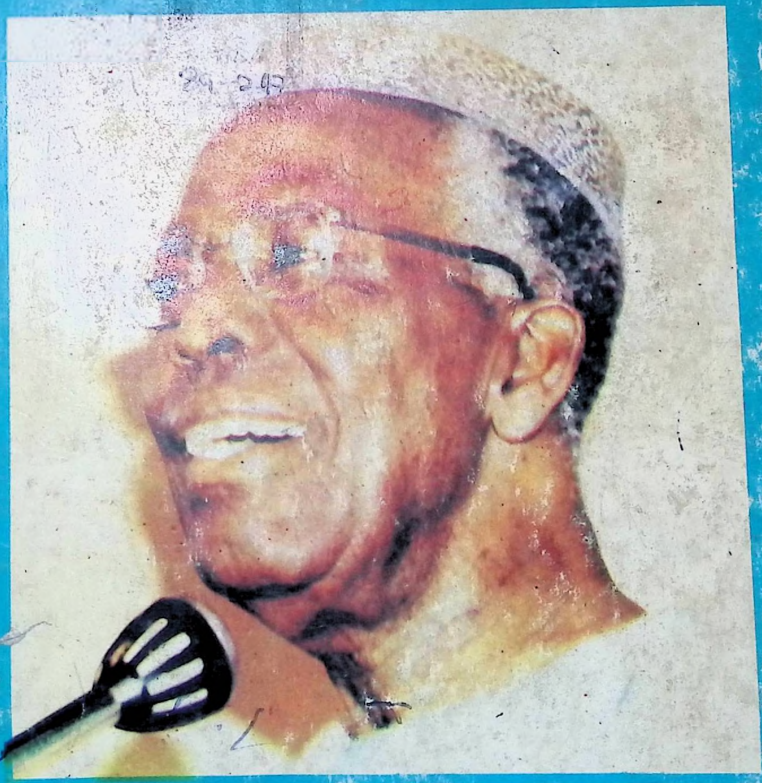


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AWO'S
GREAT LIFE
BATTLES



Ebenezer Babatope

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and its programme. Papa true to his character of being too trusting felt my assertion had no foundation. Papa was quite categorical that the military regime would indeed honour its pledge.

On 25th August 1978, the General Olusegun Obasanjo administration sacked me alongside others as a result of a Justice Mohammed Commission of Inquiry that had investigated the April 1978 "ALI MUST GO" patriotic demonstrations of the Nigerian students. When I was dismissed from my job, it then dawned on me that it could have paid me better if I had accepted Papa's offer of being by his side in his efforts to build what later became the best organised party in Nigeria.

I quickly made my way to Europe with a firm resolve to stay out of Nigeria for at least five years. I was surprised when on 18th September 1978 I had a surprise telephone call from Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande in London requesting me to have dinner with him where a special message of Papa Awolowo was to be conveyed to me.

It was in one of the WALDOFF ASTORIA hotels in London on the night of 18th September 1978 that Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande (who was later to become the UPN action Governor of Lagos State) gave me Papa Awo's message that I should return to Nigeria immediately. On 20th September 1978 I arrived back in Nigeria from London in the company of my friend Mr. Foluso Opadina.

On 21st September 1978, Papa told me over his small dining table at his residence at Apapa that I had offered the post of the National Director of Organisation of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria by the steering committee of the *Committee of Friends* that eventually metamorphosed into the Unity Party of Nigeria.

I was stunned by Papa's information. Stunned that Papa had remained committed to my person despite the fact that I had refused in February 1978 to resign my job at the University of Lagos as he had requested. I was equally stunned by the fact that I had been considered for the post in a country where numberless human materials (better a million times than myself) abound.

Papa Awo's parting words to me that afternoon was to ask me how I was facing life with the Obasanjo sack still hanging on my mind. I told Papa that I felt bad and bitter about the

event. Papa simply advised me to put the events right behind me and look straight to the future without regrets.

When I was confronted later that day by Mr. Eric Teniola of the **Punch** group of newspapers with a teaser on the Obasanjo purge of left wing intellectuals in Nigerian Universities, my reply was: 'I have put the events right behind me'. It was so published by Eric Teniola in the **Punch** without any knowledge of the fact that the statement I had made to him was coined from the advice Papa Awo had given me earlier in the day.

The five years and three months that I spent by Papa Awolowo's side as his party's Director of Organisation have till date been the most exciting moments of my life. You never had a dull moment with Awo. Papa was full of life and he was at home with any subject.

He never for one second interfered with the way we managed our various departments at the party's National Secretariat. Papa Awolowo read all the Press releases issued by Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu and myself on behalf of the party on the pages of Nigerian newspapers just as other Nigerians. I want to state and with all emphasis at my command that Papa Obafemi Awolowo never gave instructions to any of us to issue press releases on subjects he considered due for public attention. He was a democrat in every sense of the word. Papa couldn't stand indolent persons. He had a deep flare for thoroughness and finesse.

It is without any doubt that the banned Unity Party of Nigeria led by Awo was the best organised political party in Nigeria during the second civilian republic. This was due to the sterling qualities and organisational wizardry of Papa Awolowo himself. The character of any organisation is determined by the quality of its leadership.

Papa was a very disciplined man. He programmed his life in such a way that he had himself prepared at all times. In other words, there was nothing he did that had not been adequately planned and arranged by him long before it was done. When Papa told Nigerians that he would no longer mount any soap box in Nigeria after the callous rigging of elections in 1983, not many people knew that Papa had already given hint of this situation as far back as 1969. On 30th March 1969 in a letter sent to the **Sunday Times** Papa wrote as follows: "Fifth, I am quite satisfied in my own mind

that, whether I am in government or not, I now, by the Grace of God, occupy a position whereby my thoughts and ideas are bound to have, now and for a long time to come, pro-found, pervasive, and persuasive influence, and impact on the affairs of the country....

The only reason why I aspire, and will continue until I am 75, to aspire to participate effectively in government activities, is that by such participations, it could be possible for me to translate my thoughts and ideas into realities much more quickly than would otherwise be the case".

From the above statement of Papa, it becomes absolutely clear that he was not just speaking with his tongue in his cheek when he declared that the 1983 elections were to be his last at mounting political rostrums in the country. By 1983, Papa was already 74 and with the next electoral context then fixed for 1987, it was obvious that Papa's programme fixed at 75 in his letter to the **Sunday Times** would have been exceeded by at least three years.

In the same letter to the **Sunday Times** in 1969 Papa wrote "so, if, on the return of civilian rule, I am in government, well and good. If not, I will mount a most vigorous campaign to the end that those who are in power should give very serious, sincere and favourable consideration to what I believe should be done to cater to and advance, the welfare and the best interests of the masses of our people". Awo did exactly that until he breathed his last. Papa Awo beautified politics by the way he treated all attacks on his person. Democracy to Papa was never 'rub my back and I rub yours'. He was always advising all politicians to develop thick skins to abuses from political opponents. Awo was a politician's politician.

The greatest attribute of this sage was his fanatical love for Nigeria. I am sure that at the very last seconds of Papa on earth, his mind must have dealt extensively with the problems of Nigeria.

The proof of this lies in the letter he wrote to me on the 26th of February 1987 (some two and a half months before his death). The letter which reveals the old man's love for his country and his strong commitments to intellectualism forms an appendix to this book.

The greatness of Nigeria and the welfare of the masses of

the people were his prime concern. He fought and fought doggedly throughout his life for the welfare of the people.

I want to state that I am today very proud of having been privileged to have worked closely by Awo's side. It was very kind of Awo to have made this possible particularly in a Nigeria where my betters reside. I am confident to state that if it were to be possible to restart the whole business again, I will still unhesitatingly elect to relive the period with immortal Awo.

Papa Jeremiah Oyeniya Obafemi Awolowo meant many things to many people. He was controversial in life and he has remained so in death. I am, however, happy that in death, friends and foes have come to accept him as a great titan of Nigeria's history. The perspective of history will eventually cement the greatness and uniqueness of Papa's leadership and political life. He will surely live for ever.

The stories told in this book are some of the accounts of the political storms that the old man faced when he was alive. The beauty was that he weathered through them all.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said of great leaders:-

“Not gold but only men can make a nation great and strong. Men who for truth and honour's sake stand fast and suffer long. Brave men who work while others sleep. Who dare while others shy. They build a nation's pillar deep and lift them to the sky”. These words, I believe are largely correct of the life and times of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

CHAPTER 1

IMPERIALISM AND AWO: The Full Story.

As tempting as it may be, we want to resist the temptation of embarking upon a rigorous theoretical and perhaps historical explanations of imperialism here because such is not the main concern of this book. In the present circumstance imperialism merely serves as a major explanatory variable in our endeavour to shed more light on the real dynamics behind the apparent electoral 'failures' which robbed Awo the headship of the Nigerian state before his transition to "the great beyond" and by extension expose the flimsy but entrenched assumptions which have continuously deprived most African states purposeful leadership in the likes of committed social reformers as Awo of Nigeria.

Nevertheless, for a better understanding and a profound appreciation of the obstacles which imperialism unleashed on the progressive leaders of the African continent, we hope to indicate in brief terms, our conception of imperialism. More than anything else, we hope by such efforts to resolve the definitional problems, which might otherwise ensue; reduce analytical bottlenecks to the barest minimum and most of all enhance a better exposition of the various disguises of imperialist machinations particularly with regard to its specific manifestation as obstacles in the ways of achieving Awo's life-long campaigns for the total emancipation of the African continent in general and the Nigerian state in particular.

In simple terms we define imperialism as a relationship of exploitation and domination which manifests as either a situation of direct socio-political, economic and military subordination of one country to another in order to facilitate and maintain a "relation of unequal exchange". (Nkrumah, 1966 Reynolds, 1980; Galtung, 1980). In a more restricted but technical sense, imperialism involves a systematic programme of strategies — mainly economic — covertly conceived by one

country for another to effect in the later country a subtle albeit pernicious deprivation of control over their activities to the benefits and needs of the former country (Lenin, 1916). In other words, imperialism either as a process of direct colonial subjugation or an indirect means of neo-colonial manipulation engenders a relationship of unequal exchange, dependence and underdevelopment (C. Leys, 1965; Brett, 1973; Onimode 1983).

What is more, the logic of imperialist domination has of necessity revealed the fact that national independence is only meaningful and possible within the context of total national sovereignty which necessarily involves political and economic freedom and as such a determined battle against imperialism. Since capitalism and imperialist domination are both embedded in the same history, the urge to subvert the latter cannot in the last analysis be divorced from the struggle against capitalism. (Baran, 1953; Amin, 1975; Ake, 1979).

The foregoing represents in a nutshell the political context and historical paradox of African states. Paradoxical in the sense that the Africa situation has given birth to a condition in which crusaders of meaningful development often confront stiff opposition in the powerful Trans National Corporations (TNCs), their agents particularly in Britain and U.S.A and Western capitalism in general as well as local collaborators of imperialist domination. Conceived within this context therefore, imperialism implies not only a situation of its being imposed by force by an alien power, but equally a situation in which values have been "internalised, legitimacy established and vested interests involved", thus rendering its rejection and the task of turning to a new direction very highly impossible.

Accordingly, when Andrei Gromyko, the ace foreign minister of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R) for many years and former president of the country was asked why he had never considered it necessary to visit an African country, he replied: "Before you leave the Airport of your country, the government of the African country you had intended to visit would have been to overthrown".

When one considers the number of coups that have taken place in Africa since 1952, when the free officers club in Egypt overthrew the government of flamboyant, over-

pampered and imperialist puppet king Farouk, then one cannot but agree in totality with the submission of President Andrei Gromyko. In Africa's coup fiesta, it is progressive African leaders that have been most decisively hit. These leaders were all either removed from power by force or were prevented by all means from being able to attain the mantle of power necessary for their dream - wish of transforming their countries to progressive modern states.

Most times, the organisers, financiers and backers of these infamous acts have been external busy bodies of the WEST who have always taken it upon themselves to decide and determine who the rulers of less powerful nations should be.

It is therefore no surprise that many Africa's men of ideas became easy victims of deep seated international conspiracies arranged to block their contacts with state power. Muhammad Ben Barka who was kidnapped in Paris by French SDECE and MOSSAD and killed in 1965 when he was on his way to the Tri - continental conference in Havana, Abdeslam Boguaya, Layarchi all of Morocco, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Patrice Lumumba of Zaire, Eduardo Mondlane Mozambique, Oginga Odinga of Kenya and Papa Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria were all clear examples of men of ideas who were deliberately prevented from shaping the destinies of their respective countries by the International Policemen of the West. But then, the exemplary lives and the thoughts and ideas these leaders left behind have continued to inspire millions of their admirers all over the continent of Africa.

Perhaps one man in Nigeria who was target for imperialist machinations and conspiracy throughout his political career was Papa Obafemi Awolowo. From 1947, Chief Awolowo was subjected to a kind of surveillance by the WEST and very clear programmes of meeting his radical thoughts, opinions and policies were mapped out to effectively neutralise him in Nigerian politics. The first signs of this dangerous international manoeuvre was clearly observable in the foreword written by Margery Perham of Nuffield College OXFORD in December 1946 to Papa Awo's first book titled: *Path to Nigerian Freedom*.

Margery Perham had started her foreword with these words:

I have never met Mr Awolowo. An editor, an English

friend of his, sent me the script of this book and asked if I would try to arrange for its publication and write a foreward. I did help to arrange for its publication. I do not, however claim any credit for this. as I have no doubt that the book would have found a publisher upon its own merits without any intervention upon my part. With regard to the foreword, I wrote to Mr. Awolowo saying that I considered some passages of his book were misleading and inaccurate and that he might, on second thoughts, wish to revise them. He replied in uncompromising terms that he would alter nothing that he had written. I thereupon told him that if I were to write the foreword he must on his side agree to accept whatever I should write. He accepted this condition.

Margery perham later went on to state what she had considered inaccurate and misleading passages of Awo's book that required being expunged when she stated: "Readers will observe that Mr Awolowo by spirited offensive tactics, tries to knock out of British hands, at the very start the two main arguments in defence of their present position, the backwardness of the Africa they annexed, and the general beneficence of their rule. WE CANNOT SUBMIT TO THESE TACTICS (capitals mine)".

From the foregoing, it becomes clear that with *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Papa Awo was too early in exhibiting to the imperialist task masters of the world his radical convictions for a free Nigeria and his wizardry as a dedicated political agitator for all oppressed people of the world. Little wonder then that from 1947 right to the very end of his political career, the tactics of the WEST was to "WEAR HIM OUT" if possible. Awo as a politically clever, stubborn and rugged nationalist and politician refused till the very end of his life to be worn or tired out. Some of the Imperialist conspiracies against his person and his radical leadership of the people are told to Nigerians in this special report.

The internal conspiracies against him have been adequately reported by Papa himself in his book *Travails of Democracy and the Rule of Law*.

Many countries of the world particularly the developing nations have always failed to give credence to Jose Marti's

famous words of wisdom "A man does not make a nation at its birth but a nation may find its vibrant and triumphant voice in a man". The Americans in particular and the west in general have always based their policies and programmes in developing countries on ensuring that such men of Jose Marti's dreams who are capable of using their God given talents decisively to promote the best interests of their respective countries are placed under close watch and scrutiny.

Papa Awo's *Path to Nigerian Freedom* gave him up too early in his political career as an uncompromising nationalist who was prepared not only to dismantle colonialism in Africa but to join forces with other progressive leaders of the world in combating Imperialism and making it irrelevant in all the countries of the world where it has stamped its feet.

Several other acts of Awo and his lieutenants in the Action Group (A.G) in the nationalist years of 1950 — 1960 were to further push the west into effective monitoring of Papa's activities. In 1953, the first motion ever demanding independence for Nigeria was moved by the Action Group at the House of Representatives. The motion was moved by chief Anthony Eronmosele Enahoro from *Ishan* constituency. The motion was followed by the resignation of Action Group Federal Minister following the rejection of the party's motion for independence. However, the anti-imperialist fight did not end there, parts of Nigeria became self-governing as a result of the massive pressure of the Western and Eastern delegations at the 1956 London Constitutional Conference in which Awo played very significant roles.

In November 1960, the Tafawa Balewa government wanted to sign a defence pact with Britain. The Anglo-Nigerian defence pact, as it later became known was to ignite patriotic demonstrations of democratic forces in Nigeria against such a tragic blunder that had intended to tie the country to the apron strings of Britain.

In 1960 when the actual motion for the approval of the defence pact was moved in the Federal House of Representatives, the attack of Papa Awo on the reactionary move was so biting, thoroughly and severely penetrating that Alhaji Muhammadu Ribadu the then Minister of Defence, on a point of order warned Alhaji Tafawa Balewa of the dangers of Awo's radicalism. Ribadu had declared "unless this man

Awolowo is put in goal, this country will not have" *Travails of Democracy and the Rule of law* precisely its twenty-fourth (24th) page.

What is more, Awo's clear perception on what true independence means could not have pleased Western imperialism. In a lecture he delivered to Nigerian students at Conway Hall, London on September 3rd 1961, Awo emphasised the need for an economic independence for Nigeria. Awo clearly saw the control of our economy as the main reason for imperialist moves which resulted in our colonisation. It is for this reason that Awo saw the need for economic independence. As he puts it:

It is, I believe, generally agreed that political freedom is meaningless unless it goes hand in hand with economic freedom. Anyone who cares to read his history aright will readily concur that the prime and sole motivation for imperialist predations, conquests and rule is economic in character.

All these activities of Papa Awo had convinced the imperialists particularly in Britain and America that he should be closely watched and neutralised if his political advances were getting too popular for their own liking. With the move of the Action Group in 1962 Jos conference of the party to the LEFT having adopted democratic socialism as its ideology of the way forward, the grounds were then laid for the first stage of the imperialist programme of "OPERATION WEAR HIM OUT".

Awo and many of his lieutenants were later hounded to various prison terms on a charge of TREASONABLE FELONY. The statement of late Joseph Tarka made to the court proves conclusively the glaring animosity of imperialism to Awo's political activities. Tarka had said "Mr O'Sullivan said they had been expecting me for weeks for interrogation in connection with the alleged plot to overthrow the Federal Government when I said I knew nothing about any ploy he said I was a liar and that all RED HOT COMMUNISTS were liars".

Stage two of "OPERATION WEAR HIM OUT" commenced with the lifting of the ban on politics in 1978. Before then, Papa Awo had distinguished himself as an economic wizard and financial expert when he managed Nigeria's resources

during the civil war without having to borrow a kobo. Between 1967 and 1970 Papa Awolowo also initiated some progressive economic policies that caught international finance capital off balance in their operations in Nigeria.

Awo's views on the way forward in the industrialisation of Nigeria were no less anti-thetical to the desires of Western Imperialism. For Awo, while there could be enough room for cooperation with external forces for the purpose of our industrialisation, such external forces must not be allowed to dominate us. According to Awo:

I share the view that side by side with improvement in agricultural economy, there should be a measure of industrialisation. But my view about industrialisation of this country is not by issuing invitations to foreigners to come into this country to exploit its resources, but by allowing Africans to embark upon the industrialisation and government giving such Nigerians every help that is within its power to give.

These positions of Awo must have played a significant role in the Indigenization Decree that Gowon later promulgated after Awo's departure from his cabinet. Though the Indigenization Decree was not well implemented, the ideas and thoughts that led to it could not have been palatable to Western Imperialists.

Also as Federal Commissioner for Finance Papa Awo took some decisive steps to check the excesses of foreign capital in Nigerian economy. These included (1) The total rejection by Papa Awo of a demand by Prime Minister Harold Wilson's government in Britain that a devaluation policy embarked upon by that government in Britain should automatically affect Nigeria's reserve there. The blow on British economy by Awo's measure was really telling (2) Papa introduced taxation of the profits made by foreign companies in Nigeria. The various Chambers of Commerce protested strongly to Gowon's government on this measure. Awo did not waver in a decision he believed was in the best interest of Nigeria.

When it became clear that Nigeria was again preparing to return to civilian rule in 1979, there came with it a reactivation of a general imperialist surveillance on Papa Awo. The potency of such scrutiny is fully appreciated when it is realised that the TNCs today, are major actors in the world's political

economy, for it has been estimated that they control between one quarter to one third (1/3) of world production. (Teresa Hayter, 1981). TNCs have taken both legal and illegal actions within host states to favour friendly governments and oppose unfriendly governments to obtain favourable treatment for the corporation, and to block efforts to restrict corporate activity. They have engaged in such legal activities as contributing to political parties, lobbying with local elites and carrying out public relation campaigns (Pinelo, 1973) They have also engaged in illegal activities; illegal contributions to political parties, bribes to local officials (Onimode, et al, 1983), and refusal to comply with host laws and regulations (Pinelo, 1973). They have also used extra legal methods as international boycotts to pressure unfriendly governments. With the added advantage of controlling larger budgets than most Third World nations, the TNCs influence the rise and fall of government. A lucid example is the role of the ITT in Chile (Spero, 1977).

In July 1978, at Churchill hotel in London, Mr. Tiny Roland the big boss of the LONRHO group of companies made a telephone call to Papa Awo requesting a meeting with him. David Ogunsade (editor of the radical Pan-African Journal, AFRICAN INTERPRETER based in Cologne West Germany) and myself were with the old man when Mr. Tiny Roland's telephone call came through. Papa Awolowo's reply to the man's telephone request for an audience was coined nearly in the following words:-

"I am sorry I don't know you. I am here on a private visit and I will be leaving for America on Sunday". The fellow tried to persuade Awo to accede to his request without success. The conversation ended with Papa inquiring:- "By the way who gave you my telephone number?" The man talked again and Papa politely and courteously bade him good bye.

It must then have been interpreted that Papa Awo was still not prepared to compromise his views on socialism. The turning down of a request for an audience with an international big business man like Tiny Roland was sure signal that Awo was not prepared to negotiate the freedom of his people on the altars of imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Subsequently, a deep seated Western antagonism to

Awo's leadership of Nigeria was deliberately planned after several unsuccessful attempts by TNC's interests to damage the image of Chief Awolowo. In this connection, I consider it pertinent to mention a story told to me by Papa Awolowo on what happened in July 1978. This story is worth narrating now for posterity.

While Awo was at the Churchill Hotel in July 1978, and after the futile attempt by the big boss of the LONRHO group to cultivate the friendship of Awo, the old man was visited by a top official of the British Secret Service M15. The official had served under Chief Obafemi Awolowo when he was the Premier of the former Western Region.

The M15 official had come to discuss what he termed "an important business with Chief Awolowo." In the discussion, the British intelligence officer told Awo that the British government would be prepared to offer all its assistance to Awo in his bid to become President of Nigeria on the condition that Awo signed a private undertaking never to tamper with British economic interests in Nigeria and to always consult the British government on all major policies to be introduced by his government.

Chief Awolowo told me that he was outraged by such proposals and he said he did not mince words with the British man as regards the foolishness of such proposals. Papa told me he asked the man this question. "Are you planning to have an Awolowo President of a British colony?" He called off such discussion by putting it to the man that he (Awo) would abide by the clean verdict of the Nigerian people and would never accept to be a robot president of Nigeria that will be at the mercy of a foreign power.

The British intelligence chief was later to surface in August 1987 to pay chief (Mrs) H.I.D. Awolowo a condolence visit in London after the death of Papa Awolowo. He however did not forget to ask Mama the question of who was likely to be Awo's successor before he took his exit.

The Western Imperialist plot to have Awo caged the various Western governments particularly the various British government officials of the capabilities of Awo as an effective manager of men, matters and events. They have seen him perform a miracle in Western Region as Premier and the stance of Awo as Federal Commissioner for Finance over the

issue of the devaluation of the pound sterling was not lost on the British government.

Western Region as Premier and the stance of Awo as Federal Commissioner for Finance over the issue of the devaluation of the pound sterling was not lost on the British government.

The British government's antagonism to Awo Press Conference of September 22nd 1978, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had declared:

For the avoidance of doubt socialism is decidedly the goal of the UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA. But no one, no nation ever attains a worthwhile goal designed for the benefit of the entire people in one fell swoop, without courting irreparable or prolonged disaster for the people concerned. Indeed, any attempt to attain the goal of socialism in one frantic leap is bound to generate widespread alarm, social upheaval and distress and attendant violence.

From that date, the plot to stop Awo from assuming the presidency of Nigeria in 1979 took a dramatic and decisive turn. The election of 1979 were manipulated to stop Awo. The details of the 1979 elections will appear in a different book being prepared by this author. For now, we consider it apt to mention that the result of the 1979 elections was observable in the manouvering that took place a week to senatorial elections by the British Broadcasting Corporation. (B.B.C). The B.B.C deliberately sponsored a programme which amounted to a pre-meditated and calculated blackmail of Papa Awolowo. In the broadcast, the B.B.C had interviewed an organ Engineer who was introduced as having sold an organ to papa Obafemi Awolowo.

In the broadcast, the organ Engineer told deliberate lies to his audience by stating that Papa had ordered the organ with a view to using it at his swearing-in-ceremony if Papa became President of Nigeria in 1979. The Engineer also lied that the organ was to be installed at a church being built at the back of Awo's house in Ikenne. The *Candido* column of the *New Nigerian* newspaper in Nigeria was too happy over the news item that it published the picture of an organ claiming that it was the organ Awo had paid for.

The truth of the matter however was that Papa

Obafemi Awolowo had bought an organ from Britain as a gift to St. Saviours Church, Ikenne. Papa applied through the Central Bank of Nigeria to effect the purchase. The organ was standing there erect on 6th June 1987 when the funeral service for Papa was held at St. Saviours church Ikenne. Papa as an ardent christian and lover of music was up till his death responsible for paying the salary of the organist (easily one of the best in the country) of St. Saviours Church, Ikenne.

It was infact, no surprise to anyone when Mr. Andrew Young the erstwhile United States representative at the United Nations led a business delegation of the Pullman—Kellog Company of America on an enthusiastic embrace of congratulations with Alhaji Shehu Shagari when the latter's election as President was still a matter for the courts to decide.

In 1979, the Military attache of an embassy in Nigeria imported stuffed ballot boxes into Nigeria. There could be no doubt that these ballot boxes were intended for exchange whenever possible, with the actual ballot boxes used during the voting. The Military attache in question then boasted that if the NPN lost in the Presidential race, the Army would refuse to hand over. Thanks to Chief Graham Douglas, we now know that this was in no way an idle boast.

The gentleman retired after the 1979 elections but later returned to Nigeria as an executive in the employ of a Nigerian businessman, with access to one of the diplomatic cars of the embassy in which he was previously employed.

This same man brought five compartment ballot boxes into the country for demonstration to a close circle of officials in the embassy where he was formerly employed. His Nigerian employer a member of the defunct NPN was present. The strange thing about the box is that if you put a plain paper in the slit of one compartment and then press a button, the paper can appear in any of the other compartments. Here lies the danger and, the awful facility for rigging.

Consequently, at a Press Conference held in Ikenne (his home town) on May 28 1981, chief Obafemi

Awolowo said among others: "There is evidence in support of the assertion that the NPN is implacably bent on rigging the 1983 elections in its own favour".

On 7th September 1981, Chief Obafemi Awolowo further startled the nation when on his return from an overseas trip he gave the information that a military attache of a foreign embassy in Lagos was already saddled with the responsibility of manipulating the 1983 elections. Chief Awolowo told Nigerians then in the following words:

"One top NPN leader has incorporated a company which is tipped to place orders for all the mechanical boxes."

Two other NPN leaders who are experts and experienced riggers are in charge of programming the mechanical ballot papers. And the military attache of the embassy which helped the NPN with stuffed ballot boxes in 1979 is back in the country. He left for home immediately after my Press Conference in May.

It was he who demonstrated the mechanical boxes to a small NPN audience in his embassy. He is back in the country to pursue and perfect his diabolical and villainous assignment; and as a cover up, he continues in the employment of a top NPN businessman."

Some Nigerians felt Awo was raising mere alarms on the steps being taken by certain people to manipulate the 1983 elections. Nigerians woke up on the morning of Wednesday April 13th 1983 to find a terrifying news item on the front pages of both the **Daily Sketch** and the **Nigerian Tribune** with the following headline "US EXPOSED — PLAN TO DISLOCATE NIGERIA LEAKS." The **Daily Sketch** reported the story thus:

"The United States has a grand design to dislocate the political scene in Nigeria this year.

It wants to launch OPERATIONS HEARTBURN AND HEADACHE. The two operations are designed to solve the problem posed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief M.K.O. Abiola.

According to a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) document, the simultaneous executions of the operations before the 1983 general elections recommends

itself.

Prepared by a Miss Kiki Monshi to Ambassador Thomas Pickering, the document said "the dislocation of the Nigerian political psyche is necessary". The plan was part of a discussion at a seminar held on January 17 this year (1983). Parts of the minutes of the seminar reads:

"The dislocation of the Nigerian Political Psyche is necessary. The ruling National Party is useful in the drive to attain this objective. M.K.O. Abiola has outlived his usefulness to our service.

The Central Intelligence Agency has become notorious in Nigeria partly because of M.K.O.

Colonel Haywood the former military attache remarks how easy it was for the opposition Unity Party to uncover the role of the embassy in the electoral reorientation of 1979.

His flirtation with the opposition led by Obafemi Awolowo exemplifies the need to go ahead with operation HEARTBURN AND HEADACHE to solve the problem of these two personalities.

Simultaneous execution of these operation before the 1983 general elections recommends itself.

The X— Department must be well briefed on these wet affair. In view of these 'catastrophes' a premise will be created to install a friendly military government in Nigeria after a random purge of the present corrupt federal administration. The rectification in Chile is a valuable operational precedent. The state department must remind all field operatives in Nigeria that Federal Policy cannot accommodate Awolowo in control of affairs in Nigeria. An attempt at secession cannot be foreclosed. United States interests in Nigeria will suffer great damage if the United States sacrifices the Yoruba nation the way it sacrificed Biafra.

In the last regard, United States interests will be at variance from British interests. In view of the complications of secession, a contingency plan must be formulated in advance of which the key element is the decoupling of Nigeria from Britain.

Good luck on the committee".

The American embassy did not waste time in denouncing the memorandum as a falsehood deliberately authored by a super power using an African country to discredit America's growing friendship with the rest of the world. Ambassador Thomas Pickering was later posted from Nigeria to El-Salvador.

It should be noted with all seriousness, that Ambassador Thomas Pickering however, was the first American Ambassador in Nigeria to visit Papa Awolowo at his residence. In 1981, Ambassador Thomas Pickering with two of his officials had had dinner with Papa Awo and his wife Chief (Mrs) H.I.D. Awolowo at their 31A Park Lane residence Apapa. Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu and myself were present at the dinner. It lasted over two and a half hours. Miss Kiki Monshi on the other had was the American official responsible for organising a month long visit of Nigerian women in politics to America in January 1981. These women included Mrs. Fibi Nadah of Gongola state, Mrs. Hanatu Ibrahim of Bauchi state, Hajia Muri Abubakar of Kaduna state, Chief (Mrs) Abiola Babatope of the National Assembly and a lady from Anambra state whose name has escaped the memory of this writer.

Lord Fenner Breckway one of the most respected leaders of the Labour Party in Britain declared in 1980 Blackpool Conference of the party:- "African countries are calling for partnership and proper understanding of their affairs. It is our duty in the West to give them such partnership". It was a confirmation of the prophecy of Awo while ending his book *Path to Nigerian Freedom* published in 1947. Papa Awo had concluded thus "Time marches on". "We may stop the clock or put its hand back in order to give false impression of a slow or stationery state; yet it marches on just the same. The people of Nigeria are moving forward to the goal of their ambition at a phenomenal pace. However much one may, willingly, underrate the pace of their progress, they are advancing rapidly just the same.

There is grave danger ahead if the trustee power lags behind. It is better to go a little too fast, than to

move much too slowly. It is better to give the ward a little more responsibility than he could bear than to give him much less. In the one case he would bubble with a good deal of unused energy such surplus energy would not be allowed to run to waste. It may be employed to cultivate intense nationalism. But nationalism knows no moderation when it is in the saddle, it rides hard."

The imperialists picking up this gauntlet moved fast to keep pace with Awo as he ascended the political ladder in his quest for greatness for Nigeria. "STOP HIM. WEAR HIM OUT" were the battle cries of the imperialists and these continued for long possibly till 9th May 1987 when the old man breathed his last.

It came as no surprise to anyone that major newspapers in the WEST did not only report the death of the African political colossus but also ran obituaries on him. **London Times** said of Awo "-- one of the most effective black leaders of Africa died in his home town Ikenne on 9th May 1987.

The Federal system in Nigeria wasted his organisational ability." The **London Times** and its sponsors are definitely in a position to know and affirm this point.

"The soul of a nation can best be found in the lives of its great leaders. Chief Awolowo was one of Nigeria's greatest leaders and embodies the soul of this great nation" declared Mr Princeton Lyman (Ambassador of the United States to Nigeria) while Sir Geoffery Howe — the British Foreign Secretary in his own tribute to Awo said among other things "-- The British Government shares in the profound sense of loss felt throughout Nigeria and the whole of West Africa at the passing away of this legendary statesman". The apparent ironies inherent in such 'hypocritical nonsense' as represented by these and other tributes to Papa Awo is resolved by Harold Wilson one time British Prime Minister when in his tribute to the sage he declared "Awo would have been an excellent President of the United States or Prime Minister of Britain". Well said indeed.

"The light is out, the legend is no more. Here goes a

Caesar; when cometh another?" When Chief Obafemi Awolowo died on 9th May 1987, many intelligence organisations of several countries of the Euro-American scene would have closed the political case file of one of the greatest political fighters to emerge in Africa this century.

CHAPTER 2

Awo's Friends Who Left Before 1979

One of the charges being paraded all over the country by political opponents of Papa Awo is that many of Awo's lieutenants have always had cause to withdraw their membership of the party he led. Shortly before the military permitted political party activities in the country in 1978, newspapers in Nigeria had their pages littered with publications of those politicians tagged "Not in Awo's Camp." It was quite interesting to note that the Constituent Assembly elected to put finishing touches to the Constitution to govern the second republic was broken into two clear and identifiable groups. These groups were "Those in Awo's Camp" and "Those not in Awo's Camp." These labels were given by the members of the Constituent Assembly themselves.

It was also a daily feature of some Nigerian newspapers then (1978) to feature prominently names of Awo's old colleagues of the Action Group who were said to have withdrawn support from the old man.

The names of S.G. Ikoku, Chief Anthony Enahoro, late Senator Joseph Serwuan Tarka, late Chief Akanbi Onitiri, and Chief Akin Olugbade were often mentioned. The arguments on why these people withdrew their support for Papa Awolowo were so strong that Papa Awolowo was forced to issue a press release to clarify some of the misconceptions then branded about by political renegades simply to cast aspersions on the political character and integrity of the old man. It was in the press release that Papa Awolowo declared his famous saying that now re-echoes all the time in the ears of patriots: "I am a relentless progressive. I am a democrat socialist".

It is important to document for posterity some comments on the names of some politicians given above who at one time or the other were colleagues of Awo. Whatever I say about them are my own personal research findings on their political

lives and on why they severed relationship with the old man. I have not assassinated any one's character and neither are my views coloured with any political sentiment, prejudice or parochialism. Some of the findings put down here have been based on my contact with certain documents relevant to the production of this book and also on the views of Papa Awolowo that I have listened to and have also had cause to record on these men. The stories are all a part of the great life battles fought by Awo — The battle of his friends.

1.1 SAMUEL GOOMSU IKOKU

Samuel Goomsu Ikoku was one of the frontline leaders of the Action Group in the first republic who ended up as a member of the ruling National Party of Nigeria in the second republic. A very brilliant economist, S.G. Ikoku was one of the students of the famous Harold Laski, a Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics, S.G. Ikoku holds a Master's degree in Economics.

S.G. Ikoku's talent as a gifted orator and a radical politician was discovered by Papa Obafemi Awolowo in the early fifties. Awo did not waste much time in inviting him to join the Action Group. Ikoku created history in Nigerian politics when he became the first man to contest an election against his own father the well known late Sir Alvan Ikoku of Arochuku in Eastern Nigeria. S.G. Ikoku defeated his father and consequently became the official leader of the Action Group Opposition in the then Eastern Regional House of Assembly.

By 1960, S.G. Ikoku had become a major force in the politics of the country. His brilliance, his oratorical power, his charm as a revolutionary socialist activist soon warmed him close to Papa Obafemi Awolowo. It is now a part of Nigeria's history that the insistence of Chief Awolowo on having Ikoku as the General Secretary of the then Action Group in preference to Chief Ayo Rosiji was one of the causes of the Action Group crisis of 1962.

At the Jos Conference of the party, S.G. Ikoku was unanimously elected the General Secretary of the Action Group. He defeated Chief Ayo Rosiji who had held the post for many years in a landslide. Chief Ayo Rosiji withdrew from the Conference and joined forces with the Akintola faction of the party. A major rift within one of the best organised political parties in Africa had thus begun.

One of the highlights of the Action Group Jos Conference of 1962 was the declaration of DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM as the ideological stand of the party. Consequently the Action Group Federal Secretariat was organised massively along radical lines. S.G. Ikoku contributed immensely to the process of radicalisation of the party.

Conservative elements within the Action Group who found the new ideological trend of the Action Group as not being suitable for their class positions did not waste time in declaring open war against the party. Late Chief Okunowo from Ijebu-Ode was to later explode on the floor of the House of Representatives that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was now surrounding himself with young and bearded communist rascals. (Obafemi Awolowo, *The Travails of Democracy and The Rule of Law*, 1987).

The Action Group crisis later worsened leading to the declaration of a state of emergency in the then Western Region controlled by the party. An administrator Dr. 'Koye Majekodunmi was appointed by the Balewa led N.P.C. government to rule the region.

S.G. Ikoku later fled to Ghana to seek political refuge there. As Papa Awolowo himself said, S.G. Ikoku came out with the suggestion that Action Group leaders should seek refuge in Nkrumah's Ghana. Papa Awo said that at a rally of the Action Group at Oko-Awo in Lagos after the Balewa government had declared emergency in the Western Region, S.G. Ikoku pleaded with him (AWO) to take his suggestion of fleeing to Ghana. Papa Awo said his reply to Ikoku was a firm NO. Papa Awo told Ikoku that it was going to be most distressing news in all decent ears if he as the leader of the Action Group should desert the teeming supporters of the party and seek refuge in a country where he would soon pose a security problem to his hosts. S.G. Ikoku disappeared immediately to Ghana that same day.

S.G. Ikoku was to be in exile in Nkrumah's Ghana for a little over four years. While in Ghana, S.G. Ikoku enjoyed tremendous goodwill from the Nkrumah government. Kwame Nkrumah and Chief Obafemi Awolowo were very good friends. Their first meeting was at the 1945 Manchester Pan-African Conference. The Conference was equally attended by late Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and President Kamuzu Banda the dictator of Malawi.

S.G. Ikoku soon became the Economic Adviser to Kwame Nkrumah. This was besides his being a Senior Lecturer at the Ideological Institute at Winneba (a beautiful small town on the road to Cape Coast in Ghana) and also the Deputy Editor of the SPARK a radical socialist weekly of the AFRICAN REVOLUTION.

Following the February 24, 1966 Coup in Ghana which terminated the progressive government of Kwame Nkrumah, the military rulers in Ghana led by General Joseph Ankrah arrested S.G. Ikoku and another Nigerian, Mr. Ayo Adebajo (also an Action Grouper who had fled into exile following the events of 1962) and returned them to the military rulers in Nigeria. The two men were subsequently detained by the Nigerian military rulers. S.G. Ikoku remained in prison for about eighteen months before being released by General Yakubu Gowon.

After his release, S.G. Ikoku was appointed Senior Lecturer in Development Economics at the School of African and Asian studies, University of Lagos, on the recommendation of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. S.G. Ikoku was to later become a roving Ambassador for the Gowon regime during the civil war. He was also later appointed Commissioner for Economic Development and Reconstruction in the Ukpabi Asika led East Central State government.

When Chief Awolowo visited Enugu in 1970 in his capacity as the Federal Commissioner for Finance, S.G. Ikoku threw a big party for him and paid glowing tributes to Awo as a great leader who had helped the Ibo states tremendously in the post war reconstruction programme. Many dignitaries were invited to the party.

In 1971, S.G. Ikoku delivered a lecture at the University of Ife titled "The role of the individual in history" to mark the 62nd birthday of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The lecture was a brilliant expose on the life and times of Awo. There was nothing beautiful under the sun that "Comrade" S.G. Ikoku did not say of Awo.

In 1972, S.G. Ikoku ran into problems with Ukpabi Asika the then Administrator of the East Central State. Ikoku was consequently removed from office as Commissioner by Asika. Ikoku later returned to the University of Lagos. He did not spend three months in the School of African and Asian studies before he ran into trouble again with the

authorities there. These problems later culminated into his leaving the University of Lagos.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo again moved to his aid by helping him secure another appointment at the Institute of African Studies then newly established at the University of Ife. S.G. Ikoku later declined the offer after announcing to the world through a *Sunday Times* interview published in 1973 that he had decided to go into full scale business. He equally told Nigerians that he was giving up politics for good. His reason for going into business was "to maintain a living".

No cogent reasons have been given till today by S.G. Ikoku on why he decided to sever political association and ties with Awo. He is, however, the author of the rather unfair accusation against Papa Awo that Awo was the leader of a Yoruba irredentist movement. His break with Awo became noticeable by the public about 1976 when he (Ikoku) issued a statement attacking Chief Awolowo's refusal to serve in a handpicked Consitution Drafting Committee by the then Military regime led by General Murtala Ramat Mohammed to prepare a new Constitution for the country.

As brilliant, as intelligent and as eloquent as Samuel Goomsu Ikoku is, it is sad that he has always found it easy to sever ties and connections with leaders that he has had the opportunity of serving. He served Kwame Nkrumah but when Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown by the Ghana military, Ikoku wrote a book "LE GHANA DU NKRUMAH" Published by MASPERO PARIS which contained strong indictments of the Nkrumah regime in Ghana. One would have thought that S.G. Ikoku as a very close aide of Nkrumah in his days in power had the rather unique opportunity of solving some of the problems that he highlighted in his book. There are still some of Nkrumah's old associates in Ghana who feel very bad about the comments of S.G. Ikoku's book on Nkrumah's Ghana.

It is equally well known that S.G. Ikoku decamped to the National Party of Nigeria from the Peoples Redemption Party (P.R.P) led by Mallam Aminu Kano few days before Mallam's death. S.G. Ikoku served as Adviser to President Shehu Shagari on National Assembly matters during the second republic.

1.2 CHIEF ANTHONY ENAHORO

Chief Anthony Enahoro was also one of the frontline leaders of the Action Group in the first republic who later severed comradeship with Awo. Anthony Eromosele Enahoro was one of the frontline nationalists that fought for the country's independence. A brilliant journalist with a handsome personality, Chief Anthony Enahoro was one of the young nationalists that went to jail as a result of his radical anti-colonial views and opinions. Chief Anthony Enahoro was to later write on his experiences in his best seller *The Fugitive Offender* (a book he wrote on his travails after the Action Group crisis of 1962).

Chief Anthony Enahoro joined the Action Group in 1951 and remained throughout the political days of the first republic a frontline member of the party. He was one of the Ministers representing the Action Group in the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos. Chief Anthony Enahoro in his days as an Action Group politician was a firm believer in party discipline. When the Action Group had a major conflict with the colonial government on the issue of immediate independence for Nigeria in 1953, Chief Anthony Enahoro obeyed the instruction of his party to the letter by resigning his post as Minister immediately.

It is also to the eternal credit of Chief Anthony Enahoro that it was he who on behalf of his party the Action Group, moved the famous "Independence motion" for Nigeria on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1953.

After the 1956 elections in the old Western Region of Nigeria, Chief Anthony Enahoro emerged one of the Ministers of Chief Obafemi Awolowo's radical and progressive government there. Chief Anthony Enahoro served as the Region's Minister for information. Chief Awolowo's era as Premier of Western Nigeria remains evergreen in the minds of all Nigerians for it was a pace setter of an era.

When in 1959 Chief Obafemi Awolowo announced his intention to move to the Centre in Lagos, Chief Anthony Enahoro equally announced his desire to move there with his leader. Thus in 1959, Chief Awolowo and Chief Enahoro emerged as Honourable members of the House of Representatives in Lagos after the December 1959 Federal elections. The Action Group lost the elections and became the official

party in Opposition to the Balewa led N.P.C./N.C.N.C. coalition government. Chief Anthony Enahoro was immediately announced as an Action Group Shadow Minister in the House.

One thing that must be mentioned about the Awo/Enahoro relationship is the fact that by 1959, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had started to notice the vacuum that could exist in the leadership of Western Nigeria that he was vacating for a seat at the Central government.

In order to prevent this kind of situation from developing, Chief Obafemi Awolowo proposed Chief Anthony Enahoro as the man to succeed him as Premier of Western Nigeria. This idea was completely rejected by the elders and some leaders of the Action Group who felt that it sounded reasonable to the ears if Chief Awolowo was succeeded as Premier of Western Nigeria by his deputy in the party, Chief S.L. Akintola who was then serving in the House of Representatives in Lagos.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo for sometime persisted in his belief that Chief Anthony Enahoro or any other leader within the Action Group should succeed him rather than Chief S.L. Akintola. It was Chief Awolowo's belief that Chief S.L. Akintola might not be a successful Premier of the Region. Eventually, Chief Obafemi Awolowo succumbed to the pressures of the Action Group leaders and it was Chief S.L. Akintola that succeeded him as Premier of Western Nigeria. It was to be a costly exercise and mistake. Chief Anthony Enahoro immediately announced that he would move with Chief Awolowo to the Centre because he could not serve under an Akintola regime in Western Nigeria. The reasons he advanced were quite honest and genuine and they were also to be later vindicated by the 1962 events, in the party.

When the Action Group crisis broke out in 1962, and emergency was eventually declared in Western Nigeria, Chief Anthony Enahoro made a prophetic statement on the floor of the House of Representatives when debates on the declaration of the state of emergency were on, that Nigeria by what was about to happen was witnessing a series of events the end of which no one could predict. The statement was also validated some years later when the simple but dangerous exercise evolved from the House of Representatives to break the political power base of one man — AWO — blew up on

everybody's face and landed Nigeria in a very unfortunate and bloody civil war.

Chief Anthony Enahoro later fled into exile. He was later arrested by the British Police when he landed in Britain to see his children schooling there. He was tried under the English immigration law as a prohibited immigrant. He was found guilty and subsequently returned to Nigeria to face treasonable felony charges. After a long trial, Chief Anthony Enahoro was sentenced by Justice Lambo to a term of fifteen years imprisonment. Chief Anthony Enahoro's book, *The Fugitive Offender* was a reflection of all his experience during the turbulent times of the Action Group crisis in Nigerian Politics.

Chief Anthony Enahoro was released from prison alongside Chief Obafemi Awolowo in August, 1966, after the coup of 29th July 1966.

Chief Anthony Enahoro started taking his distance from Chief Obafemi Awolowo politically immediately after his release during the 1966 leaders of thought meeting in Lagos. As a result of the political problems created by the coup of 29th July, 1966, General Yakubu Gowon (then Lieutenant Colonel), had called a meeting of leaders of thought representing the four regions to discuss on the constitutional future of the country. While Chief Obafemi Awolowo led the Western Nigeria delegation, it was Chief Anthony Enahoro that led the Mid-West delegation. The differences between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Anthony Enahoro became noticeable by the public when the stands of the delegations led by the two men on the future constitutional arrangement for Nigeria differed.

During the leaders of thought meetings, Chief Anthony Enahoro started to pull more to the side of the Northern leaders. Political observers believed that the Northern leaders might have influenced Chief Anthony Enahoro to start a gradual disengagement from Chief Obafemi Awolowo

Chief Anthony Enahoro was appointed the Federal Commissioner for Information by the Gowon military administration in 1967 just before the civil war broke out. He served as a Federal Commissioner until 1975 when the Gowon regime was overthrown. His last assignment as Federal Commissioner was in charge of Special duties connected with FESTAC.

When political party activities returned in 1978, Chief Anthony Enahoro announced his membership of the National Party of Nigeria and emerged as the party's first chairman in Bendel State of Nigeria. It is however remarkable that unlike S.G. Ikoku, Chief Anthony Enahoro never spoke ill of Chief Obafemi Awolowo throughout the life of the second republic. He has kept out of any public controversy on why he broke his relationship with Awo. It is equally interesting to note that the NPN hawks who removed Enahoro from the leadership of the party in Bendel State in 1980 branded Anthony Enahoro an agent of Chief Awolowo within the NPN simply because Chief Enahoro had refused to comment adversely on Awo.

1.3 JOSEPH SERWUAN TARKA

Joseph Serwuan Tarka was a colourful politician who emerged as the first man to lead an armed revolt against feudal oppression in the country. He was leader of the militant United Middle Belt Congress (U.M.B.C.) that was at the head of the struggle for the creation of Middle Belt state out of the then Northern region of Nigeria.

The United Middle Belt Congress was an amalgam of minority groups that presently inhabit the Kwara, Benue, Plateau, Gongola and parts of Bauchi states. It was a well organised movement with para-military bases in all the areas mentioned above. Joseph Serwuan Tarka as the leader of the group was soon to discover that the Action Group led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo offered the minority groups in the North a great political and ideological cover for their struggle. By 1959, an alliance between the U.M.B.C. and the Action Group had been well positioned for the December 1959 elections which was to throw up a government that would lead Nigeria to independence in 1960.

It is worth mentioning here that Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Action Group was the major champion for the creation of states in the country in the first republic. The party (A.G.) pursued a vigorous creation of states policy. The party presented memoranda on the issue to the various constitutional conferences that took place between 1951 and 1960. It was no surprise that the various minority groups fighting for the creation of states for their respective areas found in Chief Obafemi Awolowo a very good friend and

sincere comrade. The Action Group found it easy to strike alliance deals with the Bornu Youth Movement led by late Alhaji Ibrahim Imam and the Calabar, Ogoja-Rivers state movement (C.O.R.) apart from the United Middle Belt Congress led by Joseph Serwuan Tarka.

It is also worth mentioning that the Action Group was also seen by peasant groups as a worthy ally and companion. The Action Group/Ilorin Talaka Parapo alliance now readily comes to mind as a good example of this situation. The Ilorin Talaka Parapo association was led by late Alhaji Sule Maito. Talaka Parapo is a Yoruba expression meaning the alliance of poor people.

One of the reasons why Chief Awolowo was hated and dreaded by his political opponents was his organisational ability and commitment to laudable ideals and principles. Chief Obafemi Awolowo always threw himself seriously into any cause he was convinced was worth fighting for. All the various political groups that were allied to the Action Group did not waste time in embracing the radicalism, the speed of action and the dynamism of their major partner — the Action Group.

In the 1959 Federal elections, after the Action Group and its allies had thrown everything into the campaigns and all the other parties (the NPC and the N.C.N.C.) had been forced and stretched into a battle of the titans, the leader of the NPC late Sardauna of Sokoto was said to have been so annoyed at the unprecedented campaign assault that Chief Awolowo had mounted in the North. On one occasion while wiping out dust from his face during one of the campaigns (an exercise he had never done before) he was quoted to have said, "I will never pardon Awolowo for this."

The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) representing the Northern feudal establishment never pardoned Joseph Tarka and the United Middle Belt Congress for ever allying with a turbulent and radical politician like Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

Following the crisis within the Action Group and the subsequent events in the then Western Region of Nigeria in 1962, Joseph Tarka was one of the Action Group leaders charged with Chief Obafemi Awolowo for treasonable felony and conspiracy. The then ruling establishment had seized the opportunity of the Action Group crisis to solve the problem of the radical and aggressive politics of the Action Group and

its allies. That the Action Group lived till 1966 (before the coup of the young majors) was due in the main to the will of the people and the sound organisational structure of the party.

Many of the minority groups all over the country that allied with the Action Group started collapsing and degenerating as pressure movements. One by one, members of these organisations started to decamp into the Northern People's Congress (N.P.C.). Many leaders of the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement started decamping into the Northern People's Congress believing that their state aspirations could only be met by the ruling Northern People's Congress.

This was evidenced by what one of the leaders of the C.O.R. movement, Chief Andrew Bassey said in his book: *A People's Struggles for Survival* and released in 1980. He had written:-

"The marathon trial of Chief Obafemi Awolowo provided to this great country a very good opportunity to see and assess the true worth of Chief Awolowo whose legal ability, fortitude, clear political vision are unsurpassed measured by any standard. Yes, although most of those who closely followed the trial expected that Chief Awolowo and some of the accused would be discharged and acquitted, they were eventually convicted and the Chief was sentenced to ten years — while some of the others received various terms. He all along demonstrated such calmness and serenity that the world noticed in the satanic trial of our Lord Jesus Christ who was unruffled all along. Yet the Chief took the sentence with equanimity and had time to predict openly that the country was entering into ten years of darkness that would later be dispelled — by bright light — Yes light after darkness. I am sure we all in Nigeria saw the darkness.

In the matter of the creation of states in the country which Chief Awolowo was the loudest and persistent advocate among top political leaders until he went to prison, it is significant that God used him to get the states created when he was released from the prison in Calabar and placed second to the then Head of State and also as Federal Commissioner for Finance. He may be likened to the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who was brought out of prison and placed at the head of affairs in the country — the Gold Coast, now

Ghana and he did extremely well. Only one who was not in a position to know will fail to appreciate the truth that Chief Awolowo came out of prison and played the greatest part in the dissection of Nigeria into states in May 1967.

He must have heaved a sigh of relief at the accomplishment of his operation since he had always believed and preached that progress and real development in Nigeria would follow the breaking up of the country into states of which the South Eastern State now Cross River State is one."

The United Middle Belt Congress of Joseph Serwuan Tarka was also caught off guards by the sad events of the period. Joseph Tarka was jailed alongside Chief Obafemi Awolowo having been found guilty of treasonable felony and conspiracy. Joseph Tarka was also later released by Yakubu Gowon in August 1966. He also emerged as one of the leaders of the Northern group to the leaders of thought meeting in Lagos in 1966 on the constitutional future of the county. It was at the Lagos meetings that it became noticeable that Joseph Tarka was pulling himself away from Awo. No reason could be advanced for this line of action except that Anthony Enahoro and Joseph Tarka were being made to believe that they also could lead the country.

The only sign that was evident to Action Group leaders by 1965 about possible signs of trouble in the alliance between the party and the U.M.B.C. came after a meeting of the A.G. National Executive Council at Ibadan. The U.M.B.C. leader was quoted to have said "The cow is no longer milking." This was a reference to the fact that the Action Group as a result of the crisis could no longer maintain the operations of the party and its allies.

Joseph Tarka was appointed a Federal Commissioner in charge of the Ministry of Transport by the Yakubu Gowon led Federal military government.

In 1974, Joseph Tarka resigned his post as Federal Commissioner in the wake of series of affidavits sworn to by a Lagos businessman Godwin Daboh alleging that Joseph Tarka was corrupt. Joseph Tarka was said to have later accused Chief Obafemi Awolowo of being the brain behind Godwin Daboh's move against him. Joseph Tarka was said to have declared that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was in a position to have stopped the Daily Times from championing the publications of the Daboh affidavits. The truth of the matter however was that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was not in a posi-

tion to do what Tarka wanted since he held no shares in the **Daily Times**.

Some people have also said that Joseph Tarka also believed that the late Joseph Gomwalk, the then military governor of Benue Plateau State was behind the Godwin Daboh allegations against him. Joseph Tarka was believed to have been behind the 1974 Aper Aku affidavits of corruption against the late Joseph Gomwalk as a retaliatory blow for what happened to him (Tarka) in 1974. Some have said also that the nomination of Aper Aku as the first post Military Governor of the Benue State was a sort of compensation for Aper Aku by Joseph Tarka for the 1974 "Joseph Gomwalk affair."

With the declaration by the Murtala Mohammed military administration in July 1975 that normal democratic rule would be achieved in 1979, Tarka went to the Constituent Assembly. He later joined the National Party of Nigeria. He contested the Presidential nominations of the NPN at its first convention held at the Casino Cinema in Lagos in December 1978. He lost the party nomination but later led the party to grand victories in all the five elections held in July 1979. Joseph Tarka won his election into the country's Senate with a landslide. Colourful Joseph Serwuan Tarka later died in a London hospital in 1980 after a protracted illness.

It must however be stated clearly here that by the time Joseph Tarka died, a new move had commenced from his side to normalise relationship with Chief Obafemi Awolowo. If he had lived, Chief Awolowo and Tarka would probably have fought the 1983 elections together. Chief Obafemi Awolowo sent Senator Abraham Adesanya to London to deliver a get well quick message to Joseph Tarka. When Joseph Tarka died, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was in the Senate building to pay his last respects to one of his colleagues in the great struggles against feudalism.

1.4 CHIEF SAMUEL AKANBI ONITIRI

Chief Samuel Akanbi Onitiri was one of the Lagos leaders of the defunct Action Group in Nigeria's first Republic. He was also one of the leaders of the Action Group that got tried and convicted for treasonable felony and conspiracy.

After the coup of 1966, Chief Samuel Onitiri emerged as the leader of a Lagos based *Committee of Friends*. With the banning of political party activities by the then military regime, the Action Group leaders in Lagos formed a *Com-*

mittee of Friends, which was organised as a social forum for former leaders and supporters of the banned Action Group. It is to the credit of the group that the annual birthday celebrations of Chief Obafemi Awolowo were held under its auspices throughout the period of military rule in the country.

Meetings of the Lagos *Committee of Friends* were held regularly in Chief Akanbi Onitiri's house for all the years of military rule. The meetings of the group were taken out of Chief Onitiri's house in 1978 when it was discovered that Chief Onitiri was about pulling out of the group.

In 1977, Chief Akanbi Onitiri contested the Constituent Assembly elections and won representing the Yaba and Ebute-Metta council areas of Lagos in the Assembly. He was assisted in his campaigns for the Constituent Assembly by the *Committee of Friends*.

Chief Akanbi Onitiri started severing relationship with Papa Awo when he became a member of the Constituent Assembly. He was said to have been made chairman of a Committee of thirty eight Constituent Assembly members who had been organised by Chief A. Akinfosile to plan the formation of a political party. An idea was said to have developed within Chief Onitiri to the effect that he also could run for the nation's Presidency. Chief Onitiri later joined the *Club 19* which was one of the political groups that merged to form the Nigerian People's Party (N.P.P.) Chief Akanbi Onitiri later became one of the Lagos leaders of the Nigerian People's Party when political party activities began in the country

Chief Akanbi Onitiri later declared himself the Presidential candidate of the N.P.P. for the 1979 elections after Nigerians had been informed that the N.P.P. National Executive Council then chairmaned by Chief Akinfosile had been dissolved and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe removed as the party's Presidential candidate. Chief Akanbi Onitiri announced one Alhaji Idrisu an Okene based businessman as his running mate. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) chairmaned by Chief Michael Ani (Chief Onitiri's In-Law. One of Chief Ani's daughters is married to one of Chief Onitiri's relations) was to later reject Chief Akanbi Onitiri's candidacy.

Chief Akanbi Onitiri remained a loyal N.P.P. man until

his death in a motor accident in 1980 while returning from an N.P.P. meeting.

Chief Akanbi Onitiri never had any fundamental reason for pulling away from Chief Obafemi Awolowo. He had felt rightly or wrongly that he also could contest Presidential election like Chief Obafemi Awolowo. That is the only reason one could spotlight on why Chief Onitiri did not join the Unity Party of Nigeria in 1978.

1.5 CHIEF AKIN OLUGBADE

Chief Akin Olugbade was one of the Action Group front benchers in the post independence House of Representatives in Lagos. He was a very powerful and eloquent debater who made tremendous impact in his contributions at the Federal House of Representatives.

With the coup of 1966, Chief Akin Olugbade went into private business. When political party activities began in 1978, Chief Akin Olugbade joined the National Party of Nigeria. He never accused Chief Obafemi Awolowo of having done anything to him.

In 1981 when the **National Concord** newspaper then supporting the N.P.N. in view of the membership of the party by its proprietor Chief Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, came out to attack Chief Awolowo on the 1963 Coker Commission of Enquiry, Chief O.B. Akin Olugbade wrote a powerful article in defence of Chief Obafemi Awolowo thereby letting the world know that the Coker Commission of Enquiry was one of the inquisitions established by the opponents of the Action Group to liquidate the party and its leader Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

Chief Akin Olugbade prospered as a businessman, during the years of the military in Nigerian politics. Possibly he too decided to sever relations with Papa Awo on the grounds that Papa Awo's socialist ideas would be strange to his business interests.

Those who hated Awo did so with every fibre of their existence. They constantly invented false stories to weaken Awo's position. Awo was labelled "rigid" and stubborn. Awo remained undaunted in the face of those charges. He remained by the side of the masses of the people until he breathed his last.

CHAPTER 3

How Awo Formed The Banned UPN

“May I reaffirm, in all humility and unshaken faith, that there is no cause for despair. For, it is to the progressive and radical elements in Nigeria, whose numbers are rapidly increasing, that the morrow of our illustrious country belongs” —

Awo London 1961

In view of the parochial and narrow minded views of Awo's critics who accuse his leadership of belonging to a Yoruba irredentist movement, it has become very important for the history of how the U.P.N. was formed to be written down. This sketchy historical analysis of the U.P.N. will help explain the efforts of Papa Obafemi Awolowo and the entire leadership of the Party to give to Nigeria a political party that would for ever be a source of pride, inspiration and joy to all.

“We know that the people the masses make history. The people are divided into classes, which in the course of the class struggle organise their own political parties...from whose ranks come leaders, the most experienced, trained and active members. The role of these leaders in history consists in organising the people, rousing them to action, setting them definite tasks and mobilising them to carry out these tasks.

....Great people do not appear by chance but by historical necessity, when the corresponding objective conditions are ripe. Outstanding political figures, leaders of the people come to the fore in a period of radical revolutionary changes in society, very great political actions and popular uprisings. Men of genius appear in science most often when

production requires sound great scientific discovery. More-over a talented person will go down in history only if his capabilities, character and intellect are needed by society at a given stage of its development”.

V. Afanasyev.

The above introduces us adequately to the history of the Unity Party of Nigeria (U.P.N). The U.P.N. came into being at 11 a.m. on the 22nd of September, 1978 when Papa Obafemi Awolowo addressing a press conference in Lagos pronounced the following memorable words:-

“At long last the ban on political activities has been lifted as one of the steps towards the return to civil rule in Nigeria in 1979. By this act, the Federal Military Government has bestowed on Nigeria THE DAWN — the long awaited dawn — which promises a new era of bright and radiant light for democracy in our fatherland ... I do this on behalf of myself and the Unity Party of Nigeria which in accordance with the wishes of the National Committee of Friends, came into being upon the declaration of return to political activities”.

The U.P.N had however long existed before Papa finally declared its birth to the Nigerian public after the lifting of the ban on politics by the military administration. It is therefore important to examine the historical development of this party that was easily the best organised and the best led political organisation in Nigeria.

JANUARY 1966 COUP AND BEYOND

Following the coup of the five young majors led by late Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu on 15th January 1966, the political parties of the first republic were banned by the military administration. The assets of all the political parties were also confiscated. The Action Group was one of the political parties that came under the hammer of the new military Government.

At the time of the coup, several Action Group leaders including the leader of the Party, Papa Obafemi Awolowo

were in many prisons of the country having been sentenced to various terms of imprisonment as a result of a treasonable felony trial in 1963. These leaders were not released from prison until August 3, 1966 after another coup led by some northern officers had taken place on the 29th of July, 1966.

The Action Group in the days of politics of the first Republic was reputed to have been the best organised party in Nigeria. Many renowned authors in the world have always named Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party of Ghana and the Action Group Party of Nigeria as the best organised political organisations in Africa.

Several leaders of the banned Action Group found it extremely difficult to sever connections altogether with the solid apparatus of mass mobilisation that they had established over the years.

With the ban imposed on politics by the military, the level of interaction amongst the Action Group members was therefore confined to social events. Many of the leaders kept the social interactions on from 1966 until 1978 when the ban was lifted.

A. THE COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS (LAGOS STATE)

The Committee of Friends came into being in Lagos State in 1966 after the release of the Action Group Leaders from prison by General Yakubu Gowon.

The Committee of Friends was founded by the Lagos Division members of the Action Group. Later it spread to other divisions in the state.

The Lagos division Committee of Friends met regularly at the house of late Chief Samuel Akanbi Onitiri from 1966 till 1977. The others also held their separate meetings beginning on various dates. The Lagos State Committee of Friends held meetings during the same period in the office of Alhaji L.K. Jakande in Lagos.

Chief Akanbi Onitiri's house remained the venue of the meetings of the Lagos Division Committee of Friends from 1966 till 1977 when it became clear that he (Chief Onitiri) no longer agree with the philosophy and principles of the organisation. The meetings of the Committee then moved to the residence of Chief J.O. Lambo. Lateef Jakande a renowned Nigerian journalist and the then Managing Director of African Newspapers of Nigeria Limited continued

to host the Lagos State meetings in his office until the UPN was established.

It is to the eternal credit of the Committee of Friends in Lagos State that since 1967 the birthday anniversary of our great leader Papa Obafemi Awolowo has always been marked in all festivity. The celebrations helped to bring together all the old faces of the Action Group, it helped to win new friends from among the former political parties in the country, brought into limelight new emergent democratic forces in society and also helped to keep the memories of the noble principles and philosophy of the old man alive in Lagos State.

In 1969 for example, the Lagos State Committee of Friends in conjunction with the Socialist Club of Lagos university then under the leadership of this writer organised a lecture to mark the 60th birthday anniversary of our leader Papa Obafemi Awolowo.

A lecture was organised by the Socialist Club of the university of Lagos on "STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM IN AFRICA". It was delivered by Uncle Bola Ige former Governor of Oyo State and the ceremony was presided over by Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande former Governor of Lagos State. The lecture was attended by students, workers, youths, market women and representatives of all the then 42 wards of Lagos.

The Committee of Friends, Lagos State continued with its meetings after it dissolved into the National Committee of Friends in 1977.

B. THE SOCIAL REFORMERS MOVEMENT (EKITI)

Some activists of the banned Action Group and some young radical forces in Ekiti West of Ondo State organised themselves into the above named organisation. The group also believed in Awoist socialist goals. It was a post civil war development and meetings of the organisation were held regularly in rotation among the major cities of Ekiti West Division of Ondo State viz Efon-Alaye, Aromoko, Ijero, Iddo, Ifaki, Osi, Ipoti, Ikoru, etc. etc. etc. The leader of the group was Mr. Akin Omoboriowo then an administrator at the University of Ife.

The group also organised lectures, debates and symposia all over the place.

Other leaders of the organisation were Chief Ogunyemi from Osi-Ekiti and son of late Mrs. Adunni Oluwole founder of the Commoners Liberals Peoples' Party of Nigeria who died of whitlow in 1958, Mr Adebamigbe Akilaya of Ifaki Ekiti (then an under graduate at the university of Ife) and Mr. Olawumi Falodun (who was for some time Secretary of U.P.N. in Ondo State).

A decision was taken in 1974 by the organisation to become a nationwide movement. Thus at a symposium at the Central Library early in 1975, the Nigerian Social Reformers Movement was born. The symposium attracted a large audience and partivipants including Barrister Kanmi Ishola Osobu, lawyer Gani Fawehinmi and Mr. Ebenezer Babatope. At the end of the symposium, the organisation elected officers to run its affairs.

Amongst those elected officers were Mr. Akin Omoboriowo — President; Mr. Lam Adesina, Vice-President, and Mr. Ebenezer Babatope, Secretary. Both Mr. (now Chief) Awoyode, Mr Adebamgbe Akilaya and Alhaji Anuola Adewusi were elected ex-officio members of the Executive.

Mr. Lam Adesina later became the secretary of the organisation in 1976 at a meeting held at Ibadan.

The Nigerian Social Reformers Movement submitted a memorandum to the Constitution Drafting Committee in 1975 on the type of Constitution it would want to see adopted for Nigeria.

The Nigerian Social Reformers Moverment also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends in 1977.

C IBADAN GOODWILL COMMITTEE

The Ibadan Goodwill Committee was founded around 1970 by young Ibadan citizens. the members included Mr. Lam Adesina (teacher), Niyi Adelu (trade unionist) (both former members of the Federal House of Representatives). The members were also either former members of the proscribed Action Group or those who believed in the philosophy and leadership of the old man. This organisation organised debates, lectures and symposia as a means of

keeping its members alive politically and socially. The Ibadan Goodwill Committee also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends on the birth of the latter in 1977.

D. THE AKURE MEETING

The Ondo group of friends was a post civil war development. It was established to give proper ideological leadership and direction to the people of Ondo province then (now Ondo State) who were being harrassed by some careerist military and business opportunists.

Before the establishment of this organisation, these business charlattans had been spreading false rumours among the people of Ondo State that Papa Obafemi Awolowo was not in favour of the creation of an Ondo State.

Early in 1971 some mysterious advertisements believed to have been sponsored by the former military governor of Old Western State and backed up by one Mr. Akintoba and Chief Akin-Deko started appearing in newspapers calling meetings for the creation of Ondo State.

The group of friends quickly organised themselves together so as to stop the aimless and purposeless drift of the military cum business opportunists in the province. The group was better known as the AKURE meeting. It was made up of former members of the Action Group, young emergent forces and others who were in other political parties in the first Republic but who were convinced of the need to work together with the great leader.

Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin was unanimously appointed the chairman of the Akure meeting. Meetings of the group became intensified from 1974.

Other members of the group were Professor Sam Aluko, Mr. Wunmi Adegbonmire, Mr. Akin Omoboriowo, Chief Tewe, Professor David Oke, Professor Banji Akintoye, Professor S. Agboola, Chief Akerele, Chief Okeya, Mr. Olaiya Fagbamigbe, Mr. Wunmi Falodun, Mr. Egunyimika, Chief Olukoju, Chief Adefarati, Senator Ayo Fasanmi, Smart Omodunbi, Mr. Adebamigbe Akilaiya, Mr. Alex Adedipe, Chief Fawehinmi, Chief Adegoke, Chief A. Fasoranti and a host of others.

It is to the credit of the Akure meeting that the Ondo State was eventually created through its efforts. The organisation

also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends in 1977.

Another group the OSHUN SOLIDARITY FRONT led by Mr. Sunday Afolabi also existed before it also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends.

PRESSURE GROUPS

A. THE SOCIALIST STUDY GROUP

With the banning of politics by the military in the country, several politically conscious Nigerians started organising pressure groups based on ideological grounds.

One of these pressure groups that latter dissolved into the National Committee of Friends was the socialist Study group in Lagos.

The Socialist Study group was a group of some young activists who were in the Action Group in the first Republic. The group was headed by Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande. Other members were Mr. S.G Ikoku, Alhaji R.A. Williams (deceased) Chief J.O. Lambo, Lateef Teniola, Alhaji Ganiyu Olawale Dawodu a former Chairman of the Lagos City Council, S.A. Onitiri, Alhaji T.A. Mumuni, Professor Abiola Ojo, Mr. Ojekunle Ferrerra now of the Lagos State House of Assembly.

This group held their very first seminar on Socialism early 1970 at the University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba. It was a great seminar attended by a cream of socialist and marxist scholars in the country. Papers were presented at the Seminar by the University of Lagos Socialist Club, Dr. Akin Ojo, Professor Akin Mabogunje, Mr. Alao Aka-Bashorun, and Alhaji Lateef Jakande. Others who attended the Seminar also included Dr. Kola Gbodi, Mr. Kanmi Ishola-Osobu, late Mr. Fagbewesa (then of the N.I.D.B), Alhaji Aminu Kano, Dr. Obi Wali, S.G. Ikoku, and some trade unionists in the country.

Mr. Ebenezer Babatope was the Rapporteur of the Seminar. The group held another seminar at the university of Lagos Akoka, Yaba in 1971. It was also very successful. The proceedings of the first Seminar was published later and they sold for N3 each.

As mentioned earlier this ideological pressure group also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends that was to

give birth to the Unity Party of Nigeria.

B. THE IFE GROUP

There was a powerful group at the University of Ife made up of lecturers and administrators in that University. It was a powerful pressure group whose existence was very well known even though they never formally established an organisation. The Ife group was composed of former student and lecturer activists of the banned Action Group. The group was to play an effective and positive role later in the establishment of the National Committee of Friends.

Prominent among its members were Professor Samuel Aluko, Mr. Akin Omoboriowo, Mr. Wunmi Adegbonmire alias 'Omo Ekun', Professor Banji Akintoye, Professor David Oke, and Professor A. Agboola. These men kept close relationship together and sustained the ideas of the old man at the campus until the National Committee of Friends was born in 1977 at Papa Obafemi Awolowo's residence at Ibadan. Only seven people were at the historic meeting.

C. THE FRONTIERS

There was another group in Lagos State called "THE FRONTIERS" Alhaji Sikiru Shittu-Bey, Dr. Femi Ayantuga, (former senators), Mr. Yemi Adefulu, Mr. Tunji Ayanlaja, Mr. Ebenezer Babatope, Mr. Adeyiga Ajayi, Mr. Tade Ismail (former member of Ogun State House of Assembly), Abisogun Leigh (then a commissioner in Lagos State) and Alhaji Babs Animashaun (a trade unionist) were members.

Weekly meetings were held to review political events in the country and to help propagate the philosophy of Awo. The group also dissolved into the National Committee of Friends in 1977.

1975 COUP

In his October 1st, 1974 broadcast to the Nigerian people, the then Head of State General Yakubu Gowon announced his government's inability to honour a previous pledge of returning the country to normal democratic rule in 1976. It then became obvious that General Gowon was attempting to establish a personal power regime in the country. It was

also obvious that the regime would not last long in view of the fact that all sections of the Nigerian community rose up in opposition to his seeming opportunistic designs.

On the 29th of July, 1975, Nigeria witnessed her third military coup when the government of Gowon was dismissed ignominiously ushering in a new military administration headed by late General Murtala Mohammed. The new military administration promised an early return to normal democratic rule in the country. The regime later gave 1979 as the year of return to democratic rule.

A constitution Drafting Committee was selected by the military to prepare a new Constitution for the country. It was at this juncture that it became clear that Nigeria's military was quite ready to hand over the civilians.

Party formations assumed new character after the 1975 coup.

PAPA AWO'S FRIENDS

On August 4, 1966 a day after the release of Papa Obafemi Awolowo from prison by General Yakubu Gowon (then Lieutenant Colonel), Papa in a Press statement said in conclusion:

“My conscientious appeal to all Nigerians is that instead of mocking the dead and fallen, instead of scheming vengeance against those who wronged or harmed us, we should strive to see what lessons we can usefully learn from the historic, though calamitous and tragic events of the past four years.

As far as I am concerned, it is to the future - a future which we can make great and glorious by our united action, and invincible benevolence towards one another — that I have dedicated the rest of my life. Under no circumstances will I be drawn into any sterile recriminations about the past which in my case is gone, irretrievable and irremediable”.

Papa kept to those words. He opened his doors to leaders and members of all banned political parties in the country. He also held discussions with progressive elements in society.

During the civil war, late Alhaji Zanna Bukar Dipcharima leading a group of some northern politicians, came to Lagos to make very passionate pleas to General Yakubu Gowon to

hand over power to Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The late Dipcharima insisted that this must be done immediately but was dissuaded by Papa himself in the presence of Gowon, that the request was not possible in view of the anti-democratic nature of the suggestion and also in view of the prevalent political climate in the country. Alhaji Dipcharima unfortunately lost his life some few months after the event in an air crash in Kano. Had this man lived, he might possibly have been in the leadership of the U.P.N. between 1978 and 1983.

Between 1966 and 1977, Papa discussed the possibility of establishing a progressive political organisation with the following Northern leaders (to mention a few):-

Alhaji Maitama Sule, Dr. Iya Abubakar, Mallam Aminu Kano, Alhaji Yerima Bala (formerly of NEPU and from Sokoto), Dr. Ibrahim Tahir, Alhaji Yaya Gusau (who remained a good friend of Papa till this day), and Alhaji Inua Wada of Kano. Virtually everyone of the above named persons gave positive reactions to the old man's gestures at one time or the other only to fade out later.

Some of the old colleagues of Papa in the banned Action Group also kept in close touch with him. People like Chief J.S. Olawoyin (Kwara), late Chief Wenike Briggs (Rivers), Arch-deacon Alayande (Oyo), Chief Alfred Rewane (Bendel) and several others were always around the old man. When the time came for the formation of the National Committee of Friends in 1977, all of them enthusiastically offered their support and assistance.

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS

The local government elections of 1976 December, signalled the era of political formations in the country. After the elections (that were contested on individual basis and not on political party platform), many people felt the time had come for political associations to be formed that would serve as fore-runners to future political parties.

At a meeting held early 1977 at Papa Awolowo's residence, at Ibadan it was decided that a National Committee of Friends be formed. The meeting was attended in the main by Mr. Wunmi Adegbonmire, Professor Sam Aluko, Professor Banji Akintoye, Professor Ambrose Alli, Mr. Akin Omoboriowo, Mr. Ayuba Dadazai and some other persons.

It was also decided at the meeting that all those who attended should endeavour to invite other persons to the meeting. By the time another meeting of the National Committee of Friends was held, more people attended.

The venue of the meeting was later shifted to Papa Awolowo's residence at 33, Park Lane, Apapa, Lagos. But late in 1978, it was decided that the meeting should be rechristened the NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS.

Membership:

Membership of the Committee was free. No one was ever disturbed attending the committee's meetings as invitations to the meetings were open, free and without conditions.

The democratic nature of the meetings of the National Committee of Friends was such that debates on issues of policy, constitutions and ideology were as frank, cordial and open as ever.

Members were requested to spread the crusade of the Committee far and wide with the view to enlisting more support of Nigerians for its programmes and ideals.

Papa also sent messages to all his friends, and well wishers all over the country for membership of the committee. Within the first six months of 1977, the cream of the U.P.N. leadership had been mobilised.

COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS AND NATIONAL UNITY:

Right from the inception of the Committee, it had been made clear that the aim of its existence was to establish a progressive people's party of Nigerians that will champion the yearnings and aspirations of the people. Efforts were made by all to achieve this goal.

As I mentioned earlier, emissaries were sent to various parts of Nigeria to enlist the support of all Nigerians for the Committee's set political goals.

Some of the emissaries sent by Papa to various parts of the country included Chief Michael Omisade and Ladipo Fashade (Kano); Mr. Wunmi Adegbonmire, Yemi Adefulu and this writer (Cross River State); Mr. Olaniwun Ajayi (Plateau & Bauchi); Mr. Ayo Adebajo (Plateau and Borno); Dr. Tunji Otegbeye and Nati Iwuagwu (Imo and Anambra) and Dr Olaogun Adeoye (Sokoto State).

Chief Bisi Onabanjo and Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchuku were on different occasions sent to late Dr. Michael Okpara, the former Premier of defunct Eastern Nigeria then based in Ireland. Contacts were also made with Chief Akanu Ibiam (former Governor, Eastern Nigeria).

Papa Obafemi Awolowo himself did a good job trying to wield together a crop of progressive Nigerians into a political part to serve as beacon of light, hope and inspiration to millions of Nigerians.

Papa went on series of visits to some states of the federation as earlier stated in this book, but he was unfortunately prevented by the security forces from holding meetings with his friends. Mention should be made of some of these unfortunate events.

ABAKALIKI

At Abakaliki in Anambra State, Papa was stopped by Police from staying to discuss with his friends. A senior Police official passionately appealed to Papa to kindly leave the area. He pleaded that if Papa stayed at Abakaliki that night, he was certain to lose his job. It was reasonably believed that some misguided elements tipped off the Police about Papa's visit to the area.

Incidentally, Papa was to witness an organised political riot at the same Abakaliki during the 1979 campaigns when an irate crowd threw stones at the campaign team of the old man.

This was a few days before a spirited attempt was made at Aba in May, 1979 to assassinate Papa Obafemi Awolowo. A kerosine bomb thrown at the helicopter conveying Papa out of the campaign ground merely broke the windscreen without doing much damage. It was a narrow escape for Nigeria.

It must also be mentioned that during the tour of Anambra, Papa had made an attempt to pay a courtesy call on Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe at Nsukka. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was said to be out of town.

ILORIN:

Papa's attempt to address his friends at Ilorin was also stopped by the Police.

Instructions were sent from Lagos that Chief Awolowo be

stopped from entering Kwara State by the military administration headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo. As soon as Awo arrived at Ilorin, he was told by the Police that he could not proceed further. The police categorically asserted that they were under strict instructions not to allow Papa to step Kwara.

A meeting of the National Committee of Friends (Kwara State branch) already assembled had to be called off and Papa returned to Lagos.

Papa therefore cancelled all other visits to other parts of Nigeria as a result of the government's hidden hostility to such visits. Papa only used the occasions of his professional duties as a lawyer and as Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria to commence discussions with his friends. He was able to discuss and chat with his friends in Cross River State when he paid a visit to Calabar where he had gone to appear for the Oron community in a legal action filed by the community.

Awo also opened discussions with certain persons of Northern origin that he believed could be in the same party with him. It was at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria that Papa talked to Professor Iya Abubakar (former N.P.N. Minister) and Dr. Ibrahim Tahir (a top official of the banned NPN)

It must be mentioned here that the only state of Nigeria where Papa Obafemi Awolowo had a hitch free meeting with his friends and old colleagues was Bendel State. At a meeting organised by Eddy Osifo in 1977 in Benin before Constituent Assembly deliberations began, Papa was able to talk to a cream of young and politically articulate Bendelites. These included Chief Tayo Akpata (former chairman of the N.P.N. in Bendel State) and Dr. David Omoruyi who later went to the Constituent Assembly to demand that Awolowo be banned from politics. It was a good meeting and all those who attended had ample opportunity of putting questions to the old man.

Papa also used the occasion of his visit to speak to some Bendelites of former political shades of opinion. The exercise yielded good dividends and the Unity Party of Nigeria was to later have within its fold in Bendel State, late Chief Im-

afidon, Chief Amadasun, Chief Oweh, Senator John Umoly (all formerly of the NCNC), Senator Olu Akpata and Mr. Imokhuede former civil servants in the old western region of Nigeria. By early 1978, the National Committee of Friends had become a very powerful political movement. Papers were written on various subjects by many of the members. The meeting of the Committee was based on reviews of policy papers already commissioned.

It must be mentioned at this juncture (particularly for the benefit of all the narrow minded capitalist bigots of our society who had consistently accused Papa Obafemi Awolowo of leading a tribal party) that the following people played very active roles in the affairs of the Committee of Friends:-

Dr. Ayuba Kadzai (who eventually surfaced in the Nigerian People's Party but later went into political oblivion), Mvendaga Jibo from Benue (who spoke at length in May 1977 of the Committee's meetings but bowed out of the Committee on the lifting of the ban on politics to join the N.P.N.), Barrister Ubani Ukoma son of late Chief Ubani Ukoma a former A.G. member from Aba (who was never heard of again when politics began), and Brigadier George Kurubo. He attended the Committee's meetings twice before he was never seen again. He later rejoined U.P.N. in 1981 and was immediately elected a member of the National Executive Council of the party.

The National Committee of Friends was such a cohesive and serious minded group that by August 1978 only a few things remained to be concluded in its arrangements for the launching of a political party for the country. The flags, signs, symbol and name of the party had been finalised. The policy papers, objectives and guidelines of the party to guide a future government to be formed on its basis had been prepared. A good building to house the National Secretariat of the party had been secured and a dance band to serve as carriers of the political gospel and message of the party to the people thereby attempting to secure a proletarian base had been assembled together.

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Constituent Assembly was sworn in by General

Olusegun Obasanjo in October 1977 to review the draft constitution made by the Constitution Drafting Committee and prepare a new one for Nigeria.

The meetings of the Constituent Assembly later became grounds for ambitious persons to launch unguarded and puerile attacks in Papa Awolowo's person by most of the Constituent Assembly messiahs and princes of post military politics in Nigeria. Some fine Nigerian citizens who today could have been holding positions of leadership in Nigeria wrote themselves off politically when they lost their heads to the cunning political manipulations of the feudal class in Nigeria. Some of these people include Dr. Ayuba Kadzai who stayed in Papa's Apapa residence as Papa's Guest for over three weeks when the Constituent Assembly meetings began and late Chief Michael Akanbi Onitiri (a man who at one time was the moving spirit of the Committee of Friends in Lagos State).

One significant event occurred in the Constituent Assembly that had relevance to the operations of the National Committee of Friends. Desperate efforts were made by some forces to introduce age barrier to the Constitution. A motion moved by Dr. David Omo Omoruyi from Oredo Local Government, Benue State suggested that anybody above the age of seventy must be barred from contesting the 1979 Presidential election in the country. It was an attempt to stop Papa Obafemi Awolowo from contesting elections. The maturity of the Chairman, Sir Justice Udo Udoma and the timely warning to the Assembly given by Chief Bisi Onabanjo and some others killed the motion. In the end, only sixteen people voted for the motion while the vast majority of the Assembly voted against it. After this incident, "AWO'S CAMP" became the vogue in the Constituent Assembly. The members were identified either as being in "AWO'S CAMP" or not in "AWO'S CAMP".

Some newspapers in Nigeria were selling fast on some anti-Awo news being made by some members of the Constituent Assembly and some outside it who were old time colleagues and associates of Papa Obafemi Awolowo in the defunct Action Group. They were then singing new chorus to appease their new found mentors. One of them now deceased (May

his soul rest in peace) in a reply to Uncle Bola Ige in the **Sketch** said he never knew all the years that the political feet of Papa Awo was made of clay. He said he only discovered this at a meeting with Papa in February 1977. It was indeed pathetic to see the degeneration that took place.

THE INVADERS

The Constituent Assembly was therefore an important landmark in the formation of political parties in Nigeria.

The activities of some of the Constituent Assembly members were so sickening and childish that a group of committed Awoists decided to be holding weekly meetings with the Assembly members who believed in the programmes and activities of the National Committee of Friends. Papa later jocularly named this group the **INVADERS**. Meetings of this group were held at the Sattelite village (the official residence of the Constituent Assembly men). Senator Ayo Fasanmi was unanimously appointed the leader of the group.

The invaders met to review general development in the political race and offered valuable suggestions for the group. Senator Ayo Fasanmi was chosen as the contact man between the organisation and Papa Obafemi Awolowo. The meetings of the organisation were discontinued after the Constituent Assembly has gone into permanent recess.

Some of the members of the "INVADERS" were Senator Ayo Fasanmi, Mr. Akin Omojola, Mr. Asiwaju-Dada (who later joined the N.P.N), Mr. Kayode Iwakun (former member, House of Assembly, Mr. Olagunju (former House of Representative from Akoko), Mr. Aremu Alagbe (former Political Assembly), Mr. Dimeji Longe (former Deputy Speaker, Lagos State House of Assembly) then in the Constituent Assembly), Mr. Bola Adewunmi (then in the constituent Assembly), Messers Martins Kuye and Gboyega Adepitan, Mr. Yemi Adefulu (former commissioner in Ogun State), Mr. Dipo Odujurin (a lawyer), Mr. Tunji Ayanlaja (a lawyer and Ogun State UPN executive committ member), and this writer, Ebenezer Babatope.

The activities of the Invaders were constantly reported to the meetings of the National Committee of Friends.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF FRIENDS IN SOME OF THE STATES

Early in February 1978, the National Committee of Friends took a decision that the activities of the Committee should be extended to formations of state chapters. Membership of the National Committee of Friends was however made open and on individual basis. In other words, representation on state basis was completely ruled out. Attendance at meetings of the National Committee of Friends in Lagos was open to all Nigerians. The state chapters were only established to help all those who could not attend meetings in Lagos to know what was going on through members of the Committee in their respective states.

ANAMBRA

Pioneering efforts at establishing a base in Anambra State were done by Awo's contacts with former politicians in the place and Mr. Anthony Mba then a senior staff of the College of Arts and Science, Idah. He was introduced to the activities of the National Committee of Friends by Mr. Nati Iwuagwu. Papa Awolowo had spoken to Chief Philip Ezebuilo Umeadi a legal practitioner and a former member of Chike Obi's Dynamic Party, Chief Charles Abangwu (formerly of the N.C.N.C.) and Barrister C.C. Onoh of Ngwo Enugu. Chief Ezebuilo Umeadi later joined the National Committee of Friends while Barrister C.C. Onoh did not respond to the old man's invitation.

Constant meetings were held and prominent among its foundation members were Chief Charles Abangwu, Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchuku, Barrister Aghaji from Nri but based at Enugu, late A. Alegu (a supervisory councillor at Abakaliki), Chief Mrs. Oyibo Odinamadu (she joined the Committee of Friends about middle of 1978), Dr. Don Ike (a lecturer at the Institute of Technology, Enugu), Barrister Chudi Mosanya (from Abakaliki), Dr. Chukudun Uche, and a host of others.

All the above mentioned persons participated in establishing the Unity Party of Nigeria. The following amongst them later decamped: Chief Charles Abangwu (resigned from U.P.N. in 1980 and declared for the N.P.P.), Barrister Aghaji (left for the N.P.P. in 1980), Dr. Don Ike (resigned to resume his lectureship at the M.I.T. Enugu), and Chudi Mosanya (decamped into the N.P.N). Chief Charles

Abangwu was the party's gubernatorial candidate for Anambra State in the 1979 elections.

BAUCHI:

Much job in this area was done by Mr. Olanihun Ajayi. Most of the members of the Committee from this state were soon to decamp into the N.P.N. after the ban had been lifted. An old member of the Action Group late Mr. Zagi Dass then Chairman of Dass Local Government later joined the U.P.N. He left the U.P.N. fold in 1983.

BENDEL

Papa's old friends in the A.G. like late Chief O.N. Rewane, Chief Alfred Rewane from Warri, Chief J. Oye from Akoko-Edo, late Chief Enaboifo from Ishan, Chief Benedo Osagie from Benin and young emergent forces like Dr. Isaac Okonjo (a former secretary of the Bendel State Government under the military). Air Iyare and others teamed up with those persons already mentioned to form the Bendel State branch of the National Committee of Friends. Professor Ambrose Alli who later became the gubernatorial candidate of the U.P.N. and Governor of Bendel State was a member of the National Committee of Friends. He was an active student member of the Action Group in his undergraduate days at Ibadan University.

BENUE:

Despite the lack of interest in the National Committee of Friends by Papa's old colleagues in the A.G.-U.M.B.C alliance in this state, much enthusiasm was still shown by people.

A former civilian commissioner, in late Joseph Gomwalk's administration in former Benue-Plateau State, Mr. Chia Surma joined the Committee of Friends after returning from the United States of America where he had read for his Master's degree. Other members of the National Committee of Friends from this state included Alhaji H.M. Adaji (a former minister under the N.P.C. administration in former Northern Nigeria. He was the party's gubernatorial running mate in the 1979 elections. He unfortunately decamped into the N.P.N. in 1980), Mr. Musa Eneji from Katsina Alla and some others. Mvendaga Jibo attended many meetings of

the National Committee of Friends, wrote many favourable articles on Papa Obafemi Awolowo as a staff of Daily Times but later joined the N.P.N. after the lifting of the ban on political activities in 1978.

BORNO STATE:

Mr. Ayo Adebajo was very active in this state propagating the ideals of the party. He spoke to Alhaji Bukar Petrol who showed initial interest in the affairs of the Committee of Friends. He however never attended any meeting of the Committee in Lagos and was soon to declare for the N.P.N. on the lifting of the ban on political activities in 1978. Mr. Paul Bassi who later became the party's chairman and gubernatorial candidate in the state was introduced to the party in September 1978 by Mr. S.K. Babalola then of the N.U.T. Paul Bassi remained a solid member of the U.P.N. until the coup of December 31st 1983 put an end to political party activities in the country.

CROSS RIVER

Papa Obafemi Awolowo under normal circumstances (as the man that stood behind state creation in Nigeria) ought to have been massively supported in Cross River, Rivers, Benue, Plateau, Bauchi, Kwara and Gongola which make up the former minority areas in the first Republic. Chief Obafemi Awolowo never rested until the dreams of these minority areas were realised in 1967.

Unfortunately most of his colleagues had joined the group of Nouveaux Riche during the military era and never wanted to embrace any more a political leadership that championed the struggles of the impoverished masses since that may deliver serious economic, political and social blows against their exalted class positions.

Despite the difficulties encountered in Cross River State, the following people participated actively in the affairs of the National Committee of friends, S.T. Umoren (a former colleague of the old man who was tried with him in the 1963 treasonable felony trial), Chief Ambe Bassey (a businessman and Managing Director of White House Organisation from Oron. He was Papa's client), Comrade Ebony Okpa from Obubra (a renowned trade unionist and Marxist), Effiong Ononokpono (an ardent socialist from Oron and former

member House of Representatives), Chief Andrew Bassey (an old time colleague of Papa Obafemi Awolowo in the days of the Action Group. He later decamped into the N.P.N. early in 1980), Chief Jacob Duke (a well known socialite in Calabar), late Mrs. Ededem (a popular woman activist in the first Republic), Chief Akpan of Ukanafun, and Reverend King (a retired civil servant in Lagos from Ibibio land).

Chief Ambe Bassey later contested the gubernatorial elections in 1979 on the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria.

GONGOLA STATE:

There is no way one can talk of the operations of the Committee of Friends in this state without special mention of the name Gayus Gillama from Numan. He was a former member of the Action Group-U.M.B.C. alliance. He was one of the organising secretaries in the first Republic. He popularised the activities of the National Committee of Friends in Gongola State. He sadly joined the N. P. N. in 1981.

Dr. Ayuba Kadzai from Minchika was in the National Committee of Friends until March 1978 when he withdrew further participation in the Committee's affairs for no stated reasons.

Some other members of the National Committee of Friends from this state included Mr. Philip Maken from Ganye, Gilbert Nanyiso from Numan and Abubakar Jalingo (this man later decamped from the U.P.N. after the first Congress of the party in Lagos in October 1978. He joined the P.R.P. but remained unheard of ever since).

The largest delegation that came from the northern states to the first Congress of the Party came from Gongola State under the leadership of Gayus Gillama.

IMO:

There was a powerful branch of the National Committee of Friends in this state. Nati Iwuagwu and Dr. Tunji Otegbeye did a great job in bringing many people into the membership of the Committee. The son of late chief Ubani Ukoma (a strong supporter of Papa Obafemi Awolowo in the first Republic) Barrister U. Ukoma who was in the Constituent Assembly was in the Committee of Friends before he withdrew his membership for reasons best known to him.

Those who joined the Committee of Friends in Imo State included Mr. S. Ekeanyanwu then elected chairman of a local government in Imo State and also a school teacher, Mr. Nwagbara, Dr. Ngbaronye an Umuahia based private medical practitioner (he joined the committee very late on Nati's strong persuasion. He however pulled out of the U.P.N. after he was defeated in the contest for state chairmanship of the party by Barrister Zacheus Nwosu who also later decamped into the N.P.N.), and several others.

KADUNA:

Barrister Bayo Aluko-O'okun of "Okun" chambers in Kaduna did a lot to establish the Kaduna State branch of the National Committee of Friends. He talked and discussed with several persons in Kaduna State trying to persuade them to join the Committee of Friends. He got Alhaji Yussuf Dantsoho the then Chairman of Kaduna Local Government to show some interest. Alhaji Yussuf Dantsoho later declared his support for the G.N.P.P. led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. He also opened up discussions with Dr. Christopher Abashiya as the group's gubernatorial candidate for the 1979 elections. Dr. Christopher Abashiya later assumed duties as Acting Registrar of the University of Jos.

In 1978, Alhaji Dan Musa a barrister from Kaduna visited Papa at Ikenne and pledged his loyalty to the old man. Papa then informed him about the Committee of Friends. He promised to join. When politics began he declared support for the N.P.N. He later became the Speaker of the Kaduna State House of Assembly.

Chief Ige from Zaria, Mallam Yahaya Maigari and Rev. Yahaya Ayok Kaura (both from Southern Zaria) joined the National Committee of Friends from this state. Reverend Yahaya Ayok Kaura resigned his membership of the U.P.N. when he felt bitter about the non selection of a Southern Zaria indigene as the gubernatorial candidate of the Party for Kaduna State. He joined the N.P.P. but later returned to the U.P.N. Both Mallam Yahaya Maigari and Chief Alli Ige joined the N.P.N. after the 1979 elections. Late Alhaji Mamman Nasser the first Chairman of the Party in Kaduna State, joined towards the end of 1978.

KANO:

Chief Michael Omisade operated here for the propagation

of the ideals of the National Committee of Friends. He made contacts with Alhaji Mudi alias 'Mudi Sipikin' and enlisted his support for the National Committee of Friends. Alhaji Mudi was a former member of the Action Group before he decamped to the N.P.C. He was taken by Papa Obafemi Awolowo to the London Constitutional Conference in 1957 as an official Action Group delegate to the Conference. He first gave Chief Michael Omisade assurances of his preparedness to join the group; he later chickened out and was appointed the chairman of the Kano State branch of the National Party of Nigeria (N.P.N.). It was during the period that Alhaji Abdu-Kadir Young-Sidi a former member of the Action Group in the first Republic joined the National Committee of Friends. He later attended the first Congress of the Party in Lagos in October 1978.

KWARA:

Chief J.S. Olawoyin played a crucial role in bringing together progressive elements in Kwara State into the National Committee of Friends. Young people particularly from the Universities like Dele Shittu, alias Adebayo, Wole Oke, Tunji Adebayo, Titus Balogun, Laiyemo and Architect Ogunniyi joined the group. Prominent among those who joined the National committee of Friends are Reverend S. Moody, Mr. Seth Maiyekogbon from Kaba, Mr. Adewunmi, late Mr. Bob Bolarinwa, Mrs. Obaoye, Mrs. Olarenwaju (wife of former N.P.C. Federal Minister from Igbomina Ekiti), late Alhaji Onikepe from Ilorin and several others.

All the financial timber men in this state refused to join the Committee of Friends. They all went to the N.P.N.

NIGER:

The National Committee of Friends did not make much impact in this state. It was not until the first Congress of the party in October 1978 that Alhaji M.K. Ahmed (a young business executive) emerged declaring his support for the Unity Party of Nigeria.

(Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Ondo States have been discussed in earlier pages. Many of the members from these states were attending the Lagos meeting of the National Committee of Friends in view of their proximity to Lagos).

PLATEAU:

The Council of Understanding and Solidarity (CUS) that

was composed of some young elements in the former Benue-Plateau State was very strong in Plateau State. some of the members of C.U.S. included Mr. Solomon Lar, Mr. Paul Unongo, and Mr. Paul Belabo. Despite the deep penetration of the C.U.S. which later dissolved into the original N.P.P., the National Committee of Friends was able to attract the membership of some indigenes of the state.

Mr. Clement Gomwalk a retired civil servant and former diplomat from Pankshin became the leader of delegation from Plateau State to the meetings of the National Committee of Friends. Others who joined were a councillor Mr. B.B.B. Bachit, Mrs. Mary Princewell, and Papa Sotji Bot. Both B.B. Bachit and Mrs. Mary Princewill later declared for the N.P.P.

RIVERS:

Chief Wenike Briggs did not respond positively to all the contacts made with him as regards his membership of the National Committee of Friends. He however, appeared at the first Congress of the Party from Rivers. He was a loyal and dependable colleague of Papa Obafemi Awolowo in the banned Action Group.

Retired Brigadier George Kurubo from Rivers state attended one or two meetings of the Committee before he withdrew from further participation.

More persons from Rivers State however showed up at the first Congress of the party held at the Mainland Hotel Lagos. Chief R.O. George from Buguma appeared at a ceremony of opening of the Secretariat on September 25, 1978. Mr. Sunday Saganwi also from Rivers and other delegates were at the first Congress of the party. Mr. Sunday Saganwi was later charged with murder by his political opponents. He spent virtually the whole of 1979 in prison awaiting trial. He was later discharged and acquitted.

SOKOTO STATE:

The activities of the National Committee of Friends were not strong here. It was however significant that Alhaji Ali Nakura a former N.P.C. member in the first Republic came to the first Congress leading a contingent of Sokoto delegates. Alhaji Ali Nakura was elected National Vice-President of the Party in 1978 but decamped to the G.N.P.P. early in 1979.

The Unity Party of Nigeria (announced from the mouth of its great leader Papa Obafemi Awolowo) was the successor to the National Committee of Friends.

It is only proper and tidy to end the story of how the Unity Party of Nigeria was founded with the last two paragraphs of Papa Obafemi Awolowo's opening address to the first Congress of the Unity Party of Nigeria held at Mainland Hotel, Ebute-Metta, Lagos in 1978. Papa had declared inter-alia:

"Welcome to this first Congress. As I said before, we are now about to tread a new path. There are pitfalls.... There are premonitions of glory...Old pitfalls we can and must avoid... New pitfalls can with foresight be sighted and guarded against... At any rate, their adverse effects can be reasonably contained or minimized... The old premonitions of glory we must keep... New ones must be erected.

We, as new travellers in the path under the entirely new and all embracing auspices of the U.P.N.; can succeed where others have failed and are failing; provided we allow ourselves to be guided by this great principle: "The glory of a ruler is the welfare of everyone of his people".

This is the principle which guided the Committee of Friends which U.P.N. as the successor to the Committee of Friends will be guided now and in the future. Pray our deliberations may be fruitful and may contribute to the good welfare and happiness of every individual Nigerian".

The U.P.N. was to later experience large scale defections in 1982 after the party primary elections for the 1983 elections. The story of the party however was a success story.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROAD TO 1979 AND BEYOND

Papa Obafemi Awolowo had realised the very day in 1962 that his party the Action Group moved to the left by adopting 'Democratic Socialism' as its ideological way forward that the struggle to change humanity is no doubt a formidable task. It is a struggle that requires dedication, will, courage and extreme fortitude. It is a struggle in which everything is thrown so as to ensure total victory for the teeming masses of the people who are the ultimate makers of history.

After the historic Jos Conference of the Action Group in 1962, an avalanche of political oppression and victimisation was launched by Awo's opponents with the sole aim of destabilising and halting the revolutionary process of change which he had ignited in the country with his party's polarisation of the country's politics on ideological lines. He and some of his colleagues in the Action Group went to prison. Despite all the odds, the old man remained undaunted. He was full of hope and conviction that his course was just and the ideological war he had ignited would one day consume Nigeria's decadent forces thereby paving the way for a progressive government in Nigeria.

On Friday 22nd September, 1978, just sixteen hours after the then Head of the Federal Military Government General Olusegun Obasanjo had lifted the ban on politics Chief Obafemi Awolowo announced the formation of the UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA. Addressing a world press conference where the party's existence was officially announced, Chief Awolowo ended his speech with the following words:

"In closing, I invite all fellow Nigerians to shed off all existing political commitments, and rally to the indomitable, invulnerable and conquering BANNER of the UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA to wage total and effective war against the suffocating strangle holds of ignorance, disease, poverty and

squalor, and in our victory through God to bestow on our land now and in perpetuity all the good things of life including in particular, the rule of law, public morality and social justice.

At that historic occasion, Chief Awolowo gave the following tasks of the Unity Party of Nigeria in transforming our great country into a real People's Democracy:

- (1) Free education at all levels.
- (2) Integrated rural development.
- (3) Free medical services for all Nigerians (both curative and preventive) and
- (4) Full employment for all Nigerians.

The Unity Party of Nigeria was the first party to be announced to the Nigerian public after the lifting of the ban on politics. Throughout the life of Nigeria's second Republic, the party without any doubt remained the best organised party in the country.

The battle waged against Chief Awolowo was however fierce before such a great party could be so efficiently put together by the old man. He encountered difficulties all the way in his efforts at putting together a party that would be as efficient and as formidable as the defunct Action Group (A.G.).

The old man had left no one in doubt as regards his determination to go into politics after the military must have withdrawn to the barracks.

In 1971, when Papa was tendering his resignation from the cabinet of General Yakubu Gowon, he had stated inter alia:

"You will recall that in a statement made by me and published in the *Sunday Times* of March 30 1969, I declared among other things as follows:

"Even at the Federal level, I have no desire whatsoever, and I certainly cannot be tempted or induced to develop one, to head, or participate in an unelected college elected civil administration in a military government because I have been invited, and I also think it is right so to do.I would like to state that though by this resignation, I am leaving your government and literary activities as mentioned above, it does not mean that I am completely relinquishing all public services to our country and people.

On the contrary, it is my resolve to continue in all circumstances and until my life's end, to see the best interests of our fatherland, and promote the welfare and happiness of our people in every way possible".

After the coup of July 29th 1975 which had removed the sit tight government of General Yakubu Gowon, Papa Awo reiterated his desire to be actively involved in the future politics of the country which the new military rulers had fixed for October 1, 1979.

In November 1976, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was invited by the Ghana Government to deliver the Kwame Nkrumah memorial lectures which the Kutu Archeampong government had established at the Cape Coast University in honour of Africa's Nationalist of all times OSAGYEFO Kwame Nkrumah. Papa titled the four lectures he gave in Ghana "PROBLEMS OF AFRICA — NEED FOR IDEOLOGICAL RE-APPRAISAL".

The first lecture was delivered at the University of Cape Coast, the second one was delivered at the University of Science and Technology Kumasi and the last one was delivered at the University of Cape Coast Ghana. At the end of the lectures, the University of Cape Coast honoured Chief Awolowo with an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws at a Special Convocation Ceremony where the final lecture had been delivered by the old man.

The invitation extended to Chief Obafemi Awolowo by the General Ignatius Kutu Archeampong's government in Ghana was in recognition of the contributions of Awo to the Progress of Africa.

Throughout Awo's stay in Ghana, he was given an enthusiastic welcome by the government and people of Ghana. He was treated like a visiting Head of state. In Accra, he was lodged at the Presidential Lodge in front of the famous 'JOB 600' built by Kwame Nkrumah in 1963 as offices of the O.A.U. (Organisation of African Unity) but which now serves as offices of the Ghana Government. Mrs. Fathia Nkrumah widow of Kwame Nkrumah attended all the four lectures. It was a great occasion that will for ever remain with me for as long as I live. Accra provided me the unique opportunity of seeing the Chief at very close quarters.

However the importance of the Kwame Nkrumah lectures delivered by Chief Awolowo was the suspicions generated by the Ghana trip in the minds of Nigeria's security forces. The Nigerian Security Organisation had been formed after the abortive February 13th 1976 coup that had unfortunately terminated the life of General Murtala Muhammed. The Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) had replaced the special branch of the Nigeria Police force which had handled the issue of security since Nigeria's independence in 1960.

The N.S.O. was alarmed by the number of enthusiastic friends and associates of the old man that had accompanied him to Ghana for the lectures. Twenty five friends of the Chief mostly youths had accompanied Papa Awo on the trip. The rumour was unleashed that Awo was going to use the trip to form a political party in the country.

Amongst those that accompanied Chief Awolowo to the Kwame Nkrumah memorial lectures in Ghana were the following — Chief (Mrs) H.I.D. Awolowo, Professor Chike Obi, Mr. Alao — Aka Basorun (who later became the President of the Nigerian Bar Association), Mr. Wunmi Adegbonmire, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Chief Segun Adegoke, Professor Layide Abass, Chief Ayo Adebajo, Alhaji S.O. Ghadamosi, Chief Akin Omoboriowo and late Chief Adesanya and my humble self.

Mallam Sidi H. Ali was also in attendance at some of the lectures though he was not part of the Awo delegation to Ghana.

All those who had attended the lectures immediately on arrival back to Nigeria became targets of Security scrutiny as regards the rumoured formation of a political party by Awo in Ghana. There was at that time a military ban on political party activities in the country.

After the December 1976 local government elections in the country, a Committee of Friends at the National level was formed at the instance of Chief Awolowo in early 1977 to serve as the nucleus of the party that was to be formed after the lifting of the ban on politics by the military. Within one year contacts had been made by Awo with all political minds of different shades of opinion that he believed could assist in giving Nigeria a progressive government after the military's disengagement in 1978.

The N.S.O. kept very keen eyes on Awo's activities. Early in 1978, Papa commenced a tour of Nigeria's nineteen states with the intent of visiting his friends and intimating them in private discussions with his moves to form a political party after the lifting of the ban on political party activities later in the year by the military regime. Despite the private nature of the planned visits by Awo, the security of the country was convinced that Awo was engaging in political activities.

At Ilorin in Kwara State, Abakaliki in Anambra State and Aba in Imo State, Chief Awolowo was prevented by the Police in embarking on his planned visits to his friends. At Ilorin, as soon as Papa Awo arrived in the town, he was met by the Kwara State Commissioner of Police who was waving a telex message he had received from Lagos and told Papa that he had instructions not to allow him proceed further in his planned Kwara visit. The old man had to cancel the remaining visits to other states.

It was the beginning of state organised opposition to Awo's bid for the country's political leadership.

In June 1978 a delegation of NATIONAL MOVEMENT that later became the National Party of Nigeria arrived in the United States of America on what was described as a study tour of the country. The delegation spoke to many Nigerian groups in the U.S with the clear message that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was too dangerous to be allowed to have access to political power in the country.

The delegation was also said to have met with some officials of the WHITE HOUSE in Washington where they had falsely accused Chief Awolowo of attempting to form a communist Party in Nigeria.

From that date, the plot to stop Awo from assuming the Presidency of Nigeria in 1979 took a dramatic and decisive turn. The elections of 1979 were manipulated to stop Awo.

It is however important to mention that immediately after the 1979 elections, Awo the old warrior threw his weight behind moves started by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim against the declared winner of the 1979 criminally rigged elections.

While these efforts were going on, the state apparatus was deliberately placed at the disposal of the NPN to ensure the

total neutralisation of the 'New' Awo plans. Secret meetings between some officials of the N.P.N and the N.P.P immediately commenced and these meetings later metamorphosed into the N.P.N — N.P.P accord that ushered Nigeria into her second civilian democratic experience.

It was a grand exercise in political horse trading designed to destabilise the political offensives of the old political war horse Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

I now publish the minutes of the secret meetings held between representatives of the N.P.N and N.P.P at the very same time that the N.P.P was involved in moves backed up by Awo to establish a Progressive front to counter the diabolical intentions of the N.P.N in Nigerian politics. The minutes of the secret meetings present once again some of the ugly faces of Nigeria's Second Republic. The PRP mentioned in several areas of the minutes never participated in the meetings:

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL PARTY OF NIGERIA AND THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY AT EKO HOTEL, AT 8 A.M. ON 21ST AUGUST, 1979

1. *Present:*

National Party of Nigeria

Chief (Dr) J.S. Tarka — Chairman

Dr. Sola Saraki

Chief T. Coker

Prof. G.A. Odenigwe

Mr. Denis Ukume

Nigerian People's Party

Chief M.T. Mbu

Chief R.B.K. Okafor

Mr. Chimezie Ikeazor

Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya

2. *Agenda:*

Chief Tarka and Chief Mbu announced that their teams had been fully mandated by their Parties to explore

areas of co-operation between them and to reach accord.

In this regard, the two teams agreed on the following agenda for the meeting:-

1. Report from previous Meetings;
2. Election Petitions;
3. Adverse Publicity;
4. Chief Awolowo's Court Action; and
5. Working Arrangement
 - (a) Government Level
 - (b) Political
 - (c) Eventual Merger
 - (d) People's Redemption Party

3. *Report from Previous Meetings:*

Chief Mbu reported that as a result of previous meetings between the NPN and his Party, the atmosphere was now conducive for meaningful discussions to take place.

He said that he and Chief Okafor had the mandate from the entire Party (NPP) including the Owelle, to reach full agreement with the NPN.

Chief Tarka told the meeting that the National Party of Nigeria was working towards a tripartite arrangement involving the NPN, NPP as well as the PRP. The PRP, he explained, had already agreed to work with the NPN.

4. *Election Petition:*

Chief Tarka reported that the NPN had decided, as a gesture of goodwill, to withdraw all the petitions the Party had filed against the PRP, including the Kaduna Gubernatorial Election one.

He said that the NPP and NPN should similarly withdraw the cases they had filed against each other and wide publicity to this effect should be given. The NPP team were in agreement, but they explained that such publicity should only be put out after the two Parties would have reached agreement to work together and the Press release to that effect sanctioned by the bosses of the Parties.

5. *Adverse Publicity:*

Chief Mbu called for complete cessation of Press hostility. The two Parties agreed to talk to their respective publicity Departments.

6. *Chief Awolowo's Court Action:*

Chief Okafor told the meeting that the NPP was in no way connected with Awolowo going to Court. But his Party rejected FEDECO's announcement of the final results.

Dr. Saraki wanted to know what the NPP would do about Zik's television statement threatening court action and requesting the Supreme Military Council to annul the Presidential Election result.

Chief Okafor explained that once an accord had been reached between the NPP and NPN, the the former would issue a Press statement making it abundantly clear that they were in no way associated with the UPN.

7. *Working Arrangement:*

The meeting agreed that once the NPN and the NPP had reached an accord, the PRP could then be brought in.

Possible Areas of Co-operation as Presented by the NPP

(a) *The Owelle's Position*

The meeting agreed that the Owelle's pension should be reviewed and he should be accorded all the privileges that are commensurate with his status.

He should be appointed Special Adviser to the President, and his entitlements clearly spelt out.

An offer covering these suggestions should be referred back to him

* (b) *Special Grant*

The NPP disclosed that Chief Awolowo had promised the Party N2 billion (N1 billion each for Anambra and Imo) as a special grant for the areas if he came to power with the help of the NPP.

The NPP would want N2 billion as special grant from an in-coming NPN Government to cover development in Anambra and Imo, as well as in the Rivers, Cross River, Plateau and Benue States

The meeting resolved that there was a case for a special grant for needy States and it accordingly recommended that the sum of N5 billion be made available to the following states: Anambra, Imo,

Rivers, Cross-Rivers, Plateau, Benue, Kwara, Gongola and Niger. It was decided that a five-man Committee be set up to look into the needs of these states and make recommendations.

(c) *Ministerial Appointments and Allocation of Portfolios:*

This must be examined in relation to the envisaged tripartite composition of the Government.

The NPP is to submit a fresh paper on this subject. Meanwhile the meeting has suggested that the number of Government Ministries should be increased from 19 to 24. In the allocation of Ministries, the meeting resolved that the following criteria should be adopted:

- i. The Party in power or that which has majority out of the three, appoints a Minister.
- ii. Where the UPN, and GNPP have won majority of the votes, of the three Parties that have the highest votes nominates a Minister.

(d) *Composition of various Corporations and Companies:*

The meeting agreed on the need to overhaul the composition of these bodies.

Mr. Denis Ukume was asked to submit a list of these organisations to the next meeting.

The NPP would wish to see the establishment of a University in Imo State as well as a steel mill, assembly plant and a dry dock.

(e) *Creation of more States:*

It is the desire of NPP that more States should be created in the country.

(f) *Take-over of Properties in Port Harcourt:*

The meeting agreed with the request of the NPP that an independent commission should be set up to review the take-over of properties by the Rivers State Government.

8. *Adjournment:*
The meeting adjourned at 12.35 a.m. until tomorrow at 8 p.m.

DENIS UKUME

21st August, 1979.

*The N.P.P had deliberately told this lie of Awo promising the Party 2 billion naira in order to strengthen their hands in the crude negotiations.

**MINUTES OF THE RESUMED MEETING HELD
BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL
PARTY OF NIGERIA AND THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S
PARTY AT EKO HOTEL, AT 8 P.M. ON 22ND
AUGUST, 1979**

1. *Present:*
National Party of Nigeria
Chief (Dr) J.S. Tarka - Chairman
Chief Toyé Coker
Professor G.A. Odenigwe
Mr. Denis Ukume
- Nigerian People's Party*
Chief M.T. Mbu
Chief R.B. Okafor
Mr. Chimezie Ikeazor
Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya
1. *Dr. Saraki*
Chief Tarka apologised to the meeting that Dr. Saraki would be unable to attend.
3. *Adoption of Minutes*
The minutes of the previous meeting were read and adopted with few amendments.
4. *Ministerial Appointments and Allocation of Portfolios*
In conformity with the decision of the previous meeting, the NPP submitted two papers.
- A (Based on a two-party Government)
and
B (Based on a three-party Government).

Annotation:

Party A represent NPN

Party B represent NPP

Party C represent PRP

Chief Okafor wanted reassurance that the PRP would definitely join the Government and that the NPP's paper submitted on them would not be useless. Chief Tarka explained that the purpose of the meeting was to enable both parties explore possible areas of co-operation and make recommendations to their respective bosses. The PRP he said were not represented at the meeting, but he assured Chief Okafor that they were talking in Kano with the NPN.

The NPP pressed for full discussion on the two lifts, and, wanted an NPN commitment as to the number of Government Ministries they would be offered.

Professor Odenigwe told the meeting that the NPN team was not competent to discuss the allocation of Cabinet posts without clarification from the President elect.

Chief Mbu stated that before leaving for Sokoto early this year, the President elect had asked him to "get on with the job".

Chief Coker emphasised that the NPN team had not the mandate to allocate Ministries. They could only make recommendation and forward them along with the two lists to the Party bosses.

After full discussions on the allocation of Ministries, the following ratio at both the Federal and State levels was suggested for consideration:

Ministries

Using the number of National Assembly seats won by the three parties (NPN, NPP and PRP) as a base, the proposed disposition of existing Federal Ministries among the parties would be as follows:

NPN — 11; NPP — 5; PRP — 3.

With five additional Ministries as proposed by the meeting, break-down would be as follows:

NPN — 14; NPP — 7; PRP — 4

Major Commissions

NPN — 5; NPP — 3; PRP — 1

Federal Corporations and Companies

NPN — 36; NPP — 13; PRP — 7

NB: The figures are not necessarily up-to-date as Mr. Denis Ukume is still expected to produce a complete list of Federal Corporations and Companies.

At the State level, the base for calculations will be number of seats won by the parties during the House of Assembly.

The meeting agreed that modifications should be made regarding allocation in order to cater for states where the three parties are not in control.

Mr. Chimeze wanted the same criterion to apply to Permanent Secretaries but Chief Tarka asked that civil servants be left out of the exercise.

Election Petition

Mr. Chimeze told the meeting that he was appearing for Mr. Solomon Lar in the election petition filed against him by Mr. Michael Audu Buba (NPN) and that in view of the decision of the previous meeting on election petitions he wanted to know the definite position of the NPN on the matter.

Chief Tarka remarked that he had already spoken to Mr. Lar and assured him that he would get Mr. Buba to withdraw the case against him.

Chief Okafor announced that his Party had filed a petition against Chief Okilo and wondered whether at the level of the meeting, authority could be given for him to withdraw the case in return for a reciprocal gesture by Mr. Wakama Okoro (NPN) against the (NPP) man in Imo State.

Chief Coker explained that it would not be easy to give instructions to the people involved in the various cases to withdraw, but as for Chief Tarka, he was using personal contacts.

Recommendations

The meeting resolved that Prof. Odenigwe and Mr. Denis Ukume should submit draft recommendations covering all aspects of the discussions to be forwarded to the bosses of the Parties.

Appreciation

The meeting expressed full appreciation to Chief Francis Arthur Nzeribe for the useful role he has played in the discus-

sions. And this should be brought to the notice of the leaders of the co-operating parties.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12 midnight to resume tomorrow at 11.00 a.m.

DENIS UKUME

22nd August, 1979

CONCLUSIONS ON WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL PARTY OF NIGERIA AND THE NIGERIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY AT EKO HOTEL, L A G O S FROM THE 20TH TO THE 23RD AUGUST, 1979

Participants at the meetings

National Party of Nigeria

Chief (Dr) J.S. Tarka

Dr. Sola Saraki

Chief Toye Coker

Prof. G.A. Odenigwe

Nigerian People's Party

Chief M.T. Mbu

Chief R.B.K. Okafor

Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya

Mr. Chimezie Ikeazor

People's Redemption Party

The meeting noted that efforts should be made by the NPN to bring the PRP into the discussions and to persuade the leadership of the PRP to give favourable consideration to the recommendations for working arrangements between the three parties.

Preamble

With the authority of the party leadership of the participating representative teams, the members expressed the desire and the willingness to explore area of co-operation between the two parties and make recommendations for the consideration of the respective leaders of the parties.

Objectives

The objective is directed towards the establishment of effective working arrangements between the parties at the Federal and State levels. This will contribute to the peace, Unity and Progress of Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Election Petition

It was recommended that election petitions against elected members of the co-operating parties which are still pending in the courts should be withdrawn.

2. Adverse Publicity

It was recommended that adverse publicity between the co-operating parties should cease.

3. Chief Awolowo's Court Action

The NPP, in fact, did not associate itself with Chief Awolowo's court action against the FEDECO on the declaration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the President-Elect of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The NPP will seize any available opportunity to destroy publicly the impression which has been created in the minds of the people that the NPP is in support of Chief Awolowo's court action.

4. Working and co-operative agreements

i. It was recommended that in the event of any summons of meeting of the Electoral College to elect the President, the representatives of the three parties (NPN, NPP and PRP) who are members of the electoral college at Federal and State levels will vote for Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the President of the Republic of Nigeria.

ii. It was recommended that in the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) all the members of the three co-operating parties will vote in support of the Presidential or Government bills and nominations of the President for appointments after prior consultations and due deliberations.

iii. It was also recommended that the above working co-operative agreements among the three parties will apply to State legislatures.

iv. It was recommended that the President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, should review the Oweile's pension and other privileges that are commensurate to his status. He should consult with the Oweile and appoint him a Special Adviser to the President.

v. It was also recommended that special arrangement should be made for Malam Aminu Kano, the leader

of the PRP after due consultation with him by the President.

- vi. It was recommended that in view of the depressed and retarded economic developments, especially, of Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Cross River, Plateau, Benue, Kwara, Niger and Gongola States, the sum of 5 billion naira should be provided as special grants to these states as emergency/special development funds. A five-man committee will be appointed by the President to locate and assess the projects for the expenditure of this amount and the proportion due to each state.

On the Executive Ministries and Ministerial appointments, it was recommended as follows:

- (a) The Executive Ministries should be increased from 19 to 25.
- (b) The President will nominate the Ministers for appointment subject to the approval of the Senate from all the states of the Federation as herein stated. The co-operating parties (NPN, NPP and PRP) should recommend to the President persons for his nomination and appointment as Ministers, subject to the approval of the Senate, in the states where the party is in control of the state government.
- (c) In the states where the UPN or the GNPP have majority or in control of the state government, the President will consult with the leaders of any of the co-operating parties which has the highest votes in such state on the nomination of persons for appointment as Ministers.
- (d) It was suggested that the distribution ratio of Ministers among the parties, on the basis of the number of members of each party in the National Assembly could be in the ratio of :
 - (i) In case of 19 Ministers —
NPN — 11; NPP — 5; PRP — 3.
 - (ii) In case of 25 Ministers —
NPN — 14; NPP — 7; PRP — 4.
- (e) It was also suggested that distribution ratio of the Chairmanship of the Corporations, Boards, Companies etc. could be — NPN — 31; NPP — 13; PRP — 7. if the total number is 51.

- (f) It was again suggested that the distribution on the major commissions could be NPN — 5; NPP — 3; PRP — 1. if the total number is 9.
6. **Creation of More States**
The representatives of the co-operating parties recommended the creation of more states in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.
 7. **Abandoned Property Issue**
It was recommended that the acquisition of some of these properties by the governments and the compensation to the owners should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.
 8. **Political**
It is recommended that a committee of the co-operating parties should be appointed to examine and reconcile the political programmes of the three parties for implementation.
 9. **The Merger of the Co-operating Parties**
It was recommended that within one year after the installation of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a representative committee of the three parties should be appointed to make recommendations on the merger of the parties into one national party.
 10. **Meeting of the Leaders of the three Parties**
It recommended that the leaders of the co-operating parties should meet by Wednesday the 29th August, 1979.

Signed by:

Chief J.S. Tarka
National Deputy Chairman
of the National Party of
Nigeria

Chief M.T. Mbu
National Deputy Chairman
of the Nigeria People's Party

23rd August, 1979.

23rd August, 1979.

Awo eventually had the last laugh in this encounter when by 1981, the two parties N.P.N and N.P.P went into a political war of attrition between themselves. The accord between the two parties was dissolved and the N.P.P governors later directed their attention to the Progressive Governors meetings which had been formed with them in September 1979 at a meeting hosted in Lagos by Alhaji Lateef Kayode

Jakande the then U.P.N Governor elect for Lagos State.

The N.P.P. was to make a laughing stock of itself when the committee the party established to re-evaluate the party's accord with the N.P.N came out with the following silly comments on Awo:

“Further in this very critical era to the N.P.P, there is another equally important phenomenon which involves Chief Obafemi Awolowo. There is a near paranoid resentment and fear of Chief Obafemi Awolowo amongst the Igbo people and some Yoruba speaking persons who are members of the N.P.P.

Some political opponents particularly in the Igbo speaking areas, may promote the rumour that we broke the accord as part of a process of re-alignment aimed at putting Chief Awolowo into power. The success of such a campaign might occasion a material reduction in our party's electoral fortunes”.

Papa Awo remained a doughty fighter throughout his life. He enjoyed controversy. he gave as much problem as he received. He was ruthless in his attacks on the bastion of reaction. He spared no one who by his activities had shown that he was against the people's interests.

He exposed at every given stage the plans of certain Nigerians and international collaborators to continue to manipulate the electroral wishes of the Nigerian people.

CHAPTER 5

The Post 1979 Decampees

“AND we were all swept away in the same storm” so declared Ciano, Mussolini’s Italian Foreign Minister just before he was executed on the orders of the Fascist. It was a last minute message of regret by Ciano who at one time in the history of fascist rule in Italy was the Supreme lord of the manor.

Papa Awo was never a Mussolini in the history of Nigeria. Papa Awo was a democrat who over-played the game of the democrat to such an extent that the old man did not know when and how to apply the breaks in the trust he reposed in his lieutenants and other mortals. One of the glaring weaknesses of Papa Awolowo from my close association with him was that he was just too trusting. This weakness was abused by nearly all his lieutenants. You can easily place Papa Awolowo’s feelings on issues particularly when they relate to his friends and lieutenants.

The year 1982 was the year when Awo’s over tolerance and over trust of his friends and colleagues blew up on everyone in the party. Some renegade members of the party who never at anytime had any party “Will” but kept on their membership of the Unity Party of Nigeria simply to satisfy their selfish and inordinate ambitions attempted to destroy the party.

The full history of the acts of betrayal and teachery perpetrated by those members of the party cannot be thoroughly and objectively discussed here. We will have to leave the details for some future date. The immediate concern of this writer is to explain to the public the unique part played by Papa Awo in this unfortunate episode. The records just must be set straight so that some intellectual frauds do not start bastardising, prostituting and falsifying the history of the party by once again telling lies against the dead man.

The party rebels that left the party as a result of party nominations of 1982 were quoted by several newspapers of accusing Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the following acts.

- (1) Uncompromising support for the five UPN Governors on all matters.

(2) Collection of millions of Naira from UPN Governors to back up their positions within the party.

(3) Jettisoning the party Constitution in a dictatorial manner by ensuring that the governors had a smooth ride back to power.

The story of the Unity party of Nigeria will have to be told from 1982 in order to enable all fair-minded persons to have access to the truth. The several distortions of the events of 1982 are being circulated by the renegades who decamped from the party to the banned NPN that straightening of the records now becomes important.

In 1978, before the military regime headed by General Obasanjo lifted the ban on political party activities, the members of the Unity Party of Nigeria were members of a political association called *The Committee of Friends*. The task of the Committee of Friends apart from preparing to launch the association into a political party whenever the ban on political parties was lifted was also to get the association prepared for any eventuality. Thus, by the time the clarion call for political party activities was sounded by the military, the Committee of Friends had been fully prepared for the exercise. Nearly all party candidates for the 1979 elections had been nominated for the states. The story of the Unity Party of Nigeria is told in another chapter.

When the Committee of Friends eventually transformed into the Unity Party of Nigeria on the 22nd of September, 1978, nearly all areas of conflict for party posts and positions had been narrowed down. The party nominations were done in a most democratic manner ever. Chief Awolowo never participated in the nomination of party candidates for the elections. Some of those rebels who now parrot lies against the old man knew the truth of the situation in their respective states. The story of party nominations for the gubernatorial positions in the five states controlled by the Unity Party of Nigeria in the 1979 elections will shed more light on the impartiality of Papa Awolowo in the whole affair.

BENDEL

The party nomination for the post of Governor of the Bendel State was keenly contested in this state. The contestants for the post were Professor Mofolorunsho Alli, an Ishan medical doctor who was a member of the Constituent

Assembly, Mr. Air Iyare a Benin socialist radical who was sent to prison several times by the Ogbemudia led military administration in Bendel State on account of his (Iyare's) anti-corruption crusade in the state; Chief L.T. Garry, a Lagos based businessman from the Riverine area of Bendel State and Chief Emmanuel Obahiagbon, a veteran politician, journalist and author.

The nomination exercise was presided over by Chief Obafemi Awolowo himself.

Professor Alli eventually won the party nomination and the other defeated contestants immediately pledged their support for his candidature.

LAGOS

There was no contest for party nomination in this state in view of the brilliant party organisation that had been existing in Lagos State since 1966. As mentioned earlier, the former Action Group members in the old Lagos division were quick to organise themselves into a Committee of Friends after political party activities had been banned following the military coup of January 1966. The Committee of Friends (then a social organisation) met regularly for all the years of the military interregnum. Except for the Chief Akanbi Onitiri rebellion which was adequately contained, the Lagos group was able to work out a concensus for tackling immediate and long term problems.

Another major reason that aided the smooth operation of the Lagos group was the 1976 Local government council elections. The then military regime had ordered local government elections throughout the country as a step towards the restoration of constitutional rule in the country.

The Committee of Friends in Lagos State then decided to field virtually all former members of the banned Action Group in the state for the elections. The Lagos State Committee of Friends had taken the decision apparently to enable the group have elected councillors whose loyalty could be ascertained. This followed the experiences of the former Action Group party in the hands of some disloyal party members who had slipped off the 1962 crisis of the party.

Some young but progressive individuals in Lagos State who had started to move near Chief Awolowo were attracted by the decision of the Lagos State Committee of Friends to field councillors to them.

The December 1976 local government elections in Lagos State became a clear battle between the former Action Group members and young emergent friends of Papa Awo. At the end of the elections, many of the former members of the Action Group were soundly defeated by the young entrants.

The able and quick way by which reconciliation was effected by the Lagos State Committee of Friends helped tremendously in narrowing down areas of conflict within party organisation in Lagos State. Within three weeks of the post election period, all efforts towards the 1979 elections commenced fully.

Interviewing panels were set up to screen all party candidates for various positions in Lagos State for the 1979 elections. All party men and women interested in contesting the election were given the chance before the panels. By June 1978, all the candidates for the various elective positions in Lagos State had been nominated. By June 1978, the committee had also unanimously nominated Alhaji Lateef Jakande a veteran journalist and former President of the International Press Institute (I.P.I) as the party's candidate for the 1979 gubernatorial election.

It must be remarked here that party organisation remained brilliant in Lagos State throughout the second Republic.

OGUN

Four party leaders contested in this state. They were Chief Bisi Onabanjo, Chief Jonathan Odebiyi, Dr. Tunji Otegbeye and Chief Soji Odunjo.

The battle was decided after two electoral battles. In the first exercise the score board stood as follows:

Chief Bisi Onabanjo	—	20
Chief Soji Odunjo	—	20
Chief Jonathan Odebiyi	—	6
Dr. Tunji Otegbeye	—	4

The last two candidates were eliminated from the race to pave the way clear for a winner in the second and final electoral exercise.

The final score then stood at:

Chief Bisi Onabanjo	—	30
Chief Soji Odunjo	—	20

(The supporters of both Chief Jonathan Odebiyi and Dr. Tunji Otegbeye had tilted the scale in favour of Chief Bisi Onabanjo by voting for him en masse). Chief Bisi Onabanjo emerged from the democratic contest as the party's candidate for the 1979 battle. Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not participate in the exercise.

OYO

Party nomination in this state in 1978 was fought with a kind of savagery that was only equalled and surpassed by the same exercise in the same state in 1982.

Chief Michael Omisade, Chief Sunday Afolabi, Archdeacon Emmanuel Alayande and Chief Bola Ige initially showed interest in the gubernatorial nomination exercise. Chief Michael Omisade later withdrew from the race in order to consolidate the party's overall programme and plans for the 1979 elections. It was a commendable gesture on Chief Omisade's part. Chief Sunday Afolabi later withdrew for Chief Bola Ige. He later emerged as the running mate to Chief Bola Ige in the 1979 elections.

The field was then left open between Archdeacon Emmanuel Alayande (a very good friend and old political associate of Chief Awolowo) and Chief Bola Ige, a brilliant Ibadan based Lawyer and a former Acting Federal Secretary of the banned Action Group. Chief Michael Omisade, Senator Lere Adesina and Senator Olaogun Adeoye were in support of Archdeacon Alayande while Alhaji Busari Adelakun and Chief Sunday Afolabi were on the side of Chief Bola Ige.

The battle for nomination was finally decided at Okeho a town very near Ibadan. Chief Bola Ige was nominated the gubernatorial candidate for the party having won a landslide at the nomination contest. Archdeacon Alayande's group later protested to Papa Obafemi Awolowo alleging irregularities in the conduct of the nomination exercise. The battle was so tough that by the time the first congress of the Unity Party of Nigeria was held at the Mainland Hotel early in September 1978, both Chief Bola Ige and Archdeacon Alayande were called to represent Oyo State at the High Table. This was requested by Chief Obafemi Awolowo himself in order to avoid any kind of controversy whatsoever between the two groups.

There in Oyo State who felt that Archdeacon Emmanuel

Alayande was to be imposed on the state in view of the friendship between Chief Awolowo and Archdeacon Alayande were beaten hands down when Papa Awolowo decided to uphold the Okeho verdict that had thrown up Chief Bola Ige as the party's gubernatorial candidate for Oyo State. Archdeacon Alayande and all his supporters without exception accepted the verdict and campaigned vigorously for the party and Chief Bola Ige in the 1979 elections. This kind of spirit disappeared completely in 1982. The 1982 episode in Oyo State was indeed a sad and tragic development within the party. The same forces that had swept Chief Bola Ige to the gubernatorial position in 1979 had by 1981 turned ferociously against him.

These same men later turned their arsenal of falsehood against Papa Awolowo simply because they could not realise their inordinate ambitions for power. The rest of the story will be told later in another book being prepared by this writer.

ONDO

There was no bitterness of any kind in the nomination exercise in Ondo State in 1978. The two contestants were Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin and Senator Ayo Fasanmi (both former strong members of the former Action Group). While Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin from Owo in Ondo State picked Chief Akin Omoboriowo from Ijero — Ekiti as his running mate, Senator Ayo Fasanmi from Ekiti had Mr. Kayode Iwakun then a young University of Lagos administrator from Okitipupa area of Ondo State as his running mate. Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin defeated Senator Fasanmi with a wide majority to emerge as the party's gubernatorial candidate for the 1979 election. It is remarkable to state here that no controversy of any kind was generated by the victory of Chief Ajasin in the party nomination. Ayo Fasanmi an Oshogbo based Chemist soon settled for Senatorial nomination while his running mate in the gubernatorial nomination race Kayode Iwakun successfully sought party nomination for a seat in the Ondo State House of Assembly.

Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin's deputy (the author and propagandist of the philosophy of AWOISM) was to later unleash a kind of terror, venom, blackmail and treachery unknown in that part of the country on the state on account of acts of personal aggrandisement and inordinate ambition for power.

It will therefore be seen clearly that Papa Obafemi Awolowo never interfered in the democratic process of selecting the gubernatorial candidates of the party for the 1979 elections. The same story could be told in all the other states of the country. The Party members were left free to democratically select their flag bearers for the various elections.

1.2 THE POST 1979 DEVELOPMENTS

The Unity Party of Nigeria became the second largest party in Nigeria after the controversial elections of 1979. The elections had been badly manipulated by the then military administration in favour of the conservative National Party of Nigeria. The Unity Party of Nigeria won the control of five out of the country's nineteen states.

The UPN immediately declared Education and Health free in all the five states. A beautiful pace in civilized and progressive government had thereby commenced in the country. The challenges were tremendous but the UPN leaders in the five states were equal to the task.

The cohesion and the unity of purpose of the UPN administrations in the five states became shattered barely a year after the return to normal democratic rule due to the inordinate and mad ambition for power of certain UPN leaders and the naivety and power drunkenness of some of the UPN governors.

Nigeria opted for the Presidential System of Government in the second Republic as opposed to the Westminster type which was operated in the first Republic. The concept was quite new to the country and it did not take three months of return to normal democratic rule before trouble started all over the country over the application of the system.

Many of the Governors in Nigeria conceived the Executive governorship under the Presidential system as being "I in Government" and not the party in government. Besides this glaring misconception of the system, the shameless display of the paraphernalia of office by some governors made fellow party men dream of enjoying such unlimited powers. Sirens were being blown all over the country and all powers of state seemed massively concentrated in the hands of these governors. The Governors hired and fired all appointees into government posts and positions at will. The powers of Governors under the system were simply limitless. The only

check available was the clause on impeachment of any erring governor by the State Assemblies.

One UPN governor ordered that his deputy be banned from the use of his state's Guest House in Lagos. The same UPN governor also ruled that the term "HIS EXCELLEN-CY" should not be used for his deputy. This was clear display of naivety by the Governor concerned. Many Governors in Nigeria behaved exactly that way. They were lords to themselves and many of them simply lost their heads in the process. As said earlier, mad ambition developed in the minds of many party men for the 1983 governorship positions. The UPN was not spared in this unfortunate race.

When some of these vices were coming into the open within the UPN, Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not waste time in trying to correct them, so as to save the party from any kind of bitter rivalry and intra-party controversy. Papa Awolowo's regular advice to all UPN government functionaries was based on his popular saying "when you are in Government, do not enjoy all those things you will not be able to afford while out of office."

He even cautioned against the use of Government houses, cars and other materials. It is on record that Chief Awolowo never lived in any official government quarters throughout the period he served the government. He also never for one day spent any Estacode allowance for all his overseas travels made on behalf of the government of Nigeria.

Papa Obafemi Awolowo also frowned at the use of sirens by UPN government functionaries. The old man would always refer to the example of Karamanlis, the President of Greece who walks into office unannounced and unnoticed by anyone. Karamanlis also rides through the streets of Greece with no sirens.

It must however be added that some of the UPN governors who lived in official government quarters were those who did not have their own buildings in the capital cities of the respective States.

Chief Awolowo had been accused of interfering with the governments at the control of the Unity Party of Nigeria. This was a most unfortunate charge. All UPN governors were free to run the administrations the way they wished them to be run. They chose their Commissioners and other political office holders without any reference to the party leader for directives. The UPN governors merely sent their

full lists of Commissioners to the old man without any demand from him that this be done as a matter of courtesy. The result is that Chief Awolowo never knew in person more than half of the people that featured as Commissioners in the first four years of the second Republic.

When Papa Awolowo sensed that a deep gulf was developing between the party governors and some leaders of the party particularly as they relate to the way these leaders were being treated by government officials in states controlled by the party, Papa ensured that the National Executive Council of the party took certain decisive steps to arrest this ugly situation.

By June 1980, the National Executive Council of the party had succeeded in approving recommendations on ORDERS OF PRECEDENCE made by a Committee of the N.E.C. headed by Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin the Governor of Ondo State. The Order of Precedence had attempted to define the position, privileges, and rights leaders of the party should enjoy in government functions.

The National Executive Council of the Party also approved without debate a suggestion from Chief Obafemi Awolowo that the party's deputy governors should be made automatic members of the National Executive Council of the party. Also granted automatic membership of the N.E.C. of the party were the party's leaders of the Parliamentary Council at the National Assembly and two other members of the National Assembly.

2.2 RULES GOVERNING PARTY NOMINATIONS

The National Party of Nigeria once made the claim that the initiative of setting out rules for party nominations into various elective offices in the country belonged to it. This is far from the truth.

As far back as 1980, the National Executive Council of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria had approved a Council memo from the National Directorate of Organisation calling for the formulation of rules and regulations governing the conduct of party nominations for the 1983 and other subsequent elections. The matter was slated for full debate at the April 1981 meeting of the Executive Council in Benin City, Bendel State.

At Benin City in April 1981, the National Executive Council of the party established a nine man committee headed by the leader of the party's Parliamentary Council in the Na-

tional Assembly, Chief J.A.O. Odebiyi. Some other members of the Committee included Chief Demas Akpore, the then deputy governor for Bendel State Professor Sam Aluko, Mr. Ayo Adebajo the Secretary of the party's Legal Defence Committee and Mr. Nati Iwuagwu of the National Directorate of Organisation who was secretary to the Committee.

The report of the Odebiyi Committee on rules and regulations for the conduct of party nominations was considered at the August 1981 meeting of the National Executive Council of the party held at the AMKA Hotel, Ilorin Kwara State.

It must be remarked however that with the establishment of the Committee to work on the rules and regulations for party nominations, meetings of the National Executive Council of the party attracted the deepest interest of all intending candidates for party positions. From August 1981, the observers at N.E.C. meetings outnumbered the real N.E.C. members. The observers had abused the generosity and over-democratic tendencies of the party leader, Chief Awolowo who had ruled sometime in 1979 that all kinds of party meetings should be made open to all members for as long as the party members could show evidence of their party membership. It then became a tradition of the party that observers could attend N.E.C. meetings of the party. These observers were permitted to take part in deliberations at the N.E.C. meeting but could not vote. As time went on, the observers who had been brought into the N.E.C. meetings by the various gubernatorial candidates were not only participating freely in discussions but were also voting along with other N.E.C. members on issues. It was a costly error.

The August 1981 meeting of the N.E.C. at Ilorin opened the gates for the greatest political manoeuvres, intrigues and bickerings ever seen in the history of a party like the UPN that subscribed to socialism as its ideological weapon of political forward movement. One of the would-be contestants, Chief Akin Omoboriowo even brought his wife to the N.E.C. Henceforth, affairs of government became paralysed as leaders became fragmented and factionalised on the struggle of certain individuals for gubernatorial power.

The tragedy of many of these men was their inability to understand that the crucial point about power is that it is temporary and it is never permanent. Another point about power which these over ambitious men missed is not who has

power but how to use it to promote the welfare and happiness of the teeming masses of the people. Over ambition was the prime reason for their quest for power, unfortunately, virtually all of them have found it hard to achieve power till now.

The August 1981 meeting of the N.E.C. succeeded in preparing a draft for the December 1981 Congress of the party for approval. The draft of the rules and regulations was approved with slight modifications by the Congress of the party. The Lagos City Hall, venue of the Congress of 1981, was taken over completely by the contestants for governorship positions and their supporters. Drummers and singers were brought into the venue to sing the praises of the various contestants. A most unfortunate scene was thus created. The Congress also decided to send back the final draft of the Rules and Regulations to the National Executive Council for interpretation and execution. The N.E.C. was also empowered by the Congress of the party to modify the rules and regulations to make for smooth party nominations. The Kaduna and Yola meetings of the N.E.C. in May and September 1982 eventually succeeded in blending these rules together and all parties were satisfied that a thorough exercise had been done by the party to ensure smooth and democratic party nominations.

It must be remarked however that between August 1981 (when the N.E.C. met at Ilorin to consider the Odebiyi report on the Rules and Regulations) and December 1981 Congress of the party, various prospective gubernatorial candidates carried their campaigns to the pages of Nigerian newspapers. The picture created was so sickening and saddening that the Congress of the party in December 1981 banned candidates from using newspapers as arena to engage in campaigns of calumny against themselves. The National President of the party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was empowered by the Congress to discipline any partyman that infringed on the directive. Despite this ban by the Congress, some partymen like Dr. Isaac Okonjo of Bendel State and Dr. Opeyemi Ola from Ondo State continued their campaigns in the newspapers. Papa Awolowo refused to act against them. It was Papa's opinion that a drastic execution of any law could further widen a conflict instead of healing it. Many leaders of the party took advantage of Papa's matured stance on politics and created a lot of problems for the party.

2.3 AWO'S INTERVENTION TO SAVE THE PARTY

There are those who claim that Papa Awolowo was responsible for the unfortunate events within the party in 1982. These people have said that Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not make any effort whatsoever to resolve the conflicts within the party and reconcile the individuals who were involved in a game of life and death for the 1983 governorship race.

Some other people have also claimed that it was Papa Awolowo who forced the UPN governors on the throats of the party. These charges are false. They are the creations of the demented brains that allowed their reasoning power to be controlled by passion, sentiment and inordinate ambition. This writer has written about the fairness of Papa Awolowo in dealing with all issues that involved the UPN governors. The UPN governors were never at anytime treated as sacred cows.

It is to the credit of Chief Obafemi Awolowo that all partymen and women were treated equally by him. The 1982 Yola meeting of the National Executive Council of the party will remain a testimony to the fairmindedness and plain heartedness of the old man. At Yola, the N.E.C. had deliberated on an appeal by Alhaji Busari Adelakun from Oyo State (now deceased) who had protested against his suspension from the Oyo State Executive Council of the party. The rift that had necessitated the suspension of Busari Adelakun from the State Exco of the party was part of the life and death struggle over governorship that was then raging fiercely within the party.

At the end of the deliberations, the suspension of Alhaji Busari Adelakun was lifted by the N.E.C. and all the parties to the dispute left Yola happy and contented that justice had been done. The same people who had praised the efforts of Papa Awolowo in the way and manner the matter was handled with fairness to all were to later claim that Papa Awo displayed a kind of affection for Governor Bola Ige of Oyo State.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo tried his best to arrest the troubles within the party. His efforts were sabotaged at every stage by inordinately ambitious partymen.

AKURE

Since 1980, Papa Awolowo had tried to reconcile the war-

rying factions there with fairness to all.

Early in 1980, a group of Ekiti leaders came to Papa Awolowo in his Park Lane (Apapa) Lagos residence with a protest against the Governor of the state, Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin. The Ekiti delegation which was led by Chief Joe Babatola of Ado-Ekiti had come to complain to Papa about what they called the plan of Chief Adekunle Ajasin not to site the proposed State University in Ekiti. Papa Awolowo did not waste time in calling the attention of Chief Adekunle Ajasin to the point. In the end, it was mutually agreed that the site of all the main campuses of the new Ondo State University should be in Ekiti. Chief Akerere of Ayede Ekiti had approached Papa Awolowo with number of complaints against Chief Michael Adekunle Ajasin. Chief Adekunle Ajasin was accused of having said in a statement that the population of Ekiti in Ondo State was manipulated. Chief Adekunle Ajasin was also accused of victimising Ekiti civil servants in the State. Papa Awo also did not waste time in pointing all these to Governor Adekunle Ajasin. The matter was also amicably settled.

Chief Awolowo was not happy with the way and manner Chief Akerere was removed from his post as Chairman of the Ondo State Broadcasting Corporation on the executive orders of Papa Ajasin. Papa Awolowo did not hesitate in informing Chief Ajasin of his displeasure at the disgrace meted out to a party leader of Chief Akerere's calibre.

Series of reconciliatory meetings were also held by Chief Awolowo between the Ondo State House of Assembly and the Governor of the State, Chief Adekunle Ajasin. By early 1981, relations had worsened between the Governor and the legislature in Ondo State.

The crisis eventually led to the summary removal from office of the Speaker, deputy Speaker, Majority leader and Chief Whip of the House of Assembly on the grounds that these principal House officials were loyal to Governor Ajasin. New House leaders were immediately appointed to replace them.

Three meetings were held by Papa Awolowo and the UPN leaders in Ondo State to effect amicable settlement of the problem. A Justice Odesanya probe panel was established by Chief Awolowo to go into the crisis in the Ondo State House

of Assembly and recommend measures to deal with the problem. The report of the Justice Odesanya Committee was to be submitted to Papa Awolowo as the National President of the party. Papa Awolowo was to implement the recommendations of the report.

The Ondo State House of Assembly members did not wait for Papa Awolowo's reactions to the Odesanya recommendations. They implemented the recommendations themselves thereby becoming judges in their own cause. It was a most unfortunate and disgraceful episode. It was an open insult on the leader of the party. Papa Awolowo as usual took the whole matter with equal minds. He proceeded in January 1982 to Ondo State once more to meet with party leaders there for another round of reconciliatory talks. By the end of February 1982 Papa Awolowo had successfully presided over the signing of a peace accord by the two warring groups in the state. By this time, the UPN in the state had broken into two. 'The Ajasin Group', and 'The Akin Omoboriowo Group'. It did not take the Akin Omoboriowo group two weeks before the truce was broken and henceforth the battle for the governorship race proceeded on in all ferocity, brutality and shameless brigandage.

All dirty weapons were thrown into the fight. Caution was thrown to the winds. The Akin Omoboriowo group invented lies, blackmail, and falsehood to push their campaigns on. Anyone suspected by the group not to toe their line was subjected to series of calculated blackmail. Some of the U.P.N. men who eventually joined the Akin Omoboriowo group did so to avoid being blackmailed and lied against. This writer was one of their victims.

A lie was told by three members of the Akin Omoboriowo group, Bode Olowoporoku, Ayodele Morakinyo and late Tunde Agunbiade against me that the five U.P.N. governors had bribed me to the tune of one quarter of a million naira in order to back their re-nomination as governors. Chief Godwin Daboh was the agent used to transmit this wicked accusation to members of the Nigerian public. This blackmail had been devised in order to ward me off from any kind of intervention whatsoever in the Ondo Situation. It must be recorded for posterity that some of the members of the group are clever manipulators of men and they are equally dangerous schemers who in their bid for power have no

circumstance, we cannot afford to do anything that remotely looks like a betrayal of the people's deepest yearnings, aspirations and expectations UP NIGERIA."

Little did the old man know that he was speaking to people who were not ready to hearken to his words of wisdom.

The last time when the dramatis personae of the Oyo State U.P.N. crisis came together with Papa Obafemi Awolowo was when the old man in November 1982 had convened a meeting in his residence at Ikenne in Ogun State of Nigeria to appeal to the leaders concerned to ensure peaceful party nominations due to start shortly in the state. The following people had attended the meeting: Archdeacon Emmanuel Alayande, Alhaji Busari Raji, Chief S.M. Afolabi, Alhaji Busari Adelakun, Chief Bola Ige, and Chief Michael Omisade.

After Awo had appealed to them individually and jointly to allow peace to reign in the party nominations slated for the state, and after he had made clear to them why he had convened the meeting (principally for peace), the leaders themselves volunteered to withdraw from the gubernatorial race in order to give peace a chance in the state. At the end of the meeting, everyone present was happy. I attended the meeting alongside Chief Awolowo's Private Secretary, Mr. Rotimi Abe as observers. Mama Chief (Mrs.) H.I.D. Awolowo was also present. Mr Rotimi Abe and myself later drafted the communique of the meeting which reflected the true feelings and wishes of the leaders present. These leaders after eating dinner with Papa Awolowo later voluntarily signed the communique. The communique was then released to the Press about 11 p.m. that night.

It must be remarked, however, that the only person who showed a kind of displeasure to the suggestions of his colleagues was Chief Michael Omisade, the MAYEGUN of Ife. He however signed the document. He later drew attention to the fact that he merely intialled the communique and that he did not sign it. This was when a fresh crisis broke out over gubernatorial nomination of the party for Oyo State. It is also pertinent to mention that Chief Bola Ige was equally reluctant at first to accept the terms of the agreement volunteered by the leaders present (Chief S.M. Afolabi, Archdeacon Alayande, Alhaji Busari Raji, and Alhaji Busari Adelakun).

It did not take some of these leaders (who had voluntarily opted to withdraw from Oyo State gubernatorial race) twenty four hours before they started to twist and manipulate facts as regards the Ikenne meeting. In the end, some of these leaders notably Chief S.M. Afolabi and Alhaji Busari Adelakun were later to tell the world that Papa Obafemi Awolowo had called them to Ikenne to appeal to them to withdraw from the gubernatorial race in favour of the then incumbent in office, Chief Bola Ige.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo later annulled the Ikenne accord in view of the seeming backmail that had come from the disgruntled leaders. A new nomination exercise was ordered. When it was eventually held in December 1982, these same leaders attempted a general boycott of the exercise.

2.4 AWO'S FINAL PEACE EFFORTS

By December 1981, party leaders had known that the gubernatorial nominations in the party would not be an easy affair. Conflicts among party leaders in nearly all the states of the Federation particularly in the then five U.P.N. controlled states had widened beyond reasonable limits. The National Executive Council of the party in its meeting of December 1981 established a Peace Committee headed by Chief Alfred Rewane to go round the five U.P.N. states and attempt to reconcile all the leaders of the party. The Alfred Rewane Committee was blackmailed out of existence by the Akin Omoboriowo group in Ondo State. The Committee never met again.

In June 1982, this writer was called to London by Papa Obafemi Awolowo to hold discussions with him on the rifts within the party. Papa Awolowo was then spending his leave abroad. I was directed by Papa Obafemi Awolowo to invite leaders of various groups in the five U.P.N. states for meetings with him at Ikenne in August, 1982 after he must have returned home from London with the view to making the last attempt to reconcile the warring leaders. Each group was to bring twenty members to the meeting. The first groups slated for the meeting were the groups from Ondo State. They were to meet with Papa Awolowo on the 18th of August 1982.

The three groups in Ondo State led by their leaders Governor Adekunle Ajasin, Chief Akin Omoboriowo and Professor Banji Akintoye came with all their twenty supporters each to the meeting.

Unfortunately, the meeting could not be held that day as Papa Awolowo was down with a serious attack of bronchitis. When the Ondo State leaders saw the condition of Papa Awo who had managed to come down to greet them, they all knelt down in prayers for the well-being of the old man. Chief Mrs. Akeredolu Ale and one Muslim Imam prayed for the quick recovery of the old man. Chief Awolowo later held short discussions with Chief Adekunle Ajasin, Chief Akin Omoboriowo and Professor Banji Akintoye in his bedroom.

As a result of Papa Awolowo's sickness, all the other meetings with the groups from Oyo, Ogun and Bendel states were cancelled. A short press-release was issued on why these meetings were cancelled.

At the Yola meeting of the National Executive Council of the party held early in September, 1982, Papa Awolowo informed all present that he was going to hold a special three day conference with all categories of U.P.N leaders in the country. He announced October 25 to October 27, 1982 as the three days for the meeting. He kept the purpose of the meetings with the leaders secret and speculations were soon rife in the air as regards why Papa Awolowo was calling for such a meeting.

The October 25th meeting was the last attempt made by Papa Awolowo to effect lasting solution to the gubernatorial wranglings for power among party leaders.

The three day meeting was held at the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. Chief Awolowo delivered a moving speech on why he was appealing and calling for peace within the party. He appealed to all party leaders to consider allowing the U.P.N. governors to run for their second and final term in office. He called attention to the pathetic situation of the Nigerian nation where the vast majority of Nigerian citizens were wallowing in poverty, starvation and disease. "I have served you all my life with vigour and dedication. I call on you at this hour to join me in saving Nigeria." The words of the old man fell on the deaf ears of a minority group of ruffians and hoodlums who had been brought into

the hall by the over ambitious partymen to create chaos and confusion.

At a stage during the debates on the address of Papa Awolowo, a group of people tampered with a fire extinguisher near the high table and the attendant sound of the extinguisher created such a panic that many people were wounded instantly. It was a most disturbing sight. On Tuesday, October 26, 1982, after it had become clear that some people were not prepared to give peace a chance in the party, the old man announced that party nominations would be held throughout the country to satisfy the selfish motivations of the partymen who had lost all faith in the ability and capability of the party in ever winning power at the centre and had consequently thrown all resources into fighting to become Governors, Commissioners, etc. in the states. It was a most ruthless struggle.

On October 27th, 1982, the National Executive Council of the party met to put final touches to the party nominations.

Unknown to Papa Awolowo and the National Secretariat of the party, a Joint Action Committee of all the groups opposed to the renomination of the U.P.N. governors for a second term in office had been formed. The existence of the group was only disclosed to the National Executive Council of the party on October 27, 1982 when Alhaji Lateef Jakande mentioned that the J.A.C. had sent Dr. Oluwadamilare Awe from Oyo State and Mrs. Titilayo Ajanaku from Ogun State to hold discussions with him. It later became known that the Joint Action Committee had taken an office at the National Arts Theatre two days before the Special Conference of Party leaders called by the National President of the party, Chief Obafemi Awolowo began. Several anti-party publications and literature were released by the J.A.C. from their Iganmu office as the Conference progressed. The moving spirit of the J.A.C. was later identified to be Dr. Isaac Okonjo from Bendel State. Two deputy Governors, Chief Akin Omoboriwo and Chief Sunday Afolabi who were themselves candidates for the gubernatorial nominations in Ondo and Oyo states respectively were also said to be rign leaders of the J.A.C.

It was later revealed that part of the functions of the J.A.C. was to establish links and talks with the N.P.N if their

inordinate ambitions for power did not materialise within the Unity Party of Nigeria.

Party nominations were held between November and December 1982. Nearly all the members of the J.A.C. lost their bids to win nominations on the platform of the U.P.N. It was not long after these nominations before these party decampees started opting out of the party for the N.P.N.

Chief Soji Odunjo and his men were the first to announce their exit from the party from Ogun State. The Akin Omoboriowo group in Ondo State followed in January 1983. Alhaji Buari Adelakun and Chief Sunday Afolabi from Oyo State were the last to go in February 1983. These acts were acts of betrayal and treachery against a leader that loved them dearly with all his heart. Such actions are however normal occurrences on the path of a political party genuinely interested in the welfare of the masses. Politics is cemented with intrigue. Politicians are masters of the game.

As I mentioned earlier, the story of what actually happened to the U.P.N. in 1982 cannot be told objectively in detail now. The events form the details of a new book being written by the writer. The only thing that remains to be said is that some of these men were over-pampered by Chief Awolowo when they were in the U.P.N. Papa Awolowo was just too trusting. This was a major weakness of the old man.

Chief Akin Omoboriowo was treated by Chief Awolowo like a son. He was the favoured party leader that was always saddled with the duty of representing Papa Awolowo in important events that the old man was unable to attend. The affection Papa showered on Akin Omoboriowo was such that it soon gave room for doubt and suspicion in the minds of some of Papa's old friends like Chief Fazoranti, Chief Wunmi Adegbonmire (alias Omo Ekun) and Professor Sam Aluko of Ondo State.

At a meeting of Ondo State party leaders at Akure early in 1982, Papa Awolowo was furious when Chief Segun Adcgoke rose up to accuse Chief Akin Omoboriowo of involving himself in anti-party activities. Papa Awolowo declared to everyone present that he had tremendous respect for Akin Omoboriowo as a loyal and dedicated party man. Some of Papa's friends at Akure who knew the facts about Akin Omoboriowo's anti-party activities were simply stunned.

One of Chief Akin Omoboriowo's supporters who also later withdrew his membership of the Unity Party of Nigeria was late Chief Olaiya Fagbamigbe a renowned publisher who handled the publications of a trilogy on Papa Awolowo's great political speeches and Essays. He titled them *The Voice of Reason*, *The Voice of Wisdom*, and *The Voice of Courage*. In December 1981 when Papa Awolowo visited Akure in Ondo State to attend the launching ceremony of late Chief Olaiya Fagbamigbe's publications on Awo, his (Awo) visit was boycotted by all party leaders supporting Governor Adekunle Ajasin. These leaders had accused Papa Awolowo of promoting the gubernatorial ambitions of Akin Omoboriowo as a result of Papa's intense love for him. Akin Omoboriowo chaired the launching ceremony.

Honourable Chief Olaiya Fagbamigbe later lost his life in the unfortunate events that followed the declaration by FEDECO of Chief Akin Omoboriowo as governor of Ondo State in 1983. The people of Ondo State rose up in revolt against the daylight robbery. The courts in Nigeria were later to annul the FEDECO declaration. Many lost their lives in the inferno. It was a tragedy of unequal proportions.

Chief Sunday Afolabi the then deputy Governor of Oyo State before he decamped and ended up casting a major blot on his otherwise brilliant political career was a loyal and devoted party man. He was one of the most ardent supporters of the old man. The reasons for Afolabi's departure are still not very clear to this writer. He might have been influenced by some unscrupulous elements who joined in the mad struggle to disintegrate the party through the petty struggles for gubernatorial positions.

No one in his correct senses would quarrel with any decent conflict within a political party. Heraclitus was right when he stated that society must be in a permanent state of conflict. When conflict, however, become wild and uncivilised, then decent men must raise their eye-brows and question why? Awo's weakness was trust and confidence he placed on his lieutenants without question. It was a blind loyalty that followed the great man to his grave. He remained completely loyal to the U.P.N. Governors during the 1982 gubernatorial controversy.

Events have however brought out the stark reality of Papa Awo's existence. He was very much ahead of his time.

CHAPTER 6

Controversy Over Awo's Land At Maroko

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was controversial in life and in death. He was such a colourful personality that anything said or done by him immediately caught the attention of all.

It was no surprise that a mere ownership of some landed property at Maroko in Lagos state was to occupy the attention of millions of his fellow countrymen and women for over two months in 1980. It was a battle so meticulously handled by Papa Awo that at the end of the day, his opponents were left looking as fools and mere political imbeciles.

On Monday May 12th 1980, the **National Concord** newspaper then serving as the political mouthpiece of the then ruling National Party of Nigeria and owned by a multimillionaire Chief Moshood Kashimawo Abiola came out with a front page banner headline "Awo in N1m LAND DEAL" (360 plots at Victoria Island).

The mischief in the news publication was adequately reflected in the introductory paragraphs of the story. The Newspaper reported the story inter alia 'SOCIALIST' leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Chief Obafemi Awolowo has bought a large parcel of prime economic land at the Victoria Island, Lagos for N1,000,000 (one million naira).

The total arce of the land is 29.613 hectares, that is the equivalent of about 360 plots.

The parcel of land is described in the Deed of conveyance as "all that parcel of land situate lying and being at Maroko and Igbosere areas in the environs of Victoria Island Lagos"

The purchase came to light when the Deed of conveyance was registered at the Lagos State Land registry last week.

The National Concord went on and on with what it called a "WORLD EXCLUSIVE". The story was intended by the

then NPN megaphone to achieve the following:

- (a) cast aspersions on the socialist claims of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.
- (b) portray him as a capitalist roader who was only trying to collect the votes of the masses of the people as their defender and supporter.
- (c) create dissensions within his party — the Unity Party of Nigeria which was the best organised political party in Nigeria of the second Republic and which was very uncompromising in its crusade against the corruption of the NPN federal regime.
- (d) divert attention from the exposure of the corrupt acts of the ruling government which had reached a crying scandal by the sordid exposure of a 2.8 billion naira scandal in the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC).

The **National Concord** was confident that it had picked the best of times to deal politically with Papa Obafemi Awolowo. The paper did achieve some initial successes as regards its mission to:

- (i) divert attention from the criminal government of the NPN and
- (ii) attempt to rock the bottom of the socialist claims of the great leader.

The **National Concord** story was published on the very day that Papa Obafemi Awolowo and his wife were due to leave for the United States of America on their annual holidays.

The newsmen flooded the Murtala Muhammed International Airport on that Monday morning 12th of May 1980 trying to get Papa to comment on the story published that day by the **National Concord** newspaper. It is important to publish at this stage how some of the National newspapers reported Papa Awo's immediate comments on the land conveyance:- Under the caption "AWO REPLIES CONCORD" the **Daily Sketch** published the following:-

"Chief Obafemi Awolowo leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) has said the land referred to in a report published by the **National Concord** newspaper yesterday is his private affair. Chief Awolowo who was talking to newsmen at the Murtala Muhammed Airport Ikeja, described the front page report headline "Awo in N1 million land

deal" as obnoxious and of no effect. Chief Awolowo accused the Concord newspapers of promoting discord instead of national unity.

The **National Concord** in its edition of Tuesday 13th May 1980 had this to report in its front page: "AWO KEEPS MUM"; "Chief Obafemi Awolowo taking a one — man escort with him, flew out of Lagos yesterday to begin a month long vacation abroad.

Shortly before his departure, he cancelled a press conference he had promised Concord man Lewis Obi weeks ago, and refused to answer questions on his N1 million land deal at Maroko and Igboere, Victoria Island Lagos.

But subjected to a barrage of questions from newsmen, Chief Awolowo who is the leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria merely described the land deal as a 'private affair' on which he was not prepared to comment.

The **National Concord** in the same news report went to lay bare some of the real reasons for the publication of such a story. The paper went on to say in its report "yesterday, political analysts were interpreting Chief Awolowo's unusual 'no-comment' as the effect the exposure of the land deal has had on the 'socialist' leader of the UPN".

The **New Nigerian** equally noted for its rabid anti-Awo stance had the following report published on page three of its May 13th 1980 edition "AWO FLARES AT NEWSPAPER REPORT ON NIM PLOTS." The paper wrote inter-alia: "The leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Chief Obafemi Awolowo, yesterday in Lagos described a front page report in a national daily as 'outrageous'.

The newspaper had alleged that Chief Awolowo bought about 360 plots of land in Victoria Island at the cost of one million naira.

Speaking at Murtala Muhammed Airport Ikeja shortly before his departure to Jerusalem on the first leg of his two month long overseas trip, Chief Awolowo described the story as false. He however refused to comment further on the issue which he described as his personal affair."

Though the **New Nigerian** has always been opposed to the politics and person of Chief Obafemi Awolowo ever since the paper was established by the late Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello as the voice of the "NORTH" in its editorial policy, it is to the credit of the paper that its news presentation on men, matters and events in Nigeria has always been

objective and balanced. The **New Nigerian** of 13th May 1980 concluded its report on the land matter with the publication of the other side of the story. The paper went on: "But in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) the UPN Director of Research and Publicity, Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu said that Chief Awolowo bought a piece of land at Marokō Legitimately in 1976 when he was a practising lawyer and had to invest what he earned from his profession.

He pointed out that people should not refer to socialism as to mean poverty, adding that the socialism his party talked about means equality of wealth and not that everybody should be poor"

The **Punch** under a front page banner headline titled: "AWO WON'T TALK ON NIM LAND DEAL" had the following to say:

"UPN leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo flew out on pilgrimage to Jerusalem yesterday without shedding light on his alleged N1 million land deal at Victoria Island in Lagos.

The alleged deal was published by the **National Concord** yesterday.

According to the newspaper, Chief Awolowo bought a total of 29.613 hectares of land at Maroko and Igboere areas on Victoria Island for N1 million.

The deed of conveyance on the land was said to have been dated February 28, 1978 and registered in Lagos last week Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters at Murtala Muhammed Airport yesterday, Chief Awolowo described the report as obnoxious and added "in spite of that it has no effect on me."

When pressed by the reporters to confirm or deny the report, Chief Awolowo said: "That is my private affair. I have no comments to make".

The UPN leader went on to accuse the press of "singing praise of the government to an undesirable extent". He said that the press should "criticise the government untiringly so that those ruling the country at present may identify their faults and make amends".

The diabolical intentions of the owners and sponsors of the **National Concord** in its attempt to cast aspersions on the socialist leanings of Papa Obafemi Awolowo with the publication of the land story became manifest when certain

chosen NPN leaders started to react to the story. The **National Concord** and the **Nigerian Herald** (a KWARA government owned newspaper which was however more NPN than the NPN itself) were to throw their pages open for tirades against Papa Awo on the land affair. I now record for posterity what some of the NPN chieftains said on the affair.

Prince Isaac Adebayo described as the chairman of the NPN in Oyo state was quoted by the **National Concord** to have demanded a probe on the land affair. The story of Prince Isaac Adebayo's press statement was reported by the **National Concord** in its edition of Friday May 16 1980. The paper reported the story thus:

"The Federal government has been called upon to probe the circumstances surrounding the N1 million land deal involving Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

In a statement issued yesterday, the chairman of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) Oyo state branch, Prince Isaac Adebayo said that the probe was necessary because someone must have tried to 'circumvent the land use Decree by clever means'".

He wondered why the UPN leader reputed for his unrivalled aptitude for details could offer no explanation to justify the acquisition of such a vast land which he described as patently anti-social acquisition.

Prince Adebayo had a number of other posers for the UPN leader:

- What is Chief Awolowo going to make of such a massive expanse of land in the expensive Victoria Island environ?

- Will he build an empire on the site to complement his existing properties?

- Will he resell the land to the less fortunate Nigerians? Is this how to be a socialist in metropolitan Lagos where countless number of people dubbed "squatters" by Jakandes agents are daily being subjected to harassment?.

Prince Adebayo said that the UPN which had always held itself out as the party of the masses, hypnotised the people with its empty socialist philosophy in 1979 to achieve undeserved electoral advantage in five states of the federation.

It is therefore an anathema that the UPN leader, barely nine months after should procure 360 plots of land at the expense of the poor masses whose properties were demolished

at the site" he remarked.

He expressed shock at the silence from people like Professor Ayodele Awojobi, Mr. Niyi Oniororo, Professor Chike Obi and Dr. Tai Solarin over the land scandal.

He added "If this deal were a matter involving a supporter of one of the other parties, we know those who would have taken to the streets in unfettered demonstrations, writing of ghost columns in the pages of some newspaper, shouting scandal".

Prince Adebayo called on the UPN governors of Oyo, Ondo, Lagos, Bendel and Ogun states to resign forthwith in response to the betrayal of their professed cause perpetrated by their leader".

Mr. Etienam Bassey representing the NPN from an Oron Federal constituency of Cross River state in the House of Representatives was to declare while speaking on the debate of the message of condolence to the President of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia that the propaganda of socialism in the country by the Unity Party of Nigeria was simply acquiring wealth for its members. He was reacting to the Concord publication on Papa's land matters.

The *Sunday Star* owned by Chief Richard Osuolale Akinjide the then NPN Federal Attorney-General took the opportunity of the story to write an editorial comment denting the socialism of Papa Obafemi Awolowo.

Under the heading "AWOLOWO'S FAKE SOCIALISM" the paper wrote among others: "Early last week, it became known that Chief Obafemi Awolowo leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria, had acquired 29.6 hectares of land, which is equivalent to more than 300 building plots near Victoria Island in Lagos. To those who already knew that Chief Awolowo was an unabashed capitalist who only masquerade as a socialist, this particular disclosure could not have come as a surprise. The man is too rich to be a true socialist or to even be a true socialist sympathiser. This was why the Chief had no answer to journalist's questions on the subject other than to say that the publication was obnoxious and that it was his private affairs".

The attempts made by men and megaphone of the National Party of Nigeria as stated earlier were to discredit the socialist leanings of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. For over ten

weeks in 1980, these men kept shouting their heads off over the legitimately acquired land owned by the old man. Despite all the vituperations however, none of the critics succeeded in laying any foundation of doubt in the minds of the masses of the people as regards Chief Awolowo's fanatical commitment to socialism. None of them was able to show any impropriety associated with the land purchase. All they kept hammering upon was the point that Papa Awolowo as a professed socialist ought not to own property.

This clear mischief was to lay bare to decent minds in Nigeria the rabid antagonism of Nigeria's corrupt rich to the socialist campaigns of Chief Awolowo and other democratic forces.

It is important to perform at this stage a short analysis of socialism and all it stands for in order to correct the bastardisation of the socialist philosophy that came with the crude attacks of reactionary minds in Nigeria on Chief Awolowo's property at Maroko in Lagos.

Chairman Mao Tse Tung declared in 1949 while speaking on the third anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's anti Japanese Military and Political College:-

"I hold that it is bad as far as we are concerned if a person, a political party, and Army or a school is not attacked by the enemy, for in that case it would mean that we have sunk to the level of the enemy. It is good if we are attacked by the enemy, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. It is still better if the enemy attacks us wildly and paints us as utterly black and without a single virtue, since it demonstrates that we have not only drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves but achieved a great deal in our work".

I have quoted Chairman Mao's speech elaborately to show that the attacks on Chief Awolowo's legitimately acquired landed property at Maroko and other unguarded attacks on socialists in Nigeria by renegade forces were done out of ignorance of what socialism means. It could also have been deliberate attempts by capitalist roaders and reactionary intellectuals to halt the speed of the growth of revolutionary

consciousness within the masses of the people.

M. Rosenthal and P. Yudin in their co-edited *"Dictionary of Philosophy"* define socialism as a social system based on public ownership of the means of production. Socialism comes into being as a result of the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Socialism builds on two forms of ownership state (public) ownership and co-operative and collective ownership.

From this brief description by these two famous revolutionaries, it can be seen that socialism is built on the united efforts of the people — the oppressed people. It can also be seen that socialism is a system that guarantees a planned and well integrated economy, a clear point that philistine intellectuals have never accepted.

The socialist system is the most advanced social system in the world where the working masses are masters of everything and where everything in society is made to serve the interests of the working masses and the rural peasantry.

In simple terms, socialist democracy is fully cemented on people's and economic democracy. These ensure social, economic and political justice and rights — the right to free education and medical services, guarantee of security in old age, equal rights for men, women and citizens of all races or colour, rest and leisure, political freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of assembly. This in essence means that a socialist state is a highly mobilised state with a high level of political consciousness by the people.

Right wing opportunists and their friends in the business circles of Nigeria often give wrong interpretation to socialist values. Some silly talks often voiced by opponents of socialism as they did on Chief Awolowo's land include the following: "Socialists who sleep in hotels, socialists who wear beautiful dresses (to them socialists must wear unkempt beards. They must be seen to be absolutely wretched before they can be regarded as being truly committed to socialism), socialists who ride Mercedes Benz and other luxurious cars.

The simple answer to these empty charges is: socialism is never an ideology of poverty. Kwame Nkrumah stated in an article published by the *African Forum* volume 1 No. 3 of 1966 titled *"African Socialism Revisited:"* "socialism is not spontaneous. It does not arise of itself. It has abiding

principles according to which the major means of production and distribution ought to be socialised if exploitation of the many by the few is to be prevented; if that is to say, egalitarianism in the economy is to be protected.”

Chief Obafemi Awolowo's socialist views are clearly expressed in three of his books: *The People's Republic; The Strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic and Problems of Africa: Need for Ideological Re-Appraisal*.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was quite aware of the capabilities of capitalist forces in society to frustrate and destabilise the genuine and sincere efforts of revolutionaries to spread the message of socialism amongst the masses of the people. In his book *The Problems of Africa: Need for Ideological Re-Appraisal*, the old man had written:

“By means of monopolies, oligopolies, monopsonies and oligopsonies, the capitalists are able to rig and subvert the economy of any state to promote their self-interest and to damnify the interests of the vast majority of the people. In addition, in order to achieve their selfish ends, they do not hesitate to bribe those in authority as well as members of the business community.

In all their nefarious activities, the capitalists are formidable. There are only a few of them in the entire world. But, over the years, they and their forbears have accumulated vast capital resources through the employment of slaves on their plantations and of sweated labour in their factories. As a result, they are able to maintain a close and well-knit cabal which can operate with swift, concerted and satanic efficiency against dissenting governments and individuals”.

It therefore came as no surprise to Awo when the **National Concord** and its sponsors mounted a most vicious campaign of calumny against his person over his landed property at Maroko.

As typical of the man Awo, he counter punched on July 6, 1980 at an Airport Press Conference which he had addressed shortly on arrival from his annual leave overseas. In this account Awo fully discharged certain facts about the so called “Maroko land deal” and made “some points of clarifications, emphasis, and self-explanation”

One of the affirmations of the statement was the fact that the Maroko land belongs to Dideolu Estates Ltd (DEL) since February 1978 when the Deeds of Conveyance (also published in the National Concord) transferred his (Awo's

interest to DEL — a private Limited Liability Company registered in 1959 in which according to Awo “the only shareholders are my wife, myself and our children” — in whom the title to the Maroko land vests since the execution of the conveyance. In other words, the Maroko land no longer belonged to Awo as a private property since February 1978.

The statement also corrected the impression that Awo had already received N27,000,000.00 (Twenty Seven million Naira) from the sale of the land since “DEL has not paid me ONE KOBO for the conveyance of the land at Maroko to it in February 1978”. As against the 360 plots of land estimated by the publication of the **National Concord** newspaper, Awo put the number of Plots DEL has at Maroko at 103 “when allowances have been made for roads and the types of density permissible under the Town Planning laws and Regulation of Lagos State. What is more, that he never prompted any individual or group of individuals to demolish the illegal shanties erected on some of the Plots at Maroko. The demolition exercise carried out by Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande the governor of Lagos state was merely in conformity with the U.P.N electoral promise to give Maroko a thorough face-lift.

Reacting to the allegations of being a capitalist Awo maintains that he has worked very hard for every kobo he has earned as income. Anchoring his own understanding of socialism on the principle of **EGALITARIANISM** — equal opportunity for every citizen regardless of place of birth parental circumstances or religion. Awo declared “I have day in day out conscientiously striven according to the light that God from time to time, gives me, to promote the welfare, happiness, and best interest of the people of Nigeria and it was in furtherance of these goals that the goal of the Unity Party of Nigeria is **SOCIALISM**.”

Emphasising that to be ‘neatly clad’ and live comfortably do not in any way contradict the principle of Egalitarianism. Furthermore that he abhors in every sense exploitation of man by man which is the core of capitalism is buttressed by the fact that “my senior Driver and my Chief cook earn better pay respectively than the Chief Driver/Mechanic and Chief cook employed at Dodan Barracks by Federal Government. Their conditions of living which I provide for them free are as good as, if not better than those provided by the Federal Government for equivalent staff.”

According to Awo, the statement "any person who strives to promote the attainment of equal opportunity for every citizen in Nigeria (or for every citizen in any part of the world for that matter) is a socialist. Awo declared ipso facto "I asseverate with all the emphasis at my command that I am a socialist *not* a capitalist." This cannot be otherwise since both the defunct Action Group and the Unity Party of Nigeria under the able leadership of Awo not only had democratic socialism as their ideology but provided social services for the people within their areas of jurisdiction.

Perhaps it will be more intellectually rewarding to let Awo speak for himself. The full text of Papa Obafemi Awolowo's press conference is now published in full for posterity.

PRESS STATEMENT MADE BY CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO AT MURTALA AIRPORT ON SUNDAY, 6TH JULY 1980.

As a rule, I don't read the newspaper called **NATIONAL CONCORD**. My Private Secretary is to buy one copy only, and to call my attention to any report or article in it which, in his opinion, deserves my attention. The first time he did this was on the morning of 12th May, when I was about to leave home for the airport. He had not read the report in full, and so he only told me there was a story about what the paper termed my "land deal" at Maroko.

I have, since my arrival in London on 4th June, made time to read the **CONCORD** story of the so called "land deal" and all the articles written on both sides of the battle line on the matter.

I feel very much indebted to my friends and colleagues for their brilliant contributions to the controversy. The points made by them in my defence as well as in offensive thrusts against my attackers are so thorough, exhaustive and unanswerable on any sane grounds that I really have nothing to add.

Nonetheless, there are certain facts within my knowledge and unknown to my friends which I ought to disclose. There are also some points of clarification, emphasis, and self-explanation which I ought to make for the benefit of my friends, admirers and followers. One can only hope that some of what I am going to say might permeate the warped minds,

and penetrate the densely-compacted brains, of those of my assailants who have not irredeemably succumbed to the unruly and primitive aspects of our instinctive urges which is the mark of civilised man to curb and sublimate.

In the first place, the Deeds of Conveyance published by CONCORD shows quite clearly that since February 1978, I no longer have land at Maroko. I transferred my interest to Dideolu Estates Ltd, in whom the title to the Maroko land vests since the execution of the conveyance.

In the second place, Dideolu Estates Ltd is a private limited liability company in which the only shareholders are my wife, myself and our children. It was registered in 1959. At the time of registration, I had two blocks of six flats each in Apapa which I conveyed to the company. I built these flats in 1957 and 1959 respectively, with borrowed money — Loan Accounts Nos 1 and 2 at Barclays Bank DCO, Bank Road, Ibadan; and the purpose of building them was, after paying the loan, to have sources of income supplementary to the inadequate remuneration which I received as a public man.

It was providential foresight that I built those two blocks of flats at the time I did, and that, though I was Head of Government in the Western Region, I allowed my wife to continue to go to Gbagi every morning, everyday — except *dies non* — to pursue her retail trade business. Without the incomes from the two houses and from her business, we would have, financially, gone under completely, and the education of our children would have suffered disastrously, during the prolonged crisis of 1962-1966. It is not generally known that, apart from bearing alone the expenses of the four lawyers who assisted me at the Coker Inquiry, I alone, of the 27 accused persons at the Treasonable Felony Trial, paid the Lawyers' fees. None of the 27 was asked to make any monetary contribution whatsoever. In this connection, however, I hasten to add that both at the Coker Inquiry and at the Treasonable Felony Trial, the Lawyers never charged any fees. Instead, they accepted with pleasure whatever I was able to give them. I was deeply grateful to them and will ever remain so.

Furthermore, with the income from the properties, I was able to do my financial duty to the Action Group of Nigeria, even from within the prison walls. I will give only one impor-

tant instance here among others. During the 1964 general elections in the Midwest Region, we needed money, and subscription was not forthcoming from anyone. So I asked one of the tenants — Vivian Younger and Bond — who wanted to renew its tenancy to pay FIVE YEARS RENT in advance. The company agreed, and, at £400 per annum paid £2,000. I endorsed the cheque to Mr. (now Chief) Bisi Onabanjo, now Governor of Ogun State, as my contribution to the election expenses. He was in charge of our electioneering activities in the Midwest. We knew that the Action Group could not win the election, and that it would be sheer luck if it won even a single seat. But I was determined that the Midwest Democratic Front (MDF) which was exploiting Action Group goodwill in the Region, and which at the same time, was in some kind of accord with the NPC, should not win. And we succeeded. Apart from the two blocks of flats, Dideolu Estates Ltd owns one other building — a three bedroom flat — from which it collects rents. This was built in 1971/2.

In the third place, it must be pointed out that Dideolu Estates Ltd (hereinafter referred to as DEL) makes a yearly declaration of all its gross income from rents to the Federal Board of Inland Revenue for Tax purpose.

In the fourth place, I used to have two blocks of six flats each at Iyanganku, Ibadan. These were built mainly with borrowed money — Loan Account No 3 — From Barclays Bank DCO, Ibadan. They were both completed shortly after the outbreak of the Western Crisis in 1962. My oponents scared away all prospective tenants from the flats until 1966 when the University of Ife hired four flats for some of its staff. In the meantime, the interests on the loan of £20,000 had accumulated, at compound rate, to a terrifying magnitude. The rents paid by Ife University did not cover the annual interest; and in any case, when I became Chancellor of Ife University, I refused to renew the tenancy of the University.

On my return from Calabar, I decided to sell the buildings in order to pay the debt owed to Barclays. In 1969, I succeeded in getting buyers through the help of Chief Kunle Ojora and Prince O. A. Sijuade. The buyers themselves valued the properties, and fixed the purchase prices. I quickly accepted the offers because they not only covered my indebtedness to

the Bank and to one of the buyers, but also left me with a surplus of £15,000 which Messrs. Cappa & Dalberto Ltd, after hard bargaining, agreed to accept for building the house in which I now live at Apapa. There have been some modifications to the house which were done by City Property Development Ltd FREE OF CHARGE in 1974.

Before the sale of the two houses in Ibadan, I had planned to build a dwelling house in Apapa. In pursuance of this plan, I applied to the Nigerian Building Society for a loan of £10,000, which was granted. I had thought that this amount was enough, but Cappa and Dalberto Ltd refused to do it at that price. They later agreed to do it for £15,000.

Someone who obviously has his thinking apparatus at the soles of his feet, and who must have been totally blinded by insane prejudice, has likened my Apapa Residence to the Palace of the Shah of Iran. He has certainly never heard or read of the PEACOCK THRONE in the Shah's Palace. Some people have estimated the throne to be worth more than TEN MILLION DOLLARS. Where is the comparison?

In the fifth place, DEL has not yet paid me ONE KOBO for the conveyance of the land at Maroko to it in February 1978. To declare, as some of my detractors had done, that I had already received N27,000,000.00 (Twenty Seven Million Naira) from the sale of the land is a product of demented brain and diseased imagination.

In the sixth place, DEL has only 103 Plots at Maroko, NOT 360 Plots as my attackers have suggested. When allowances have been made for roads and the types of density permissible under the Town Planning Laws and Regulations of Lagos State, it has not been possible to have more than 103 Plots.

In the seventh place, of the 103 Plots, only 19 Plots were vacant as at 10th May, two days before I went abroad on holiday. The remaining 84 Plots have been illegally occupied by squatters who have erected truly wretched shanties thereon. Because of the acute shortage of housing in Lagos, it is not impossible that, at this moment, the 19 vacant plots have been illegally occupied.

It is totally untrue and defamatory to say that Alhaji L.K. J̄ande has demolished houses on DEL's land at Maroko to oblige or please me or at my insistence.

In the eighth, the City Property Development Ltd has always had a brilliant plan for the rehabilitation and development of Maroko. Its plan was abruptly interrupted in 1972 by Government acquisition of the land. There was court action to get the acquisition revoked. This action ended in a compromise judgement in the High Court. All the parties in the case, including those whose counter-claims against the CPD were dismissed in the High Court, appealed to the Supreme Court. The CPD's appeal and those of the counter-claimants were dismissed and COSTS were awarded against the latter in favour of CPD. As between CPD and the Lagos State Government, no costs at all were awarded. This is one of those interesting, but difficult-to-understand judgements of some of the Judges of the Supreme Court.

In the ninth place, nothing daunted, I appealed to the Military Governor of Lagos State to be graciously disposed to release parts of the land to the CPD. Governor Lawal was indeed gracious. He did release parts of the land; and the release was published in the *Lagos State of Nigeria Official Gazette No. 11 Vol. 10 of 3rd March 1977* at page 84.

In the tenth place, in anticipation of the release, the CPD caused another Layout Plan to be prepared for the development of the released portions of the land. This Plan was submitted to the appropriate Department of the Lagos State Government as far back as 1977.

In the eleventh place, the CPD realizes that it is imperative, on grounds of humanity, of environmental hygiene, and of planned development in harmony with the rest of Victoria Island, that the wretched, odious, health-destructive, and soul-depressing slum in Maroko should be cleared and the inhabitants rehabilitated and resettled in decent houses and surroundings. Accordingly, the CPD with, of course, the active encouragement and assistance of the Lagos State Government, had its plans ready to these ends.

However, I happen to know that the Lagos State Government, whose primary responsibility it is to clear the slum at Maroko, has a better and more brilliant Plan for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Maroko inhabitants.

When this plan is executed within the next three years, the entire people of Maroko will be living in a new town which will be the best of its kind in Black Africa.

In this connection, it will be recalled that, during the electioneering campaign, the UPN did declare that Maroko, as it was, was a disgrace. It promised that the slum would be cleared, and that the people would be resettled in decent houses and environment.

It should be clear to all those who keep their sanity and are not blighted by consuming hate that the Lagos State Governor has taken positive steps to fulfill UPN's promise.

In the twelfth place, it is worth recalling, on this occasion, that I entered into active politics, as a leader in my own right, in 1936. Ever since that time, I have, day in day out, conscientiously striven, according to the light that God, from time to time, gives me, to promote the welfare, happiness, and best interests of the people of Nigeria.

I was in the forefront with other patriots in the fight for the political and economic emancipation of Nigeria. I am the first and the chiefest advocate of federalism. I am the foremost and the most relentless promoter of free education, free health services, and agrarian revolution. When the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Oliver Stanley, visited Nigeria in 1942 or thereabout, I urged the case for free education at primary level, and free health services for all, in a memorandum submitted to him by the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). Besides I was one of the NYM delegates who met Sir Bernard Bourdillon, then Governor of Nigeria, to demand a national minimum wage for workers. And when the opportunity to execute these things presented itself to me as Leader of the Party in Power and Premier in the Western Region in 1952 to 1959, I seized it quickly and firmly by the forelock, for the greatest good of the entire people of the Western Region.

As a Pupil and (later) Provisional Teacher in Imo and Ogbé, Abeokuta; as a Shorthand Typist in Lagos and Ibadan; and as a reporter in the "Nigerian Daily Times", I lived well, and was always cleanly clad.

I owned my first car — a second-hand Ford which I bought for £30 from the late Rev. W.F. Mellor — 1935. I used this car together with a second-hand Chevrolet, which I bought in the same year for £50, as taxes. As a big produce buyer, I made a sizeable amount of profit during the Cocoa boom of 1936/37. In December 1936, therefore, I bought, for

my personal use, a Chevrolet Saloon Car, which was one of the best in the country at the time. Ever since that time, whenever I buy a car, I make sure it is one of the best, though not necessarily one of the most flashy or most expensive.

I built my first house in Ikenne in 1939. It was one of the best in Ijebu Remo Division at the time.

Despite "life's billows and tempests", I have always tried to live well, and comfortably, within my means. Now, FORTY-FOUR YEARS after I acquired one of the best cars in Nigeria, and FORTY-ONE YEARS after I built one of the best houses in my home Division, some despicable people would want me to ride in a Volkswagen Beetle or live in a hovel.

Furthermore, in the service of the people, I have continually made enormous loss and sacrifice. I have never gained materially from public life. My average net earning after tax as legal practitioner for the five-year period of 1947 — 1951 was at least £4,500 a year. As Leader of Party in Power in 1952, my salary before tax was £2,500 a year; and as Premier, I ended up in 1959 on a taxable salary of £4,000 per annum. As a Lawyer, I didn't have to entertain my clients and I didn't have to accept their invitations to social functions. But as Leader and Premier, I had to do all these things in a big way. So much so that by 1959, my overdraft on entertainments — Account No 2 at Barclays Bank, Ibadan — was over = 12,000. I had to sell my two houses in Ikeja and three parcels of land in Ibadan to wipe out the overdraft. My professional earnings after I resigned from Gowon's Government in 1971 are proof positive of the financial fortunes I had lost over a period of about TWENTY YEARS from 1952 to 1971, which I had spent in the service of our people. Even now, after paying 75K in tax out of every 100K I earn, at least forty percent of the balance goes out in donations, gifts, entertainments and assistance to less fortunate people.

I do not complain because I derive infinite pleasure and joy from serving, and I still want to continue to serve.

As a young boy and adolescent, I had to wage a fierce and sustained war against the unkind buffetings of FATE, and I won. I never believe that anyone is destined to be or should live as a pauper. Indeed, it is my firm conviction that it is quite possible for everyone of us legitimately to procure the wherewithal for a comfortable decent life. The phenomenon

of poverty, in all its gradations, is the direct outcome of an inhuman and ungodly social order, in which a strong, selfish, ruthless few exploit and deprive the masses of the people, politically and economically. Consequently, I am at my happiest when I take part in formulating or executing any policy and programmes which are designed to terminate and transform the existing pernicious social order in Nigeria.

In the fourteenth place, I have never, even once, deceived our people or anyone, in my private and public utterances or actions. I have always been blunt, forthright, truthful, and above-board in all I say and do. In fact, one of the criticisms which some well-meaning people have levelled against me is that I am too forthright and candid.

Before and during the last electioneering campaign, I did not at any time advocate the expropriation of the so-called business tycoons in Nigeria, or the confiscation of their properties; nor did I preach the immediate nationalization of the means of production and exchange. On the contrary, I made it abundantly and repeatedly clear that, if I won the Presidency, I would take quick steps to reactivate the economy by, among other things, lifting ban on imports, boosting agriculture, promoting industries, and generally encouraging private enterprise.

Again, before, during and after the electioneering campaign, I did also make it crystally and repeatedly clear that the **GOAL OF THE UNITY PARTY OF NIGERIA IS SOCIALISM**, but that this goal cannot be reached, and must not be essayed, in one fell swoop. In order, however, to attain the goal at the earliest possible time, certain things must be done. There was a time when I had thought that the prerequisites for the attainment of socialism could be accomplished within a period of five years. In the present circumstances of our country, particularly having regard to the behaviour of most of our educated youths, I now see that five years is too short.

It is my considered view that the best contribution anyone can make now is to help in laying solid foundations for the future but early advent of socialism. It is to this end that the four cardinal and other programmes of the UPN have been formulated, and are now being faithfully and efficiently executed.

In the fifteenth place, I asseverate, with all the emphasis at

my command, that I am a socialist, not a capitalist. This is not the place to make a theoretical exposition of socialism and capitalism. But even here, it is necessary to give a brief description of each of them for the benefit of all, and, in particular, for the enlightenment of those phillistines who parade themselves as socialists, when in fact they have little or no understanding at all of socialist ideals and goals, or of the ingredients of capitalism.

What SOCIALISM seeks to achieve in the political, economic, and social order is EGALITARIANISM. In our Second National Development Plan of 1970/75 we declared egalitarianism as one of our National Objectives. We have stuck to it ever since.

Egalitarianism does not mean *equality among all persons*, as has been mistakenly interpreted by some people. It simply means EQUAL OPPORTUNITY for every citizen, regardless of place of birth, parental circumstances, or religion. THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY defines EGALITARIANISM AS THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL RIGHTS ETC FOR ALL PERSONS. Without using the exact word, our Constitution stipulates that EGALITARIANISM shall be one of our SOCIAL OBJECTIVES. Section 17 (1) (2) (a) of the Constitution provides as follows:-

“The State social order is founded on the ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice. In furtherance of the social order, every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law”.

Now, if Egalitarianism, that is the “principle of equal rights etc for all persons”, is one of our National Objectives, or Equality, that is “equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law” for every Nigerian citizen, is one of the ideals on which our country’s social order is founded, then, by definition, the social goal of Nigeria is the same as SOCIALISM seeks to achieve. And any person who strives to promote the attainment of equal opportunity for every citizen in Nigeria (or for every citizen in any part of the world for that matter) is a socialist.

In its bid to arrive at its declared goal, Socialism seeks first

and foremost to exterminate all those evil factors which conduce to inequality of opportunity among men. Such factors are: ignorance, disease and poverty. As between the adult rich and adult poor, existent inequality is already more or less ossified. It cannot, therefore, be removed; but its asperity can be reduced by the introduction of programmes such as free adult literacy, free preventive and curative health services, modernisation of farming as well as accelerated development of the rural areas designed to raise the standard of life of the inhabitants of those areas. But as between the children of the rich and those of the poor, equality of opportunity can be effected. To this end, anything that can conduce to inequality, however slight or remote, must be resolutely and unflinchingly stamped out. A situation in which only the children of the rich and well-to-do have access to the good and essential things of life like adequate and good food, adequate and suitable accommodation, decent clothing, education, health care, employment, adequate minimum living wage, and more; a situation such as this is evil, and everything within human ingenuity must be devised and done to end and transform it with the utmost possible speed.

Now, only the State can undertake this task, which, admittedly, is gigantic, and at the same time presents complex problems which, fortunately, are amenable to solutions, as Nigerian experiences have shown since 1954.

As I see it, and as those whose objective perceptions and subjective minds are not dulled by corruption can see, the position which some unpatriotic, callous, and egomaniacal Nigerians, who claim to be rich men or business tycoons, take is that the poor should fend for their children. They argue, as one of them did recently, that the poor are poor because they don't work hard enough. This kind of attitude on the part of the so-called rich Nigerians can only prolong the existent evil, inhuman, and in any case, unconstitutional social order whose effects in the not too distant future can do irreparable harm to the so-called rich Nigerians. Nor would their over-advertised acts of philanthropy, which at best only benefit a microscopically small section of our community, save them when the day of reckoning inevitably and inexorably arrives. For example, how far do eight tankers and four caterpillars

go in the supply of water to the people of one whole State, and in constructing roads in the said State? How do these equipments compare with the large number that is required and is being supplied by the State Government and the various Contractors working for the State? Egomania is a disease of the mind. But until the victim "begins to eat leaves, papers and rubbish", and is totally ruined in the process, his minions will continue to acclaim him as a stupendous success and will not take the trouble to have him thoroughly psycho-analysed.

However, to provide equality of opportunity for the children of the rich and the poor, and to elevate the poor from their harsh and abject state of life, it is imperative that every Government in Nigeria should introduce the following programmes throughout the country without any further delay:-

- (1) free education at all levels including the free supply of books;
- (2) free adult literacy campaign;
- (3) free preventive and curative health services;
- (4) modernisation of agriculture and massive development of the rural areas;
- (5) a national minimum wage of N200.00 per month;
- (6) full employment; and
- (7) lifting of ban on imports.

In regard to the above, one or two comments are apposite. Firstly, we were told during the electioneering campaign that the introduction of free education at all levels as from October, 1979, was an impossibility. This claim has been completely disproved by the five UPN Governments. Secondly, at the same time, opponents of the UPN promised to introduce qualitative education. Since October 1979, we have heard no more of qualitative education. The truth really is that there is not such education. For instance, Arithmetic is Arithmetic wherever and by whomsoever it is taught; so is Geography, Biology, or any other subject taught in the schools and universities. One teacher or lecturer may be better at his job than another, but the subject they teach can have no disparate quality in the same way as there may be between one teacher or lecturer and another. Thirdly, it is not generally realized that ban on imports or making the import

of certain items of goods subject to licence generates inequality of opportunity among business men, traders and industrialists. It is only the corrupt, corrupting and influential few who are able to buy access to import licences, or know how to buy their way through customs in their smuggling activities, that flourish under such circumstances. Because of the scarcity of goods which ensue under conditions of ban and import licence, the few are able to make enormous profits, to the detriment of their less influential and more honest and more patriotic fellow-citizens. The former become fabulously rich and the latter terribly impoverished. The rich then turn round to assert unconscionably that the poor are poor because they don't work hard enough!

I have stated earlier on that anyone who strives to promote the objective of socialism, that is the attainment of equal opportunity for all, is a socialist. *In this sense, I am a socialist par excellence*, in spite of my WELL-OFF circumstances in life, and my investment in landed properties.

Some people with more envy and spite than sense of fairplay have spoken of my colossal wealth. I solemnly declare that I am not at all a rich man, but I am comfortably well-off. However, even granting that I am a rich man, then I should be congratulated for being a rich man in a class by myself. All the other rich men in Nigeria have refused to promote the fundamental and imperative objective of equal opportunity for all. They want all the good things of life to be confined to themselves and their children; and in order to prevent the advent of the day of reckoning a few of them give sop to the cerberus by proclaiming their so-called acts of philanthropy on the roof-tops, and on the pages of newspapers. Otherwise, as far as they are concerned, the children of the the poor could go to the dogs.

Since these rich people now regard me as belonging to their class in personal affluence, let them join me in striving to provide equal opportunity for our children as well as the children of the poor, as my colleagues and I have been striving to do for many years in the defunct Action Group, and now in the UPN.

I take pride in one great historic occurrence: that it is only in the areas of the country over which I have decisive influence as a political leader that equal opportunity for all those inhabiting the areas is being strenuously and faithfully

prosecutors. Indeed, all the *Governors, Commissioners, Legislators, Officers of Parastatals, and all those who hold public office, in the UPN controlled States are socialists. We all strive with all our might for the attainment of socialist goal.*

In the sixteenth place, some people have said that it is "morally indefensible" for me, as a socialist, to invest money in landed properties, more especially as Nigeria is "an egalitarian society". In saying this, such people have exposed their alarmingly abysmal ignorance of what socialism is all about. They have also thereby given vent to their burning but suppressed envy. What is morally wrong or bad or evil in a socialist using his hard-earned money to purchase a piece of land? To say that it is "ideologically indefensible" is understandable. But to say that it is "morally indefensible" is the very height of morbid thinking and depraved judgement. Besides, when did Nigeria become an egalitarian society, that is a society in which every Nigerian has equal access to all the good and essential things of life?

I have an advice to give to this class of traducers. They should read and try to digest all that has been written and said on this controversy by various brilliant and thoughtful persons like Odiya Ofeimun, Tai Solarin, Agboola Sanni Akin Oke, Odiya Ofeimun, Senator J. Odebiyi, Odetola of SKETCH, Late Ogunsola, Lam Adesina, Lawal Isa, Wumi Adegunmire, M.C.K. Ajuluchuku, Tola Adeniyi, Idowu Odeyemi, Sam Aluko, Ebenezer Babarope, Alkhan Uduehi, Alfred Ilere, J.S. Olawoyin, Banji Ogundele and Segun Adegoke. They should also read, mark and digest what I have said about egalitarianism and socialism in this statement. In addition, they should make time to study thoroughly the social status of Communists in Italy and France, and of socialists in Britain and the Scandinavian countries.

Furthermore, they must learn that the practice of socialism is dynamic not static, and that over time, and under changing socio-political circumstances, this practice has moved far away from that which was advocated in the days of Marx and Lenin, and, especially in Western Europe, in the early part of this century. Here is what Seldon and Fernance, in their *THE DICTIONARY OF ECONOMICS*, say, among other things on this matter.

“Although socialist programmes usually entail redistribution of income from rich to poor, they also emphasize EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY ... In recent years left-wing parties (i.e. socialists) in Europe have tended to replace general by selective State control of industry in their political programmes and some socialists have argued *that state ownership is not essential for socialism*”.

In other words, since our destination is EQUAL OPPORTUNITY for all without discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, the route we choose and the means of locomotion we employ must be in accord with reason, sound commonsense, and the terrain peculiar to the country of operation. In this connection, I am perfectly satisfied that the UPN is pursuing its goal of socialism in the right way; and that my action is ideologically and morally valid and defensible, as the host of my defenders have abundantly demonstrated.

With regard, however, to the last sentence in the quotation from Seldon and Pennance, I am of the considered view that under socialism there is need for Government to control what Bevin termed the commanding heights of the economy.

Now, unless this class of pseudo-socialists and pseudo-intellectuals heed my advice, and try to understand what they talk pontifically about, they will continue to be the disseminators of intellectual pollution, and the instruments of leading those who have trust in them into errors more abysmal than their own.

In the seventeenth place, I always try to practice what I preach. I do this faithfully throughout my public career - witness my performances in the Western Region and in the Federal Government under Gowon's Administration.

I also do the same thing in my private life. My domestic and personal staff are among and have always been among the best paid in their categories in the country. Indeed, my Senior Driver and my Chief Cook earn better pay respectively than the Chief Driver/Mechanic and Chief Cook employed at Dodan Barracks by the Federal Government. Their conditions of living which I provide for them free are as good as, if not better than, those provided by the Federal Government for equivalent staff. In addition, I pay each of my domestic and personal staff a thirteenth salary every year

in form of Christmas bonus; and after ten years in my service, I undertake to pay the school fees of the first child of every staff in Secondary School. Under this arrangement, two children have completed their Secondary education. Furthermore, I undertake to pay them a pension when they retire from my service after a given number of years. I also pay a year's salary in one lump immediately on their retirement. Two of these staff have now retired, and are enjoying their pension. But if I went through transition, the payment of the pension might cease. Accordingly, I am planning to build a house which I want to place under a trust for the payment of pension to my personal and domestic staff, even after my transition.

In the eighteenth place, it is absolutely untrue, as the CONCORD reported, that I said in London that I was going to use the Maroko land "to build children's reference library, playing grounds, recreation centres, parks and houses for the masses". When the time comes the land will be dealt with in a manner which the Directors of DEL shall direct.

In the Nineteenth place, I did not and do not, at any time, advocate the policy of ONE MAN ONE PLOT. What I did advocate most strongly when I was in charge in the Western Region was that those of us in Government should not own even one plot of Government or GRA land. After a lot of debate, the Executive of the Action Group directed that no Minister or Parliamentary Secretary should have more than one Plot. Even so, those who already had more than one Plot refused to surrender the residue, and they still hold more than one Plot to this day. At any rate, it was as a result of this Party directive, and of my unrelenting advocacy of Democratic Socialism that the opposing faction in the Action Group falsely asserted that I advocated certain policies as follows:-

"ONE MAN ONE PLOT; ONE MAN ONE WIFE"

"If a man plants yam, he must not plant maize";

"If one wears BUBA, he must not wear TROUSERS"

This vile campaign failed woefully, and those who fabricated the lies went down with the campaign. It is now too late in the day and dangerous to try to resuscitate the old fatal lies.

In the twentieth place, Capitalism has certain characteristics which are inimical to human welfare and happiness, and antithetic to the best interests of the people as a whole. I will itemize a few of these characteristics.

1. Under Capitalism, the factors of production are not rewarded according to the intrinsic, actual and physical contribution which each of them made to the total output, but in accordance with prevailing market forces which by themselves are inherently ruthless, inequitable and unjust. The worst hit under this arrangement is invariably Labour or the working classes. The supply of Labour, that is the birth of children, is not dependent wholly on economic considerations. Indeed it has been statistically established that the poorer people are, the more children they produce. Besides, unlike other factors, Labour cannot be stored up: it is quickly perishable, and inelastic in supply. Consequently, down the ages, the working classes — whether as slaves, serfs, peasant farmers, factory hands, ordinary labourers, and the like — have been the victims of feudalist and capitalist exploitation. The society under capitalism tends to be horizontally stratified: it makes vertical social mobility very difficult, and the average capitalist strives to keep it rigidly so. The peasants and the working classes are at the very bottom of the capitalist social structure, and there they are condemned to remain, unless the Government of the day comes to their aid, or in the alternative they themselves, under dedicated leadership, revolt against the socially unjust and inequitable system. This can be done in several ways. But my chief preference is for massive development of the rural areas, great improvement in the conditions of life of the peasants and the working classes, and the deliberate provision of equal opportunity for all in every sector of our social endeavours.

All these measures will help to bring about the rapid decay of the existing stratification, and greatly facilitate vertical social mobility. One example of what I mean can be given. Many of the youths who benefitted from the enlightened and very liberal scholarship policy of the Action Group in the fifties have distinguished themselves in many walks of life in Nigeria — in Government, Business and the Professions. I do know that a good number of them would not have been what they are without scholarship awards. In other words, without Government assistance, they would certainly not have been able to acquire university education, which has enabled them to migrate so rapidly from the bottom of the social strata to the very top as they have done.

2. The capitalist system thrives more on scarcity than on abundance. If it is possible for him, as in the old colonial days which still linger on under the name of neo-colonialism, the capitalist will manipulate things to enable him to pay low prices for his raw materials, and obtain high prices for his finished products. To these ends, he will endeavour to contrive a monopoly or enter into an oligopolist arrangement with other monopolists. The capitalist is in business for profit: and the higher the profit the happier he is. The basic humanist interests of the suppliers of his raw materials, and of the consumers of his goods, are a matter of indifference to him: such things never cross his mind.

3. Capitalists do not favour the planning, coordination and regulation of their activities. They want to be left along to fight it out among themselves — *sans referee sans umpire*.

The only coordination they favour is the one initiated by them to achieve a tight horizontal-cum-vertical combine. Under such arrangement as this, those outside the combine are mercilessly eliminated. In the process, producers of

raw materials and consumers of finished goods go through a period of acute uncertainty, and in the end are left at the mercy of the new combine.

4. Capitalism does not favour EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL. It believes unflinchingly in the law of the jungle — the survival of the fittest. As far as capitalism is concerned there can be no Equal Opportunity as between the lion or tiger and the weaker and smaller denizens of the wilds. To the capitalist, the tillers of the soil and the working classes are mere industrial and commercial fodders. In his business calculus and projections they are counted and regarded as so many units of input in the same way as units of cement, gravel, steel, caterpillars, etc, are counted and regarded by a road contractor.

The above by no means exhaust the evil characteristics of capitalism. But I did promise earlier on that I was merely going to give a brief description of the system.

Besides, I would like to point out that capitalism is not wholly evil. It has its virtues. Among other things, it helped, more than any other historical development, to destroy feudalism and, in the process, unwittingly to promote the emergence of liberalism and democracy. It sedulously encourages and endows exploration, education and research among a very limited class for its own sake. But it is my considered view that the evils of capitalism more than counter-balance its virtues.

It is the evils of the system that socialists are out to fight and remove.

In the twenty-first place, in the course of this Maroko land controversy, one writer has foolishly and irrelevantly repeated a lie which, I learnt from some friends, the Daily Herald told against me some time ago. The lie was to the effect that I declared that I would never serve under a Northerner. I never made this kind of declaration or statement at any time. Specific question was put to me by a radio interviewer as to whether I was prepared to serve under certain persons whose names were given, and I replied that I

would not serve under those persons. Those persons happen to be Northerners. In this connection, however, it is apposite to recall that, when the exigencies of Nigeria warranted it, I did serve the country under Gowon: didn't I? And he is a Northerner!

In the twenty-second place, I feel immensely flattered and gratified by recent additions to the family of newspapers which had suffered premature deaths by labouring under the grand illusion that my political career could be destroyed by brazen dissemination of falsehoods against my person and against any political group to which I belong. I have no doubt that, as in the past, the rabid love of filth and reckless untruths, and the insensate disregard for faulplay which motivate these newspapers will ensure that they too go into the limbo of ignominy as their predecessors in vile journalism had done. It is indeed fascinating for me to watch the constant repetition of history by newspapers and columnists who publish and write loathesome fictions with a view to achieving the impossible task of silencing me.

I want to seize this opportunity to advise them to go through the history of Nigeria in the past thirty years. They will discover that I do have a resilience and staying power in public life which is due, not to any extraordinary efforts on my part, but to the indestructibility of the cause of the common people of this country to which I dedicate all the intellectual, spiritual, physical and material forces and resources with which it has pleased God to endow me. They will discover also that I have never been shaken by the venomous vituperations of my assailants; nor have I ever mortgaged my convictions for the purpose of gaining respite from the assaults of my opponents. Indeed, it is these assaults that help in a big way to provide the shells for my cannon. As long as the common people of this country have their enemies who selfishly and callously conspire to deprive them of access to **EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, AND TO THE GOOD THINGS OF LIFE**, so long will I continue to use that cannon.

ONCE UPON A TIME, THE HURRICANE BLEW: IT LIFTED, AND SCATTERED FAR AND WIDE, ALL THE STONES THAT STOOD IN ITS PATH. THEN THE DRY

LEAVES, IN ANGER AND WITH IRON RESOLVE,
WENT ALL OUT TO STAND IN THE PATH OF THE
HURRICANE, FOR A TRIAL OF STRENGTH ON
THEIR OWN ACCOUNT, AND TO AVENGE THE
STONES! THE OUTCOME OF THE CONTEST IS A
FOREGONE CONCLUSION!!

OBAFEMI AWOLowo
LONDON: 28th June, 1980

WJO:

CHAPTER 7

The Untold Stories

“The past is settled and beyond repair. The present is fleeting but can be moulded. The future is uncertain; but it is an inexorable effect of the sum of the causes generated by the combined forces of the past and the present. Today however was the future of yesterday”

The above statement by Chief Obafemi Awolowo made at Akure on Friday 18th December adequately introduces the nature and content of what I intend to deal with in this chapter.

While Ikenne was gripped with unprecedented celebrations of Papa Obafemi Awolowo's funeral ceremony on 6th June 1987, and while the adulations and massive rejoicings rang out clear and loud from the St. Saviour's Church, as Papa's body was brought for the final Christian rites, my mind kept, on pondering on the fact that the old man Awo fought quite a royal battle with forces of reaction throughout his life. He fought a battle of the titans.

Lies were deliberately told against him for no reason whatsoever, yet Papa remained unruffled. False security reports of Papa training guerilla bands for the purpose of overthrowing the regimes in Lagos were written, and other palpable lies were told against him, all designed to whip up a deep seated animosity against his person.

In 1967, a mysterious security report was sent to the then Head of State General Yakubu Gowon by some unscrupulous elements on Papa Awo. The report said Chief Obafemi Awolowo was involved in a plot to overthrow the Federal Military Government. Papa was falsely accused of training some guerilla groups at Ijero and Ore with the help and collaboration of Lieutenant Colonel Ayo Ariyo (now deceased).

Even though Yakubu Gowon refused to believe this report, Lieutenant Colonel Ayo Ariyo was subjected to all kinds of human degradation for the remainder of his stay in the Army. He was never considered for promotion until he finally retired voluntarily from the Army after the civil war.

In 1970, another attempt was made to put Papa Awolowo in the bad books of the General Gowon government. A

particular politician from Ibadan, a lawyer and a well known opponent of the old man went to Alhaji Sule Katagum the then Chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission with a false story that Papa was planning to overthrow the military government of General Yakubu Gowon by the use of peasant farmers in the Western State. Papa Awolowo had at the time planned to perform the launching ceremony of the ELERE GARI project which was a laudable idea of the old man to start in the country, a peasant's co-operative movement based on modern mechanised farming.

Not long before the launching of the scheme, Awo had in 1969 been largely instrumental to the quelling of the AGBEKOYA uprising in Ibadan which had shaken the very foundation of the Military regime. It was the first recorded armed insurrection of peasant farmers in Nigeria to resist oppression and injustice. The Ibadan politician fearing that a successful launching by Papa Awolowo of the ELERE Farmers' Co-operative Movement in Ibadan division would completely obliterate the non-existent political influence of his and his fellow travellers, had devised this trick to nip the scheme in the bud.

The emptiness of the dubious report of the Ibadan lawyer was quickly discovered when his attempt to link another Nigerian with the plot was later known to be a calculated and monstrous lie. Alhaji Katagum will bear witness to this story.

On 3rd March 1983, the following was contained in a letter written by a senior Police Officer to the then Secretary to the Government:-

"It was further disclosed that the idea of establishing a security organisation in Ogun state is the brain child of the U.P.N. leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and as such the scheme may not be limited to Ogun state alone, but operated throughout the country. Two prominent leaders of the U.P.N., Chief Ajuluchukwu and Mr. Ebenezer Babatope have been assigned as co-ordinators of the nationwide security organisation. These two personalities according to information are believed to have travelled out at one time or the other at the invitation of some foreign security organisations."

The letter quoted above was sent to all Commissioners of Police in the country with the following directive "For infor-

mation, you should be on the alert". The letter was classified "SECRET".

Some of the dramatis personae of the stories told above were among the large congregation that turned out at Ikenne on Saturday 6th June 1987 to bid Papa farewell. It was clear victory for Awo even in death over renegade forces who without any sane reason had made themselves opponents of the noble cause Awo had championed throughout his life.

Perhaps the last of the great life battles Papa faced in his struggles to create a new life for Nigerians was recorded during the life of the Muhammadu Buhari regime. It is my belief that the story is worthy of being told to Nigerians.

One thing that will continue to gladden my heart (and for ever) is the fact that Papa Obafemi Awolowo transformed mortality for immortality during the rule of those who have proclaimed their love and respect for him. If Muhammadu Buhari and his cohorts were to be in power at the time of Papa's death, it was certain that the seeds of civil war would have been sown by the cavalier attitude the fellows would have shown to the burial arrangements of the great man.

If Buhari and his men were to be in charge, it is clear to this writer that all his governors in the five LOOBO states (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF COLONEL OLADAYO POPOOLA) — would have been too willing to carry out directives and instructions to scale-down if not disturb the PEOPLE's funeral arrangements for a leader they love passionately. I am the happiest today that one of those men who with a stroke of the pen changed a University's name in Ondo state in a futile attempt to de-emphasize Awo's popularity with the people was to later tell Pressmen how great Papa had been as a leader.

The truth must certainly be told. This is why the story of the ghost — hunting exercise conducted against Papa by Buhari and his men deserves being fully told to Nigerians particularly at this hour.

The months of January and march 1984 were the months the Buhari administration attempted a total wipe out of members of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria. After the silly and ill-motivated ransacking of Papa's house at Apapa, Lagos in the early days of the 1983 coup, a clamp-down on all Papa Awo's lieutenants all over the country was embarked upon.

All those men and women in the Northern states who had been bold enough to identify themselves with Papa during the Second Republic were either hounded into detention or made to commence a routine weekly report to the Police for over one year. Alhaji Bappa Ahmed, the gubernatorial candidate of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria in Bauchi state was detained in Bauchi prison for several months until he was released by the Armed Forces Ruling Council headed by President Ibrahim Babangida. Clement Gomwalk and Chia Surma kept on reporting to the Police for over one year. Alhaji Abba Tor from Borno state who with Alhaji Mohammed Goni and several others had joined the banned Unity Party of Nigeria in 1983 was put under lock and key in Maiduguri prison despite the fact that he had been discharged and acquitted by the Jos zone of the Special Military Tribunal. He remained in prison for twenty months until the coup of 27th August 1985 saved his life and gave him justice.

Early in February 1984, Major General Tunde Idiagbon (now retired) then the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters of the Buhari junta at a Press briefing informed the nation that three of the former U.P.N. governors had confessed to security forces that they had received "kickbacks" of 2.8 million naira from a foreign company that had won the contract for the construction of the office complex of the GREAT NIGERIA INSURANCE COMPANY — (a company jointly owned by the governments of Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo states).

At the time Idiagbon was making those claims, none of the former U.P.N. governors: Chief Bisi Onabanjo, Chief Bola Ige and Papa Michael Adegunle Ajasin had ever been questioned by security forces on the issue. Papa Obafemi Awolowo in his characteristic bluntness and candour did not waste time in issuing out a comprehensive press release stating in unequivocal terms that such a confession could never have come from any of his colleagues. Chief Awolowo gave to the nation a detailed statement of accounts of the Unity Party of Nigeria and how these funds had been got. Papa, noted for his flare for thoroughness and public accountability did not hide any facts from the Nigerian public.

From his statement, it was clear that the banned Unity Party of Nigeria received donations from members of the public and interested party men who were committed to the fortunes of the party.

Immediately Papa issued the press statement, the military authorities banned all visits to political detainees. From 9th February 1984 till the end of the Buhari regime, political detainees were held incommunicado. By 25th February 1984, the private secretary of Papa Awolowo (Rotimi Abe) had been gracefully picked up at Ikenne and marched straight into detention by the Buhari men.

Towards the end of February 1984, a team of military intelligence officers came to Kirikiri prison to visit some detained politicians. According to my source six former politicians of parties other than the banned U.P.N. were invited for the chat. They were all from the Northern states of the country. They included Chief Solomon Lar, and Abubakar Rimi.

These men were told by the visiting intelligence officers of the story of a coup plot allegedly planned by Papa Awo and leaders of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria to overthrow the Shagari Government. The phoney coup was said by the men to have been uncovered by the Buhari security forces after the December 31st 1983 coup.

The following were the reasons why Buhari and his men inside Dodan Barracks had conjured up the news of a U.P.N. phoney coup. On the eve of the December 31st 1983 coup, Papa Awo had called on all lovers of Nigeria to observe a three-day fast with special prayers to God for peace, progress and prosperity for the nation. The three-day fast was religiously observed by millions of people. The timing and success of the three-day fast was seen by Buhari and his men as proof positive of the existence of a coup plot by Papa Awo and his lieutenants to unseat the Shagari government. The December 31st 1983 coup was announced within forty eight hours of the end of the three-day fast.

Certain top Military, Police and N.S.O officers believed to have sympathies for Papa and his banned party were compulsorily retired within three weeks of Buhari's climb to power. Sources close to Idiagbon's Dodan Barracks have confirmed that Major General A. Aduloju was retired on the

belief that he had sympathies for the U.P.N. All N.S.O. men believed to be favourably disposed to the banned U.P.N were also hounded out of service. The former N.S.O. boss in Oyo state, Mr. Oshodi (a graduate of Lagos University) was compulsorily-retired along with other men and women of the organisation.

One other reason for the phoney coup of Buhari's concdction was the spirited campaign mounted by Chief Bisi Onabanjo for a con-federal arrangement for Nigeria towards the end of 1983. Chief Bisi Onabanjo had in his October 1st 1983 inauguration address at the Ogun state House of Assembly made an open call for a con-federal arrangement in the country. It was his reaction to the callous and irresponsible rigging of the 1983 elections in the country.

General Buhari and his men simply concluded on coming to power that the confederal debate might have been a mere prelude to a coup plot by Papa and his associates in the banned U.P.N. It was therefore no surprise to anyone that Chief Bisi Onabanjo was to become the first casualty of Decree 3 of the junta that sent politicians to ridiculous and senseless prison sentences.

Let me state with all the emphasis at my command that there was never a time Papa Awolowo and the leadership of the banned U.P.N. ever planned a coup as claimed by the Buhari men. Papa's love for democracy and democratic practice were too well known to honest minds. Papa Awo while not hating the persons of military men was always very careful as regards his dealings with them. As a matter of principle, Papa Awo never permitted visits to his house by military men in uniform except such men were on official duties.

In 1979, shortly after the controversial elections organised by the General Olusegun Obasanjo's military administration, a military intelligence officer came to the Park Lane residence of Papa requesting an audience with the man. He gave his military title as major and he claimed to have come from Aba, Imo state. Papa refused to see him. Oluwole Awolowo (Papa's son) and myself later spoke to the man when his visits were becoming a nuisance to all. The gentleman informed us of plans being made by some soldiers including himself to overthrow the Obasanjo government and declare Papa Awolowo as President of the country. We did not hesitate one second in informing the gentleman that

he was in the wrong place with his message.

On a second occasion, a highly respected Lagos-based legal practitioner from Odogbolu in Ogun state Dr. Olu Onagoruwa had brought an Army Colonel to Ikenne with the view to paying Papa a courtesy call. When the presence of the Army Colonel was announced, Papa politely told the lawyer that he would not be in a position to permit the military officer to visit him if he was in uniform and if his visit was not official. The officer concerned was to later emerge during the era of General Muhammadu Buhari as a state governor. He was at the St. Saviours Church Ikenne on Saturday 6th June 1987 to pay his last respects to a great leader.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo fought a gallant battle against citadels of reaction. He fought for the glory of Nigeria. He never compromised the interests of the common people throughout his life. He led a disciplined life and died, well, in the hands of millions of his countrymen and women who love him passionately.

Papa's death indeed effected a lasting peace with those elements who never saw anything good in him. If however, these irredentist critics will want to persist in their tirades, they will be met at every stage by those who believe that the path of glory leads but to the grave and the righteous shall always flourish like the palm tree.

I have come out with these stories not because I want to rake up old wounds. As SANTAYANA has warned "those who do not learn from history are doomed to relive it". Another sage asserts that history repeats itself in various ways first as a tragedy and later as a farce.

Nigeria is a great country and with a great promise. All of us must strive at every stage of our history to work for our country's greatness. We must (as Muffet stated) always let the truth be told.

The past, as Papa Awo would always assert, is a story old. The future of Nigeria will certainly be written in gold.

CHAPTER 8

AWO — Facing The Political Storms

Awo was a man moved throughout his life by an idealism and vision that are very rare to find in men. He was meticulous in all political assignments he set his hands on. He refused to suffer fools and indolent persons around him. He led such a disciplined and SPARTAN life that made many people wonder what type of person he truly was.

He once told me the story of one of his Ministers when he (Awo) was premier of the former Western Region of Nigeria. The Minister was to lead a debate in a cabinet meeting on certain reforms in the educational system being operated in the region that Awo's government was then contemplating on introducing. A night before the cabinet meeting, a report was made to Papa Awo that the Minister had been seen in a social gathering enjoying himself in the midst of men and women of different characters.

Awo's view which he expressed loud and clear to his informants was that for as long as the social gathering would have no effect on the performance of the Minister the next day when the cabinet meeting was to examine his ministry, the Minister was free to use his spare time the way and manner he wished.

Awo said it was sad and lamentable that by the time the cabinet reached the item on the Ministry of Education where the Minister was expected to lead the debate, the gentleman had slept. Awo immediately led the debate (having prepared himself well for the meeting) and the reforms were approved by his cabinet colleagues without the active participation of the said Minister.

Awo later invited the Minister to his office where he told him in plain and decent language that he was having his last outing as a cabinet Minister in the region. Awo bluntly told him that a Minister that chose to dance away valuable time he could have used in the service of the people deserved to be given the full platform to satisfy his orgy for socials unlimited. True to his conversation with the Minister, Awo ensured that the man never returned to the cabinet after the 1956 general elections into the Western Regional House of Assembly.

Such was the Spartan discipline and rigid commitment to duty of Awo that those who could not understand him felt he was such a difficult person to work with. His political opponents capitalised on this spartan self discipline to paint before the people of Nigeria several portraits of Awo. Every move made by the great man to improve the lot of the people of Nigeria was resisted by his opponents who were afraid that such a well organised man if given the chance to rule might make them immediate materials for a life of irredeemable frustration and despair.

As remarked in several chapters of this book, Awo was hated with passion and fanaticism by those who believe his style of politics and his fanatical commitment to the cause of the masses of the people constituted dangers to their political aspirations.

These politicians acted true to the type described by Abraham Lincoln in a speech he delivered to the Illinois legislature in January 1837:- "Politicians are a set of men who have interests aside from the interests of the people, and who, to say the most of them are, taken as a mass, at least one long step removed from honest men".

Awo's stubborn commitment to noble ideals, his spartan self-discipline, his rigid advocacy of party supremacy, and his romance with solving the problems of the wretched of the earth provided his political enemies with a sword with which they manipulated events in the country to ensure the blockage of Awo's desire in helping to shape a great future for Nigeria and her people.

Some stories associated with how Awo's political opponents used that sword to paint for him an imbalanced portrait before the people of Nigeria, are told in this chapter. These opponents used the media in their possession to publish incessantly revelations of "flaws" in Awo's politics so as to bring out a deliberate and inaccurate over balancing of his good qualities. The stories are restricted to the period between 1979 and 1983.

Early in January 1980, the Owelle of Onitsha and one of the fathers of Nigerian independence Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe made a statement to the press where he was quoted to have stated that he had observed no change of attitude by Papa Obafemi Awolowo to Alhaji Shehu Shagari the then President of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria. Zik was also reported to have called on Awo to forget the past and work for the peace and harmony of the nation. The past that was referred to by Zik, had to do with the way and manner the military regime presided over by General Olusegun Obasanjo had seen Alhaji Shehu Shagari to power in the controversial 1979 elections. The "past" for Zik also included the rejection by the Unity Party of Nigeria of an invitation by Alhaji Shehu Shagari in October 1979 that the party should participate in a national government.

It was because the old man Zik was not properly briefed by his party men of the true facts of how and why the banned Unity Party of Nigeria turned down the National government invitation of the Shagari led N.P.N Federal government that he went to the press with such an unfortunate statement.

When the invitation was received, Awo immediately summoned a meeting of the National Working Committee of the banned U.P.N to deliberate and take a decision on the matter. Everyone present at that meeting with the exception of late Chief O.N. Rewane opposed the idea of the U.P.N joining the National government. Infact, Awo ensured that everyone present spoke on the matter before he then expressed his views and summarised the position of the party on the subject.

A polite letter, rejecting the invitation signed by the Assistant National Secretary of the Party Professor Banji Akintoye was immediately sent to Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The letter was backed up with a press release which tried to give to the people of Nigeria the reasons why the national government invitation of the N.P.N. federal government had been rejected by the U.P.N.

The release which was signed by me as the National Director of Organisation of the banned U.P.N said inter alia:-

- (1) We consider a national government idea at this stage of our socio-economic and political development as being anti the interests of the masses of the Nigerian people. The people's interests will certainly become submerged to the interests of individuals of different shades of political opinion who will be in government as a result of the arrangement.

- (2) The U.P.N has a pact with the electorate. A National government will completely destroy the ideological stance of the party as a party of the common people. It is our firm belief that any compromise over principle as Chairman Mao once said, is total abandonment of that principle.
- (3) We also believe that a government that does not have an articulate and determined opposition could easily degenerate to a fascist and brutal dictatorship. This, in our opinion will be detrimental to the political development of our great country."

In the same January 1980, a news item from Bendel state that baffled all reasonable citizens, of Nigeria was reported by many Nigerian newspapers. It was to the effect that all members of the National Party of Nigeria and the Nigerian People's Party in the Bendel state House of Assembly had staged a walk out from the Assembly when Awo was about to address the Assembly.

1980 marked the 25th year of the establishment of the free education programme in the Awo led former Western Region of Nigeria. A group within the U.P.N. called the "TRIBUNE GROUP" made up of young business and civil service executives who had been beneficiaries of Awo's free education programme, had arranged series of events to mark the programme's 25th anniversary. Part of the activities included addresses by the U.P.N leader (Awo) to legislators of the Assemblies in states that were formerly in the old Western Region of Nigeria. The states were Bendel, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo.

When it became the turn of the Bendel state to have Awo address the House of Assembly in session, all the N.P.N and N.P.P legislators staged a walk out on Awo. It was a sad affair. Awo went on with his speech which was only heard by members of the banned U.P.N that constituted the majority in the Assembly. Papa Awo refused to comment on the event and he simply smiled when he was questioned by the ever inquisitive pressmen and women.

What happened in Bendel state was most distressing when viewed with Awo's attitude to the N.P.N federal administra-

tion in Lagos. After the 1979 elections, several members of the party (U.P.N) became so frustrated that they urged a policy of non - fraternisation with the N.P.N government at the centre. Awo completely disarmed these partymen when he lectured them on the need for the new democratic experiment in the country to succeed. He called on all his supporters to bring out the very best that the democratic state could offer. In the Presidential address he gave to the second national congress of the Unity Party of Nigeria held at the Eko Holiday Inn Lagos in December 1979, Awo had declared:- "In the circumstances, I invite all well meaning and patriotic Nigerians, whatever political camp they may belong to give an objective study to what I have had to say so that together we may evolve arrangements for making future elections free and fair and so save Nigeria permanently for democracy, stability and progress".

Throughout the lire of the second Republic, Papa Awo was never tired in telling all his party men and women that whether they liked it or not Alhaji Shehu Shagari was the de facto and de jure President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was for this reason that the U.P.N members in the National Assembly had attended a cocktail party held by President Shehu Shagari at his Ribadu Road residence in Lagos.

On 21st February 1980, the then National Secretary of the N.P.N Alhaji Suleman Takuma addressed a Press Conference in Lagos where he accused Awo of plotting secessionist bids. He accused Awo of planning to dismember Nigeria by taking out of the Federation of Nigeria states controlled by the Unity Party of Nigeria. This allegation by Alhaji Suleman Takuma had come at a time when the Unity Party of Nigeria led by Awo had shown its determination in joining other democratic and patriotic forces in nipping in the bud attempts by the N.P.N controlled federal government in subverting the democratic experiment in the country.

The series of atrocities perpetrated by the banned N.P.N against the people of Nigeria at the time of Takuma's allegation and which Awo and his party had resolutely resisted include the following:-

- (1) The encouraged subversion of the government of Alhaji Balarabe Musa in Kaduna state by the use of an N.P.N majority in the House of Assembly.

- (2) Subversion of the new Presidential Constitution by illegal and unconstitutional appointments of liaison officers for states of the federation.
- (3) The arbitrary deportation of a Nigerian citizen Alhaji Shugaba Abdulrahman to CHAD Republic for the simple reason that Alhaji Abdulrahman's presence as a G.N.P.P politician in Borno state was found to be inconvenient for the plan of the N.P.N federal government to over run the G.N.P.P government led by Governor Mohammed Goni in the State.

The secessionist allegations made by Alhaji Suleman Takuma were therefore aimed at tactically diverting the attention of the people of Nigeria from the anti democratic measures then being taken by the N.P.N led federal government and which Awo had resisted with all the energy he could muster.

Early in November 1980, a well known and fast-talking Nigerian politician Paul Unongo issued a 13 page statement to the Nigerian public on events leading to his removal as Minister for Steel Development by Alhaji Shehu Shagari the then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the statement, Paul Unongo painted the picture to the public that his ordeal had been created by Awo because (according to Unongo) Awo had held him responsible for "preventing Awo from becoming President of Nigeria". Unongo claimed that as a result of Papa Awo's belief that he (Unongo) was to be held responsible for the failure of the alliance talks between the UPN, GNPP and NPP after the 1979 elections, Awo had mounted well calculated campaigns of calumny against his person leading to his removal from office as Minister.

Paul Unongo had been removed as a Federal Minister as a result of an anonymous letter sent to Alhaji Shehu Shagari containing some allegations against Unongo. It is only a silly government that would decisively move against a citizen as a result of unprovable allegations of misdeeds contained in an anonymous and clandestine publication. Rather than hold Alhaji Shehu Shagari and the N.P.N responsible for his plight, Paul Unongo unfortunately turned his venom on

Awo. Awo refused to say a word on the UNONGO fiction. He was used to such fairy tales.

On Thursday 2nd July, 1981 the then President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Usman Shagari addressed the officers and men of the Nigerian Army at Jaji in Kaduna state. In the address, Alhaji Shehu Shagari was quoted to have said inter alia:-

“Certain elements in our society excel in the use of vile languages, even with occasional attacks on members of the Armed Forces who have nothing to do with party politics and those who by nature of their oath cannot engage themselves in any public controversy”.

The innuendoes contained in the speech were clear. They were directed against Awo.

Shortly before this address was made by the then President, Papa Awo had addressed a Press Conference where he had called for prudence in the management of the economy of the country. Awo in his explanations to the press on what he called unlimited profligacy of many a past regime in Nigeria, had referred to his experience as federal Commissioner for finance during the Civil war years in Nigeria.

Awo had told the Press in his well known style of candour and bluntness that he was alarmed at the rate the various commanders of the Nigerian Army during the war were making requisitions for arms and other military supplies from Lagos. These demands were naturally sent to the Ministry of Finance in Lagos where Awo was the Federal Commissioner.

Awo created laughter when he told the Press a story to the effect that a former Russian Ambassador to Nigeria A. Romanov (whose country had been the major arms supplier to the Nigerian Army during the civil war) had told him (Awo) shortly after the end of the civil war that the entire bullets used by the Nigerian Army during the civil war were more in number than all those used by the Allied Forces during the second world war against Hitler.

During the 1979 campaigns, Awo as part of his pledge to Nigeria had declared his commitment to a progressive and gradual demobilisation of Nigeria's Armed forces. He said he would rather wish to see soldier's fully mobilised in the farms during peace time.

The immediate statement made by Papa Awolowo that had triggered off the Shagari Jaji speech was contained in the letter Awo had sent to Alhaji Shehu Shagari on the same 2nd July on the state of the nation. Chief Awolowo had said in the letter among others:-

“Civil rule set sail under a very heavy cloud of storm because of the dishonest and unjust manipulations of the outgoing military who used FEDECO and part of the judiciary as stalking horses”.

Chief Awolowo had said in the opening part of the letter:-

“Our ship of state is fast approaching a huge rock and unless you, as the chief helmsman, quickly rise to the occasion and courageously steer the ship away from its present course, it will hit the rock and the inescapable consequence will be an unspeakable disaster such as rare in the annals of man”.

It was for these reasons that Alhaji Shehu Shagari had attempted to score a cheap political point against Awo by provoking an incitement of the Armed Forces of Nigeria against the old man in his Jaji address.

It was however interesting that Alhaji Shagari's speech to the military men had come at a time, when more than anyone else, some of his fellow party men were those that had been casting aspersions on the character of the men of Nigeria's Armed Forces. Two examples will be given here to illustrate this point.

About April 1981, Senator Victor Akan representing ORON/EKET Senatorial district in Cross River state accused some Nigerian soldiers of forcibly collecting money from Nigerian citizens living in towns within the Nigerian/Cameroon border. The statement was widely reported in the national newspapers.

Also in 1981, the deputy speaker of the Kaduna state House of Assembly, Alhaji Dauda Mani (of the N.P.N.) had attempted to move the Armed Forces of Nigeria into committing treason when he declared that the N.P.N. controlled Federal government would invite the military to stage a coup d'etat should the impeachment exercise against Balarabe Musa (then schemed by the N.P.N.) fail to materialise. In other words, Alhaji Dauda Mani was inviting the Armed Forces to perform an illegal overthrow of the Constitution of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

On 1st September 1981, the National Secretariat of the U.P.N was forced to issue a statement on the spate of reckless accusations that were daily made on Awo by his political opponents. The statements signed by me was titled "RECKLESS ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AWO MUST STOP - A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY".

The statement is reproduced fully here for posterity:-

"Great leaders whose lives have been shining examples to mankind have always been loved with passion and hated like poison. Their names inspire much conflicting emotion and passion. They are cursed like villains and worshipped like the Gods.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo has by his activities, policies, programmes, ideas and life achievements left the the imprint of his name on the sands of time. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest African leaders to have passed through this century.

Millions of supporters of the Unity Party of Nigeria throughout the world have never bothered their heads about the reckless allegations constantly peddled against their leader and political father Chief Obafemi Awolowo by the renegades of Nigeria's political scene. They have always considered these as purposeless rantings of confused and demented brains of the reactionary school.

Recent reckless statements and allegations against Chief Obafemi Awolowo are so sickening and alarming that a general warning to these evil perpetrators is now necessary.

The following reckless and silly allegations have been made against Chief Obafemi Awolowo by certain persons whose mission in Nigerian politics is evil:-

*Testifying before the the Justice Fernandez Commission in Kano, the Police Commissioner for Kano state Alhaji Isa Wali was quoted to have said that he was in possession of an information that fanatics of tradition were planning to attack the Yoruba Community in Kano in protest against the allegation that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was involved in instigating the dethronement of Emir of Kano.

*Some N.P.N. loud-mouth demagogues have been peddling useless and baseless rumours that a pact

had been signed between Awo and Zik and the Ibos are now being sold to Awo in the process.

*There have also been the rather unfortunate statements from some evil men that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was the man that destroyed the Ibos during the civil war.

*During the last nationwide workers strike, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was accused by certain emissaries of Alhaji Shehu Shagari of being behind the worker's strike.

*When Alhaji Shagari was to present his 1981 finance bill before the National Assembly, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was accused of having caused the NEPA breakdown that occurred at the time.

These and other allegations had been made against the old man.

The Unity Party of Nigeria believes that a stop must be put to these arrant nonsense. These reckless allegations are not only unfounded, silly, biased, and figments of the imagination of the evil minds who peddle such about, but they also bother on dangerous assault on the overall security of the nation.

All countries that have aided the decimation of their national heroes and stars have done so to their own eternal peril and regret.

Indonesia today is a land of misery having collaborated with external forces in smashing the name of Sukarno, the man that led the struggle for independence from the Dutch. Ghana today is lamenting the exit of Kwame Nkrumah whose name they destroyed and smashed in the name of emotional politics. Morocco today is base of feudal tyranny after the decimation of the name and person of the great Moroccan patriot and nationalist Mohammed Ben Barka. We are very convinced that all the evil minds that are today attempting to damage the name and integrity of Papa Awolowo are going to receive the verdict of history. One hopes they do not drag Nigeria along in their chosen paths of insanity and perdition.

The Unity Party of Nigeria is now fully prepared to turn her arsenal of defence and attack within accepted rules of democracy against all these evil forces. We will not only smash them, but we will also ensure that Nigeria is rid of their evil acts for ever.

***We call on the Security Forces of this country to investigate without delay the testimony of Police Commissioner Isa Wali before Justice Fernandez Commission. The alleged proposed attack on some innocent people based on a wild and senseless allegation of an Awo plan to remove the Emir of Kano touches on the Security of Nigeria. It is a grave matter that must not be toyed with.**

The whole nation must be informed of the findings of the security investigation.

***The Unity Party of Nigeria wishes to make it clear that we will continue to champion the cause of the oppressed masses of Nigeria. We will continue to strive to give Nigeria and Nigerians a progressive government of their dreams.**

We will continue to struggle for the unity of democratic forces so that Nigeria may be able for the first time to raise her head in the assembly of progressive nations. But we will never strive for this unity at the expense of the image, name, and integrity of our leader Papa Obafemi Awolowo.

No one should be under any illusion that the Unity Party of Nigeria is unwilling to stand alone firmly on its feet, if need be, in the Nigerian struggle until the progressive cause we champion and uphold is vindicated.

Papa Obafemi Awolowo is in politics and will continue to be in politics until biological process of human development makes it impossible because he has dedicated his entire life to the emancipation of the masses of the Nigerian people from poverty, ignorance, disease, superstition, feudalism, obscurantism and naked exploitation and oppression of man by man.

No matter the campaigns of calumny and villainy of our detractors and nation wreckers, Awo will always be around to serve the people by the grace of God.

We warn the dirty and petty minds of Nigeria to desist from reckless attacks on Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

“A word is enough for the wise”.

These wild allegations against Awo continued throughout the life of the second Republic. The unkindest cut of it all, was the developments within Awo's party, the Unity Party of Nigeria during the 1982 U.P.N. primaries for the 1983 general election in Nigeria. (For which reference has been made in this book in earlier chapters). It was indeed frustrating that elements within the party who had failed to

achieve their political ambitions in being nominated as gubernatorial candidates of the party for the 1983 elections, later turned round to put the whole blames of their misfortunes on Awo.

As an insider of the events, and as the man that managed the organisational machinery of the party, I wish to submit that Awo's problem within his own party was caused by the inability of many of his colleagues in keeping pace with the old man in understanding the challenges and realities of modern trends in political party organisation withing a democratic state. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was living in a world many years ahead of his own countrymen and women.

For example, no one understood Awo when he advised the U.P.N. governors not to live in Government quarters. He equally sounded a super clown when he called on all his party associates in 1979 never to enjoy in government all those things they could not afford in their private lives before and after living government.

Awo looked a strange bed fellow to many of his associates when he advised the then U.P.N governors never to allow sirens to be blown for them while in power. It was Awo's belief that the use of Police sirens was very unnecessary in a poor society like Nigeria where such a class symbolism could dampen the people's enthusiasm. He gave his colleagues the example of President Karamanlis of Greece who drove to his office with no sirens and was accompanied by only two security men in a different car.

I remember Awo telling all his political friends and colleagues in 1979 that anyone wishing to be involved in the governance of his country must improve himself by reading and mastering the essentials of Public Finance. He once told me that for any democratic state to succeed, the political class in such a state must accept the supremacy of the party within the system. Awo advised me to read Harold Laski's book: *A Grammar of Politics*. Harold Laski was one of the most famous intellectuals of the Labour Party of Great Britain.

I searched for this book which was published in 1925 for many months until my friend MARTIN PLAUT directed me to the Labour Party Library in London. Martin Plaut was then the African Researcher in the Labour Party Secretariat. He is now in the African Service of the B.B.C at Bush House in London.

It did not take me much time in reading Laski's book to discover why Awo had recommended it to me in the first instance. Laski had said while commenting on the role of political parties within a democratic state:-

"The life of the democratic state is built upon the party system. The Party is the broker of ideas. From the mass of opinions, sentiments, beliefs by which the electorate moves, it chooses out those it judges mostly like to meet with general acceptance".

Harold Laski concluded:- "when the last criticism of party has been made, the services they (political parties) render to a democratic state are inestimable, They prevent popular vagaries from driving their way to the statute book. They are the most solid obstacle we have against the danger of Caesarism".

Awo's belief in political parties within the democratic state was fanatical. Awo's love for the party system was like the view held by Warren Gamaliel Harding a former President of America. Harding had told journalists at a Luncheon he held for the Associated Press in New York on April 24 1923:- "I believe in political parties. They were the essential agencies of the popular government which made us what we are".

Awo loved the Action Group and the U.P.N. political parties that he had led in both Nigeria's first and second Republics. Awo announced in 1983 to an astonished National Executive Council of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria that he had donated to the party a plot of land in Maroko for the building of a permanent ultra modern secretariat for the party.

Awo was indeed very many years ahead of his time. The disintegration and collapse of all the political parties to naked and inordinate ambition of many of their leaders were among the principal causes of the collapse of the second Republic in December 1983.

I wept profusely on 6th June 1987 when Awo's body was being moved away from the St. Saviour's Church Ikenne after the funeral service. As the procession moved gently out of the church, my mind started to say it loud with OSCAR WILDE in his 'Portrait of Dorian Gray':- "A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies".

Awo's life had helped to throw clearer light to Oscar

Wilde's statement. In other words, a man should not be particularly bothered who his enemies are for as long as he pursues resolutely the paths of honesty, truth, justice, fairplay and understanding among all men. The path of glory indeed leads to the grave.

Awo's attitude to some of the attacks of his opponents was ably summarised by him in the memorable address he delivered on 29th January 1983 while declaring open the campaigns of his party (U.P.N.) for the 1983 elections at a mammoth rally of party enthusiasts held at the Tafawa Balewa Square in Lagos.:-

"I want to assert categorically that I am proud of my past electoral exploits — says a sage. The greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising each time you fall. In this connection, I am profusely thankful to God for giving me the strength and the grace to rise each time I had fallen, and for so lifting me aloft after a fall, that I am now what I am. Indeed, through all my life, it has pleased God to make me survive and triumph over all vicissitudes and travails, be they personal, social and political".

Awo will surely live for ever.

CHAPTER 9

Awo and the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Affair

In matters of the Nigerian economy, Chief Obafemi Awolowo made himself the most outspoken defender of the rights of the masses of the Nigerian people whether he was in or outside government. He was a known economic wizard whose tenure of office as Premier of the Western Region of Nigeria had made the region the best administered area of Nigeria in the pre-independence years.

As Federal Commissioner for Finance and deputy Chairman of the Federal Executive Council during the Civil War years, Chief Awolowo's capable and efficient handling of the Nigerian economy helped the federal Nigerian side to crush the secessionist Biafra in thirty months. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was an effective manager of men, resources, matters and events.

As leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria between 1979 and 1983, he did not spare the Alhaji Shehu Shagari government on matters connected with the Nigerian economy. It is now in the history records of Nigeria that it was the old man who in 1981 drew the attention of the Federal Government of Nigeria to the general economic slump and recession that was to be the fate of the Nigerian economy. Rather than pay urgent and immediate attention to the issues highlighted by Papa on the impending economic cataclysm, the leaders of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) that controlled the federal government embarked on senseless attacks on the person of the old man. The ECONOMIC adviser to President Shehu Shagari inserted paid advertisements in foreign news journals stating unequivocally that the Nigerian economy was bouyant. The advertisements were meant to serve as official replies to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's patriotic position that the economy of Nigeria was facing some very tough times.

The greatest battle fought by the old man in the matter of the Nigerian economy was the liquefied Natural Gas affair. For three years (1971 — 1974) Chief Obafemi Awolowo fought (the battle was between himself and the Federal Government of Nigeria) over the LNG affair. If the old man's

suggestions on how Nigeria should address the LNG project had been taken and implemented, our economy that has now hit the rocks in these austere times would have been saved. The hard economic times that Nigerians are now passing through would have been minimised had Awolwo's war on the LNG been successful. Papa Awo's efforts on the Liquefied Natural Gas project were sabotaged by a bureaucracy that was selfish, inward looking and inept and also by the ignorance of the true facts of the situation by the military supremo that, then presided over Nigeria's political, social and economic affairs — General Yakubu Gowon.

In a lecture I delivered at the OXFORD UNIVERSITY England on 28th May 1986 under the auspices of the NIGERIAN SOCIETY, I had said the following on the LNG affair:

“Some bureaucrats were so powerful during Gowon's rule that by 1974 a new class has developed within the country's civil service, the new class was made up of what was called ‘THE SUPER PERMANENT SECRETARIES.’”

It was some of these special Nigerians who got General Yakubu Gowon's Federal Executive Council to turn down the golden advice by the veteran nationalist Chief Obafemi Awolowo that an American company be signed on for our LNG project. Chief Obafemi Awolowo in his advice to General Yakubu Gowon had directed his attention to the fact that the SHELL company that was eventually considered to handle the gas project was already committed to the Algerian LNG project.

The old man predicted accurately that the SHELL would ensure that its investments in the Algerian Liquefied Natural Gas project would have yielded good dividend before, ever permitting Nigeria's LNG to compete with Algeria's own in the international market.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was eventually proved right as our LNG project is still under the cooler. Many thanks to some of the super-permanent secretaries of the Gowonist regime.

It is important for the full story of the LNG to be told. It is a story that will disturb many patriotic minds. The facts of the story are contained in letters written by both Chief

Obafemi Awolowo and the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon on the affair.

Towards the end of 1971, two internationally famous companies The **TEXFEL PETROLEUM CORPORATION OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A** and the **SHELL** company had shown keen interest in Nigeria's Liquefied Natural Gas project. Two prominent persons had introduced the American company to Chief Obafemi Awolowo. They were Chief Simeon Adebo and Mr. Davies then of the United Bank for Africa (UBA). The President of the **TEXFEL PETROLEUM CORPORATION** of America later came to retain the services of Papa Awo as the company's solicitor in Nigeria.

Not long after these two companies had submitted their proposals to the Federal Military Government, the Shell Company started a major campaign in the United States of America, that it had been granted the commission to execute the Liquefied Natural Gas project in Nigeria. In January 1972, a representative of Shell was said to have informed officials of the United States **FEDERAL POWER** Commission of its success in winning the LNG contract in Nigeria. **SHELL** Company was also said to have immediately announced in U.S its partnership arrangements with organisations like **TECKNIP** and **BROWN & ROOT** for the 'design' planning and actual construction of LNG facilities at Bonny in Nigeria. The picture then became clear that **SHELL** was the favoured company by the Federal Government of Nigeria to handle the country's gas project.

On 21st November 1972, Chief Obafemi Awolowo wrote a letter to General Yakubu Gowon on the affair. After Chief Awolowo had done a comprehensive review of the LNG affair in the letter, he went on to state in his known style of bluntness and candour:

"If **SHELL** were the only applicant capable of executing the LNG project profitably, then the country would have had no other choice. But there are other proposals which are as good (if not better than) **SHELL**'s.

Furthermore, it is my humble opinion that **SHELL** has had more than enough share of the country's strategic economic projects. More so, as according to the **Daily Times** of October 31, 1972, **SHELL — BP** is one of the com-

panies with whom final talks are due to begin in Lagos this week on federal government's proposals to establish a company that will produce liquefied petroleum gas in the country".

On 6th December 1972, General Yakubu Gowon replied the old man on the LNG affair. The General had said inter alia:

"I thank you very much for your letter of the 21st of November, 1972, on the subject of Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas Project and for expressing, with characteristic candour your anxieties about the way in which preliminary examination of the project is being handled. I am sure you would wish to know that I have been kept fully briefed on the development of this project; indeed the Secretary to the Federal Military Government brought to my attention your earlier correspondence with the late Mr. Abdul Atta copied to members of the Petroleum Advisory board and your two letters to the Federal Commissioner for Mines and Power."

2. "The present status of Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas project is that it is still being considered and examined by the Ministry of Mines and Power and the Petroleum Advisory Board, it has not yet come back to the Federal Executive Council for final determination. When it comes you can rest assured that my colleagues in the Federal Executive Council and myself will exert our best endeavours to ensure that justice is done and that the ultimate decision will be in the best interest of the nation."

The truth however was that General Yakubu Gowon was never adequately briefed on the facts of the Liquefied Natural Gas project. It did not take long before all the noise already made by SHELL in America on its winning the LNG concession became confirmed and contract was subsequently signed with the company by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.

This contract was terminated by the military government of Nigeria headed by General Muhammadu Buhari early in 1985 with no success recorded whatsoever in the country's efforts at adequately utilising her Liquefied Natural Gas resources. The fears and anxieties expressed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo as far back as 1972 became confirmed

after all with the termination of the country's LNG contract with SHELL in 1985:

We have now been told that the LNG project will take off in 1995 (sixteen years after Nigeria would have been earning handsome foreign currency on the sale of her gas in the international market were Awo's words of wisdom to have been given due consideration and regards).

Chief Obafemi Awolowo later came out with a paper that contained detailed and adequate analysis of the LNG affair. Excerpts from this paper are now published below. Nigerians will see the efforts of Awo in seeing to it that Nigeria made the best use of her gas resources.

Chief Awolowo had written the paper as a reply to **COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LNG PROJECTS IN NIGERIA:-**

After a careful study of the "Comparative Study of Proposals for the Development of LNG Projects in Nigeria" (hereinafter referred to as "Comparative Study"), it is crystal clear that the grand design of the "Comparative Study" is to suppress the demerits of Shell-BP's and Tenneco's proposals, and the merits of Texfel's. To this end, facts and figures have been distorted and manipulated in favour of Shell-BP and Tenneco and against Texfel. It would appear that these have been done in a calculated bid to deceive and mislead the Federal Military Government into taking a wrong and unjust decision which, in due course, is bound not only to result in colossal loss to the economy, but also to have the effect of bringing odium on the competence and honesty of ALL the members of the FMG, including those who are in no way party to the deliberate deception and misdirection.

1. EVIDENCE OF BIAS FOR SHELL-BP

In January 1972, a document entitled "REPORT ON A PROPOSAL BY SHELL—BP FOR THE LIQUEFACTION OF NATURAL GAS" (hereinafter referred to as "Report on Shell-BP") was considered by the Federal Executive Council. Council's decision among other things, was that the covering memorandum should be withdrawn, and that another one should be brought after OTHER PROPOSALS for the

liquefaction of natural gas in Nigeria had been considered by the Ministry of Mines and Power. THERE WAS NO SUGGESTION AT ALL THAT SHELL-BP SHOULD BE INVITED TO SUBMIT FRESH PROPOSALS OR REVISE ITS PROPOSALS WHICH CAME BEFORE THE FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN JANUARY 1972. But Annexes 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A and 5A to the "Comparative Study" show quite clearly that the proposals now being presented to the Government are, in many vital respects, totally different from those which were contained in "Report on Shell-BP" and presented to the Federal Executive Council in January 1972.

From the comparative facts and figures tabulated above, it is obvious that one of two things must have happened. Either the authors of "Comparative Study" have on their own volition distorted and manipulated the facts and figures contained in the 1972 "Report on Shell-BP", or they have, without the authority of the Federal Executive Council, clandestinely allowed Shell-BP to revise those facts and figures in order to make them more competitive. If the former was the case, they stand condemned for the worst form of corruption and breach of trust; if the latter, they are guilty of gross and fraudulent partiality in a matter of extreme vital importance to the nation, and on which the FMG should be objectively advised and accurately informed before taking a final decision.

If all the facts and figures distorted and suppressed in favour of Shell-BP and adversely against Texfel were to be itemized, these comments would run into unbearable length. But a cursory reading of the "Comparative Study" will reveal that the authors have nothing but praise for Shell-BP and Tenneco, and nothing but ridicule and condemnation for Texfel. There is no attempt here to hold bad faith, and to ensure that the FMG is not deceived and misled by a welter of cleverly manipulated facts and figures into taking wrong and unjust decision which might in future have detrimental financial and political repercussions. One of the duties of Government is to do the right and justice. Consequently, it is entitled at all times, to the most impartial and honest advice, and an objective assessment of conflicting issues, from its

functionaries and experts. Whenever these are deliberately denied, as in this case, it is imperative that those who discover such a blatant breach of trust should speak up and loudly, no matter whose ox is gored, or who is beneficially affected in the process.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The observations which are about to be made deal briefly with practically all the important topics discussed in the "Comparative Study". But, for the sake of clarity, each topic will be taken and considered separately, without necessarily adhering to the order in which they appear in the "Comparative Study".

SHIPPING: Of Shell-BP's total *revised* Capital Cost of \$994 million, \$650 million, more than 65%, is earmarked for the shipping phase of the project (CS: Annex 1A). In Teneco's estimates, the Government's share alone of the Capital Cost for the shipping phase is \$557.9 million for FIVE SHIPS (CS: Annex 1C Footnote 2). The sheer magnitude of the Capital Cost, therefore, demands extreme caution, thoroughness, and objectivity on the part of Government's expert advisers, in examining the issues involved. Unfortunately, however, even though they themselves admit that "this is the most important phase of the project" (CS: 38/6.3), yet the authors of "Comparative Study" appear to have approached the problems with unpardonable incompetence, slipshodness, and bias.

A CS:17/4.1 (b), Shell-BP's estimates for tanker transportation are discussed and the authors state as follows:-

"A detailed examination of the tanker fleet has not been made. *The costs estimated are still very tentative*, for example, Shell and BP are not in agreement. A divergence of opinion of the order of 13% or about *3 million was indicated per unit tanker which Shell has put at about \$85 million in 1971. Based on Shell's estimates and a 1976 completion, capital requirements would be of the order of \$650 million for *eight* LNG tankers and *two* LPG and gasoline carriers".

This does not appear to make much sense. *Eight* tankers at \$85 million should cost \$680 million. To this must be added

the cost of TWO LPG and gasoline carriers. The cost of these do not appear to be given separately in "Comparative Study". Reference, therefore, has to be made to "Report on Shell-BP" where, at page 3 paragraph 3.3, the cost is given in the following words:

"The two LPG and gasoline carriers will cost approximately \$50 million to construct and \$2 million per year to operate".

To \$680 million, therefore, must be added \$50 million, making a total of \$730 million, NOT \$650 million shown at CS: 17/4.1 (b) above and CS: Annex 1A, NOR the \$720 million shown under GAS SHIPMENT PHASE in CS: Annex 4A.

14. For Tenneco it is the same story of confusion. As already shown above, the Capital Cost of "Government's 5-ship fleet" is estimated at \$557.9. Then at CS: 20/4.3 (b) the following passage occurs:-

"Tenneco proposes for the shipping phase, the organisation of 2 tanker fleets, each to be owned separately by each partner and comprising of 5 tankers a piece. Each fleet will be registered under flags convenient to the party concerned.

The cost of each tanker has been estimated at between \$70 — \$75 million. The cost is assumed to escalate by 6% annually. To the basic shipyard costs are added other costs that must be incurred prior to delivery. The result is a total capital requirement of the order of [210 million ([630 million) including interest during construction...."

In CS: Annex 4C, the Cumulative Capital Expenditure for the Gas SHIPMENT PHASE is given as \$635.1 million which is the same as \$557.9 million Capital Cost plus \$77.2 million "Interest during construction" shown in CS: Annex 1C.

15. The truth is that the whole of the presentation on shipping in the "Comparative Study" is cleverly designed to deceive and mislead. There are four important points worthy of note in examining the problems involved.

(1) According to a Brochure published recently by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Maritime Administration, all the shipyards in the world except the US, which can handle the

construction of LNG tankers are fully booked for the next SIX or SEVEN years, and cannot accept new orders. The only shipyards available, therefore are the U.S. There, two prices exist for an LNG tanker: one for foreign buyers, and the other for American buyers (i.e. American citizens or companies owned by them or registered in U.S.). For the latter, the cost is approximately \$75 million per tanker; but, for the former a sum of \$25 per tanker is added which brings the total to \$100 million per tanker. The amount of \$25 million is given to an American buyer as CONSTRUCTION DIFFERENTIAL SUBSIDY which is not available to a foreign buyer. It is not known whether this is what the authors of "Comparative Study" have in mind when they state as quoted above that: "To the basic shipyard costs are added other costs that must be incurred prior to delivery". In any case, at the rate of \$100 million per tanker, Shell-BP's EIGHT tankers, if they are to be owned by a company registered in Nigeria, will cost \$730 million. Similarly Tenneco's own FIVE tankers will cost \$375 million whilst Governments FIVE will cost \$500 million, NOT \$557.9 million quoted by Tenneco.

(2) As already pointed out, Tenneco has, through its subsidiary, a shipyard at Newport News in the U.S. It would be unnatural if it does not see to it that the order for Nigerian Government 5-ship fleet goes to its shipyard. The difference between \$557.9 million (excluding interest) and \$500 million (excluding interest) suggests that Tenneco intends to make an excess profit of \$57.9 million on the government's 5 ships, whilst it gets \$125 million on its own 5. An excellent bargain indeed. Shell-BP are well-known Tanker Operators. They stand to gain from high freight rates: the higher the freight rate, the higher the earnings of the Operator, but the less the dividend available for distribution, and also the less the tax derivable by the Government. On the other hand, the lower the freight rate the larger the tax accruable to Government, but the less the dividend available to the non-Government partner, and the less the earnings of the Operator.

(3) Mainly owing to its balance of payments difficulties and for other reasons, the US Government is almost certain to discriminate

against a foreign-owned tanker bringing any cargo to its ports, particularly LNG, 'flag of convenience' notwithstanding.

- (4) If the authors of "Comparative Study" had given any serious thoughts to the implications of their suggestions at CS:53/2(vi), they would not have commended them to the FMG as being "in consonance with our intentions and aspirations" (CS: 39/6.3(2). By these suggestions, the FMG is being called upon to do one of two things: to amend its tax law (which, in effect, means reducing its tax) "for the registration and operation of tankers in particular (and ships in general), or to accept, as an alternative the principle that jointly owned tankers may be registered under any suitable 'flag of convenience'. By reducing tax for tankers and other ships (which must be done to avoid discrimination), the country would lose heavily in revenue. On how much this would amount to, the "Comparative Study" is silent. By registering the tankers in a "tax haven" like Liberia, Honduras, or Panama (the three best known 'tax havens') Nigeria would not only be voluntarily detracting from its jealously guarded sovereignty but also all the taxes derivable from the operation of the tankers would go to the country which provides the 'haven' or whose 'flag' Nigeria's tankers fly. In spite of the obvious and inimical fiscal implications of their suggestions (not to talk of the political effects); that is to say, notwithstanding the loss in revenue on the tanker operations, whether by amendment to Nigeria's tax law or by sheltering under a "tax haven", the authors of "Comparative Study" still take into account, in assessing the profitability of Shell-BP's and Tenneco's proposals, the full tax accruable on the tanker operations (CS: Annex 4A and Annex 4C).

CONCLUSION: In view of all that has been said, the conclusions and recommendations contained in the

“Comparative Study” (CS: 47-53) and indeed the whole document should be rejected. But must this be the end of the matter? The answer is in the negative. The exploitation of the country’s gas resources is a very important project which, if properly handled, would benefit the Nigerian economy enormously: the flare gas would no longer be wasted, the country’s revenue would be boosted, there would be a large increase in the GDP, and many ancillary economic and political benefits would result. The FMG cannot, therefore, allow the project to be delayed any longer. In the first memorandum on this matter which came to the Federal Executive Council in January last year, the urgency of embarking on this project was stressed. The same urgency has again been stressed in the “Comparative Study” (CS:46(4)); even though, it has taken the authors of this disastrously misleading document TWELVE WHOLE MONTHS to prepare it. In all the circumstances, therefore, and having regard to the manifest and undeniable superiority of Texfel’s proposals over the others, the FMG is requested to do what justice loudly dictates in this matter, namely: select Texfel for this project and direct it to submit, for FMG’s approval, within a given short period and in collaboration with an expert Consultant of international repute to be appointed by the Head of State on the recommendation of HCMP, feasibility study of the project and detailed proposals for the joint venture”.

Despite this beautiful paper, Chief Obafemi Awolowo’s advice went unheeded. SHELL company got the contract. The rest of the LNG story is no longer news.

CHAPTER 10

Awo's Death: A Postscript

Alive, almost every public word and action of Awo was attended by a lot of politics and controversy. As this book has amply demonstrated, what any contemporary Nigerian issue needed to become controversial was an "Awo tag" to it: Place it on an hitherto quiescent subject matter, and before the twinkle of an eyelid the otherwise dormant topic would have been experiencing a bulbling cauldrom of words subjecting it to a rare kind of scrutiny, a la public debate.

Such reactions to issues that concerned people of Awo's standing in society cannot be less controversial since according to Oscar Wilde, "The public is wonderfully tolerant. It forgives everything except genius". The case of Awo was no exception to this rule, rather it was particularly so to the extent that in a speech to mark the 77th birthday anniversary of Awo, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, General Ibrahim Babangida (1986) observed *inter alia*. "It can be truly said that Chief Obafemi Awolowo has been the main issue in Nigerian politics during the last 35 years: the main political question has been whether you are with Chief Awolowo or against him". To my mind, the "Awo is the issue" observation of President Babangida merely placed an authoritative zeal on an otherwise conspicuous phenomenon: a fact which has not been lost on the articulate Nigerian populace, particularly the large followership of Awolowo since the 1950s.

What may however baffle the imagination of some people is that even in death Awo remained as controversial if not more controversial than ever. In short, Awo in death is still "the issue". A controversial man, in death Awolowo added a tinge of debate leaving the nation, particularly his close associates groping in the dark; first, by the suddenness of his transition, which though he sounded loud and clear to the hearing of one and all but which was probably mistaken to be another philosophical foray characteristic of Awo into for instance an elaboration of Marcus Manilius' observation that "we begin to die at birth. the end flows from the beginning". Awo perhaps implied more than philosophical abstractions when he talked about "the imminence of my transition to eternal life". Accordingly, those expecting a "State of the

Nations" speech stifling with political agenda, such arcane talk as "I have a strong conviction in life after death and the possibility of my continuing to serve even after death", was in no doubt a tale of the unexpected. But that was Awo, who once declared "I am not going to die, but I shall go triumphantly into glory". Much as Awo understood and appreciated the fact that "the enduring lesson through the ages has been that in the temporal world buffeted by the vagaries of time and space, nothing lasts for ever", he equally acknowledged the fact that "an idea never dies". So the type of Awolowo will never die.

This position was no less validated by the kind of politics and controversy that heralded Awo's burial plans, revolving around the nature of funeral arrangements that would befit Awo's "larger than life status" particularly within the context of Nigeria's history. On May 10, a day following the death of Chief Awolowo, the issue was set in motion by Chief Bisi Onabanjo (the banned U.P.N. supremo of Ogun state between 1979 and 1983) in his capacity as the publicity secretary of Awo's burial committee, while briefing the Press on Awo's funeral plans. In a somewhat casual observation, Onabanjo indicated the tentative nature of the plans since the federal government may be planning to accord Awo a state burial. That was all that was required for the burial of Awolowo just like the sage himself to become a focus of intense and protracted politicking and debate.

The reactions were sharp and boisterous just as they were diverse and far-reaching emitted by the various categories of the people in the Nigerian society, from the ballot timbres, the bullet calibres, to the literary juggernauts and the theological barons. The mass media (particularly the press), the "learned colleagues of the wig", the industrial magnates, the singing nightingales, the academic giants through to the teeming talakawas of Nigeria were not left out in the debate. The encomiums were so much overpowering and tumultuous that one observer succinctly indicated thus: "If the Atlantic became an ocean of ink and Africa a continent covered with scrolls, by the time the ink and scrolls were exhausted, the golden glories of Papa Awo would not have been done half way!"

However, comments on Awo's burial did not stop at being "the basketfuls of eulogies in thousands and multiples". If

what prompted Afro beat musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti's comment: "May the departed chief rest in peace and his spirit to leave us in peace. Before Chief Obafemi Awolowo came back to Nigeria from Europe where he went to read law, politics in Nigeria had no tribal sentiments to it", was a "mind to rebel against the circus of clowning praise singers" novelist Chinua Achebe's description of a national burial for Awo as nothing but a national swindle cannot be so excused. Achebe's view was only being consistent with those expressed in his book *The Trouble with Nigeria* where he has dubbed Awo not only as an "ethnic warlord" but the architect of ethnic politics in Nigeria. Achebe no doubt has his own disciples, whether they are large or small is a moth question here. And this is why it will not be proper to consign such comments into the dustbin of history as one of those loose and gaseous talks. It was however the rantings of a confused intellectual.

Therefore in death, the battle line seemed drawn between those who regarded Awo as a national leader and so deserved a national burial and those in whose politico-historical dictionary Awo qualified for no more than a tribal chieftain whose burial should rest with his ethnic domain to settle. The most illuminating thing about the debate is that even in death Awo remained a worthy opponent.

An aggregation of the odes chanted and deposited at the sanctuary of Papa Awo by those in the corridor of power aroused high expectations in the people that the Babangida administration was going "to chart a bold course in the affairs of the nation" by giving Awo whose "position as one of the founding fathers of modern Nigeria is well secured in history even when he is physically no longer on the scene" a federally organised burial.

Therefore, it was little or no surprise to these people when the Chief of General Staff, Vice Admiral Augustus Aikhomu announced to the Dodan Barracks correspondents that the university of Ife (a Federal University) has been renamed Obafemi Awolowo University. What must have baffled them was the comment by Aikhomu "that the federal government will also give full support to the states of the old Western Region", where Awo was Premier for seven years (1952 — 1959), "towards the burial". The fact that Aikhomu indicated that he would be leading the federal government's

delegation to Ikenne on June 6, the day Awo was buried did not help matters. What is more, Air Vice Marshal Ishaya Shekarri who conveyed the message to the Awolowos at Ikenne in response to a Press interview at Ikenne had this to say. "I am not in a position to give the federal government's specific roles in the burial arrangements. What I know, however, is that the federal government has shown interest in the affair and that all Nigerians are behind the ideals which Awolowo stood for". A Pandora box had been opened.

Even though the governors of the four states — Bendel, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo — which made up the old Western Region, had signified their willingness to accord Awo a befitting burial in furtherance of which a 12 member state funeral committee consisting of their representatives met with Chief (Mrs.) Tola Oyediran (Awo's eldest daughter) Chief Bisi Onabanjo and Chief Jonathan Odebiyi — former UPN Senate leader and the chairman of the protocol and logistics committee for the burial "in an effort to harmonise plans for the June 6 burial; after which a statement signed by Mr. Taiwo Alimi (Ogun State Commissioner for Information) announced plans for the burial. Bewildered by the spate of outbursts that attended the issue, Chief Oluwole Awolowo and his sister Dr. (Mrs.) Tokunbo Dosumu held a closed-door meeting with President Ibrahim Babangida on 15th May.

Before Wole and Tokunbo had the closed-door meeting with the President, many of Papa's friends and associates (including myself had said it loud in Ikenne that nothing short of a state burial for Papa would be entertained. It was perhaps in furtherance of this goal that the Information and Culture Minister Prince Tony Momoh maintained that the state burial plan was carried out in constant touch with and clearance from the head of the federal government. But that was not all. Even when Mr Taiwo Alimi declared with authoritative finality at Ikenne on May 15 that what was coming Papa's way was a national burial the controversy did not subside so much so that the federal government was constrained to issue a press statement on Monday 18, May on Chief Awolowo's burial. While the statement spoke of "a befitting burial" for Awolowo, it warned individuals outside Papa's (Chief Awolowo's) immediate family giving to the public what they described as the programme for the burial of the departed leader and were trying to exploit the situation

for personal political advantage" to "refrain from further public statements". The statement went further to remind that the "thinly veiled political statements were a breach of the continuing ban on partisan politics" and concluded with a promise that the public would be "informed from time to time about the details of the burial".

While some people wanted a state burial for Awo with or without the "logistic support" of the federal government, others wanted Awo accorded a federally organised state burial or no state burial at all—still others saw no logic in the argument that Chief Awolowo's funeral must attract a federal treatment. To one observer, "Tarka's (the Tiv leader) burial arrangements were handled by the then Shagari federal government", since "Tarka's burial was not federally organised per se. His colleagues in the defunct National Assembly organised his burial and that inadvertently created a federal impression. It was purely a political affair then and it had to be under those circumstances, because the banned National Party of Nigeria (N.P.N) wanted to maintain its hold on Benue State".

In his own reaction, a former protocol officer to the late Sardauna of Sokoto — Alhaji Mahmud Ibrahim Atta in the *Herald* newspaper of 21, May 1987 maintained that to give Awo a 'federal state burial' would amount to setting a dangerous precedent since leaders like late Ahmadu Bello, late Tafawa Balewa and Late Samuel Ladoke Akintola were not so honoured. To this a former Senator responded: "What the aide did not realise was that the men he referred to lost their lives in the 1966 coup. The circumstances were different. You do not expect coup makers to honour the people they killed while seizing power". To Atta, the decision to name the University of Ife after Awolowo still suffers from the hangover of regional politics. He queried! "why couldn't a University in the north or east have been named after him? That is a bolder way to confront the political challenges of this country".

Nevertheless, to many of his critics, Awo started the second phase of his political career after the universal idealism of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) days on the wrong foot — that of ethnic chauvinism — and in their own calculation never recovered from the ailment till he breathed his last

on May 9 1987. This perhaps explains why Chinua Achebe as a follow up to his thesis on Awo in his book *The Trouble with Nigeria* issued a press statement on Awo's burial plan. In what Achebe titled "The Apotheosis of Awolowo" and published in the *Vanguard* newspapers of 29, May 1987, he declared inter alia:

"Chief Awolowo was a great Nigerian leader in so far as he was both a Nigerian and a leader. But his contribution to Nigerian public affairs of the last 40 years did not qualify him as a great national leader, rather he was champion of a section of the geographical expression called Nigeria. He was essentially a leader of Yoruba people despite his premiership of Western Nigeria with non - Yoruba minorities, and his brief spell as Federal leader of the opposition or his membership of the civil war Federal Executive Council.

Chief Awolowo's place in Yoruba history is for the Yoruba to settle. To an onlooker it would appear that they are enthusiastically according him a high seat in their pantheon of leaders. Their way of doing it is also their own prerogative.

But to turn the burial of a tribal leader into a state funeral with invitations to foreign countries is both absurd and unacceptable.

No nation thrives on expediency and prejudice or by subverting principle. Chief Awolowo was rejected by the Nigerian electorate every time he offered himself to lead them... to accord the status of a Head of state to him in death should be seen no less than a national swindle..."

In a reaction to Achebe's statement Alhaji Lateef Jakande, the banned UPN governor for Lagos State during the Second Republic and a close political associate of chief Awolowo in the *Guardian* newspaper of 1st June 1987 criticised Achebe's statement that Awolowo was not a national but a tribal leader. According to Jakande "If Achebe cared to do his home work properly, he would find out that in every election held in this country — 1959, 1960, 1964, 1979 and 1983 —, the votes cast for chief Awolowo were national and they reflected his acceptance as a nationalist.

"I am sure Achebe knows that one does not have to be the head of government to qualify for national leadership. Mahatma Ghandi of India never held any public office; he was never a President, never a Prime Minister, yet he was the

greatest national hero India ever had and he is worshipped by all Indians up to this day and yet he was a Hindu. And the fact that he was a Hindu did not make him belong to a particular religious sect in India" Accordingly Jakande said "Achebe has goofed by his statement and I am convinced he is wrong". Refuting the claim by Achebe that Awo was not a national leader, he gave as good example of the late Chief Awolowo's national leadership four of the many books he wrote which contributed immensely to solving some of Nigeria's problems as (i) *Path to Nigerias's Freedom* (1947), (ii) *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution* (1966); (iii) *The People's Republic* (1968); and (v) *The strategy and Tactics of the People's Republic of Nigeria* (1970). Alhaji Jakande concluded by saying that "For one thing, Awo was never rejected as a national leader. He might not be elected to the presidency, but as leader of opposition, he was the alternative Prime Minister and I am sure Achebe knows that in all civilised world the leader of opposition is next only to the Prime Minister".

Perhaps some of Awo's critics like Chinua Achebe did forget that it was Chief Obafemi Awolowo's party the Action Group that first moved a motion for the independence of Nigeria in 1953 at the floor of the Nigeria House of Representatives.

Beyond the rhetorics of claims and counter claims some of which even when well-considered appear too fanatical to be true, we consider it pertinent to make some historical corrections in the same spirit as Odia Ofeimun debunked some of the fictions which has sustained "the mythology (and demology) activating the antagonism between Zik and Awo and between the Ibos and Yorubas" which "has been sold to successive generations of Nigerians who, not having the ready means to decide between history and fiction have been plodding along as permanent hostages of contemptible prejudices". Accordingly sensible people cannot but agree with Odia Ofeimun's suggestion in his *In Defence of History*, (a re-appraisal of Achebe's *The Trouble with Nigeria*), that "we need to make determined clinical forays into the past to discover how non existent problems were verbalised into ugly behemoths, blown up like ballons and turned into the clouds that have fixated the

development" of a united strong and virile Nigerian state.

It is an historical fact that an ethnic Yoruba organisation — Egbe Omo Oduduwa-, of which Chief Awolowo was the secretary general metamorphosed into the Action Group led by Awo during the First Republic, just as the Northern Peoples Congress had its genesis in an Hausa/Fulani thrust, "spiled in feudalistic temper and teleguided from the Sultanate in Sokoto". Also the National Council of Nigerians and Camerons later known as the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which was initially nationalist in outlook, with the demise of Herbert Macaulay (its leader) and the ascendancy of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to the leadership mantle, not only lost its mass followship but became strongly identified with the Ibo State Union and its regional nationalism. (James Coleman, *Nationalism in Nigeria*). All these historical happenings had political and historical explanations nay justifications. It has been observed that "the tripod of Hausa, Ibo and Yorubas reduced for all practical purposes into NPC, NCNC and AG personified in Ahmadu Bello, Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo was the historical tripod on which rested the telling responsibility of first, wresting self-government from the colonialists and thereafter ensuring that the cultural polygot of an entity called Nigeria grew systematically into a self-respecting whole". Instead of branding Awo a tribal leader he should be remembered as a man who fought relentlessly to break from the "tripod" syndrome and to achieve in his time a new consciousness, a new fervency to take national politics out of the parochial confines of tongue and creed into much more rationalised realms of deliberations and issue-oriented options.

Therefore a lot of restraint should be introduced into labelling as "ethnic warlord" Awo or any of Nigeria's early leaders for that matter. Any analysis of their role in history should take cognisance of the style of politics that prevailed in their period. For instance "one has to appreciate the period in which they led, especially the circumstances of colonialism which essentially employed divide and rule tactics". In so far as colonial administration was concerned, the 1939 administrative division of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria into Western and Eastern" Regions marked the inception of the tripod. As a follow up, the 1946 Richard's

Constitution substantiated the 1939 arrangement by granting each of the three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern), now constituted into a political territory respectively, an autonomous exercise of political authority.

What is more, such historical tragedy which elevated the Regions from administrative to political territories (by the creation of regional political institutions) was complicated by its timing which coincided with the period when the Nigerian nationalist movement was being assailed by ethnic contradictions. Thus it has been observed that the Richards constitution helped in large measure, to resolve or rather channel these contradictions in one particular direction: regionalization or ethnicisation of the Nigerian Nationlist movement". Although the Richards Constitution initiated the "integration" of the North and South in a national legislative council, it however, gave birth to the concept of regionalism — the evolution of the process of fragmentation and acrimony in the country as written by Kalu Ezera in his *Constitutional Development in Nigeria*, 1960 pp 26 — 84.

The contribution of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 was merely to extend and build on the logic of the 1946 structure by giving greater "political responsibilities to the natives", since these responsibilities of necessity, must be exercised in the first place by each regional political authority; The modus operandi of such functions required the setting up of regional governments and institutions to execute responsibilities prescribed in the constitution. The A.G and N.P.C were factional responses to this provision of the 1951 constitution. Coincidentally, by this time, the NCNC had denerated from a militantly Nigerian nationalist movement to an organisation seriously bedeviled by political timidity, opportunism and tribalism. (Richard Sklar: *Nigerian Political Parties*, 1963) Mokwugo Okoye's "A LETTER TO ZIK" also bears adequate testimony to this point.

Conceived within this context therefore, any attempt to paint Awo in the picture of a tribal leader would in my considered opinion, not only be unfair but subjective since it would be essentially anti-history. Rather than blame the tragic historical development on Awo's tribalistic tendencies, he as well as his contemporaries should be seen as victims of an operational milieu which was cleverly exploitative of the

diversified nature of the Nigerian political structure.

Thus the basic epistemological position which informs the idea of labelling Awo a tribal leader suffers from gross historical fallacy and a great simplification of a rather complex feature, because instances abound which demonstrate how slippery it could be to call Awo an ethnic warlord. It is necessary at this stage to cite some of such instances and very crucial ones which have proved the contrary: (i) The 1941 crisis in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), in which Awo supported Ikoli an Easterner against a fellow Yoruba Samuel Akinsanya (later Odemo of Ishara and an Ijebu Remo like Awolowo) and Zik an Ibo supported Samuel Akinsanya against Ernest Ikoli, in the course of filling a vacancy in the central legislature produced from sight one of such instances of a cross-tribal nationalism. (ii) Secondly it is an historical fact that Awolowo supported S.G. Ikoku an Easterner against Ayo Rosiji, a Yorubaman for the post of the General Secretary of the Action Group in the Jos Conference of 1962.

The late Chief Okunowo from Ijebu-Ode was to declare on the floor of the Federal House of Representatives in Lagos after the Jos Conference of the Action Group that Awo was "now surrounding himself with bearded rascals" - a clear reference to Ikoku and the other radicals that emerged in the A.G. leadership at the Jos Conference. The defeat of Chief Ayotunde Rosiji in the election formed part of the remote causes of the 1962 A.G. crisis. (iii) It is also on record that Chief Obafemi Awolowo preferred Anthony Enahoro an Ishan from Benin to Chief S.L. Akintola as his worthy successor the Premier in the Western Region when he was vacating the seat for the federal election in 1959. I hope it will not be considered too petty to indicate that none of Chief Awolowo's domestic servants is Yoruba. His Chief cook up till May 9 when he passed away was an Urhobo man Also, Chief Awolowo's son Oluwole Awolowo is married to a Calabar woman. What else do we need to portray Awo as a true nationalist, when we realise that the Urhobos of Bendel State of Nigeria are known traditional political opponents of Chief Obafemi Awolowo?

What is more, evidently Chief Awolowo steadily grew in stature within and outside the former Western Region from 1952 until Death on May 1987.

Awo's giant stature among his contemporaries cannot be otherwise because "Awo, like many other great men, was self-opinionated but highly disciplinedthis is understandable in a society where wooling-thinking and sycophancy have become endemic". To buttress this point Awo once observed:

I have never regarded myself as having a nonopoly of wisdom. The trouble is that when most people in public life and in the position of leadership and rulership are spending whole days and nights carousing in clubs or in the company of men of shady character and women of easy virtue, I, like a few others, am always busy at my post working hard at the country's problems and trying to find solutions to them.....

Only the deep can call to the deep.

In the final analysis even though Awo at the outset conceived of Nigeria as nothing more than "a mere geographical expression", which Nigeria was then, it is also on record that by 1966 Awo had grown to recognise the need, as he wrote in *Thoughts on Nigeria's Constitution*, (1966) to stamp out "tribalism and most of the manifold evils which abound and proliferate with general approval, in a capitalist economy". This is why I believe that it was not the political post that Chief Awolowo assumed or failed to assume which will determine his place in Nigeria's history. It is the noble goals and lofty ideas he aspired to and dreamed of, and which those of us his heirs are almost certain to continue. This explains why even in death, the struggle continued for Awo. Awo as an idea lives for ever.

I was by Awo's side for five years as his party's National Director of Organisation (1978 — 1983). Awo raised me from national obscurity to a prominent position in Nigerian politics. I am positive in my mind that Awo has become a TITAN of our history.

UP AWO UP NIGERIA
The struggle definitely continues.

APPENDIX



Chief Obafemi Awolowo

31 Park Lane · P.O. Box 632 · Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria · Home Tel. 873205 — Office Tel. 873145/876289/876391

26 February 1987

Chief Ebenezer A. Babatope,
Faculty of Law,
University of Buckingham,
Buckingham MK 18, IEG,
London.

My Dear Ebino

Mama and I were very happy to receive your latest letter dated 28 January 1987.

As usual, we are very delighted and thrilled with the contents of your letter.

I am particularly professionally gratified, and somewhat elated to learn that you are not finding the study of law an easy walk-over. It was once said of the great Bertrand Russell that as a student, he found the study of Economics so easy that he changed to Philosophy and Science. If you, as brainy as you are, say that the Law is difficult to study, then those of us who had had the same experience as law students have cause to be gratified.

The economic situation at home continues to be bad. The Government, I have no doubt, is busy daily in an ardent search for solution, but most of the time it pursues an ignis fatuus. A serious ailment, such as ours, requires accurate diagnosis and correct treatment. But our diagnosis is absolutely wrong, and

APPENDIX



Chief Obafemi Awolowo

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consequently, the treatment applied by us is completely inappropriate.

In other words, in the peculiar circumstances of Nigeria, we have been trying to solve problem which is purely agricultural by internal and external monetary manipulations and manufactory devices.

I hope you are well; we are all well at home. If you are able to pay a visit home, we will be delighted to see you.

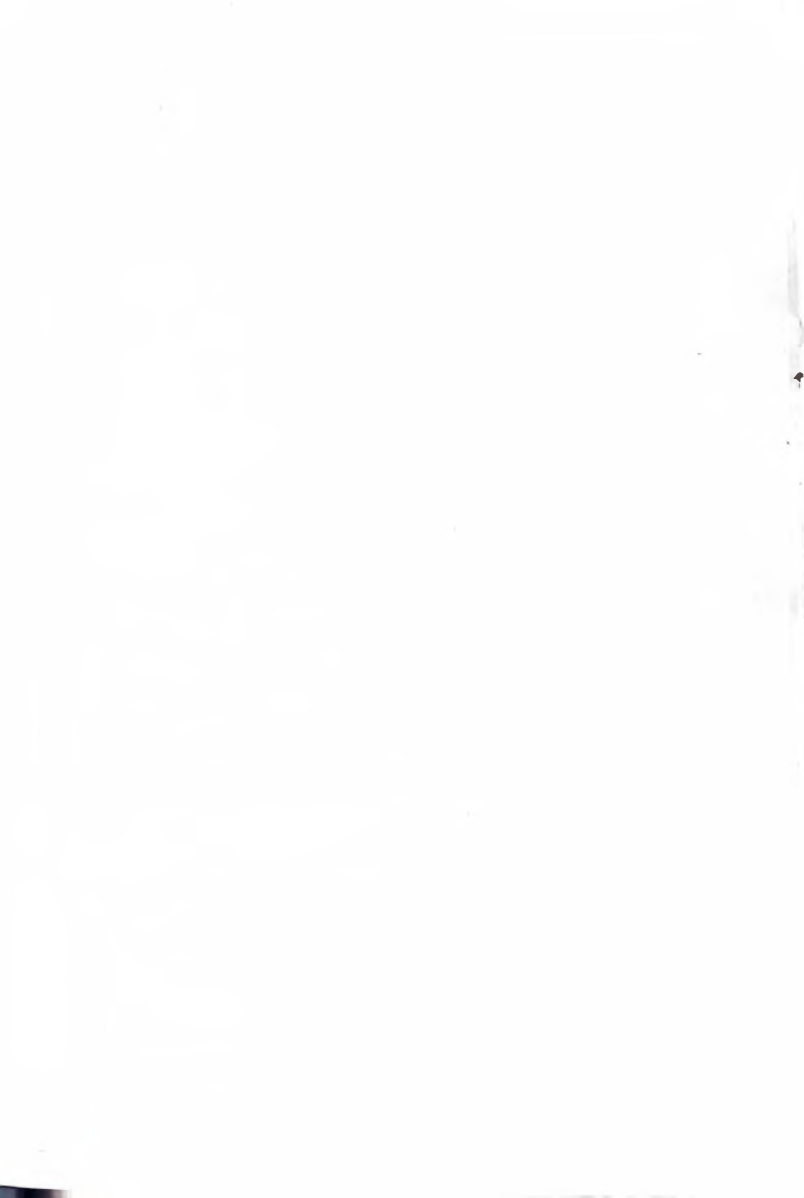
As always, we wish you the best of luck in your studies and exams.

With affectionate regards,

Yours as ever

Awolowo

OBAFEMI AWOLowo.





AWO'S GREAT LIFE BATTLES

Awo's Great Life Battles, is a resource book on Awo's political life just before, during and after the Second Republic. Some of the stories are being made public for the first time while some are put together in a more rigorous fashion. No-one is better placed to chronicle these aspects of Awo's life than a political son like Ebenezer Babatope who was not only by Awo's side in the last decade of Awo's life but also enjoyed Awo's confidence.

Ebenezer Babatope was born in 1945 at Ilesha in Oyo State of Nigeria. He was educated at New Grammar School and later at the University of Lagos where he obtained a Combined Honours Degree in Political Science and History (1966-1969) He was a student leader in his undergraduate days.

After a stint in the University of Lagos administration, he became the National Director of Organisation of the banned Unity Party of Nigeria. He is a convinced and unrepentant Socialist.

Ebenezer Babatope has written many articles, pamphlets and books on the politics of Nigeria. He is currently in the Nigerian Law School having recently completed a degree in Law.

He is married with children.

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