of votes in the open ballot system introduced in 1990 to check electoral fraud in Nigeria do not support such claims. Further, the evidence that support massive cheating during the 1963 census is so overwhelming that it is unnecessary and futile to confuse issues by pretending that the integrity of those who organised the census is being called to question. Far from it.

After all there was failed census in 1973. Yet the 1973 Census laid in the desire to inflate figures for political reasons. Those who seek to defend or prop up the 1963 figures will do well to recall that at the close of enumeration, the total Population was put at 60.5 million. That showed an increase of 15.2 million people in one year (from 45.3 in 1962). That was absurd. Very many Census districts failed the basic tests applied by the Board. Indeed it was after such tests, that the Census Board found itself 'unable to accept the actual population count for a number of districts'. It is these checks that finally helped to bring down the 1963 Census figures to 55.6 million.

In a recent review of the 1991 provisional census figures of 88.5 million, Frank Hobbs (1992) of the United States Bureau of the Census has confirmed that there was a substantial overcount of people in 1963. Evidence in support of massive census fraud in 1963 had long been documented in various publications including the contributions by Udo (1968) Okonjo (1969) Yesufu (1968) and Ogunlesi (1968). The Census Bureau projection using 2.3 percent growth rate for 1952 - 63 on the 1952/53 population of 30.4 million shows that the population of Nigeria in 1963 was about 38.7 million, and not 55.6 million. Given the experience in 1963, when the original figures of 60.5 million dropped to 55.6 million after the application of some basic checks, it is not unreasonable to assume that the raw figures of 45.29 million in 1962 could have dropped to about 40.0 million or less after checking. Indeed according to Aluko (1974), the Federal Ministry of Information at Lagos had earlier published a figure of 42.0 million for the 1962 Census.

The problem with the 1963 Census was that there was large scale cheating in the field by Census enumerators and supervisors. The same thing occurred in an exaggerated form in 1973 and to a much smaller extent in 1991. The demarcation in 1991 of enumeration areas with boundaries that can be identified on the ground made cheating less difficult in 1991. In 1963 and 1973 the boundaries of most enumeration areas in rural areas were merely lines on the maps, which could not be established on the ground. The verification of Census fraud was therefore not easy in 1963 even if there was

adequate time to do so.

It is pertinent to recall that two of the decisions taken on February 19th, 1963 at the meeting of the Prime Minister and the Regional Premiers were:-

- (1) to nullify the 1962 census and
- (2) "to comply with the constitution and hold elections in 1964 from the figures to be derived from the new census in 1963".

It was therefore clear from the onset that the result of the 1963 Census would be used for re-allocating parliamentary seats in the legislature. This provided a major reason for the inflation of the 1963 Census figures. In spite of the fact that the 1962 Census figures were inflated, the 1963 Census figures for all the Regions were higher than the 1962 figures. There has certainly been more births than deaths during the year inter censal period. The real issue, however, appeared to be that any Regions that recorded a decrease in 1963 over the 1962 figures would have been paraded as guilty of having inflated the 1962 Census figures. The 1963 Census figures were therefore consistently higher than those for 1962. The increase was particularly high for Northern Nigeria (from 22.01 million in 1962 to 29.78 million in 1963), an increase of 35.30 per cent in one year! The corresponding increase for Western Nigeria was 26.91 per cent while Eastern Nigeria and Mid-western Nigeria recorded an increase of 0.49 per cent and 5.42 per cent respectively. The rather high figure of 29.78 million for Northern Nigeria was lower but very close to the figure of 30,862,202 million which the Northern Region returned in January, 1963 as the verified Census figures for the 1962 exercise.

The great disparities in the percentage increase in the 1963 Census over the 1962 Census figures led to the rejection of the 1963 Census by the governments of Eastern Nigeria and Midwestern Nigeria. The Eastern Nigeria Government went to court over the issue. The case was lost because the Supreme Court held that it had no jurisdiction over the administrative functions of the Federal Government. Thereafter the Census figures for 1963 were adopted and used for re-allocation of parliamentary seats for the 1964 General Elections into the

Federal Parliament. Eastern Nigeria lost some seats and so did Northern Nigeria. Western Nigeria gained ten seats. The stage was set for greater juggling of future Censuses, which is precisely what happened in 1973.

The 1973 Census:

The 1973 census took place from Sunday 25th November to Sunday, 2nd December, 1973, a period of eight days; as compared with 15 days for the 1962 census, four days for the 1963 Census and four days for the 1991 census. It has been described by Mabogunje (1988) as "the census for which the country was best prepared" even though it ended by being cancelled under circumstances that made "the prospects of having an accurate census in future to appear as no more than a mirage". Mabogunje served as a Special Adviser to the National Census Board with the specific responsibility for seeing to the demarcation of the whole country into enumeration areas, for 1973 Census. He had earlier been in charge of the demarcation of enumeration areas in the Western Region for the 1962 Census, and had also served as an enumerator in the Mapo area of Ibadan city during the 1952/53 Census. He was therefore in a position to speak authoritatively on the 1973 Census.

As a member of the National Census Board (1972 - 75), and as the Commissioner who took full control of the demarcation of enumeration areas (EAD work) for the 1991 Census I confirm that the preparations for the 1973 Census were more thorough and much more elaborate than for previous censuses. The National Population Commission of 1988 - 1993 learnt a lot from the mistakes of the 1973, and the 1962 and 1963 censuses. The ability of the National Population Commission to anticipate and prevent the types of fraud that featured during the 1963 and 1973 censuses helped to reduce the level of inflation of the 1991 Census. Unfortunately, those Nigerians who stand to gain from inflated Census figures pretend that the pre-Census estimate of 120 million is more realistic than the Census figure of 88.5 million.

The Census Board that conducted the 1973 census was inaugurated on May 27th 1972 while the Decree establishing the Board was published in June, 1973. The Board therefore has only seventeen full months to prepare for the census that took place from November 25th to December 2nd 1973. However, preparations for enumeration area demarcation (EAD) work had started much earlier, with the training from October 26th to November 7th 1970 of officers from the Federal Office of Statistics and from seven of the twelve states. Following the advice of the United Nations expert in population censuses, a revised system of EAD work in which all houses in each enumeration area (EA) was listed and in which the population of each EA was estimated on a sampling basis took off in May, 1972. This system was also adopted in the 1991 Census.

The preparation for the 1973 Census was certainly more thorough than that of the 1962 or the 1963 Census. For the first time a senior and competent Professor of Geography was engaged to organise and supervise the demarcation of the country into enumeration areas of 500 - 800 people in rural areas and 800 - 1000 people in urban areas. About 120 Cartographic Assistants were recruited and trained with the help of the Federal and State Survey Department to carry out EAD work. More importantly all the 1:50,000 series maps of Nigeria which were under preparation in 1963 along with those commissioned after 1963 were available for use for the 1973 Census. However, about 30 per cent of the country was still not covered by the 1:50,000 series in 1972 as compared with only 13 per cent in 1988. The situation with respect to cadastral maps of towns was only slightly better than in 1963.

One of the main problems with the 1973 Census was the composition of the Census Board of 27 members, which was not only too large, but was made up of representatives of each state of Nigeria and of various interest groups. Thus, although Census is a Federal subject, the loyalty of members was mainly to their state of origin. The issue that trickled off the disaster that was census '73 was the large number of EAs returned by some states. Basing their arguments on the likely relation between the number of EAs and the likely population of the state, some members of Census Board sought to increase the number

of EAs in their state. The land areas of states and difficult terrain were used as excuses for asking for more EAs. The technical advisers were over-ruled by the Board which decided to allocate more EAs to some states. The Board therefore created a situation that assisted in falsifying the 1973 Census results. An attempt to increase the number of EAs in parts of the country by a politically active but naive member of the National Population Commission in 1991 failed largely because the composition of the Commission made it difficult for him to gather sectional support for his cause as was the case in 1973.

Many more items, fifteen in all, were canvassed during the 1973 census as compared with eight for 1962 and five for 1963. The number of items canvassed in 1991 was fourteen (see Table 3). Questions on tribe, language and religion which appeared in the 1973 census schedule were dropped in 1991. The EA size of 500-800 for rural areas and 800-1000 for urban areas appeared to be too large for one enumerator. Thus at the end of the house listing and house numbering exercise, many enumerators who found the job to be much more than they expected for the money payable, failed to report for census enumeration. In 1991 the size of an enumeration area was drastically reduced to a range of 250 to 650 persons.

During the 1973 census enumeration which lasted for six days, counting was by sight. In order to cater for areas where *purdah* is practised, female enumerators were recruited to serve in such areas. There were two enumerators for each enumeration area. In addition, as if to remind citizens that the military government that sponsored the Census was serious, a soldier was detailed to follow each team of enumerator. However, the presence of soldiers did not prevent the series of census fraud that featured double counting and the entry of fictitious names. It is also on record that on payment of one naira per person, many citizens who were impatient to await their turn to be enumerated were thumb printed and allowed to go without being enumerated.

On December 8th, 1972 the Chief Census Officer, requested the Chief of Staff (Army) to assign an officer to the Census Board to take charge

of census logistics. This turned out to be one of the greatest departments which was extremely poor especially in respect of the retrieval of census forms from the states to Lagos. Many states were unable to send the completed census forms to Lagos on schedule, thereby reluctance of the logistics officer, a military officer, to accept the overriding authority of the Chief Census Officer complicated the problem. posed by the inefficiency of the logistics department. It was the logistics department that leaked out the first computer print-out to the Head of State, General Gowon, who contrary to an earlier undertaking, announced the raw and highly inflated census figures to the nation. In 1991, the figures announced by the Head of State were checked and discussed by the National Population Commission before submission to Government.

The composition of the Census Board proved a major set back in the effort to obtain an accurate and acceptable census. Each state was represented by a permanent secretary each of which appeared more concerned with protecting the 'interest' of his state. State Census Officers which should have been appointed by the Census Board were often injected by the State Governments. Board members from the Northern states made much fuss about the fact that almost all the professional demographers were from the Southern states. This was a major reason why a Northern military officer was selected to man the logistics department. The ethnic composition of the staff of the National Census Board was also a subject of controversy in many Board meetings. Northern members along with the New Nigerian Newspaper argued that the ethnic composition of staff at the headquarters had to be reviewed to make the census "look like an all Nigerian affair". The fear was that Southern staff will work against Northern interest. This fear also existed in 1991. It was largely responsible for the scandalous rate of falsification of figures in various parts of the northern states in 1973.

Since 1962, the real issue in Nigerian censuses has been the relative size of the population of Northern and Southern Nigeria. The fuss made over the 1962 census was partly due to the fact that for the first time the proportion of the population recorded for the Northern

states which injected an additional 8 million people tried to restore the proportion to 57%, just as it was in 1931! However, when the largely faked results of the 1973 census showed that the Northern states share had risen sharply to 64.42 percent, the Northern Board Members who had been suspecting foul play from the South saw nothing wrong with the results. Rather, they rejoiced in their ability to out-cheat the Southern states, some of which also inflated their figures. What surprised most people was the hurry with which General Gowon the Head of State announced the figures. It turned out that the 1973 census controversy provided one of the reasons why his colleagues in the army decided to overthrow his regime.

The 1991 Census

Many of the people who in 1988 spoke against a census in 1991 did so because of the fear that a census controversy could disrupt the transition to civil rule programme. Some critics felt that it was no use conducting a census in 1991 since the figures could not be used for the Local Government and general elections schedules respectively for 1990 and 1991. The Federal Government clarified the situation by stating that the 1991 census figures would not be used for the conduct of elections during the period of transition to civil rule in 1992. This was unlike the situation in 1962 and 1963 when the Federal Government had to rush the census to enable the National Electoral Commission to use the figures for the General Elections of 1964. The policy decision by Government made it possible for the 1991 census.

The first and most basic technical exercise in the conduct of a population census is the delimitation or demarcation of enumeration areas. This exercise was carried out during the 1962, 1963 and 1973 censuses. However, the time available for enumeration area demarcation (EAD) work during past censuses was most inadequate given the size of Nigeria and the lack of suitable manpower at these times. The situation was compounded by lack of suitable maps. At the time of the 1963 census, for example three groups were executing the contract to produce the 1:50,000 topographical series of Nigeria. These were the Canadian Technical Assistance Team handling 29.30

per cent of the country, the United Kingdom Technical Assistance Team, to map 24.56 per cent of the country and the Nigerian Federal Surveys to map 46.14 per cent. Less than one-fifth of the maps were ready for use during the 1963 census which had to depend on the old 1:125,000 series which covered only parts of the country. As at 1988, when preparations for the 1991 census started there were still no maps of the 1:50,000 series for many parts of Nigeria. It was the National Population Commission that awarded contracts to produce, using satellite imageries, the outstanding 179 sheets of the 1:50,000 series for use in the 1991 census exercise. The EAD work for the 1991 census was clearly more comprehensive than the exercise of 1962, 1963 or 1973.

In the course of the demarcation of the country into enumeration areas (EAs) the number of buildings in each E.A. was recorded along with the name of the chief occupants. The number of households and the population of one in every five buildings was sampled, from which the population of each E.A. was estimated. It is the thoroughness of the preparatory work and the records kept that helped to reduce the level of census fraud during the 1991 census. The provisional census figure of 88.5 million appear to be on the high side and the final figures would certainly be lower after the necessary checks to deal with census fraud would have been carried out.

The size and composition of the National Population Commission were great assets in the successful conduct of the 1991 census. Sectional interests were not as obvious in the eight member commission as was the case with the 27 member Census Board of 1973. However, as in past censuses, members from the northern states continued to entertain fears that predominantly Southern Nigeria staff at headquarters would work against Northern interest. Thus although there were five members from the Northern states and three from the Southern states, the Chairman, still felt that it was necessary for him to inject another Northerner into the Commission as a personal adviser to him on computer and communications. The adviser was brought in without consultations with the other members of the Commission.

An important innovation in census administration in Nigeria was the creation in 1988 of seven census zones in the country. There were 21 states and 449 Local Government Areas at that time. The smallest zone, made up of Bendel and Anambra states, consisted of 49 Local Government Areas. The zonal structure was put together in such a way as to de-emphasise traditional political and cultural links. Thus the Kanuri state of Bornu, along with the Hausa states of Kano and Katsina constituted zone one while the Eastern minority states of Akwa-Ibom, Cross River and Rivers joined with the Ibo state of Imo to form zone three. This principle was however not followed when more states were created in 1991 when the chairman preferred to transfer Niger state from zone 6 to zone 7. Apart from putting Niger state back to the Sokoto caliphate zone, this arrangement created a rather unwieldy new zone 7 (see fig. 2). Each zonal headquarters had a data processing centre for the collation and first stage processing of data from all Local Government areas in the zone. A Commissioner was put in charge of each zone, and it was agreed that no Commissioner should take charge of a zone in which his home town or that of his wife is located.

In order to further minimise census fraud and to ensure acceptability of the census figures, the Commission adopted a number of checks and balances in the field. The accuracy of enumeration area maps were tested during the three pre-tests and the trial census, and some very large EAs were amended as necessary. The Commission decided to recruit and pay all enumerators and supervisors from the rank of public servants who could be disciplined if they failed to perform. All enumerators served in their various localities but there was an exchange of supervisors between states. In order to reduce operational costs, some supervisors between states, but not in their local government areas of origin. A number of prominent Nigerian citizens were appointed as observers, that is in addition to the United Nations four observer teams that toured the country during the census enumeration exercise.

Compared with the situation in 1973 or 1963, the retrieval of census

questionnaires and other forms was more orderly and on schedule. The local government controllers delivered all documents to the state headquarters from where they were taken to the zonal headquarters. Delay in construction of racks at the zonal data processing centres (DPC) resulted in poor archiving of the materials, and considerable frustration in locating misplaced questionnaires.

The bogey of Southern officers working against Northern interest which led to the appointment of a Northern military officer to man the logistics division of the 1973 census was played down in 1991 since the Chairman of the Commission was a Northerner. Unlike in 1973, the operational and logistics aspects of the 1991 census were fully under the control of the Chief Census Officer. This was an important factor that helped in the successful execution of the census exercise. The decision of the Commission to appoint directly all the State Directors and its ability to resist direct interference by State Governments in matters of appointments and postings also contributed greatly to the comparatively smooth administration of the 1991 census. The decision of the Commission to use Local Government Area as the unit of field organisation of the census also assisted in neutralising attempts by state authorities to meddle with any aspects of the census. Of course, the one line command which is only possible under a military administration helped to make State Military Governors to play positive roles to make the census a success.

7 The National Population Commission is one of the Federal Executive Bodies established by the Nigerian Constitution of 1989. The constitutional provision that the Commission shall comprise of one person from each state of the Federation was set aside by the Decree establishing the National Population Commission of 1988-1993. The Commission on its part proposed, and Government accepted to set up a Census Tribunal to consider complaints arising from the Census. This innovation was intended to prevent the re-occurrence of a situation in which a well planned and properly conducted census is cancelled as a result of dishonest practices by a few misguided and fraudulent citizens who seek to inflate census figures for selfish reasons.

Specific Issues Concerning the 1991 Census Figures

The provisional results of the 1991 census published in March 1992 provide information only in the total male and female population of each Local Government Area and of each State, including the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. There are as yet no figures on the population of any locality. Comments by critics of the 1991 census results have therefore centred on the total population of the country and the perennial issue of the relative size of the population of the northern and southern states. Many state Governments and Local Governments are up in arms to contest the size of the population of the territories they administer on the grounds that the figures returned are too low. The other issues raised touch on the sex ratio, the negative or very small growth rate of the population of some local government areas and on localities alleged not to have been enumerated during the census. Some of these issues are considered since the basis of most arguments presented so far make reference to past censuses, particularly the 1963 census.

Projections based on the 1963 census results had led most Nigerians to expect that the 1991 census figures would range from 112 to over 120 million. Discussions since March 1992 suggest that very few people expected that the population would be less than 100 million. The indication that the population would be far below general expectation came at the end of the exercise of demarcation of enumeration areas. The trial census of March 1991 confirmed the view that existing population estimates were highly exaggerated. When however, the total population figures of 88.5 million were published in March 1992 many people considered the figures to be too low. Indeed some politicians were both shocked and worried because the votes that some of them had received from some local government areas during the Governorship election of November, 1991, were more than the total population of these Local Government Areas.

It appears strange that the general response to the total population of 88.5 million is that the figures are on the low side. Apart from Sam

Aluko, the retired Professor of Economics who has openly stated that the published figures are close to his estimate of about 82.00 million, others insist that a large number of people were not enumerated. The more uncharitable critics insinuated that the figures were pre-determined by foreign agencies. Yet there were others who thought that the 'low' figures confirmed their contention that the issue of over population of Nigeria was an imperialist bogey to thwart the emergence of the country as a world power.

The culture of manipulation of population figures and of the register of voters of the local Government elections of 1985 and 1988, the gubernatorial elections of 1990 and the National Assembly elections of 1992 all point in the direction of inflating population figures. It would indeed appear strange that architects of population inflation in 1963 and 1973 would give up in 1991. Available evidence shows that organised fraud to inflate the 1991 census started with the enumeration area demarcation exercise in 1988. It continued in the field during the enumeration exercise. The level of cheating in the 1991 census was greatly reduced because of the fear of exposure created by the documentation of verifiable field data during the demarcation of enumeration areas, house listing and house numbering. The final figures will therefore certainly be less than 88.5 million.

Intercensal Annual Growth Rates:

The current estimated population growth rate for Nigeria is about 3.0 per cent per annum. In the 1970s and up till about 1985 the annual growth rate was about 2.5 per cent. The population of 88.5 million in 1991 suggests that the annual growth rate between 1963 and 1991 is 1.6 per cent, since the growth rate is certainly much higher, critics of the 1991 census argue that the population should be much higher than 88.5 million. It happens that the problem is not with the 1991 census, but with the 1963 census figures which were greatly inflated. The status of both the 1963 census and the even more bloated census of 1973 appear obvious when the inter-censal growth rates from 1952/53 to 1991 are compared. Using the geometric growth method (discrete model), these growth rates are as follows:

(1)	1952/53	-	1963	(11 years)...	5.7	per cent
(2)	1952/53	-	1973	(21 years)...	4.7	per cent
(3)	1952/53	-	1991	(39 years)...	2.6	per cent
(4)	1963	-	1973	(10 years)...	3.7	per cent
(5)	1963	-	1991	(28 years)...	1.6	per cent
(6)	1973	-	1991	(18 years)...	0.6	per cent

The only growth rate that is close to that of Nigeria, and indeed to figures for most developing countries during the period 1960 - 1980 is 2.6 per cent for the 1952/53 to 1991 period. What this implies is that the 1952/53 census provides a much better base for judging the 1991 census.

Complaints from Local Governments and State Governments that figures returned for their territories are low will be difficult to sustain. At the close of enumerations in December 1991, there were no complaints that any persons or localities were left out. Yet when the figures were published in March 1992 there were a few protests to start with; followed much later by many more protests. This is understandable since revenue allocation takes population into consideration. The haphazard way in which Government has set about creating new local Government Areas and new states has also encouraged agitation for higher population figures to justify the ever-increasing demands for more Local Government Areas and more states.

The Population of the Northern States

The size of the population of the Northern states in comparison to that of the Southern states has always been the key issue in the politics of population in Nigeria since about 1955. Those who are playing up the issues in 1991 have argued that the 'desert margins' of Nigeria have suddenly become more densely populated than the better watered forest areas of the south. They may have a point especially in respect of the comparatively very large population recorded for Sokoto, Katsina and Bauchi States. However, there is also some

doubt over the rather large population of the mangrove swamps and the fresh water swamp forests of the Rivers State. It is intriguing that the proportion of people in the Northern States in 1991 was 53.40 per cent as compared with 53.50 per cent in 1963. In 1952/53 the proportion was 55.40 per cent and in 1931, the proportion was 57.03. The proportion of people in the Northern States has therefore continued to decline since about 1911. This is a fact that critics of the 1991 census results appear to ignore.

The Sex Ratio Controversy

The outbursts and expressions of unbelief concerning the higher male population (44,544,531 as compared with the female population of 43,969,970) were unprecedented and embarrassing. The myth of surplus women in Nigeria had become so widely accepted that most Nigerians did not even realise that the 1963 census figures recorded more men than women. Even some academicians including a Professor of History who could have readily checked on their 'beliefs' from the University libraries join the chorus of those who claimed that the population of males can never be more than that of females. Many prominent citizens refused to be convinced that there were more men than women in the country even after the National Population Commission had produced evidence to show that there were also more men than women in many other countries including Egypt, Libya, South Africa, China and Turkey. Rather, one State Governor dismissed the evidence as unacceptable, arguing that 24 of his 38 children were females.

Summary and Conclusions

The Census Tribunal to consider protests against the provisional results of the 1991 census is expected to start taking evidence about October 1992. Many states and Local Governments have as at September 1992 submitted written statements to the Tribunal. A considerable number of them will certainly withdraw their cases after the first few complaints have been determined. Hopefully the inability to fault the census figures by most complainants will provide additional evidence that the 1991 census figures are more

reliable than any figures obtained during past censuses.

The first census taken simultaneously throughout Nigeria took place in 1921. Actual enumeration was restricted to the few townships while figures for a much greater part of the country were obtained from estimates compiled by field officers of the Colonial administration. The next census in 1931 was not centrally planned and was disrupted by civil disturbances in the Eastern Region. Excepting in the Northern Region where enumeration was carried out in most of the Provinces, the figures were also based on estimates provided by administrative officers in the districts.

A complete enumeration of people in all parts of the country was carried out for the first time during the 1952/53 census. Unfortunately, the 1952/53 census lacked simultaneity. The general reluctance of people to furnish information on the exact size of their families resulted in under-enumeration in parts of the country. The situation, however, changed after independence of 1960, when the political importance of population figures had been recognised. Census fraud in the form of inflated census, therefore started in 1962 and was perfected in 1963 and later in 1973. In the game of numbers that followed, Southern Nigerian politicians sought to establish that there were more people in Southern Nigeria than in Northern Nigeria. The strategy of Northern politicians was to ensure that the population of Northern Nigeria remained higher, and that the north-south ratio of 57:43 was maintained at all costs.

The cancellation of the 1962 census was unfortunate, and a rather expensive price to pay to sustain the federal system of Government in Nigeria. The rate of inflation of figures was much less than in 1963. A series of standard validation tests would have taken care of distortions caused by census fraud. The scale of cheating during the 1963 census which gave a population of 55.6 million (obtained from a raw figure of 60.2 million) was staggering, since the final figures of the 1962 census would have been 42 million or slightly less. The 1963 census was of course hurriedly carried out to provide figures for allocation of parliamentary seats for the 1964 General Elections. It

cannot and must not be used as a base to judge the 1991 census results. Rather a careful analysis of the final figures of the 1991 census, especially the population of various localities, will help to expose further the extent of census fraud in 1963 in various parts of the country.

What about future censuses? The unwieldy size of the 27 member Census Board of 1972-75 contributed in many ways to the failure of the 1973 census. That is to say that the Constitutional Provision in respect of the membership of the National Population Commission must be reviewed to be in line with what is contained in Decree 23 of 1989 which established the National Population Commission of 1988-1993 that conducted the 1991 census. An eight-member team made up of experienced professionals not readily given to sectional or ethnic sentiments is adequate for the job. The team should be headed by a retired senior citizen who will openly declare that he will not seek elective political office for at least five years after a census taken during his term of office.

And finally And finally credit should be given to the NPC and the Babangida administration for conducting a successful and less controversial census. If nothing else, the government and other agencies have some acceptable statistics for use in programmes and other developmental projections. Of equal importance is the fact that the massive data collected and stored by the NPC in its computers could be reviewed scientifically and thus a good and reliable base and source for future censuses, without any controversy have been set.

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