

THE TRIAL OF OLU ONAGORUWA

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ASD

Citizen

**DOUBLE
EDITION**

N30

HARD ON NEWS, STRONG ON VIEWS.

CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

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COVER STORY



Awaiting the debate

Anxieties build up over the proposed constitutional conference that so far suffers from improper definition and focus

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Trial of Onagoruwa

New federal attorney-general, Olu Onagoruwa has hardly settled down, but already he is neck-deep in controversy

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FROM THE EDITOR
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LETTERS 7 APR 1994

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BRIEFLY

Minister of petroleum resources, Chief Don Etiebet, last week, ordered the release of 15 million litres of petroleum products for the northern states of the country in an apparent move to alleviate the acute shortage of fuel which had severely hit the areas for about a year now.

This arrangement, according to the minister would continue until the situation normalises. He explained that haulage firms and marketers have refused to supply the products due to lack of profit. He, however, assured that the NNPC would get tankers and provide the necessary cost of transporting the products to the northern states.

He said the Kaduna Refinery which produces below capacity as a result of the damage caused to a part of it would be repaired within six months to reduce road haulage of products. He, however, said, the only viable solution to the persistent problem of fuel scarcity in the north for now would be road haulage.

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FROM THE EDITOR

In many organisations, the end of the year period is always loaded with activities. For them it is a time for stock taking, budget preparation and revision of corporate strategies in readiness for the coming year. For us in *Citizen* and in general it is indeed a time for another type of stock taking. The government has told Nigerians that a constitutional conference is in the pipeline, setting tongues wagging about the desirability or otherwise of such an endeavour.

At the time others were unsure of how the call for a national conference should be handled, *Citizen* ventured where they feared to tread. It's first annual dialogue, hosted in Abuja had the theme **The National question. What is the answer?** It was a brainstorming session that brought together politicians, intellectuals, human rights activists and others. The constitutional conference kite flown by the Abacha administration promises to extend the perspective of the debate on defining how we should live

with each other and under which political dispensation. We sounded a cross section of the population and their views form the cover story. Being the traditional period of stock taking, we reckoned that our readers deserve a bumper of 64 pages for what is our last edition this year. And what national stocktaking can beat the debate on the proposed constitutional conference? Our general editor **Mohammed Bomol** and **Aluko Akinyele** wrote it with reports from our team of reporters.

Accompanying the cover are fatter pages for most of our regular departments, from the business to sports. An interview with Comrade Oshiomhole, the deputy president of the Nigerian Labour Congress, NLC, adds spice to your festive season. We wish all Nigerians, particularly our readers a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Bilkiu Yusuf

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LETTERS

Re: "Attack" on IBB

Sir,

Until your write-up on the true version of the IBB attack episode, myself and a lot of Nigerians, I am sure had formed different opinions and ideas on the incident.

However, when you disclosed who the attacker was, I want to tell you that most of us know that he converted to Islam since 1992.

My guess is that he held Babangida's hand too long because he wanted to tell him that he converted to Islam and that his family despised him because of that. That is the usual story he tells any first timer he met. But that is not to suggest that he does so to get favours or collect money.

I have forgotten his muslim name but he prays and attends Jama'at prayers always. The boy will not harm a fly.

Aminu Iyawa
Government House, Yola

Press rejoinder

Sir,

The attention of the federal ministry of transport and aviation has been drawn to an editorial titled This is disgusting which appeared on page 6 of the "Citizen" of November 1-7, 1993.

I wish to state that your editorial was misleading because it is not true that the federal government has concluded arrangements with the government of what remains of Yugoslavia to remodel our airports.

As a public opinion moulder, *Citizen* was insensitive to the mood of the nation by playing up a subject as volatile as religion in this country, which is capable of rocking the foundation of this country. It is important to remember that Nigeria is still a secular state. It is equally important to note that Alhaji Bashir Dalhatu, himself a devout muslim, is not the first minister of transport and aviation to shake hands with the Yugoslav ambassador in Nige-

ria on behalf of the federal government. *Citizen* is also, not competent to dictate to government and this ministry which country becomes Nigeria's permanent friend or foe.

The ambassador only proposed technical assistance to the Nigeria Airways in the area of reactivation of navigational equipment at the nation's airports, and, replacement of obsolete ones.

O. Nwadike
FMT & A, Marina, Lagos

No to democratic terrorism

Sir,

It is disturbing to hear governments of the day advocating democracy with vigour. Democracy as defined by the West evokes memories of western imperialists nations as a medium through which the government that enjoys the support of its populace is destroyed and driven out of office. The United States has not enhanced democratic principles, instead puppet governments in the third world are the medium through which the west propagates the false democratic ideologies.

The military should not be in a hurry to draft another transition timetable for a return to civil rule. It should choose a convenient time for it and this should happen when tension might have subsided.

Ali Auta
Azare, Bauchi State

Re: Objectivity and the media

Sir,

Babayola Mohammed Toungo said it all (*Citizen* Forum 22-28 November, 1993) about the activities of the South-west press and the so-called human (actually, Yoruba) rights organisations.

If any Yoruba man wants to become an instant hero today; or if a newspaper or magazine wants to sell very quickly, the shortest way is

to start abusing the Hausa-Fulani. Take a look at this list: Tai Solarin, Wole Soyinka, Alani Akiranade, Alao-Aka Bashorun and Olu Onagoruwa, minister of Justice. *The Tell*, *The News* and *Tempo* magazines all debated with cover stories dedicated to Hausa-Fulani bashing.

However, these papers are encouraged by the same northerners in position of authority who patronise them by giving them adverts worth thousands of Naira to the detriment of credible media organisations.

Lawal M. Yusuf
Bakin Kasuwa, Bauchi State

Re: Governors' their joys and woes

Sir,

Your story on the above reported some amazing and patronising comments on the tenure of Kabiru Ibrahim Gaya as governor of Kano State.

It is preposterous and ironic for a Kano State civil servant to suggest that ex-governor Kabiru Gaya had "laudable programmes" he could not implement because of party squabbles within and among the defunct SDP and NRC. Kabiru Gaya started as a political nonentity, however destiny had its way, he became somebody but ended as a political leper that not even his defunct NRC was happy to identify with.

It was also conceivable that such a novice, on a political adventure with no previous apprenticeship, could not articulate programmes but relied on experts in the art of chicanery and thuggery and the many sycophants who paraded the corridors of power to see him through governance.

Governor Gaya became the first indigene to dismantle enviable projects and set in a decaying process that would take decades before Kano bounces back to its glory.

Abubakar S. Suleiman
Hausawa Quarters, Kano

Letters to *Citizen*, carrying names, signatures and addresses, should be brief and to the point. They should be typed double space and addressed to Letters Page, *Citizen*, G.11 Unguwar Kanawa, PMB 2334, Kaduna. The Editor reserves the right to edit, publish or reject all letters.

Towards a constitutional conference

When General Sani Abacha, head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces took over power on November 17, one of his first acts was to announce the summoning of a constitutional conference for the immediate future. Whatever may have been his motivation, no one can dispute the fact that, given the persistent call from some sections of the country for such a conference, it was difficult, if not impossible, to move forward without some re-examination of the constitutional basis of our existence as a nation.

Straight away, let us restate our reservations about such a conference. First and foremost, we are concerned that it may provide an avenue for those who fear that they may never get power through the democratic process to seek break up this country. Obviously, this should not be allowed to happen. The territorial integrity of this country — or of any country for that matter in so far as it is man-made, may not be sacrosanct — but it remains the best hope of the black race. As such its preservation is worth everything we can give it.

Second, if the constitutional talks should be useful then we must all adopt a positive attitude towards it. First, we must regard each other as communities and as individuals, with respect rather than with suspicion. We must disabuse our minds of the widespread belief that one section of this country has been enslaved by the other, because such a belief, no matter how strongly held, is not borne out by the facts on the ground. Whatever anyone wishes to believe, the fact is that poverty is as endemic in the north as it is in the south — probably even more so in the north. Whatever anyone chooses to believe, the rich and powerful of all tribes and religions do not discriminate between ethnic or sectarian groups when it comes to the exploi-

tation and manipulation of the poor. We must bear these in mind if we wish to have a useful constitutional conference. In other words the most critical element for success is mutual goodwill and respect.

Mutual goodwill and respect among the contending groups and individuals, is however only half the solution. The other half lies in raising the right questions and looking for the right answers to those questions. These questions are many but the larger and more important ones include (1) who convenes the conference? (2) How should it be composed? Through selection or election? (3) What should be its scope, i.e. should it have no go areas like the country's unity? (4) What should be the federating units, assuming we agree on a federation as against a confederation? Should the units be the states as they now are or should they be reconstituted? Or should the units be ethnic groups? (5) Last but by no means the least, what should be the guiding principles of our constitution?

We shall in time provide our own answers to these questions as the debate unfolds. For now, however, we would like to share the position of a recent constitutional workshop on contemporary national issues organised by the Constitutional Rights Project, that the principles that should guide our organisation are (1) the rule of law, (2) accountability, (3) equity and (4) giving real power to the people. Guided by these principles and by mutual respect and goodwill for each other, we should be able to fashion out a constitution that will endure. After all, the blame for our persistent crises as a nation has always laid far less with our constitutions than with our attitudes as a people; in truth no constitution on earth can work unless those it is meant for are prepared to allow it to work, and so far we have not demonstrated such preparedness.

Watch this GATT

If the Americans and Europeans succeed in resolving their squabbles over film markets and aircraft subsidies, then

a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, GATT, should be ready for the people of 117 countries by this week. This will bring to a

successful end the protracted dispute in this Uruguay Round of GATT which has continued since 1986.

Anyone who paid even a cursory attention to the GATT talks in the last year, and especially in the last three months, cannot help but wonder where developing countries were. There are 117 countries in GATT, the majority of them being developing countries. Yet, the Big Three trading blocs, namely the US, the European Union and Japan, between them manoeuvred and haggled and bargained over such things as rice and films and music cassettes as if the rest of us are not in the deal.

While it is acceptable for the US and Japan to haggle over trade deficits or threaten each other with trade wars. The less developed economies, LDCs are not expected to raise eye brows over trade imbalance with the developed world. That explains why the GATT talks can pretend that LDCs do not matter or even adopt the paternalistic attitude of speaking for them. What options do the LDCs have but to let the big league traders dictate to them how free trade should be entrenched worldwide? That reflects how lightly they weigh LDCs in their scale of priorities.

Suspicion one. GATT is predicated on the theory that the removal of subsidies and obstacles to imports leads to free trade which in turn leads to more efficient production in the world which in turn leads to increase in the volume and quality of goods produced. Thus, it is claimed, consumers worldwide will get cheaper and better quality goods. Suspicion two, developing countries such as ours may never get round to cash in on this windfall if all our industries and farms fail to measure up to the competition from other, especially developed, countries, as seems quite possible. American wheat alone, if unchecked, can displace in quality and price every grain produced in Africa. Nor is there any factory anywhere in Africa that can hold its own against the Japanese, in price or quality, in an open contest.

Suspicion three, cheaper and better quality goods for consumers are not the only stuff of national development. There is something else called national self-reliance. There is no reason why Africa should accept, in its present precarious state, to engage in any open competition against Europe, America

and Japan. The so-called area of specialisation consigned to us in this free-for-all is nothing more than the production of agricultural commodities and minerals at ever falling prices vis-a-vis manufactured goods. No, we must build industries of our own and, if it requires 1000 years of closed markets, we should not hesitate to do so. There is nothing to be ashamed of in this matter. This year alone, we have seen the length to which the Japanese and South Koreans went to protect rice and the length to which the French and other Europeans went to protect their apples and oats and films.

In any case, an unstated fact of the GATT matter is that it will benefit mostly those countries that are already large traders. Today, the US, Germany, Japan, France and Britain together control 44.5 per cent of all world trade, and they will quickly hit the 50 per cent mark and keep pushing on when GATT is ratified.

This Uruguay Round of GATT was from the start an affair of the rich, by the rich and for the rich countries. Efforts by developing countries to place the issue of international debt on the GATT agenda was rejected, even though debt is clearly linked to trade and the IMF makes trade liberalisation a condition for any debt rescheduling agreements. Suspicion four. And even while all this is going on, the rich countries are busy creating wider free-trading blocs. This year alone, the European Union took off, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was ratified and President Clinton is pushing through his idea of an American, Asia and Pacific free trading area. Suspicion five, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other African groupings are stalling.

Recently, the countries in the East African zone saw the wisdom of old and are working hard to resuscitate the moribund East African Economic Community. But the fact remains that their existence has not given the needed impetus to intra African trade, nor has it oiled the machinery for south-south trade. Yet our hope as developing economies lies in being able to find our feet before the GATT gale sweeps us into the ocean of liberalised trade.

Africa must approach GATT with its eyes wide open. As soon as it becomes apparent, at any stage, that we are being transformed into a junk yard for dumped goods and our industries are faltering, we should be able to say that it is not our cup of tea and quit.



ADAMU ADAMU

dise the nation.

At one time the claim of the marketers might have been true, no doubt — especially when the shortage covered the entire country. At that time it was rumoured that oil workers, in collusion with security personnel attached to the oil distribution network, were demanding outrageous sums of money per tanker. They therefore had good ex-

Administering fuel

The fuel crisis is news to many Nigerians. They are lucky. When they want to buy fuel, they just drive up to the next petrol filling station, fill the tank, pay the official rate and drive away. They must be smiling a smile of revenge, having found out how quickly violence pays. In Lagos the queues at filling stations never lasted more than two weeks at any one moment. In Daura the fuel shortage is now in its third year.

When last week Colonel Mohammed Abdullahi Wase, Kano State military administrator, said a meeting of all the military administrators in the north to discuss the shortage was going to take place soon everyone was happy. At least some people in authority view the matter with as much seriousness as the people took their suffering.

Just before the appointment of administrators a few of those who acted for them tried to solve the problem. In some cases the matter appeared to have turned hanky-panky just when relief appeared to be on the way. But probably the truth of the matter is that the affair of the shortage is far from clear.

In the past, some oil marketers had claimed that what they paid for their liftings was multiples of the official price. There was no way therefore that they could sell at the official price and lose. Quite correct. They were not in business to substi-

tute to divert their allocations to surface tanks and charge outrageous prices.

But now when other marketers — in Lagos and elsewhere — have made available fuel at the official price, it will be difficult to believe this practice still continues. Are the marketers in the south selling their fuel at a loss? Hardly. Or have officials at NNPC depot across the country resorted to selective extortions? This is even more unlikely.

However, it is still not impossible that the extra is only paid at depots in the north. And, if true, this makes the promise by Kano's Colonel Wase even more crucial. And, as he said, this must be done in all states at the same time, otherwise neighbours may simply be sweeping their problems across the boundary — or the borders.

Because there are indications that our oil is finding its way to neighbouring countries illegally, it is difficult to believe that the traffic is not passing through our borders.

In principle, our oil must indeed find its way to our neighbours. We must supply them with good cheer, but this must be between governments or at least as per legal agreements. Certainly it is not the prerogative of oil marketers and customs officials to decide to "export" fuel meant for local consumption.

If it is because of fuel smuggling that the board of customs was dis-

solved last week, the wrong people are being punished. It is the people at the border post or those who give them orders to look the other way. Wherever they are.

Already Dr. Bello Mohammed, customs director, has begun sounding tough. He should do more than that; he must clean and insulate his directorate from interference and ensure that only patriots man our outlets.

That, indeed, is a tough task but it is one that must be done if we are to begin to solve our problems. Even if military administrators meet as planned, devise ways and means of dealing with fuel shortage and are allowed to put them into practice, all will come to naught if customs opens the door to smugglers.

It is clear that this shortage and the misery associated with it have gone for as long as they can. For three years the Babangida administration looked on without doing anything. One could have with justice claimed that the officials responsible for easing things took particular delight in contemplating people's miseries.

When Ernest Shonekan took over and was desperately looking for credibility, he missed the best opportunity of his life, as far as the ordinary man in the north was concerned. If he had made fuel available and affordable — and he could have easily done so — he would have registered a significant difference with them.

While these two regimes lasted, there was the feeling that the unavailability of fuel and the consequent rise in price, the corruption at depots or within the distribution chain, and the smuggling going on all became possible and easy because it was the big and powerful men who were behind the racket.

If the Abacha people are really truly different then we ought to begin to see whether they will deal with the devils in the oil business. Or even whether they can.



Abubakar: it is vague

of the conference, asking again and again what purpose it would serve. He described it as "useless because it's without direction." He instead suggested that we should ask those

Nigerians who talk about conferences how they came about their wealth. "This is because there is no way we can achieve any meaningful development or even actualise our togetherness in any conference if some individuals are far richer than the country they say they want to serve. It is a diversionary tactic to buy time and legitimacy for the regime. A conference for what when the nation is in such dire economic mess?" he asked.

Alhaji Nuhu Kuso, a prominent Kaduna lawyer also told *Citizen* that the conference is merely a delay tactic by the military, arguing that there is nothing wrong with our constitutions, but the operators who have continuously failed us. "What is the purpose anyway, to stop coups?" he asked rhetorically.

Aliyu Modibbo Umar, a senior lecturer at the faculty of education, University of Abuja told *Citizen* that



Saraki: no to presidential system again

what the government wants might be to re-evaluate constitutional matters in this country from the point of view of equity and access to resources. However, said Umar, "One contradictory aspect of this whole idea is that even the constitutions

administrator, the United Kingdom. *The 1966/67 constitutional conference* came in the wake of the 1966 crisis and the historic intervention of the army into national politics. The offshoot was the breaking of Nigeria into 12 states.

The 1979 constitutional conference adopted the presidential system of government and paved the way for the second republic. *The 1986 constitutional conference* (Cookey's political bureau) retained some of the provisions of the old and ushered the way for the shortlived third republic.

However, a major trend that emerged from all these constitutional talks is that interests of contripal and centrifugal forces came to dominate issues. Vexed issues of revenue allocation, sharing of national resources, access to power, and minority problems remain unresolved. This latest proposed constitutional conference is supposed to settle once and for all our major questions, and usher in the fourth republic.

Constitutional vs national conferences: A global view

The call for constitutional or national sovereign conference is a worldwide phenomena. Some advanced countries had discussed theirs in the past but some primordial fundamental issues still crop up once in a while.

For instance, despite America's development, the issue of the civil war of the 19th century is still a touchy one. One would not be going too far to say the wounds have not completely healed.

Up till now the Irish issue is still a complex and sour

item to the British. Quebec is still threatening to secede in Canada. The French have the Corsican and Basque separatist issue. The Catalan problem touches the Spanish national psyche. There is the issue of the Flemish and the French in Belgium. In Italy, Napolitans and Sicillians are not too sure whether they are full Italians. In Africa, the Chadian, Sudanese, Angolan, Mozambican, Algerian, Egyptian and Liberian national question still bathes these countries in blood. Zaire, Congo and Togo are still involved in bitter national bloody debates. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and Hutus have died in Burundi and Rwanda because of national crisis. South Africa is in the process of a fundamental constitutional debate that would end apartheid policy. Although communist rule was able to suppress national and ethnic sentiments behind the iron curtain in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Total collapse of state structures and the resultant violence, in these places show that intolerance still reigns supreme in the people's attitudes with one another.

The Somalis are one people, but clannish issue still dominates the national question.

Some of these problems, like the Nigeria example, revolve around tribe, religion and language. Some of these problems are colonially created. They were however maintained and entrenched by neo-colonial forces, who exploit the confusion to their advantages.

By Shoyebi Abayomi

COVER STORY

and Umar, Bui said "I always think that the problem is not with the operators of the constitution."



Ikoku: no to presidential system

Mahdi



...e or something, but if it's organised people would still say it's sectional. ...posed to be a federally manned in- ...t have what we call its immediate ...not escape from this but we aspire

...hering now will be national or

workshop that we are trying to ...is still an idea that we are toying ...ou that it is very largely going to ...ve no reason why we should not ...le people from all over the coun-

December 20, 1993-January 2, 1994

COVER STORY

Government may not have really helped its case by saying very little on the proposed conference. As former SDP chieftain, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, "It is difficult to understand what the government means. So far the government has said very little." Alhaji Abubakar said, the conference is unnecessary as there is already a constitution fashioned out in 1989 by a constituent assembly. Said he, "That constitution is still untested, it has not been used."

With the parameters of the conference clearly set by the government, as it had told the nation that not only would there be government nominees, but there would be "no go areas" in the discussion what are the goals of the conference? The government and some citizens are at loggerheads as to how far it should go. The government wants systems



Diya: Nigeria is not negotiable

of government to be chosen and a few problems such as the issue of minorities and the oil producing areas to be addressed, but others, such as Akinola Aguda, want the



Mohammed: good idea

very basis of Nigeria to be discussed and agreed upon. Yet others want the issue of national political leadership and succession, especially in the light of the annulment of the

try and if it becomes necessary even from outside the country to make an input into the exercise.

Citizen: *Over the years there have been a lot of constitutional conferences as you have pointed out but one reason or the other makes it work, what do you think really is the problem?*

Mahdi: Exactly, you have answered the question. You see, this is exactly why I am opposed to this constitutional conference. Quite frankly, I have already stated. I do not think there is something much against the existing constitution. And no amount of writing of constitution, even if we have a million constitutions, even if angels write them, when the chips are down, it will be the people. Nigerians are going to operate the constitution to suit their purpose.

Citizen: *What do you think the agenda should be for example, the government has its no go areas ...*

Mahdi: There are two sides to it. There are people whose idea is that we go for sovereign national conference along the lines of those who have held one for example Niger Republic and other French speaking neighbouring countries. This means that when the delegates converge, they take decisions which could not be opposed by any existing government and in fact if anything, they dictate to the existing government on what to do. This, I believe is the background to the present proposal for the constitutional conference. It is a modification for the constitutional conference. It appears even our friend, Ebenezer Babatope in the interview he granted *Tell* magazine is shifting position. He is now for the constitutional conference instead of the sovereign national conference and now why now. Because they

are in government now, if you ask them, they will not talk about the sovereign national conference. They would rather talk about the constitutional conference.

Citizen: *We have still not got to the bottom of the problem. There are no go areas and some people got the best the country can offer.*

Mahdi: That is the point. You see, it is very interesting to note that one of the questions that has been raised in one of the no go areas, is the sharia issue. You see there are quite a number of things that do not in any way cause the problem that we are going through. For example, the crisis that we are going through is political. It has to do with the annulment of the last election. I also don't think the present crisis has to do directly with the revenue allocation except that the military because of its structure has succeeded in centralising the country and making it unitary whereby they have concentrated the entire resources in the hands of the president. This is what informs the current rat race to the presidency — and I think one of the areas that has to be taken up in the constitution is reversion to the real term, federal system of government. What we then do is to make sure that certain cliques — are not allowed to get access to power to the extent that they will stop the integration process. I think people are actually just being emotional about this. This is the real problem. So there is no reason why this problem should not be sorted out through an objective examination rather than go for a national conference now. It will just be horse trading, nothing more than that.

**By Shoyebi Abayomi
and Idris Ndanusa**



Bello: Chief justice

but some communities are being unfairly accused of such acts such as the north.

Malam Liman Ciroma said the clamour for the conference was nothing more than giving expression to a perceived domination of political leadership by the north, especially the so-called Hausa/Fulani. He pointed to the dangers of such a conference, such that southern politicians would latch onto disagreements in the north and reach common understanding on issues that are more of perception than substance.

Mr. Oshiomhole said while the idea of the conference was too narrow just to enable the military to buy time because "they have their own agenda," it might be a way to address power sharing between the states and the federal government, with the centre having lesser role and a radical review of the revenue allocation formula to make the centre less attractive.

Alhaji Tijjani Ramalan, a former chairman of the NRC in Kaduna State sees in the conference a chance to address the issue of democracy and national co-existence once and for all.

Alhaji Nuhu Kuso said since the government is going ahead with the idea, it would be a good opportunity to settle some misinformation especially about the north taking the money which the south had been producing it. He argued that all the states depend on the government for money that comes from revenue allocation. He said from the little experience he gained as a commissioner in Niger State, it was clear to him that most states in the south pocket their allocations instead of using it to better their people's welfare.

"Rivers State", he said "gets 100 times more than Niger State, yet the level of development is not the same. If people are not stealing the money, then where is it going? Into the pockets of the northerners? Up here in the north, we use the little we get. Up there, they steal most of it and because they have the media clout, they pull the wool over the people's eyes by pointing accusing fingers at northerners.

"Go there and see for yourself. There is nothing to suggest that money is poured into their areas because they have been pocketing it," he charged. He also said the

Natioal conference is a ruse — Okereke

Mr. Nnodi Okereke, manager, legal services, Abuja Building Society, Kaduna, said a constitutional conference is normally convened to fashion out the best constitutional framework for any polity. It is during a constitutional conference that the constituent parts of the polity will determine which type of political arrangement should they adopt. A national conference presupposes that a nation is already in existence and that a given formula has been in operation which has fallen short of expectations, so a national conference is convened to address these shortcomings.

So actually, he said, "a national conference is narrower in scope, it is a sub-set of a constitutional conference. Sometimes we talk of a sovereign national conference. Sovereignty is what we call the grand norm, that is a body that has power, you cannot question its legality. If a government seizes power

forcibly, it means it has assumed the position of the ground norm, and once it has reached that position you cannot ask, in law, who is supporting it, because it is supporting itself with the



power of the gun. That is what we call ground norm. "In Nigeria, the call for a national conference is a ruse, a diversionary tactic. The human rights groups



Abubakar: it is vague

of the conference, asking again and again what purpose it would serve. He described it as "useless because it's without direction." He instead suggested that we should ask those

Nigerians who talk about conferences how they came about their wealth. "This is because there is no way we can achieve any meaningful development or even actualise our togetherness in any conference if some individuals are far richer than the country they say they want to serve. It is a diversionary tactic to buy time and legitimacy for the regime. A conference for what when the nation is in such dire economic mess?" he asked.

Alhaji Nuhu Kuso, a prominent Kaduna lawyer also told *Citizen* that the conference is merely a delay tactic by the military, arguing that there is nothing wrong with our constitutions, but the operators who have continuously failed us. "What is the purpose anyway, to stop coups?" he asked rhetorically.

Aliyu Modibbo Umar, a senior lecturer at the faculty of education, University of Abuja told *Citizen* that



Saraki: no to presidential system again

what the government wants might be to re-evaluate constitutional matters in this country from the point of view of equity and access to resources. However, said Umar, "One contradictory aspect of this whole idea is that even the constitutions

administrator, the United Kingdom. *The 1966/67 constitutional conference* came in the wake of the 1966 crisis and the historic intervention of the army into national politics. The offshoot was the breaking of Nigeria into 12 states.

The 1979 constitutional conference adopted the presidential system of government and paved the way for the second republic. *The 1986 constitutional conference* (Cookey's political bureau) retained some of the provisions of the old and ushered the way for the shortlived third republic.

However, a major trend that emerged from all these constitutional talks is that interests of contripal and centrifugal forces came to dominate issues. Vexed issues of revenue allocation, sharing of national resources, access to power, and minority problems remain unsolved. This latest proposed constitutional conference is supposed to settle once and for all our major questions, and usher in the fourth republic.

Constitutional vs national conferences: A global view

The call for constitutional or national sovereign conference is a worldwide phenomena. Some advanced countries had discussed theirs in the past but some primordial fundamental issues still crop up once in a while.

For instance, despite America's development, the issue of the civil war of the 19th century is still a touchy one. One would not be going too far to say the wounds have not completely healed.

Up till now the Irish issue is still a complex and sour

item to the British. Quebec is still threatening to secede in Canada. The French have the Corsican and Basque separatist issue. The Catalan problem touches the Spanish national psyche. There is the issue of the Flemish and the French in Belgium. In Italy, Napolitans and Sicilians are not too sure whether they are full Italians. In Africa, the Chadian, Sudanese, Angolan, Mozambican, Algerian, Egyptian and Liberian national question still bathes these countries in blood. Zaire, Congo and Togo are still involved in bitter national bloody debates. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and Hutus have died in Burundi and Rwanda because of national crisis. South Africa is in the process of a fundamental constitutional debate that would end apartheid policy. Although communist rule was able to suppress national and ethnic sentiments behind the iron curtain in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Total collapse of state structures and the resultant violence, in these places show that intolerance still reigns supreme in the people's attitudes with one another.

The Somalis are one people, but clannish issue still dominates the national question.

Some of these problems, like the Nigeria example, revolve around tribe, religion and language. Some of these problems are colonially created. They were however maintained and entrenched by neo-colonial forces, who exploit the confusion to their advantages.

By Shoyebi Abayomi

that we have had, not all of them have been put to test. "What are we going to reevaluate?"

In the same vein, Gbolade Osinowo, former chairman of Ogun



Realism is our chance

state SDP today insist that though an attitude of healthy skepticism should be maintained about the matter, "another constitutional review may be a wasteful exercise and unnecessary luxury." Dr. Osinowo however believes that a constitutional conference can result into fundamental changes depending on the intention and motivation of the conveners. Like Ken Sare-Wiwa, the spokesman of the Ogonis, Osinowo believed that since the issue of our association was not thoroughly trashed out before independence, going to the conference table now may not be out of place. Another member of the political class, Dr. Adam A. Biu, also told *Citizen* that "it appears that the government would like to amend the existing constitution of 1989 in order to have a better framework." Like Osinowo

and Umar, Biu said "I always think that the problem is not with the operators of the constitution."



Ikoku: no to presidential system

It's unnecessary — Dr. Mahdi

Interview with Dr. Abdullahi Mahdi,
Director, Arewa House, Kaduna

Citizen: Do you think, sir, that there is any need for a constitutional conference?

Mahdi: It is in vogue in this country whenever any government collapses as we have witnessed, then the next thing is constitutional conference but I believe the genesis of the constitutional conference has to do with the chorus song by many people especially in Lagos and other areas for a national conference which has been going on for quite a long time. For example, throughout the later part of Babangida's reign, people were talking of national conference. I believe the present government jumped on it because as you know whenever a new government comes in it tries to appease groups as it is aware of the call for a national conference. That is why it's got it in its programmes among other things, but I don't see any need for it at all.

Citizen: Sir, there is speculation in some of the media that you are trying to organise a sort of a constitutional conference — may be a northern one before the national one.

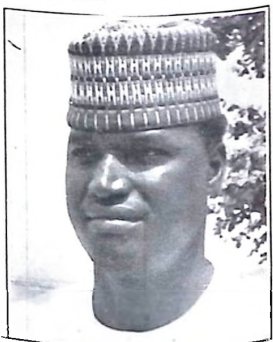
Mahdi: To some extent actually our proposal is in line with government's desire, but it is largely academic. Remember this is actually a centre of research. So it is an academic exercise that we are planning to do to make our input into the conference. I am working on the basis of the assumption that there will be a national conference or whatsoever and if it is going to take place, it is not

going to be proper for me or for us to fold our arms and just allow things to go. We want to, for example come up with a workshop or seminar to debate the whole thing thoroughly and academically and then either come out with our findings in the

form of communique or something, but if it's organised by Arewa House, people would still say it's sectional. Arewa House is supposed to be a federally manned institution but we must have what we call its immediate environment. We cannot escape from this but we aspire to be national.

Citizen: So this gathering now will be national or regional?

Mahdi: Exactly. The workshop that we are trying to organise is an idea. It is still an idea that we are toying with. And I have told you that it is very largely going to be academic and we have no reason why we should not invite all knowledgeable people from all over the coun-



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Government may not have really helped its case by saying very little on the proposed conference. As former SDP chieftain, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, "It is difficult to understand what the government means. So far the government has said very little." Alhaji Abubakar said, the conference is unnecessary as there is already a constitution fashioned out in 1989 by a constituent assembly. Said he, "That constitution is still untested, it has not been used."

With the parameters of the conference clearly set by the government, as it had told the nation that not only would there be government nominees, but there would be "no go areas" in the discussion what are the goals of the conference? The government and some citizens are at loggerheads as to how far it should go. The government wants systems



Diya: *Nigeria is not negotiable*

of government to be chosen and a few problems such as the issue of minorities and the oil producing areas to be addressed, but others, such as Akinola Aguda, want the



Mohammed: *good idea*

very basis of Nigeria to be discussed and agreed upon. Yet others want the issue of national political leadership and succession, especially in the light of the annulment of the

try and if it becomes necessary even from outside the country to make an input into the exercise.

Citizen: *Over the years there have been a lot of constitutional conferences as you have pointed out but one reason or the other makes it work, what do you think really is the problem?*

Mahdi: Exactly, you have answered the question. You see, this is exactly why I am opposed to this constitutional conference. Quite frankly, I have already stated. I do not think there is something much against the existing constitution. And no amount of writing of constitution, even if we have a million constitutions, even if angels write them, when the chips are down, it will be the people. Nigerians are going to operate the constitution to suit their purpose.

Citizen: *What do you think the agenda should be for example, the government has its no go areas ...*

Mahdi: There are two sides to it. There are people whose idea is that we go for sovereign national conference along the lines of those who have held one for example Niger Republic and other French speaking neighbouring countries. This means that when the delegates converge, they take decisions which could not be opposed by any existing government and in fact if anything, they dictate to the existing government on what to do. This, I believe is the background to the present proposal for the constitutional conference. It is a modification for the constitutional conference. It appears even our friend, Ebenezer Babatope in the interview he granted *Tell* magazine is shifting position. He is now for the constitutional conference instead of the sovereign national conference and now why now. Because they

are in government now, if you ask them, they will not talk about the sovereign national conference. They would rather talk about the constitutional conference.

Citizen: *We have still not got to the bottom of the problem. There are no go areas and some people got the best the country can offer.*

Mahdi: That is the point. You see, it is very interesting to note that one of the questions that has been raised in one of the no go areas, is the sharia issue. You see there are quite a number of things that do not in any way cause the problem that we are going through. For example, the crisis that we are going through is political. It has to do with the annulment of the last election. I also don't think the present crisis has to do directly with the revenue allocation except that the military because of its structure has succeeded in centralising the country and making it unitary whereby they have concentrated the entire resources in the hands of the president. This is what informs the current race to the presidency — and I think one of the areas that has to be taken up in the constitution is reversion to the real term, federal system of government. What we then do is to make sure that certain cliques — are not allowed to get access to power to the extent that they will stop the integration process. I think people are actually just being emotional about this. This is the real problem. So there is no reason why this problem should not be sorted out through an objective examination rather than go for a national conference now. It will just be horse trading, nothing more than that.

**By Shoyebi Abayomi
and Idris Ndanusa**



Bello: Chief justice

June 12 presidential elections and that of an ill-defined marginalisation to be discussed.

The Dan Iyan Misau said the conference could examine the system of government that is suitable to the issue of perceived marginalisation from the economic and political process by some communities. He said though some form of inequality existed in the sharing of the "national cake", the ethnic colouration given to it is not only exaggerated

but some communities are being unfairly accused of such acts such as the north.

Malam Liman Ciroma said the clamour for the conference was nothing more than giving expression in a perceived domination of political leadership by the north, especially the so-called Hausa/Fulani. He pointed to the dangers of such a conference, such that southern politicians would latch onto disagreements in the north and reach common understanding on issues that are more of perception than substance.

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Alhaji Tijani Ramalan, a former chairman of the NRC in Kaduna State sees in the conference a chance to address the issue of democracy and national co-existence once and for all.

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"Rivers State", he said "gets 100 times more than Niger State, yet the level of development is not the same. If people are not stealing the money, then where is it going? Into the pockets of the northerners? Up here in the north, we use the little we get. Up there, they steal most of it and because they have the media clout, they pull the wool over the people's eyes by pointing accusing fingers at northerners.

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National conference is a ruse — Okereke

Mr. Nnodi Okereke, manager, legal services, Abuja Building Society, Kaduna, said a constitutional conference is normally convened to fashion out the best constitutional framework for any polity. It is during a constitutional conference that the constituent parts of the polity will determine which type of political arrangements should they adopt. A national conference presupposes that a nation is already in existence and that a given formula has been in operation which has fallen short of expectations, so a national conference is convened to address these shortcomings.

So actually, he said, "a national conference is narrower in scope, it is a sub-set of a constitutional conference. Sometimes we talk of a sovereign national conference. Sovereignty is what we call the grand norm, that is a body that has power, you cannot question its legality. If a government seizes power

forcibly, it means it has assumed the position of the ground norm, and once it has reached that position you cannot ask, in law, who is supporting it, because it is supporting itself with the power of the gun. That is what we call ground norm.

"In Nigeria, the call for a national conference is a ruse, a diversionary tactic. The human rights groups



conference would be a ground where these truths would come out. "If we are to compute revenue allocation figures, more than half of it goes to the south. Look at it, they own more than 70 per cent of the banks and other businesses, where did they get the money to set them up?"

Alhaji Liman said a review of the presidential system of government might not be a bad idea. "People," he said, "are wondering whether we should now revert to the parliamentary system of government and see if it can help us in resuscitating our cultural, political and economic values."

For the *Magasin Rafin*, the issue is that of sincerity of purpose and honesty. Before any conference, he said, we should declare our assets and turn over any illegal acquisitions and see if such a conference were necessary.

Mr. Maigari said Nigeria's problems are well-known to all Nigerians. The problem seems to be that they had been foisted on us and deliberately maintained by a class that is benefiting from these problems. The agenda itself, he said, is part of the problem. "The sociology of the issue is that we need change.



Agbakogba: CLO boss

Those clamouring for it simply want a change in attitude," he argued.

The *Turakin Ilorin*, and former presidential aspirant, Olusola Saraki and Mazi S.G. Ikoku, a veteran politician and nationalist share the view that the presidential system should be jettisoned. However, Ikoku and the former deputy speaker of the Enugu State House of Assembly, Chuka Utazi, want a return to the parliamentary system aban-

doned in the second republic, though with some modifications. Legislators should be elected through purely traditional modes of selection as prevalent in our various communities and that the head of government should not be elected on the basis of membership of parliament, so that non legislators may also vie for the office. Ikoku said it would be dangerous to turn the conference into a forum for dismantling Nigeria as some selfish interests seem to clamour for. Utazi lamented the enormous cost of running a presidential system and that the parliamentary system would greatly reduce costs. Saraki wants a mixture of the good aspects to produce something indigenous and beneficial.

What the nation needs, Fawehinmi told *Citizen*, is first, a constitution review committee which will work for three months, and submit a draft constitution. This, Fawehinmi said will lead to a referendum and subsequent ratification of the constitution. Elections will follow and by October 1, 1994, said Fawehinmi, democracy should be in place.

Perhaps, the government may

acquire a relevance with their call for a national conference. Remove that issue, and they have no relevance at all. The present regime also proposes to hold a constitutional conference because that gives it legitimacy and acceptability. So it is a ruse by both of them.

"The call for a national conference in Nigeria acquires legitimacy because of the observed weakness in the workings of the presidential system, or more properly, the desire of a certain class (the military) to perpetuate itself in power. If the election had not been annulled, do you think there would have been a call for the conference? Right now, there is the need for the people of Nigeria to sit down and renegotiate the basis of unity, to avoid a repeat of the events of recent months and to give every part of the country a sense of belonging. So whether it is called a national or constitutional conference is irrelevant, provided they sit down to address the problems of the country.

"The type of issues we should reconsider is look, we are so fascinated by sophisticated political systems. We are so concerned with form, and not sub-

stance, of government. Some people are now saying we should try the French presidential system, after trying the British and American systems. Why? When this conference sits next year, it should not be fascinated by sophisticated political systems. We shouldn't have bicameral federal legislature, it is a waste of time and money, and in the states and local governments too, we have separate executives and legislatures.... So we are carried away by sophisticated political superstructures, which we superimpose on a weak economic substructure. We want to adopt an American political system, to be supported by this our economy! We should address our economic problems.

"In any case, the military never gives the politicians time to perfect the political system. Democracy cannot be perfected overnight. Let us begin at that conference. Let us begin at that conference by simplifying the political system, addressing the special ecological problems of the oil producing areas.

By Mahmud Jega

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re unknowingly put itself in a tight corner by raising the issue of a constitutional conference and above all throwing the hint that "the nagging issue of minority rights" could be reappraised in the conference. Political analysts believe that with the gathering momentum, it is either the government completely abandons the issue of holding talks or it is forced to support a sovereign national conference.

The question however, is what the likely outcome of a national conference would be if it is clear that a constitutional conference would end up merely refashioning or dictating outright a presidential system of government or parliamentary democracy for the nation. Most advocates of the talks, may have resorted to using the oil producing minorities as its test case. May be their case really arouses sympathy from the environmental point of view. In the words of Beko Ransom-Kuti, "there are people from whom land resources are being taken to develop, Lagos, Abeokuta, Sokoto etc. They have a right to discuss how this money is spent."

Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni crusader was even broader in his submission; restating the fact that Nigeria is a federation of ethnic groups, some very large, others small. The novelist and playwright reasoned that if these groups are to live together in harmony and pursue common interests "every effort must be made to satisfy their aspirations, social, cultural, economic and political." The Ogoni crusader's idea of the conference is a place where any ethnic group is free to pull out of any decision not favourable to it until concessions are made or it is persuaded to accept majority view that was not carried too far. Said Saro-Wiwa, "On the surface this may appear to signal disintegration. But it is not so. The sheer forces of economics of international politics, both of which affect Nigeria, will dictate mutuality and good sense."

He added, "And we may at last find that those things which unite us are far greater than those things which divide us." The wisdom of Modibbo Umar that splitting the nation is mere romanticism on the parts of the ethnic groups may have streamed down to Saro-Wiwa. Beko Ransom-Kuti also confessed to *Citizen* last week that the atomistic nature of the eastern minorities is a sure guarantee that no ethnic group can go as far

as wanting to secede in the event of a sovereign national conference. For Atiku Abubakar, government, in order to avoid a clash should abandon the issue of a constitutional conference and go straight to a political timetable and allow the return to democracy. Like Gani, Abubakar suggested a one year duration.

Whatever the form the conference would still be debated long after it might have held. A conference, national, constitutional or sovereign has a long history in Nigeria. However, it usually follows one political trauma or another. This one of course, is a direct result of the annulment of the June 12 elections and fears that the convener of the conference, Olu Onagoruwa, is somewhat compromised having taken a position under the banner of the Movement for National Reformation, started by veteran politician and nationalist, Chief An-



Kuti: how is our money spent?

thonny Enahoro. In 1983, it was the late governor of Ogun State, Chief Bisi Onabanjo, who, without a debate, called for a confederation after the reelection of the *Turakin Sokoto* Alhaji Shehu Shagari as president.

Voicing out the frustration of the political south-west, as currently defined, and that of his mentor and party leader, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, he said a situation where



Awolowo: a federalist



Orkar: dismemberment is it

one section of the country dominated federal leadership was intolerable. It did not matter that the late Awo was a staunch federalist.

A few months after this outburst, the military struck on December 31, 1983 ousting the democratically elected government of Shehu Shagari. Major General Muhammadu Buhari and Major General Tunde Idiagbon, both retired and from the north, assumed power. Things quietened down, but not for long.

This time, the new cry centred on the composition of the Supreme Military Council, SMC. It was viciously attacked, this time by new interests; retired military officers in the south west and the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN. At the head of retired military officers was Lt-General Alani Akinrinade, a chief of defence staff under Shagari. He argued that the SMC was stacked in favour of northerners. CAN said it was full of muslims. For these reasons, the volume of strident calls for confederation got louder; but it is to be noted that as soon as Akinrinade



Okogie: CAN president

was appointed a minister after the overthrow of General Buhari by General Ibrahim Babangida, the former minister of industries settled into his position and never again called for confederation. CAN too, seemed satisfied with Babangida's Armed Forces Ruling Council, AFRC, until Babangida removed some christian cabinet figures.

The calls became more strident by events of April 22, 1990. That was when late Major Gideon Orkar and a number of officers stormed Dodan Barracks, then the seat of power and sent the former president, General Ibrahim Babangida and his family scurrying for cover.

At the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN; a few metres away; the conspirators had also taken over the studios. When he came on air, it turned out that his aim was not just the sacking of that government. Orkar excised five states from Nigeria. Thus began the Orkar agenda — a sore reminder of the issues that tend to divide the nation rather than those that could form the basis for stronger unity.

Like a bush fire in the harmattan, the need for a forum to "sit down and talk" gathered momentum even while the Babangida transition train wobbled on a journey to the land of "lasting democracy."

Some self-styled democracy and human rights activists latched onto this and went into action. These were Beko Ransome-Kuti, a doctor and Olisa Agbakogba, a lawyer and head of the Civil Liberties Organisation, CLO, which is perhaps the oldest and the most credible. Others who later got onto the train included Dr. Frederick Fasheun, a former presidential aspirant on the SDP ticket, Alao Aka-Bashroun, a one-time president of the Nigerian Bar Association and Dr. Olu Onagoruwa, a lawyer and now minister of justice. Their goal was to convene a "sovereign national conference" to discuss the "national question."

In September 1990, their plans almost came through. Undeterred by threats of imprisonment by Prince Bola Ajibola, the then minister of justice and attorney general, the conveners went ahead to invite

people sympathetic to its cause to give talks on specific issues. Only the locking of the gates of the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos against the conference scuttled the idea. The fear then from government quarters, was not the breaking up of Nigeria, but the fear of the leadership being removed entirely. It had argued that the issue of what Nigeria should be had been settled, therefore a conference to take a fresh look at it in such way was unnecessary. Then too, the example of nearby Benin Republic was enough warning.

It was perhaps a realisation that former president Babangida would not budge that changed the emphasis of the democracy and human rights groups to seeing the end of military rule and the emergence of a democratic governance. Consequently, they made more noise on the "transition traps" than even the politicians who were seeking Babangida's position.

May be, if the June 12 election had been allowed to be by General Babangida, a psychological relief, at

least, from the citizenry may have swept: issues like the amorphous "national question" under the carpet. But that was not to be as the June 23 annulment and the attendant confusion further fuelled the glow-



Madaki: for corporate existence

ing embers of disunity in the country. *The Guardian* in a recent editorial, said: "Babangida left the country not only with these imbalances unresolved, but in fact a more disunited Nigeria than he met it. Under him, it would appear a perceived gradual transformation of several areas of the country to internal colonies became complete." The bloody Zangon Kafaf disturbances and the uprising by the minority oil producing areas are enough pointers.

Therefore there was a mixed relief when General Abacha told the nation in his maiden broadcast as head of state that, "We require well thought-out and permanent

solutions to these problems if we are to emerge stronger from them. Consequently, a constitutional conference, with full constitutional powers, will be established soon to determine the future constitutional structure of Nigeria." The scope of the conference did not end at that. Added General Abacha, "The constitutional conference will also recommend the method of forming parties..." The position of the general is not any different. Every time the military takes over from civilians or quasi civilian structures like the one bequeathed by Babangida, the constitutional framework takes the first bashing.

When in 1979 the military wanted to handover to civilians after 13 years of rule, the parliamentary democracy was consigned to the dust bins. On hand to replace the British legacy was the American presidential system. Babangida was to have handed over government based on the American model. No one is sure what Nigeria would end up with this time around.

Alhaji Atiku's advise perhaps might be the best in the present circumstance. Reason being that many like Modibbo Umar believe that our problem is human and can be solved through discipline, probity and interaction.

Therefore when the scales fall off our eyes, a scapegoat must be sought at all cost. In the words of Professor Claude Ake, at the 1993 *Guardian* lecture held recently, "It is not politics or politicians that have failed but the military." Consequently, the constitutional conference or sovereign national conference would now be seen to be all about how to drive out the military from power.

By Mohammad Bomo and Aluko Akinyele, with reports from Mahmud Jega, Yabagi Kolo, and Shoyebi Abayomi in Kaduna and Moyo Akoshile, Mannir Dan-Ali and Samson Ojo in Lagos



Balogun: decisions taken should be binding

Trial of Onaguruwa

New federal attorney-general Olu Onaguruwa has hardly settled down, but already he is neck-deep in controversy

Being in the public eye can be bitter sweet as has been the lot these days of Dr. Olu Onaguruwa, easily one of Nigeria's best constitutional lawyers, whom General Sani Abacha has just picked as his federal attorney-general.

A consistent opponent of military rule and advocate of civil liberties, Onaguruwa's bravado, in and out of court, has put him in the raw and friends and critics alike are taking potshots at his "nakedness". His elevation to the post of a chief law-maker or as Chief T.O.S. Benson, himself a distinguished lawyer, said, "the first legal officer", especially under a military regime, has shocked friends who are alleging betrayal.

Foes have been digging for something, maybe a *faux pas*, to nail him on. And they haven't got to dig deep. A court case started against him in 1989 on a charge of theft provided a convenient skeleton.

The facts of the case are these: a client of Dr. Onaguruwa reported him to the police concerning an alleged theft. The police investigated the allegation and charged him under the criminal law of Lagos state. On January 30, 1989 a Lagos high court judge ruled that Dr. Onaguruwa had a case to answer. He however went to the Court of Appeal where his no case submission was upheld. The Lagos State director of public prosecutions (DPP) sought leave of the Court of Appeal to appeal to the Supreme Court. That is how far the matter has gone.

Now the issue is whether a citizen who has a case in court, to wit a criminal one, qualifies to be his country's chief legal officer. "No", said Otunba Benson, senior advocate of Nigeria (SAN). He should "as a matter of principle and de-

centy" have declined the appointment. "If any lawyer has a case against him, either criminal or civil, he should not be appointed to and/or accept the high official post of attorney general."



Onaguruwa: under fire

But he suggested that Dr. Onaguruwa should be considered for another post, "if by all means he must be appointed minister". Yahaya Mahmoud, a Kaduna-based lawyer would not contemplate alternatives. He said that he expected Dr. Onaguruwa to "resign honourably" or defend himself in "your own interest", as soon as he received a copy of an open letter he sent to the Head of State on the matter. The letter was dated December 13.

Boye Leyimu, a Lagos attorney wrote in *The Guardian* of December 10 that the case against Dr. Onaguruwa has made his appointment as attorney general "a liability" to the Provisional Ruling Council, which seized power on November 17. "This liability.... is too much for a junta whose first priority is to legitimise itself and restore credibility to the federal government", he said.

According to him, Dr. Onaguruwa with his credentials as a "committed democrat" should have "naturally" declined the appointment.

Other lawyer colleagues of his who have styled themselves "concerned lawyers", have condemned Chief Justice Mohammed Bello's silence on the appointment of Dr. Onaguruwa, whom they fear might not command any respect from his colleagues because he is not a senior advocate of Nigeria (SAN). They also referred to the court case against him, asking, "How can any country have an accused person as its attorney-general?"

Incidentally, the whole controversy surrounding the appointment of Dr. Onaguruwa has also raised a storm over the continued stay in office of the Chief Justice of the Federation, Mr. Justice Mohammed Bello. Certain lawyers, seeking to intimidate him so that he could be lenient when Onaguruwa's case comes before the supreme court have called for his removal and the "sanitisation" of the judiciary.

Bello's "crime" is that he swore into office Shonekan's Interim National Government whose legality was a court case. But Yahaya Mahmoud pointed out that one time Chief Justice Sir Adetokumbo Ademola found himself in the much same situation in 1970, when the Supreme Court reaffirmed the sanctity of the 1963 constitution and declared the military government of General Yakubu Gowon an interim government. Gowon came up with Decree No 28 asserting the supremacy of his military regime. "Sir Adetokumbo was removed", said Mahmoud. "He did not resign as Chief Justice of the federation."

According to Mahmoud, Chief Justice Bello "does not know me personally and would not recognise me if he sees me," but he joins others like Sir Ademola in commending Bello's "independent and honest mind in the administration of justice."

By Tawey Zakka

A corporation in transition

It has been a never ending problem for the NNPC

While the situation report on the availability of its refined products in the Nigerian market has not changed, the nature of the country's petroleum behemoth, the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation is fast changing. The possible privatisation of the nation's refineries that are some of the corporation's subsidiaries started as a whisper which has long turned out to be true; leasing of the oil depots to the major oil marketers has also being thrown into bargain. At a recent visit by an oil company, the petroleum and mineral resources minister, Mr. Don Etiebet said that the move will check the activities of marketers who smuggle the products. The minister was however silent on the fate of the NNPC workers at the leased depots and privatised refineries.

It is obvious that a large number of workers there would soon join the long queue of the unemployed. One of the arguments for the privatisation of the refineries was that they are overstuffed in non essential areas. On getting a whiff of the impending privatisation, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) kicked against it. However since the move burst into the open nothing has been heard from the association or the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) which caters for the junior staff of the oil industry.

With the impending privatisation of the NNPC as indicated by the new government, more people are likely to be out of job. An NNPC source indicated that with the refineries and depots gone, some people in the corporate headquarters will have little to do.

Lingering financial difficulties which affected the companies' operations for most of the year are not

likely to have gotten any better. For a long time now the NNPC has not been able to meet its obligation to its Joint Venture Partners, JVP. These are the producing companies like Shell, Mobil, Chevron and Elf where the federal government through the NNPC holds 60 per cent equity while the foreign partners hold 40 per cent. Under the joint venture agreement, the NNPC provides 60 per cent of the budget of those companies which makes it eligible for a given percentage of whatever oil they produce.

The reduced financial standing of the corporation has however made it difficult for the company to pay its obligation to the JVP as and when due since 1992. At a time this year, a backlog of 294 million dollars had built up prompting a request of



Etiebet: a never ending problem

additional crude oil allocation above the usual 200,000 barrel per day from September to December to clear the backlog. It is unclear whether the request was granted but sources indicate that the JVP have been threatening to withhold their crude oil find until the backlog is settled. Much earlier the option of production sharing contract (PSC) which entailed no financial commitment on the part of the NNPC has been



Oyibo: adamant headquarters?

advocated to replace the joint venture partnership.

Financial consideration was also responsible for the reduction in equity holding of the government in the controversial Liquefied Natural Gas project. Government participation which was initially at 60 per cent was reduced to 49 per cent with the technical partners holding the rest. There is infact the possibility of further dilution of government holding to just 20 per cent. In any case the LNG project which has been mired in controversy is now to be re-launched shortly. Citizen learnt that some technical staff of the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas company are to proceed for overseas training shortly.

For the NNPC it may have won the battle for the appropriate pricing of refined products but its fight against financial insolvency is far from over. It is curious however that when every kobo counts, the stealing charge against its former principal officers seems to be dying down. After the fireworks of claim and counter claim in the advertorials by the former petroleum secretary, Izoma P.C. Asiodu, the Lenoil chief involved in the case and a representative of one of the accused, it has now quietened on the front. And the accused are yet to appear at the military tribunal for which their case was earlier withdrawn from the magistrate court.

By Mannir Dan-Ali

A helping hand

The Nigeria/Palestine Association is born

Despite the scuttling of the emergence of Palestine as a nation by its arch-foe and a signatory to the new pact — Israel, the Nigeria/Palestine Association (NIPA) was inaugurated recently at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The formation was in response to the call by the Palestinian ambassador in Nigeria, Samir Barker for understanding, goodwill and friendship for his people. The national coordinator of the association, Malam Bashir U. Kurfi of the department of business administration, ABU, Zaria, said the establishment of the friendship association was important because of the "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian homeland" and the support that is necessary for the realisation of this dream.

Said he: "The Palestinian question is a prerequisite for the resolution of the Middle Eastern conflict which is a natural factor in global peace and security." The association is formed by citizens of Nigeria who are against the dehumanisation, exploitation and criminal atrocities perpetuated against the occupied and colonised Palestinian people.

The guest speaker on the occasion, Dr. Tanimu Abubakar, who is also the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU president, ABU branch, said that a lot of misconception has to be cleared on the Palestinian question.

He asserts that the issue at stake was the question of struggle, truth and justice adding that what confronts us on the Palestinian questions are various ramifications of dehumanisation, and the ejection of Palestinians from their homes. He disclosed that population and land distribution pattern in Palestine shows that the Israelis have grabbed all the fertile lands in the area, and that about 60 per cent of Palestinians have been driven into exile. He argues that the Palestinian problems were deliberately created, nurtured and sustained by the West who through such proxy wars, conflicts and distablisations have come to appropriate, control, dominate and squander vast Arab fortunes. Dr. Abubakar accused the West of not wanting a united Arab world that would have effectively served as a third force and challenged their hegemony. He said that support for Palestinians by Nigeria would go a long way in boosting the confidence of Palestinians. He argues further that the Palestinian issue transcends religions. The Jews he said are Judaists, while the Palestinians are christians

and muslims mixed peacefully together. Mr. Umar Ekeleji, a labour unionist and secretary general of the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC in Kaduna, said that the struggle of Palestinians represents the search for peace and global stability.

Malam Toure Kazah of the department of history, ABU, Zaria, believes that the time has come to finally settle the Palestinian problem and thereby bring about world peace.

The association, according to the coordinator is neither a trade organisation nor is it teleguided by any country of the world. Their concern, he disclosed is only that Palestinians have a right to live in dignity in addition to "their right to self determination and right of self defence."

Malam Bashir who described



Abubakar: justice is at stake

The Palestinian question is a prerequisite for the resolution of the Middle Eastern conflict which is a natural factor in global peace and security.

the situation in the Middle East as "more sophisticated form of racism by the Zionist regime" said they have among their members people with the history of struggle against all forms of racism. This he said was the reason why "we fought and are still fighting the system of apartheid in Southern Africa."

By Shoyebi Abayomi

...has been doing its best — Oshiomhole

...has been doing its best — Oshiomhole

proved a document which we have forwarded to government. In that document we asked government to extend education to cover secondary school level, we asked government to carry the burden of examination fees which WAEC is charging — a

six years of primary and secondary education because they can't afford 600 Naira or 700 Naira. These are issues that should be examined. These are issues we talked about but they have not formed headlines and they are not likely to for reasons best known to the press. These are issues that are not sensational news in town. So people don't get to know about these and unfortunately too, labour hasn't got its own means to reach out. So we don't talk about the need for government to provide certain out. So we don't talk about the budget for government percentage of the budget for education, health, etc. These are issues we have talked about. But we have to talk about the need for government to reduce military spending. We are not in a state of war. Why devote so much. These are issues that over and over, we have consistently argued that government cannot be working for creditors. That we must pay our debts. Government should reduce external debt servicing. And our argument is that if you do that, you will have more money to look after the health of the domestic economy. Again, all of these don't make banner headlines but if after such headlines we say however, in the interim we could do with 50 per cent increase on wages because according to the federal office of statistics, inflation is running at 52 per cent. So we want 50 per cent, we are prepared to forget two per cent. Now the people go to town and say labour asked for 50 per cent wage increase. It is not really correct to say that we really fight for wages. I think it is clear to us that nominal money wages won't solve the problem. The fight for real wages must transcend nominal money wages. It must go into health, educational sectors and it must go into even the whole question of employment generation because if every Nigerian is left to feed his mouth alone, he will not be worse off than



Endless queues: labour's headache



Oshiomhole: cut military spending

situation which has made it difficult for workers to have their children examined after they passed through

...say that the price will amplify the salary component of labour struggle. If we demand from government and negotiate about position on SAP, about restructuring of SAP, this will produce banner headlines if I ask for 10 Naira increase, you will say NLC demands 10 Naira increase for workers. So it is the price that starts the struggle of the Nigerian trade unions whether the level of industries or at the level of the nation. I think we have to combine both. Over the years there is a lot of literature on NLC's observation on the way in which the economy runs, policy, health, social insurance, on housing, inflation, transport and on a number of issues and in fact, and just last week we ap-

he is today. Problem is you have two hands and you are working to feed four mouths — your wife, children and relatives who have been unemployed elsewhere. All these are issues that we'd tackle and will continue to tackle. In fact, this year, we said during the negotiation of fuel price why we went on strike and it is significant that this time we went on strike not to demand wage increase. Government said, tell us what we should do with the five Naira increase, we said no, the problem is to keep down price, not to give us money to cope with higher prices because we know, you can never be able to quantify the multiplier effect over times. These are issues but I must tell you that we are wage earners in the final analysis. We are the representatives of wage earners, we are an association of wage earners and the world over, wage earners will always ask for wage increase. We are in a market economy and the basis of exchange

have put in inflation is rising and the possible way to deal with it is to ask for more money. In many other economies, particularly economies

rikan worker operate within the Nigerian economy? If the economy is in crisis. If our GDP and GNP are growing negatively our capacity

You cannot divorce the fortune of the wage sector from the other sectors so if the economy is in crisis, the people including wage earners will have their share of that crisis. On the other hand, if the economy is healthy, booming, growing, wage earners will have their share.



Bafyau: labour boss

is money and even after you have looked at these sectors, you must in the final analysis address wages because in spite of all the effort you

of adjustment in some of the third world countries, the people go to the extent of indexing wages — that if inflation increases by 10 per cent you increase wages by 10 per cent or 11 per cent. It is not only unique to Nigeria. It is part of the things we can't do without. It is not only the thing we do but we are not ashamed of the fact that it constitutes one of our major programmes.

Citizen: Considering that salary increase is almost always accompanied by high inflation, is

it a good strategy to ease the workers' burden?

Oshiomhole: This is straightforward. Put it this way. Did the Nige-

utilisation is falling, our exchange rate is depreciating, Nigerian workers are part of the Nigerian society. You cannot divorce the fortune of the wage sector from the other sectors so if the economy is in crisis, the people including wage earners will have their share of that crisis. On the other hand, if the economy is healthy, booming, growing, wage earners will have their share. All we are doing at the moment is trying to reduce the burden that the government allocates to the wage sector. But what government is now distributing is not wealth, government is now reallocating poverty. Rather than distribute resources in order to alleviate the suffering of the masses, government at best is now trying to evenly distribute poverty. It makes the rural people poor, it also makes the wage earners poor. The only people that are not getting poor are the small, tiny elites of commission takers, contract awarders and some other people who are privileged in the system like those who are appointed to manage or control the banks and manipulate the exchange rate system. Every other person that is earning wages or living on a subsistent income in the rural areas is all

ng poorer and poorer. So what government is doing is carrying the burden from one sector to the other. We are saying is that don't give so much burden. You are supposed to improve on our living conditions. We are now fighting to mitigate the hardship rather than to increase it and there is no way you can do otherwise when the entire system is under severe recession. I



Ogbemudia: labour and productivity minister

people while the material condition of every other people is depreciating like you say, ask for wage increase, it is granted but other forces are at work. Government interest rates and inflationary rates are scandalous. Social sector is completely depressed. Privatisation has made government utilities over priced on economic basis. Everything is no longer for the poor. If you are in that

kind of environment of course, irrespective of increase in nominal wages, you find out that you are getting worse. This is the normal situation with wage workers other than inflationary economy. It is not a peculiar weakness of Nigerian trade unions.

Citizen: What has the NLC done with the 100 million Naira given to it by the federal government?

Oshiomhole: We never got the 100 million Naira in the first place until last week. I think we received about 80 million Naira. We also got another 10 million Naira. So it is now about 90

65 buses, 54 seater Mercedes Benz buses. We have 15 in Kaduna, 15 in Abuja and about 35 in Lagos making the total 65. And we are lucky that we started buying them before the price became what it is now. So we bought these buses and all of them are on road. We don't have the kind of situation in which when you buy buses after one year, half of them are off road. All the buses are on road.

And in Kaduna here, you will have noticed that private buses are charging five Naira, we are charging three Naira and the private buses are not finding it funny. They are fighting us. That is the case in Lagos and Abuja. We charged less fares. We tried to show that buses can be managed as a matter of policy, we patronised Nigerian assembled vehicles as opposed to state government and federal urban mass transit that would rather import irrespective of whether or not they have the know-how to maintain them or they have the experience to keep them on road. I am sure if you live in Kaduna you will find where they dump more than 100 buses of different mix that are off road. But all our buses are good. They are buses that are assembled in Nigeria by the Nigerian workers and they are purchased by Labour Transport Service, LTS for the benefit of the Nigerian people. We charge the honest fare and yet we make sure the buses are on the road.

Citizen: Are you saying that all the buses bought by the NLC and given to the states was from this 100 million Naira?

Oshiomhole: Yes, that is the very source of it. We have these buses Abuja and Lagos, apart from recently launched in Kaduna a we are also waiting for more. By time we receive them they are going to be delivered to other states. I believe by the end of December. So should all together have in our about 80 buses and if you go by current market rate the value of buses already is about 160 million Naira.

By Yabagi

But we have to talk about the need for government to reduce military spending. We are not in a state of war. Why devote so much? These are issues that over and over, we have consistently argued that government cannot be working for creditors. That we must pay our debts. Government should reduce external debt servicing.

don't know what kind of labour you will have in place that cannot enhance the living standard of the

million Naira that we have received up to date. Out of this 90 million Naira, we have already put on road

Hoot owls and screech owls

By
Mahmud Jega

It was clearly the elderly butcher's heartfelt opinion, for he did not even know me. We were at his shed in Kawo, 24 hours after the coup, only to buy meat, and unprompted, he said, "I am very happy the soldiers are back. *Haba*. What is the use of civilian governors?"

"What is their use? Many Nigerians appeared to have welcomed the military coup precisely because of the sacking of state governors. Why were people fed up with elected governors after only two years? The four reasons regularly mentioned were their low political quality, lack of autonomy from the centre and from local power brokers, "non-performance", and allegations of corruption.

In contrast to First Republic regional premiers and Second Republic governors, Third Republic governors were clearly of light political weight and many were bereft of grand vision, enigmatic personality, dynamism or colourful rhetoric. Whose fault was that? The circumstances that produced those governors were less than conducive for quality. All the great political actors of the first and second republics stood banned under the quixotic experiment with "newbreedism", the first celebration of mediocrity and inexperience in political history. Even among the newbreed contenders, 13 of the most astute — Onuaguluchi, Nwodo, Agbalajobi, Sarumi, Lamido, Abule — were banned by NEC in November 1991 precisely because they showed too much dynamism. Bye-bye to quality and colour.

If Third Republic governors had little autonomy from the federal government, that was due to no fault of theirs, either, but to the quaint system of "diarchy" that obtained during most of their tenure. Sitting atop them in Abuja was a military

president of great power, domineering presence and saturation visibility, not to mention unfathomable intentions.

The governors were dwarfed by the military president and by the great unbanned politicians scrambling to replace him last year and this year. Many of the governors grew accustomed to the relative stability afforded by diarchy and were fearful that presidential politics could dissolve in chaos and cost them their plum jobs. In that regard, at least, they were prescient.

Who was to blame for the governors' general "non-performance"? Pardon me, but I still think the creation of 30 states in 1991 was a mistake, a popular one, but a mistake nonetheless. To my knowledge, no one has yet demonstrated how development is facilitated by "bringing the government" physically "nearer to the people". Quite often, it has the opposite effect of gobbling up all the investible resources. Even when there were 19 states, some of them looked to the oscillating federation account for close to 90 per cent of their revenues. With the creation of 30 states, some now depend on that account for close to 100 per cent of their revenue. If we believe some of their accounts, some of the states paid out as much as 85 per cent of their total revenue as civil servants' salaries before the 45 per cent pay hike went into effect. Good for us, who equate good governance with a sprawling bureaucracy.

Many Nigerians who daily complain in the newspapers that their area has not "developed" do not seem to know what they are talking about. What, indeed, is development? Is it the building of dual carriages, secretariat complexes, street lights, magistrate courts and sports stadia, as many Nigerians seem to

think? It is not surprising that the confused conception of the idea of development among the Nigerian people has similarly confused political leaders. No governor spoke in terms of raising productive capacity, productivity or standard of living, only of siting projects at various towns, often with no idea about their over-all impact on the development process.

The former governors were also widely accused of corruption, which means both the misappropriation and, to use Admiral Aikhomu's phrase, misapplication of public funds. But we should situate that in context. Under the political system that obtained in Nigeria, it was very expensive to become a governor and even more expensive to continue to be one. A lot of money must be expended on party stalwarts, thugs, election officials, power brokers, security agents, traditional rulers, community elders, legislators, witches, magicians, priests etc. Who is to be blamed for that?

Dr. Bello Aliyu of the Usman Danfodio University in Sokoto likes to say of the situation that well, good for Africans, if you want to attain universal adult suffrage overnight. In Europe, for several hundred years, there were property and educational qualifications for voters, not just candidates. They only permitted universal suffrage when the industrial revolution had swept away the rural peasants. In the United States, women were not allowed to vote for the first 133 years of the republic's history. No one is saying that we should disenfranchise the peasants. But for as long as they constitute the main voting bloc, do not hold too much hope for quality discourse in the political process.

Many of the governors were guilty of undemocratic excesses. Not many observed all the rules of appropriating, spending or account-

for public funds, or of hiring and firing officials. Things might have been better if the state assemblies were of higher quality than they are more alert, and if the judiciary was more alert and less intimidated than it was. Again, who was to blame

The democratic chain is no stronger than its weakest link. In the Nigerian case, the weakest link of all is the economy, which is in no shape at all to support sophisticated political systems and sprawling bureaucracies. Speculators, middlemen and contractors are the most active group in the political parties. These people have little concerns beyond immediate self-interest. They have no respect for much education, scholarship or erudition, only in filial ties and reward for past favours. The regular question they ask any candidate for state office is, "what did you do for us when you were a director in the ministry?" Since not many people can answer this question satisfactorily, the quality of elected officials is not likely to rise anytime soon.

Even properly functioning executives, assemblies and courts do not a democratic system make. A fully functional democratic order envisages a host of social, cultural and economic traditions and institutions which are not created by any constitution, but are the true checks and balances in the selection of officials and the exercise of state power. Trade unions, chambers of commerce, human rights and civil liberties organisations, professional associations, student unions, elite clubs, consumer associations, perhaps even secret cults and Masonic lodges, all help to balance the power equation in the society. At present, these are very weak in our society and many of them depend on the government for donations to carry out their activities.

All of these situations and processes helped to make the tenure of the civilian governors lacklustre and ineffectual. But those, like the elderly butcher, who welcomed their unconstitutional overthrow must

now contend with the military administrators. To all appearances, these 30 colonels and police commissioners are unlikely to be of high political quality, these men, trained in the art of violence and in the tradition of blind submission to higher authority. Good for the colonels, if both available state resources and people's expectations remain at current levels. Indeed, it is entirely possible that state resources will dwindle with the recent collapse of oil prices and people's expectations will now rise with the new order. Then the colonels will be in a fine mess.

Some of the civilian governors were said to have lacked vision partly because they were "emergency" candidates who had not really thought over the situation of their states before they sought election. In that case, all of these military administrators stand to be worse than the emergency civilian governors. Here are men sent to govern states not their own; some probably never heard of the states they are now

thus equate a state government to an army brigade. The consequences of this will permeate to the grassroots, for the administrators will tend to favour the process of policy formulation and implementation as one of command and control. Many Nigerians will soon be wishing for the *aghada* men.

Those Nigerians who wish for military rule to raise the standards of public probity and the safeguarding of public funds should continue praying. The soldiers, thugs and need to bribe legislators, may have no experience of the experience to go by, elders, but if they diminish their own pre-1992 period is anything to go by, this does not diminish state funds. The appetite to misapply state funds. The main difference is, fewer people get the money and therefore fewer people get to know about it.

In one year's time or two, the elderly butcher at Kawo should be able to analyse the tenures of a military and a civilian governor. What will be the likely contrast? He may well find that it is the fine distinction

What, indeed, is development? Is it the building of dual carriages, secretariat complexes, street lights, magistrate courts and sports stadia, as many Nigerians seem to think?

going to govern. Talk about vision. Those Nigerians who resented the civilian governors' overdependence on the centre haven't seen anything yet. State administrators will now respond to a strict hierarchy of command and control and

between a hoot owl and a screech owl as they relate to the hen. One simply swoops down and snatches the hen while the other perches close by the hen, hooting some sweet nonsense and by the time you know it, well there ain't no hen.

Banks

On the brink

The nation's banking industry is no longer at ease

The political sphere is not the only one in distress in Nigeria as the economy is virtually in coma. Problems afflicting the economic sphere are even more serious than one can imagine. They range from the country's 30 billion dollars foreign debt and its rescheduling problem to the ever-rising budget deficit, falling oil prices in the international market and the problematic value of the Naira. The ailment is so serious and is only whispered by bankers and others whose job it is to ensure that the banks stay healthy.

If the federal government is to stop pussy-footing on the matter and face the problem squarely, 1993 may for some banks be their last full operating year. As would become obvious in the long run, it may be easier to take action now than continue to be haunted by the fear of multiple bank failures akin to the one of 1947-1954 when 21 of the 25 indigenous banks went bust. Liquidation, the prospect of which send shivers down the spine of bank executives or the withdrawal of licence of erring banks could only come after the failure of other measures designed to save the banks from themselves.

For close watchers of the banking industry painful as the measure is, only a thorough surgical action can check the rampant cases of distress afflicting some of the banks. In its annual report for 1992, the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Company, NDIC, defined distressed banks as those with severe financial, operational and managerial weaknesses. The most obvious indication of distress in banks is prolonged liquidity

problem which makes it difficult for affected banks to honour their obligation to depositors.

Not too long ago the managing director of the NDIC, Mr. John Ebhodaghe in a paper on the role of the NDIC in the management of distressed banks revealed that punitive measures have been imposed on over 15 such banks. But by his own



Kalu: can he save them

admission; tougher measures were needed to sanitise the industry. Mr. Ebhodaghe said that not much could be achieved if in an effort to return a bank to good health, the very hands that mismanaged the bank in the first place are entrusted with the responsibility of reviving it.

In fairness to the NDIC, the problem in the banking industry predated Decree 22 of 1988 which established it. It is a measure of how far gone some of the banks were that just within three months of its coming to life the NDIC had to transfuse 2.3 billion Naira into some of the banks with liquidity crisis. As the

case of the National Bank showed, one of the chronically insolvent banks, throwing good money after bad hardly brings the desired result. At the end of the day, the NDIC was mandated by the Central Bank of Nigeria to take over the management of the tottering National Bank. A portfolio of bad and doubtful loan accounted for the trouble of that bank. Almost two years after the take over with its resultant restructuring the bank, is still not out of the woods.

Sources knowledgeable on the matter confided to *Citizen* that the bank is long dead inspite of costly efforts to keep it alive. It is a measure of the impediments in its way that a recent report in *The Tribune* accused NDIC of worsening the National Bank crisis.

The National Bank is the only bank that has been subjected to the supervision of both the CBN and the NDIC. Five state government-owned banks were also taken over to arrest their deteriorating status and safeguard depositors funds in them. The banks which had interim boards appointed for them included the African Continental Bank, New Nigeria Bank, Pan African Bank, Merchantile Bank and Co-operative and Commerce Bank. Some other state government-owned banks remain in the firing line as the president of the chartered Institute of Bankers, Mr. Ralph Osayameh recently called for the take over of state government-owned banks. According to him such banks constitute the worst run set of banks in Nigeria. The 1992 NDIC annual report however pointed out that state government-owned banks are not the only culprits. Merchant banks which are owned only by the federal government and private individuals have within the period covered by the report joined the rank of sick banks. A recent compilation of the sick banks put their number at about 20, about half of which are state

Continued on page 34

Abacha: Portrait of a patriot

FO

It is long since I commented on public issues. Our nation is going through momentous events. But there are issues that cannot be ignored. There are times and circumstances that demand men of good-will and conscience to stand up and be counted. Such times and circumstances are today. If patriots fail or refuse to take a stand, the field would be left for scoundrels. Nigeria now demands all patriots to set aside their differences, and these are legion and be, counted on the side of Nigeria. For Nigeria's very existence was at stake. Nigeria needs us all now.

Events since the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections are well known to all. It is now part of our chequered history. The June 23 annulment of the June 12 elections sharply divided Nigeria. Tragically, this division was increasingly being drawn along ethnic and regional lines. Ironically, the June 12 election was gallantly fought along broad national platforms by both Chief Abiola and Alhaji Tofa. History would certainly indict those who reduced the issues to tribal, ethnic or regional lines.

It is not for me to comment on the desirability or otherwise of the annulment. This is mainly because the event is now firmly handed over to history. Suffice to say, the event tested our respective levels of commitment to the sanctity of the Nigerian nation. Many were found wanting. Equally found wanting was a segment of our political class who insisted that our collective aspiration be sacrificed on the altar of their perception of justice.

Indeed, we cannot divorce General Sani Abacha's ascendance on Nigeria's leadership from the threat of disintegration that the events of June 23 and its aftermath engender. It is my contention that General Sani Abacha to all Nigerian patriots, is a committed patriot. I believe General Abacha had intervened because of real threat to the life of Nigerians

By
Abubakar Jifika

which we all witnessed.

I deliberately decided to speak early to set the tone of whatever public debate the intervention may elicit. I do not know General Abacha very well. But like most of my compatriots I am aware of his involvement in the intervention of December 1983, August 1985, and November 1993, a period of 10 years. I am positing a number of observations on General Abacha.

First, I do not agree that he is an opportunist. This I will prove. Second, I do not see him as a military chauvinist. Third, I do not see him as arrogant or disrespectful to his superiors. And finally I see him as a genuine patriot, whose intervention, whenever they occur were necessary and obviously on the side of Nigeria.

First, Abacha is not an opportunist. This does not take long to prove. We first heard of Brigadier Sani Abacha on the eve of the January 1, 1994 when he announced the termination of the Shagari regime. We all agreed with Abacha's diagnosis of the problems confronting Nigerians then and now. The issues of "consulting clinics", "lack of direction", "suffering in the midst of plenty", "corruption" etc were as true as they are now. Even the most sympathetic of Shagari regime did agree that the regime was losing touch and focus.

Major-Generals Muhammadu Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon took over. Although Abacha became popular by the announcement, the most memorable of all in Nigeria's coup history, he went back to the barracks. An opportunist would have insisted on a political appointment.

General Abacha also re-echoed Major-General Dogonyaro's diagnosis of the Nigerian problem on the eve of the coup that threw out the Buhari and Idiagbon regime.

Buhari's honesty of purpose was not in doubt. What was in doubt was his rigidity and emasculation of public opinion. Nigerians agreed with major-General Abacha then, on August 27, 1985.

General Babangida and Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe took over. Again Abacha who was then the second most prominent member of the coupists did not take political appointment, but instead went back to the barracks, to head the military. He remained in the army, although he took over the ministry of defence. Through out the Babangida regime Abacha never attempted to undermine or over throw his friend. An opportunist does not wait for eight years, when he could take his chance at any time.

It is necessary for me to remind those who are now calling for the head of General Babangida that for eight years most of them were his loudest supporters. It is also a fact that through out Babangida's tenure, at no time was the life of Nigeria in mortal danger as it was after June 12. We cannot therefore prophesy what could have been Abacha's response, should Nigeria be threatened.

Suffice to say, based on his third intervention we can guess that he would be counted on the side of



Abacha: a patriot?

Nigeria. And this gives us our third and final

proof.

General Abacha accepted to serve under Chief Shonekan, a civilian. For 82 days Abacha diligently took instructions from Chief Shonekan, till the day the latter, overwhelmed by problems on all fronts threw in the towel. Abacha, if he was, an opportunist would have betrayed the interim government immediately his friend returned to Minna.

Second, General Abacha is not a military chauvinist. It was true that he was involved in Buhari regime, Babangida regime and Shonekan administration. But we should note two facts. None of these regimes was a continuation of another. Moreover, Abacha was never in personal control. His responsibility cannot go beyond that of collectivity. Whatever sins any one wants to visit on any of these regimes I cannot see how Abacha can be personally liable. He may not be a democrat, but he does give democracy a chance, it is when democracy threatens survival that the patriotism in him, demands he put his life in line.

Third, I do not see him as arrogant or disrespectful to his superiors. Apart from being reserved and a man of few words, Abacha is known to respect constituted authority. He may not agree with what his superiors in the military then did



Buhari: reviving his WAI dream

but he was never known to publicly voice out his disagreement. This was not fear but respect. Reserve, yes, arrogance not. His take over of power was compelled by circumstance not a desire that he also must do "sai ka yi". Finally, I argue that his intervention is necessitated by patriotic zeal. This again does not take too long to prove. We all agree that the annulment of the June 12 election, irrespective of which side we belong to, threw up the national question into a heated debate.

There are those who believe that the annulment was an act of God and Abiola was expected to accept it as the hand of God and spare us any further trouble. Because they believe it was an act of God they were prepared to go to any length to defend it, including their blood. There were others who believe that the annul-

ment of his intervention, in the course of his regime, he did sacrifice his life at the time Nigeria required decisive intervention.

This brings me to the issue of democracy, and western attitude to military regimes. We are at such critical period in our history that the survival of Nigeria, blackman's only hope of proving to the whites that he too can perform, was at grave mortal danger. To avoid the matter degenerating to another Somalia or Bosnia, or USSR or Georgia the military, our last hope had to intervene. If the West is our true friend, they will appreciate our circumstance and have our continued existence as one country more than their wish for us to have human rights and elections. We do aspire for these, but not at the expense of peace and stability.

If the West insists, it will only see

Whatever sins any one wants to visit on any of these regimes I cannot see how Abacha can be personally liable. He may not be a democrat, but he does give democracy a chance

ment was an act of Lucifer. They see it as the hand of "Maradona", and because of that they were prepared to go to any length to resist what they saw as devilish injustice, including shedding their blood.

I now ask: how do you think this issue would have been resolved? To reverse the annulment might have led to bloodshed. To conduct a fresh election may also have led to bloodshed. There was real logjam, a political stalemate. Nigeria was bleeding from that. From trickles, the blood of Nigeria, began to ooze out in torrents. Something had to be done to save Nigeria. And that was what Abacha did. Whatever becomes the

us through its own eyes of democracy, then I say, it is not our true friend. We cannot sacrifice our sovereignty and peace on the altar of proving any point to any country. Whatever needs to be proven would be done here in Nigeria for our collective satisfaction. We must learn to call the bluff of any country that believes it knows what is better for us more than even ourselves. There in lies the path of honour and patriotism. And that is the only genuine lenses through which we can see the Abacha intervention. The path patriotism demands no less a patriot.

Jika writes from Fombina Water Filters & Coolers, P.M.B. 3527, Kano.

government-owned. Although the number involved is not up to 10 per cent of the total figure of 120 commercial and merchant banks in the country, the interconnection within the industry only adds to the worry about the distressed ones.

The case of a federal government owned merchant bank located at Falomo in Lagos illustrate the effect of the distress now afflicting the bank. For one of its depositors, his bluff paid off earlier this year when his threats of court action made it possible for him to withdraw his money trapped in the bank's investment certificate he had earlier purchased. A cheque earlier issued to him for the money had bounced.

In compliance with a holding action imposed on it by the NDIC, the bank had to cut down on the number of its staff. It is also restrained from further loans and has been instructed to separate its good from the enormous bad loans responsible for its distress. At a time the bank's managing director along with two managing directors of other banks were taken for questioning for their parts in their banks' plight. Shortly thereafter an acting managing director was appointed for the troubled bank. Holding action of the regulatory bodies also prevents a bank from advertising for deposits, buying or selling of assets without permission. The affected bank is also required to inject additional capital. Citizen learnt the bank recently secured a 300 million Naira loan from the NDIC.

As if the liquidity squeeze and other indicators of distress are not enough problem for the banking industry, there has also been cases of boardroom squabbles. Matters came to a head in some of the banks that the NDIC had to step in to restore sanity in the affected boards. In one instance, one bank's managing director was suspended to allow charges levelled against him investigated. This period of unease in the banks, also coincided with a time of higher cases of frauds in the banks. NDIC annual report for 1992 showed that frauds in the banks during the

year is 411.75 million Naira. The Inspector General of police however pointed out at a seminar on frauds recently that the figure runs into billions of Naira as perpetrators of the crime become more sophisticated by the day. What is not clear is how far these cases of fraud contribute to the distressed conditions of the banks.

It is however observed by some people that the Central Bank of Nigeria takes the blame for the bank's problem. Mr. Osayemeh had observed that the monetary authorities (CBN) have not ensured the effective supervision and control of the financial system. This has created loopholes for banks to violate the rule without being detected and punished. Professor Adebayo Adedeji argued along the same line saying that the apex bank ought to

assert itself.

On its part, the Central Bank has indicated its readiness to liquidate banks which cannot be rescued under its restructuring and revitalisation programme for distressed banks. The CBN and NDIC jointly take action on the banks. Although they have indicated their resolve not to shy away from liquidating or taking over any bank if the situation warrants, it is unclear how long it will take them to act. As some analysts see it, political consideration make it impossible for the economically sound decision to be taken on the matter. And as the case of the National Bank has shown taking and effecting right decision might not be as easy as it sounds. The joke in this case may however, be the new administration's pledge to reorganise the banking industry.

By Mannir Dan-Ali

The customs agent

An agent of truce

The Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents launches its journal amidst commendable camaraderie

Two quarrelling, yet inseparable bedfellows sheathed their daggers last Tuesday to midwife a baby of mutual concern. At the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, were the Association of Nigeria Licensed Customs Agents (ANLCA) whose official journal, *The Customs Agents* was being launched, and the Nigerian Ports Pic (NP), inevitable landlords of the agents and which cannot but always get a mention in the new journal.

The occasion provided a refreshing camaraderie in the soured relationship between ANLCA and NP. For months, both bodies have been engaged in a face-off over new tariffs. Last September, the latter drew the ire of the association when it jerked up ports tariffs by about 200 per cent, ANLCA members promptly downed tools and operations in the ports consequently went to sleep. The new tariffs had to be

suspended fast to get the agents back to work. Even as the NP was smilingly donating 100,000 Naira in two cheques to ANLCA last week at the launching, the over users of ports services. From all indications, the



Kamba: ANLCA leader

CA
undi

OU to the rescue

200-strong SOS force is on its way to Burundi

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has waited for two long months before taking the "first faltering steps" to restore normalcy to Burundi after a coup last October.

In that time that the OAU vacillated, Hutu and Tutsi tribesmen did their worst to each other in an orgy of ethnic cleansing comparable in its murderous ugliness only to what is happening in the old Yugoslavia.

The killings in Burundi followed last October's coup attempt against the government of the country's first democratically elected president, Melchior Ndadaye. The coup, engineered by officers of the minority Tutsi dominated army failed but President Ndadaye and seven of his ministers lost their lives.

His Hutu tribesmen, who far outnumber the Tutsi, were incensed at the killing of the first Hutu to have been president of Burundi and started killing Tutsi, who in turn used the army which they dominate to exact revenge.

Many countries and international organisations condemned the early twilight of Burundi's democratic process. The OAU, of which Burundi is a member state, had been expected to go beyond merely condemning the sad events in that country. But it vacillated.

The mini-summit of 11 heads of state in Cairo, Egypt which lasted for two days (December 6-7), observers say, meant that the OAU is slowly but surely coming to terms with its responsibility to the continent and its peoples. The summit was called by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in his capacity as the OAU's current chairman.

Burundi was not the major issue

but part of a general conflict prevention and resolution mechanism, discussed and accepted at the OAU's 30 anniversary summit last June. At that time, the major crisis on the continent was the Somali civil war. Burundians had just elected Ndadaye as president then. He was Hutu, the first to ever have ruled Burundi.

The Cairo summit, in addition to committing the OAU to finding an immediate solution to the bloodshed in Somalia, backed the setting up of an international

general James Jonah who attended Ndadaye's funeral in Bujumbura on December 7 spoke on the problem of "distrust" of the army by the government and the people. And he implored the international community to help deal with it "because without full confidence in the army, the situation in Burundi will remain critical".

Last week, Tutsi soldiers allegedly swooped down



Mubarak: to the rescue

Burundi was not the major issue but part of a general conflict prevention and resolution mechanism, discussed and accepted at the OAU's 30 anniversary summit last June.

team to help "restore trust" in Burundi. According to OAU secretary-general, Salim Ahmed Salim, a 200-strong OAU force consisting of 180 soldiers and 20 civilians should be on its way to that country by the end of this month.

United Nations deputy secretary

on Kirundo village and wiped out 35 families. According to reports, a woman and her baby were left unburied, half eaten by dogs. The soldiers prevented the only clinic in the village from taking in the wounded.

By Tawey Zakka
with agency reports

Algeria

Roumi, go home!

Foreigners, especially Westerners, are the latest victims of Algeria's "fires of insurrection"

Interior minister Salim Saadi would not discuss the rising toll (he calls it "macabre arithmetic") of his government's running battles with militant Islamic groups. But reports say no fewer than 3,000 have been killed in the last two years, since the government cheekily cancelled an election that Islamic Salvation Front had been poised to win 22 months ago.

Now the fundamentalists have lengthened the dragnet to include

last week. "We don't go out. My children are completely traumatised by violence."

It does not matter how secure you may think you are. If the guerrillas want you they will get you regardless. In the night of Tuesday, December 14, 12 Bosnians and Croats, said to be all Christians, were murdered in a secure compound close to where they worked for the government Hydro-electro Company, 40 miles south of the capital.

ism. The killers were said to be "unidentified" but the manner of the killings was typical of fundamentalist guerrillas: stabbing and throating slashing.

Ironically, the killings happened as Saadi, the interior minister was assuring foreign workers in Oran west of Algiers, that their security was the government's top priority. According to a news report, Tuesday's killings were "unlikely to convince people that government has a firm control on the situation despite mobilisation of the army, police and geandamarie."

And, indeed, foreigners have been leaving Algeria, once described as the most "Westernized" Arab country's, in droves. Foreign embassies have begun evacuating non-essential staff. Russia, for instance, which in November lost some of its nationals in Algiers, has ordered 200 of them back home. Algerians, too, are leaving. A doctor last October took his wife and three children to France after a voice on telephone told him "Your shroud is almost ready."

The authorities initially arrested thousands of suspects, tried and sentenced some to death. But the stick did not seem to have worked the miracle they expected. Now they are offering the Olive branch. Last week the government announced that it was ready for talks with the fundamentalists, provided they would agree to lay down their arms. There has been no response from them.

By Tawey Zakka
with agency reports



Benjedid: started the trouble

foreigners, especially expatriates working in the oil industry, clearly with the aim of crippling this mainstay of the Algerian economy.

The fundamentalists did offer Algeria's expatriate community an opportunity to pick up their bags and baggage and run. The ultimatum expired on December 1 and the militants went to work on foreigners already frightened by the killing of French, Russian, Spanish and British nationals living and working in and around Algiers, the capital.

"We don't live anymore", a Belgian woman resident of Algiers said



Mitterrand: French worst hit

The location has been described as a hot-bed of Islamic fundamental-

"We don't live anymore", a Belgian woman resident of Algiers said last week. "We don't go out. My children are completely traumatised by violence."

Same tune

Yenbamba has however warned the opposition against "not tolerating anarchy". The army has been placed on alert and are patrolling the streets of Libreville. Hospital sources put death toll at 58 in clashes between opposition supporters and the presidential guards. It was however suspected that the toll may be higher, as unidentified bodies were buried in mass graves.

Violence erupted following the announcement of Bongo as the winner of the presidential elections. Despite the heavy presence of security forces, groups of angry Gabonese barricaded on the capital's major streets.

Consequently, the opposition said it was forming its own government to ensure full transition to democracy after it rejected the constitutional court's decision condemning the results of the presidential elections. It further threatened to make the country ungovernable until the government declares it the winner or orders a fresh election to be held in a free and fair atmosphere.

Trade union in the country had also advised workers to stay at home as from Monday over the disputed elections. The workers spokesman

Despite the heavy presence of security forces, groups of angry Gabonese made bonfire, while others erected barricades on the capital's major streets

By Abu Mommoh
with agency reports

said the political situation was unsafe for the workers to go to work. However the situation reportedly improved slightly in the Gabonese capital in spite of a call made by the opposition political parties for a strike. Administrative offices opened on Monday. Only ministry of education decided to close schools until next year in view of the tense situation in the country.

For Gabon's 400,000 voters, the election was a milestone being the first time in 26 years since Bongo, 58, assumed leadership of Gabon after the death of Mr. Lean Mba who had led the country from independence in 1960. It was also a test of popularity for a fragmented opposition. It fielded eight of the 12 opponents against President Bongo.

A single candidate uniting the opposition would have posed a far more serious threat to Mr. Bongo. Although, foreign election observers noted lapses in the conduct of the election, including absence of indelible ink to mark finger to prevent multiple voting, incomplete voters registers, and late arrival of officials in some polling stations, they however reported no election irregularities. Now that it is very certain Bongo has retained his position, the economy has to be seriously addressed. With the economy of the country in decline as a result of falling oil price, Gabon's date with the dreaded Structural Adjustment Programme prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a matter of time.

The Gabonese prime minister Ca-

Somalia

No meeting point

Factional leaders remain divided on ways to end the crisis in the war torn country

The two week conference of Somalia's factions in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa once again failed in its attempt to find a political settlement for the war torn country. Last week the consultative meeting held at the instance of the OAU was scuttled following disagreement between the General Mohammed Farah Aideed's Somalia National Alliance, SNA, and the 12 groups loyal to his main rival, President Ali Mahdi Mohammed. On the UN brokered peace accord signed by all the factions in March 1993 to form a transitional national government for Somalia the beleaguered general had demanded for changes in the accord, particularly the composition of the council, a move interpreted by his rivals as an attempt to pack the council with his supporters.

He had also insisted on the withdrawal of UN troops from Somalia, a demand that had vehemently been opposed by Ali Mahdi's faction who argued that the presence of the UN forces was an assurance for the stability and the reconstruction of the country.

In turn, Aideed's faction flayed the United Nations Operation in Somalia, UNISOM, for sabotaging the talks, arguing that the world body lobbied the anti-Aideed factions not to reach agreement. The failed talks described by western donors as the last chance to bring reconciliation before the US withdraws from the UN force in the country, was bedevilled from the start. Although Ethiopian president Meles Zenawi tried to bring the two main rivals to the Somali crisis to the negotiating table, they have remained in Addis Ababa to meet each other. Thus confirming that the presence of the two powerful men instead of hastening the

peace talks, had hardened positions.

Shortly after the talks began, Ali Mahdi's chief adviser, Awey Hajj had accused the Ethiopian authorities of favouring his rival, Aideed. Hajj said Ethiopia had taken biased stand on the crisis. "The Ethiopians want to impose a solution on us. They are dictating to us," he had complained.



Aideed and Mahdi: no agreement still

President Zenawi at a press conference last week however denied giving preferential treatment to any group, stressing that his country's interest is to end the senseless bloodbath in Somalia. He however blamed the failure of the warring factions to resolve the crisis on the illusion that each group can rule the country through war, he added that the meeting was successful in so far as it was able to start informal dialogue among the factions.

Somalia has been without a proper government since rebels

overthrew the despotic Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991 and then turned the guns on each other fuelling a famine which killed about 300,000 people.

Last week, the US took the first steps toward total withdrawal from Somalia. US military spokesman said 650 soldiers based in New York State would be the first combat troops to leave as part of the withdrawal of US forces in Somalia by March 31, next year. President Bill Clinton decided in October to withdraw all its forces and called off a manhunt for factional leader, Aideed after four months of fighting with his militia-men. Former secretary of defence,

Les Aspin said on Sunday that the US would pull out 2500 of its 8200 troops in Somalia by Christmas, about 30 per cent of all its forces.

Mr. Aspin said that the US took action because of the intransigence of the Somalia factional leaders at the collapsed peace talks in Addis Abba. Other countries who contributed to the peace keeping in Somalia have indicated that they would follow in the foot steps of US.

By Abu Mommoh
with agency reports

World trade

At last, the GATT?

Last Wednesday was the deadline for the GATT deal.
Will the deal be stuck?

GATT director-general Peter Sutherland, emerging from weeks of almost non-stop meetings in Geneva on Monday, December 13, told waiting reporters that "waning progress" had been made that weekend in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT, negotiations. Within hours, it became apparent that Mr. Sutherland had exaggerated it. Hanging over the negotiators' heads was a deadline of Wednesday, December 15, after which the US Congress will be free to revise the text of the treaty when it is brought before it by President Bill Clinton.

Holding up the conclusion of the deal last week was continuing disagreement between the world's most powerful trading nations, namely the US and the European Union. At issue was the European refusal to completely open its film, music and aircraft industries to American competition. EU trade commissioner Sir Leon Brittan said on Tuesday that the US already controls 80 per cent of the European film market but wants even more, something strenuously opposed by the culture-conscious French. Nor were the Americans yielding, and on Tuesday British Prime Minister John Major publicly asked President Clinton to permit US trade representative Mickey Kantor more room to negotiate. The Americans and Europeans had managed a few days before to resolve their differences over agricultural subsidies. US subsidies for farm exports amount to 80 billion dollars annually. The EU spends the same amount while Japan spends 50 billion dollars a year for the same purpose. Resolution of the dispute over these subsidies took

dozens of meetings throughout this year, largely held up by the French, whose politically-strong farmers vehemently and often violently objected to the deal.

If the deadline of last Wednesday was met, it will bring to a satisfactory end the Uruguay Round of



Major yielding?

GATT which began at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in September 1986. The 117 countries that have been in GATT assumed then that this final round of the talks will address the issues left over from the 1982 GATT Ministerial Declaration. Instead, the US introduced three complex new issues, namely the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property, or TRIPs, Trade-Related Investment Measures, or TRIMs, and Trade in Services. TRIMs include the protection of industrial patents as well as music and film copyright.

Over the last seven years, most sticky points were resolved and the

450-page final act was ready, except for the sticky points of contention between the US, the EU and Japan. The GATT agreement generally provides for a 33 per cent cut in industrial tariffs and extends the agreement's accepted trading rules to agriculture, services, textiles and "intellectual property", all of them not covered by the previous agreements.

Early last week, the Japanese government finally moved to end its controversial, 50-year old ban of rice imports, a policy maintained by the former ruling Liberal Democrats at the behest of Japan's powerful rice farmers. Japanese prime

minister Morihiro Hosokawa was inclined to end the ban and allow limited rice imports, eventually to be replaced by tariffs, but the largest party in his fragile eight-party coalition, the Social Democrats, opposed the move. The Japanese position had been undercut the previous week when South Korean President Kim Young-Sam ended Korea's own ban on rice imports, despite violent protest from farmers who demonstrated in front of the US embassy in Seoul and burnt the American flag. In fact, last Monday,

the Liberian-registered ship *Koala* unloaded 7,560 tones of California rice in Japan, the first imported rice to reach Japan in 18 years, allowed in by the government only because of poor harvest caused by cold weathers.

All that left the final ball in the Euro-Americans' court. By Tuesday last week, Mickey Kantor and Leon Brittan had met seven times in four days to try to end the few remaining disagreements. Baring unforeseen difficulties, they should strike the deal by Wednesday afternoon.

By Mahmud Jega
with agency reports

Russia

Behold, the Lernean Hydra

**Boris Yeltsin conquered Gorbachev, Rutskoi and Khasbulatov.
Now he has Zhirinovskiy to contend with**

At first, President Boris Yeltsin jubilated over his victory. On Sunday, December 12, the day Yeltsin had set aside for a constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections following his crushing of the old parliament in October, 53 per cent of Russian voters went to the polls, or just over the mandatory one-half required to make the vote valid. Early results released by electoral commission chairman Nikolai Rybov showed that 60 per cent of voters approved the draft constitution, though the figure was later revised to 52 per cent, or just above the number needed to pass it.

Still, the constitution was passed, officially changing the country over to an executive presidency and with a lot of power vested in the president, including the power to dissolve the parliament, the *Duma*. President Yeltsin had permitted no criticism of the draft constitution and did not allow it to be amended before last week's vote.

But results filtering in from the parliamentary elections, held the same day, quickly dismayed Boris Yeltsin. An all-night election results show by Russian television was abandoned when it became clear that the president was losing. By last Tuesday, with most results in, the big winner turned out to be the neo-fascist Liberal Democrats, founded four years ago by 47 year old lawyer Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, with 24 per cent of the votes. Yeltsin's party, Russia's Choice, garnered only 15 per cent while the Communist Party got 12 per cent of the votes. All in all, Yeltsin's ultra-nationalist and Communist opponents got a total 47 per cent of the votes.

The man of the moment was Zhirinovskiy, who finished third behind Yeltsin in the 1991 presidential elections. During the campaign,

he dismissed the US as a "bandit nation responsible for the spread of AIDS". Zhirinovskiy promised to reclaim all the lands of the defunct Russian empire, namely the 14 former Soviet republics and most of Poland and Finland; to restore Russian pride, end the economic reforms of Boris Yeltsin, stop the conversion of military industries to civilian use, and crack down on crime. Zhirinovskiy, who earlier this year dispatched volunteers to Iraq to help fight the US-led coalition, however told Finnish television last week that he does not intend to reclaim Finland.

Last week, even as the "Liberal Democrats" victory became clear,

During the campaign, he dismissed the US as a "bandit nation responsible for the spread of AIDS"

there was feverish activity at the party's headquarters in Moscow, registering new members. Zhirinovskiy's victory immediately caused consternation in the former Soviet republics, to which he said no more Russian aid will flow. It also caused unease in Europe; German television showed a picture of Zhirinovskiy addressing German right-wingers last September, where he said Russia and Germany should again "share a common border", recalling the Hitler-Stalin partition



Yeltsin: a new opponent cometh

of Poland in 1939. The Russian nationalist also said recently that Russia should dump its nuclear wastes in the Baltic states. Not only Zhirinovskiy's win unnerved Yeltsin last week. Former parliamentary opposition leader Sergei Baburin, staunchly anti-Yeltsin, was also elected into the *Duma* from the Siberian city of Omsk.

Even though President Yeltsin said when he cast his vote on Sunday that he was "very optimistic", last week's results showed that only one in five of the new MP's will be supporters of his reform policies. Yeltsin's press secretary Vyacheslav Kostikov said last week that "The president will treat the Russian elections of December 12 with respect and understanding." Yeltsin, he said, was prepared to work with his opponents "if they conduct themselves as serious politicians". Yeltsin's finance minister Boris Fyodorov also said last week that the new *Duma* is likely to be as confrontational as the old parliament and that this will jeopardise the stability of the government.

How about those who put all their eggs in Yeltsin's leaky basket? US vice president Al Gore flew into Moscow from Kazakhstan last Wednesday and demanded that Yeltsin continue on the path of reforms.

*By Mahmud Jega
with agency reports*

PLO/Israel

Peace delayed

The much awaited peace accord shifted again

As the 'sacredness' of the 13 December deadline for the commencement of the PLO/Israeli peace accord has been shattered, as the two parties could not agree on the modalities of the peace process. The Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) met in Cairo only to tell the eager world that they would need another round

and christians, and question of border security for Israel. Mr. Nissim Zuili, the secretary general of Israeli labour party said that the postponement of the peace process meant that Israel cares about its borders.

A very disappointed Arafat, believes that the trinity of *Pactum Sunt Servanda*, that agreement must be kept has been betrayed by the Israelis. He and his people had looked forward eagerly to liberation and in-

talks was still one of cautiousness. Mr. Rabin maintains that the date was not sacred adding that events on the grounds would ultimately determine and shape the final outcome of the peace process. Mr. Shimon Peres, the Israeli foreign minister believes that despite the delays, peace would still be achieved in the long run.

However, in a move to stem more violence from Hamas and Jewish extremists, the Israeli government has moved massive troops to the occupied territories. According to the chief of staff of the Israeli army, a historic dialogue has also been opened with the Hamas, although nothing concrete has been achieved, Hamas is still rejecting the peace package. Some sources say Hamas is afraid of marginalisation and irrelevancy in Arafat's Palestine. The Israeli government believes that terrorism cannot win, and that all years of war brought only pain. The time has now come for co-operation, he said. Despite this measure, death toll is on the rise.

As part of the larger peace gesture, Israeli government has allowed deported Palestinians exiled to Lebanon in 1991, to return to the occupied territories. However, the deportees returned unrepentant and have vowed to intensify the struggle.

Meanwhile the Americans reacted cautiously to the postponed peace process. Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State who has just concluded another round of Middle-East peace shuttle, said that, "if they decided they needed a few more days to get it right, it's alright, that the most important thing is to get it right." The US is also trying to get Syria to the negotiation table. Jordan too is being wooed.

Mr. Arafat has continued to solicit for international support and financial aid for this much expected peace. He has asked the UK to repay Palestinian 1.5 billion dollars for the gold she took from Palestine, when she ruled the country during the inter war years.

By Shoyebi Abayomi
with agency reports



Rabin: cautious

of meetings in the future and re-examine the issues at stake.

The crux of the matter still remains the fate of 10,000 Palestinians held in Jewish jails, the size of Israeli army to be left behind in the occupied territories, the fate of Jewish settlers in that territory and the size of Palestinian police to be established in the territories. There was also the problems of the status of Jerusalem, and the opening of religious places and shrines in the city, to muslims



Arafat: disappointed

dependence. He has called for an international force to protect Jewish settlers in the territory to allay Israeli fears. He has called on Mr. Rabin to respect his honour and make sure that the final April 13 date is not violated. However, some of Mr. Arafat's top aides Ms Hassan Ashrawi, PLO spokeswoman during the talks and Zaid Abu Zaid has left the organisation in anger over the stalled talks.

Israeli reaction to the delayed

Venezuela/Chile

At last, a change?

Popular candidates voted into office

It was election time past week in some Latin American countries. A sub continent which in the past had come to be notoriously noted for military coups, has now shelved its negative image. It seems democracy and pluralism are gradually taking roots, as confirmed by last week's election results in Venezuela and Chile.

In Venezuela, Mr. Rafael Caldera, 77, won the election. He polled about 33 per cent of votes cast, this was his second coming. The importance of the Venezuelan elections was that, democracy which started about 33 years ago has been entrenched. In 1958, the last military

brought in Caldera's National Convergence Alliance. There was no doubt that Venezuelans were angry with the old government for allowing the Venezuelan oil boom bussle to go burst. Disillusionment set in



Pinochet: watching

strongman, General Marcos Perez Jimenez was ousted. Since then the

as a result of unplanned government spending. Furthermore, the

There was massive troops deployment on election day to forestall disturbances. The threat of military coup, hovers in Venezuela, there had been two failed coups in recent times.

The opposition was conciliatory in defeat, Orlando Castro a leading opposition candidate congratulated Caldera, saying "the country is coming together around Caldera. For two years we lost our equilibrium.

Now we have got it back and we must keep hold of it."

President Caldera, has promised reforms; his leading economic adviser Asdrubai Baptisa said that "our economic policy is to end the paradox of accelerated economic growth and an equally accelerating decrease in living standards. The new regime, however, faces daunting tasks of constitutional reforms, corruption, inflation, capital flight, crime and drug abuse.

Democracy was also consolidated in Chile. Mr. Eduardo Frei, 55, won the second popular election in the country after the tenure of the military strongman, General Pinochet. President Patricio Aylwin was the first post Pinochet president in Chile. Mr. Frei is the son of former president. Mr. Frei was replaced by the Marxist government of late President Allende. Mr. Frei who is a candidate of the Ruling Concertation for Democracy Party, defeated four other candidates include a Roman Catholic priest and right wing candidate Arturo Alessandr.


Chilians would want Mr. Frei to continue with the poverty alleviating policies of the departing government and generally increase prosperity. Meanwhile, the military strongman, General Pinochet still watches over the administration of state.

By Shoyebi Abayomi
with agency reports

Chilians would want Mr. Frei to continue with the poverty alleviating policies of the departing government and generally increase prosperity

Social Action (Social Democrat) and Copei Social Christian Parties ran the country between them. But during this latest election, the electorate deserted them in protest votes and

former president Carlos Andres Perez was suspended from office on an allegation of misappropriating 17 million dollars. Seventeen candidates contested the elections.



BILKISU YUSUF

in Vienna did not end there. It was extended on December 3, to the Centre for Advanced Social Sciences, CASS at a seminar on corruption, the third in the series organised by the Port Harcourt based centre. Two editors, Bayo Onanuga of *The News* and *Tempo* magazines and my humble self presented papers on Media reporting as a tool against corruption.

Skeletons in media cupboards

The debate on journalism ethics predates the 42nd annual assembly of the International Press Institute, IPI, that prestigious gathering of journalists and publishers. But it resurfaced, — as a global response to the erosion of the ethics of our profession — at the IPI Vienna assembly last June. One of the themes discussed was intrusion, sensationalism and the media. Two opposing views emerged with Juan Luis Cebrian of Grupo Prisa, Spain, condemning that section of the media which lies just to boost sales. To buttress his point Cebrian cited the case of a Spanish gutter newspaper *Claro* which was established with the sum of 100 million US dollars but collapsed because it was unable to feed its readers with scandals, the sole aim for which it came into being. But some newspapers, when starved of scandals resorted to sensationalism, or created scandals by lying, a practice that erodes credibility and renders the press impotent in the war against corruption, injustice and abuse of power. Not a supporter of the lying press, Andrew Neil, editor of *The Sunday Times* of United Kingdom is nevertheless a defender of the intrusive and sensationalist press. He is opposed to any attempt to clamp down on intrusive journalism believing regulatory moves could encourage or shield all manner of bad behaviour.

The debate, which did not begin

Both presentations reinforced each other in their views on the media's role in combating corruption, and analysing the havoc it has done and is still doing to our society. They however, differed in their views on what constitutes corruption of the ethics of journalism. Onanuga quoted Leo Rosten "The energies which lead men into newspapers are... the desire to startle and expose," to rationalise the editorial thrust of many independent media. While one is not opposed to exposing scandals, injustices and other excesses, such expose must be based on truth. That of course is a scarce commodity in the newsrooms of many media organisations, particularly the soft sell publications popularly known as junk. Their unqualified and indiscriminate craving for scandals leads them to create fiction in their newsrooms and dish it out to the hapless public as truth. Doesn't the public have the right to know the truth as distinct from fiction, more so when their money sustains our publications? It is a betrayal of that trust vested in the media as society's watchdog. In contrast to Rosten's desire to "startle" many journalists would argue that "news is that which is truthful, timely and in the public interest." How much of the news junk papers specialise in are true and in the public interest?

My paper condemned their ruinous mingling of falsehood with sensationalism, citing the case of

Lawrence Akapa's *Top News* which fed its readers with the untrue tale of "Michael Jackson's Nigerian girlfriend" for which he was disciplined by the ethics committee of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, NUJ.

Since that lone incident, the reading public is inundated every week with lies dressed as truth and fiction masquerading as reality on the pages of many junk publications. They range from *Tempo's* lie about Babangida's plan to take a second wife to *Ahuja Newsday's* "scoop" "Abiola's son to wed Babangida's daughter."

Deliberate acts of distortion, sensationalism and fraudulent manipulation of news are now the unethical preoccupations of our junk publications. Why should the media become a prey of the seamy world of gutter ethics and bribes?

The advent of junk publications has inflicted all manner of media toasts and journalistic retailers on the publishing industry, to the chagrin of those journalists who are labouring to build a credible voice.

The junk publishers however defend their intrusive style on the need to monitor public officers. Such expose they argue is done in the public interest.

If the intrusive publications must survive they must have enough scandals to expose. Therefore the challenge facing contemporary journalism is to be able to define what constitutes this nebulous public interest and where to draw the line between public and private people. The contentious debate would then shift grounds into whether private people should have their privacy invaded at all or only when doing so will be in the public interest. Regardless of how the debate ends, it is the duty of all journalists to prevent any misuse of press power through barefaced lies and stealthy innuendoes employed just to antagonise opponents. Such practices topple decency and derail the ethics of our honourable profession.

A 170 million Naira witness!

The fuel shortage in the north has virtually become a way of life. Everything has been tried to end it to no avail. The distance between population centres in the north easily lends itself to abuse by profiteers, a reason why it's much easier for blackmarketeering to prosper in the north than in the south. Again, bridging the bulk of the fuel needs of the north from the ports by trucks, which are very scarce, is itself a big problem.

These are real problems, but the biggest one which no one wants to touch is corruption in high places. Take the case of the unaccounted for 41,000,000 dollars for which senior NNPC officials, including the MD and some executive directors, were grounded before a judge in Lagos. The money remains unaccounted for but it would not be surprising if no one is punished for this GRAND THEFT. The signs for its ultimate death is there even though the case is merely a tip of an iceberg.

Having been struck out by the

judge, it's supposed to have since been transferred to a tribunal. Not surprisingly, however, it has grown, in Nigerian parlance, a K-leg. One principal witness seems to have bribed his way out of Nigeria. A big independent oilman himself, he is reputed to own a ranch in California, a big house with Olympic size swimming pool in South Africa and similar pads in choice cities like Paris and London. It's actually the Samson Option. He threatened to drag down all the big shots on whose behalf he acted if prosecution persisted. Naturally those in authority did not want to take chances, hence the mysterious vanishing act of our star witness from Nigeria!

Not so lucky is this other principal actor who has since been under police care, even though in striking out the case, the judge went out of the way to order that no re-arrest be made until the prosecution was ready to prosecute. Well, if you've been reading the papers, you'll have noticed that his "countrymen" have



been up in arms fighting for his release. And while some are fighting on the pages of newspapers, there are these three-some including a former N02, who are attempting to plea-bargain for the poor fellow, the Nigerian way!

A birdie tells me that the prosecution has been offered a million dollars and 100,000 Naira in return for the killing of the case. No deal, says the prosecution. We know the chap has 800,000 dollars or so salted away in foreign banks and over 150,000,000 Naira at home and you offer such a paltry sum?! What do you think we are, Church rats or what?

With so much oil money lining the pocket of so few, is it any wonder that you and I have to pay dearly in time and money for fuel?

A season of betrayal (11)

I told you about the all pervading prowess, monopoly and Octopus hands of legal minds in the South-West which the *Nigerian Tribune* boasted about. How the north panicked when Chief Abiola looked like winning the presidential election. According to the *Nigerian Tribune*, phones started ringing all over the North as what to do. Among the options considered was an election petition but the *Notamas* discovered that the South-West had all the lawyers and judges. A win, was therefore unlikely.

The legal prowess of the South-West was proved just a few days later when a Lagos court declared Chief Ernest Shonekan's government illegal. I had wondered loudly then about what other legal manipulations would follow. I know.

Another legal victory for the South-West's legal prowess; the ousting of Chief Justice Mohammed Bello and the disruption of the Supreme Court's hierarchy to rid it of *notan* "vandals" forever. This scheme was hatched by the same intolerant group that has now been exposed as bogus and self-serving.

Nobody is talking about the great impropriety in the appointment of Olu Onaguruwa as minister of justice and attorney general. It is on public record that the minister is tainted by an unresolved civil matter and that he is a cousin to the chief of general staff, Lt-General Oladapo Diya. (Remember Diya said nobody would be "settled?")

When some "friends" of Onaguruwa's circulated papers pointing to his incompetence morally and

politically to hold office, we put it down to sour-grapes. But is it? He's certainly not a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, which is nothing to me if he's competent, but more worrisome, he is an open advocate of the dismemberment of Nigeria who will host constitutional talks about its future and not the great "constitutional lawyer" the press made us to believe! What a country, Nigeria

The thing is, if one insists on equity, then one must go with a clean hand. If the blasted northerner has these dubious credentials, Femi Falana, Beko Ransome-Kuti and Gani Fawehinmi and all other pseudo nationalists and "human rights" groups would have been up in arms. I am waiting for them to come out with the truth and call for Onaguruwa's removal and prosecution, at least in the moral court.

Bag men bleeding Africa

These men are struggling to carry bags bulging with cash into a bank in the heart of Mayfair. Only hours before, they stepped off a flight from West Africa, the last link in a network that has spent years bleeding some of the world's poorest countries of their currency reserves.

Over the past two years, teams of couriers from Nigeria have made the journey to London as often as three times a week to take currency worth 600 million pounds in cash to the *Banque Francaise de l'Orient* in Berkeley Square.

Banks are discouraged from conducting large-scale cash business such as this by British and European Community banking regulations and law enforcement agencies, because of the risk of money laundering by criminals.

But *The Observer* can disclose that the British authorities have closed their eyes to the bag men, in spite of the risk that this might enable drug money to be laundered — Nigerian drug barons are major distributors of heroin and cocaine — and the damage caused to West African countries by facilitating the illegal flight of capital into European bank accounts.

Although the Bank of England was concerned at what it saw as 'tainted business,' no action was taken, even after two major international banks in London decided the suitcase cash was too hot to handle. A senior bank official said: "Illegal money was hard to pin down."

The cash flood stopped only last month, when West African states banned cash exports and stopped repurchasing their currency exchanged in cash at European banks. They were forced to take action because the money flooding out threatened to exhaust their foreign exchange reserves.

What one African minister blamed on "the fraudulent export of capital" was then running at a minimum of two million pounds a day.

In the suitcases were *Communaute Financiere Africaine* francs, the common currency of 13 former French colonies in West Africa and accepted in neighbouring Nigeria and Ghana. The CFA franc is prized because it has been convertible into French francs at an artificially high rate of 50 to one, fixed since 1948. As other West African currencies have fallen, CFA francs have become an increasingly profitable way of obtaining hard currency.

Suitcases stuffed with CFA francs had been arriving since mid-1991 at *Banque Francaise de l'Orient* (BFO). The bank is owned by the leading French group *Banque Indosuez*, by Saudi investors and by business interests linked to Lebanon's prime minister, Rafiq Hariri.

BFO became the dominant London bank in the suitcase trade, taking up to 90 per cent of the business. At least one other London bank has been involved. BFO moved in after National Westminster and the London branch of Republic National Bank of New York dropped out and

Although the Bank of England was concerned at what it saw as 'tainted business,' no action was taken, even after two major international banks in London decided the suitcase cash was too hot to handle.

the rogue Bank of Credit and Commerce International was closed down.

Fears that both the CFA and French francs might be devalued have led to a rising tide of cash.

In 1990 and 1991, at least 150 billion CFA francs (350 million pounds) were physically exported. Last year this rose to more than 231 billion francs. In the first six months

of this year alone, more than 168 billion francs left.

Faced with a possible flight of almost 40 per cent of the CFA notes in circulation, the franc zone governments — which include seven of the world's poorest nations, such as Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso — had to act.

Statistics obtained by *The Observer* show that BFO's CFA cash business rose from 80 million pounds last year and more than 200 million pounds to July.

Money changers in Nigeria swapped Nigerian Naira for CFA francs smuggled in from the neighbouring franc zone countries, or paid for goods smuggled the other way. Not all the CFA trade is due to smuggling.

At Gatwick Airport, if questioned by customs, the couriers can show documents stating that the money was the legitimate proceeds of money changing or other business destined for a bank here. Breach of foreign exchange control laws is not an offence in Britain.

This Lagos-£50m into BFO every month. BFO converted the CFA francs into French francs and then transferred into bank accounts around the world or taken back to Nigeria to buy goods or more CFA currency.

This trade could be used by Nigerian drug syndicates, who earn an estimated one billion dollars a year distributing heroin, cocaine and cannabis.

The CFA currency would then be taken by Group 4 to a currency to the Bank of France, which repurchased it on behalf of franc zone central banks who paid for it with their dwindling foreign currency reserves. The CFA notes were then sent back to West Africa and the whole cycle began again.

In Paris, a Bank of France official, admitted: "Exchange control in West Africa does not work very well."

(Culled from *London The Observer* 26/9/93)

Need I see more?

— Private Eye

POETS' NEST

Politics of changing times

Should any nation be tired of trying to evolve a stable polity? Should the military rescue our nation from the political drift into which politicians often drive it? Should politicians provide the military the excuse to "rescue" Nigeria? Answers come from the wisdom of poets.

New Nigeria

Let those who seek
For the new ways
Not weary of the beginning
When the past is forsaken
But only the present is taken
With all pomps and parade
Then to hatch that self-reliance
Lies in the womb of the future
Is bound in shallows.
The contents of our *Daily Times*
Are mixed with import technologies
The darkness which reveals light
Is betrayed by the authority
Of the long tradition
How newly old is Nigeria?
The giant of Africa!
Lo! dress it as you will
The goose is a goose still

Victor Offiong

The new era

The light has been kindled
Come a new day, a redeeming day
Though we are mourners like zombies we sympathise
The death of deceased gunners.
Morning dew satisfies the mind
When the marshal music speaks, tanks and
Artilleries parade the joy of the new era
The era of casualties.
The days of uniform, the days of parsimony
Wealthy though throne but beggar across the sea
The image is sold
Pen no longer speaks
Mouth no longer writes
Decrees and edicts everyday
Yes! it is the reign of bullet.
The new redeeming day has come
Though we are mourners

The light has been kindled
In the era of casualties.

Mukhtar S. 'Wakeel

Metamorphosis

O, what an aberration
From our dearest aspirations
That path you depart
That teaches honour and honesty
And preaches decorum and modesty
Our prized path.
As you leave it
Another you tread along
Lesser than the former by far
Nothing it harbours
But greed and dishonour
Deceit and corruption.
Sheer laxity
Life's vanities
And crass ignorance
Having overwhelmed
Your heedless souls
What a pity!

Mohammed Garba Bawa

Metamorphosis

Life is but a lift
Just as is wealth a gift
The wretched beggar of the noon
Can turn
A starlight beside the moon
wonderful could be the sun
At dawn
In the sky
Diminished
It looks at dusk
Like a fly.
When the flying birds flock together
In beautiful moods
They enjoy the breeze
And the swinging of the wind
In accostic storm
They scatter like a leather
Forgetting all the joy
And leaning to a pillar
Life is such a phenomenon
To breath is to struggle
To exist all the exits.

Mph'd Alh. Nanu Potiskum

"Murder and death at large"

The lone ranger cowboy on the

poets'
nest

rampage

The haggard Russian bear its rival
In hate it forced to surrender
The cowboy now swaggering macho
Its rage a serpent's venom
Its mind full of hate and waste
The whole world its fancy prey
Its vanity a shame for mankind.
Behold the bully of new world order!
The tug-team of recolonisation
Spitting a witches' cauldron of fire
Celebrating the new NATO declaration
That 'might is right' forever
The allies' famished armies in the rear
The kinky cowboys in the vanguard
The thirst for blood lingers.
Spanning the globe for vengeance
Like mesmerised rascal creatures untethered
The "gangho" squad charged into action
Their trails a spilling smell of bloody flood
Their war song 'global maimings and killings'
Their best seller 'murder and death'
Their current album 'every nation a killing field'
Their classic tunes 'every animal a target.'

Abdulkarim Bendoka

MOHAMMED HARUNA



do so without. I believe I have always done so without. And to his credit he has always accepted those criticisms in good faith, even though he may be cross at times.

One instance I can readily recall, eventually put me on a collision course with the National Concord. It was about the first of a series of very lively Eric Hoffer Holiday Inn lectures initiated by its chairman at the time Chief J. K. Pandia, General Babangida, then

The press and its double standards

As we prepare for the forthcoming constitutional conference, one subject which will get close attention is the mass media, for the obvious reason that it is the source of most of our information and information, as they say, is power. I have said before and will say again, that Nigerian mass media has tended to abuse this power and I fear that sooner or later the media will pay dearly for it. We have tended to abuse our power in at least one of three ways, namely by using one set of rules for the "enemy" and another set for our friends, (2) by telling half truths and (3) worse by telling bare-faced lies.

The favourite subject these days, of course, is General Ibrahim Babangida. I will be the last to defend his record as a military ruler. From before my days as the managing director of *New NIGERIA*—a job to which he appointed me—through my transition days of writing a column for *Today* newspaper in Kaduna to my present position as editor-in-chief of this magazine, I have been a critic of his style and strategy. In these days when it is fashionable to see only evil in the man I must say I have always regarded it as a great virtue in the man that he will remain my benefactor even as I criticised him, sometimes in strong terms. The explanation, I concluded must be in my style even if I say so myself. Whereas some people will criticise with malice and mischief, others will

lead of army staff, gave that lecture and in it he extolled the virtue of the military, as not only the best guarantor of national unity but also its greater hope for development. In appraising his lecture, I told the general the record on the ground did not bear him out. The military, I argued, may have fought a war to preserve national unity and done lots of other things for the good of the country, but truth be told, it caused the problems in the first place by interfering in politics. As for development, I argued, the military, with its demand on our resources and its management of those resources, was more of an obstacle than a facilitator.

For saying all this, *National Concord* took umbrage with me and reprinted me in its "Thinking Corner." Who, it said in effect, did I think I was, taking on the high and mighty Babangida? Today, *National Concord* sees no good and speaks no good of the same person. How times have indeed changed!

Today, the same papers for whom Babangida could do no wrong, are among those peddling half-truths and barefaced lies about the man. And since he seems to be the most popular game in town, the older papers have since been joined by new ones in a frenzy of circulation wars. Needless to say when they are not engaged in Babangida—bashing they are busy demonising a section of this country and blaming its

leaders for every problem facing this country. The most recent case is the campaign of calumny directed at the chief justice of the federation, Justice Bello, for his purported role in frustrating the ambitions of political leaders from a section of the country. And as if the campaign is not crude enough, insinuations are now being made that the supreme court has no suitable successor to Justice Bello, obviously because the next person in line comes from the much despised north.

In all this what is most disgusting is not the half-truths and barefaced lies, terrible as they are. The most disgusting thing is the double standard the press has engaged in. Clearly what rules it applies depends on the section of the country you come from. If you come from the north or have anything to do with Babangida, you must be presumed guilty of every charge until you can prove yourself innocent—which is hardly ever. However, if you are "progressive" or a "pro-democrat" then you are presumed innocent even if you've been found guilty as hell, if you pardon the swear word. And so it was that whereas former inspector-general of police, Muhammadu Gambo was found culpable for the death of a personal staff suspected of stealing in his (Gambo's) residence, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was regarded as innocent over the death of one of his domestic helps, who witnesses, and even Fela himself, said had been beaten into a pulp for allegedly stealing a few miserable Naira!

And so it is that we now hear all sorts of spurious arguments about justice minister, Olu Onagoruwa, not facing any moral dilemma or possible conflict of interest over a case of theft hanging over his head in the supreme court. The same people, who now say he must soldier on regardless, are the same ones who would have been too ready to denounce others as guilty even on the most frivolous circumstantial evidence.

ENVIRONMENT

Polythene bag

The silent killer

The supposedly harmless polythene bag is dangerous to the environment

If the above is a question posed to selective respondents, I am sure many will not come close to identifying this silent killer of our nation. Not even when the victims are identified as living organisms and the ecological nature of the entire environment.

A green peace member who may have the misfortune of visiting Lagos our most famous city of the "good, the bad and the ugly" (courtesy of Clint Eastwood), could have convulsion on the sight of the countless European scraps known as *Tokunkbo* running the streets of the city emitting poisonous gases from both the exhausts and the front engines, and many a time stalling and breaking down which adds to the problems of traffic. A second thought of how Nigeria could manage the carcasses of the numerous vehicles may well paralyse his mental bearings but he is yet to see the silent killer at its worst.

Yet others may look at the growing gap between the rich and the poor; the dwindling value of the Naira; the absence of discipline and accountability in the management of our economy; the endemic and high level of corruption which runs wild in the system; the escalating rate of crimes of all sorts; and other social ills of no lesser debilitating nature as the silent killer(s) of our nation.

The night crawler may come to his wits end when he thinks of the dreaded killer disease, AIDS, especially when prostitution is on the increase, to give it the leading role; while the comic may see the endless play of musical chairs between the armed forces politicians and civilian

By
M.B.G. Dogonyaro

politicians for running the nation into a *cul-de-sac* as the silent killer.

Yes, all of the above are killers of a nation in their own rights and until recently, in the case of AIDS, their antecedents in Nigeria are much higher than in other contemporary nations of the world.

This slow but surely silent killer is an item we commonly but widely



Tafida: health minister

use in our everyday lives. It is, virtually in every household of both urban and rural habitation. We use it to store food items as well as use it as a transparent container for saleable food items (both liquid, solid or pieces). It is, also, widely used as shopping bags. I am referring to polythene bags, and if you should have a mild rebuke at me for taking you on what you might say "a wild goose chase," please bear with me

and also take a look around you.

Polythene bag is a by-product of petroleum. It looks simple but it is almost indestructible. It could either be destroyed by natural process nor by simple combustion such as burning or incinerating. It has very limited usage and no after usage value at all.

In clinical terms, it offers protection to the items it contains, which may be said to provide health care and safety but such premium is only achieved on a par by the highly developed countries. For developing countries like Nigeria, the hazard the bag brings to bear on the citizens and the environment is by far greater than its benefits.

Since my return from five and half years of foreign service, I have been taking note of these bags littered all over on major cities with great concern but my recent drive from Kaduna to Kano, via Jos, Bauchi and Maiduguri has turned my concern to nightmares. Everywhere I looked had polythene bags scattered indiscriminately and when I took a drive within Kano metropolis, I could see some parts totally submerged in this ghastly waste.

This carelessly thrown wastes are not only an eye sore, but truly killers of any living organ. All lives whether in the air, on the surface, below the sea, and underground, depend on air and the absence of or denial of it will result in ultimate death. Consequently, when the environment is highly polluted and ecology destroyed, life ceases to exist, and this is what polythene bag and its mates are doing to us.

An estimate of the usage of polythene bags and its related products per day is put at a unit of 20 million. In a year, the total comes to 7.3 billion. In 50 years and using the same ratio, the total will be a staggering figure of 365 billion and believe it or not, this quantity is enough to cover the entire open surfaces of Lagos metropolis, Ibadan, Kano and Port Harcourt.

... situation is further aggravated by our collective disregard for the elementary environmental rule common in any decent human society. Just as a show of obscenely vulgar, so also the habit of an individual who keeps his inner home clean and no damn about his neighbours' surroundings. It is certainly a collective inputs of the community rather than a shining singular which protects the environment from decay through uncontrolled waste management.

Nigeria might have taken some progressive steps forward since independence, but it was certainly much cleaner and beautiful 20 years ago than now. In other words, our current efforts towards environmental sanitation is one of diminishing returns, and this spells doom for the society. Indiscipline within the society, lack of maintenance culture, disrespect for the rules of nature and the laws of statute governing our environment and the abdication of the common responsibilities of individual members of any given community towards keeping our surroundings clean and tidy; compounded our problems.

The only singular effort of any magnitude seen in the last 10 years, was the introduction or rather the imposition of WAI — War Against Indiscipline — on the citizens by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime and the monthly "sanitation day" which is carried out to date but without any of its original substances. Indeed this exercise has become not only a nuisance but unworthy of its objectives.

How do we fight this phenomenal hazards? The answer lies in our collective resolve and the effective inputs of all the tiers of government.

Fighting this foe and others cannot be planned and executed in a matter of selective days or a short period of time, but rather through a comprehensive concept involving both individuals and corporate institutions and spanning a life-long period.

I recall when I was the chairman of KCAB (Kaduna Capital Development Board) in 1981, I attended a national seminar organised by the federal government's environmental protection agency in Sokoto and part of my contribution was a suggestion to establish an environmental sanitation campaign running for a period of 50 years as well as introducing this subject right from nursery, through primary and post primary schools.

My proposal for this long period of campaign was informed by the simple adage which says "habits die hard." Any habit which has been built through the ages, can only be fought by an equal number of period among the grown-ups, while it infuses its influence in the up-coming generations and eventually becomes part of their culture.

This reference to "habits die hard" reminds me of an embarrassing experience I had with an elderly Nigerian lady doctor of letters in Osaka, Japan during the Garden and Greening Exposition 90, in which Nigeria participated. As large and crowded as this expo was, every-

where was spotlessly clean; precision and orderliness were supreme and this could easily overwhelm anyone there, but this lady who was in the company of officials, my wife and myself, was totally oblivious of this magnificent surrounding, as she was dropping pieces of chicken bones on the floor of a snack kiosk despite the fact that we had all been given small waste paper bags for all litter! Of course, my wife would bend down and pick them but even that did not stop the lady!

It is worthy of note to see that the new regime of General Sani Abacha is seriously thinking of resuscitating WAI and since their effort may lack the coercive powers of the regime of Buhari/Idiagbon, they have to come up with an agenda which can motivate the various communities. Environmental sanitation laws must also be reviewed, re-enforced and applied religiously.

The monthly sanitation day should be maintained but its operative methods should be expanded and regulated. In this regard, local government authorities should take both the initiative and control of the activities of the day and the actual activities should be conducted on a ward basis in the local government. All public places such as markets, hospitals and institutions of learning should have their operators who would clean them very well on that day.

One big problem which has to be tackled is that of the disposal of the waste collected and this must be addressed in earnest. Indeed, the provision of disposal units is as imperative as fighting to collect the waste, but for this indestructible polythene waste, my simple recommendation to the federal government is to ban the production of it entirely. This suggestion is certainly not out of place bearing in mind that countries like Singapore have banned the production of the supposedly harmless candy — the chewing gum.

How do we fight this phenomenal hazards? The answer lies in our collective resolve and the effective inputs of all the tiers of government.

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HEALTH

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The "AIDS test" is scientifically invalid and incapable of determining whether people are really infected with HIV, according to a new report by a team of Australian scientists who have conducted the first extensive review of research surrounding the test.

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The findings, likely to cause intense debate in the medical fraternity and anguish for many HIV-positive people, are contained in an article published by the respected science journal, *Bio Technology*.

Many people who appear to be infected with HIV, say the researchers, can be suffering from other conditions such as malaria or malnutrition that produce a positive result in the test. Even flu jabs can produce the same effect. As a result, predictions by the World Health Organisation (WHO) that millions are set to die because of being HIV-positive may be wildly inaccurate.

The paper also lent powerful support to the theory, held by growing numbers of scientists, that HIV is not the true cause of AIDS. One of its authors, Eleni Elecpoulos, a biophysicist at the Royal Perth Hospital says "There is no proof that people labelled as 'HIV-positive' are infected with such a retrovirus. We should really question the role of 'HIV' in the causation of AIDS." Overall, the findings "mean the tests have not been scientifically evaluated", she said.

The authors say that neither of the two main HIV tests used have been adequately checked for accu-

racy. These tests rely on detecting antibodies to HIV in blood samples. But people whose immune systems have been activated by several other conditions, including tuberculosis and multiple sclerosis, can trigger the same reaction, giving a false positive result.

Promiscuous homosexual men, illicit drug users, multiple blood transfusion recipients — such as haemophiliacs — and people subject to multiple infections become increasingly liable to give positive result the longer their immune system is weakened, regardless of HIV.

To have confidence in antibody tests, they must first be validated by having their results checked against a "gold standard" — that is, isolation of the virus itself. However, this had never been done with the AIDS test. The report adds that a procedure used to confirm the validity of diagnostic tests by looking for a virus's genetic material has also been shown to produce false results and cannot be considered as synonymous with isolating the virus.

The AIDS test looks for the detection of protein called 24, generally considered the equivalent of isolating the virus. However, it has been detected in one out of 150 healthy individuals, 13 per cent of people suffering from warts — a condition that signals a weakened immune system — and 41 per cent of patients with multiple sclerosis, another immune system disorder.

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The findings have been welcomed by Professor Peter Danching, a top medical virologist who maintains that HIV is not the cause of AIDS. He said the evidence helped to support now a "false correlation" had been found between "HIV" infection and AIDS.

"The whole virus hypothesis of AIDS is based on the correlation," he said. "The proponents have nothing to recommend it whereby HIV would do the damage attributed to it, no animal test, no cure, no vaccine, no virus activity. They have nothing conventional in terms of virus-disease arguments, except this correlation with antibodies. If this study is correct, and I have reasons to doubt it, it means that even that is now falling apart."

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According to the researchers, AZT halved the rate at which AIDS-related diseases developed; they urged extending the use of the drug to HIV-positive individuals who were otherwise healthy. If implemented, this would multiply by many times Wellcome's £250 million market for the product.

The researchers' conclusions contradicted findings from the world's biggest study conducted on behalf of the British and French governments and released four months ago. This, the "Concorde trial", found that AZT (or zidovudine) had no effect in preventing AIDS.

As *The Sunday Times* reported in May, Wellcome's financial dominance of AIDS science and treatment means it is seldom criticised by doctors or AIDS organisations. But Concorde researchers were the first specialists to break ranks over Wellcome's role.

Professor Ian Weller, of the Middlesex Hospital in London, who was chairman of the Anglo-French study, said research of the sort published last week was aimed more at raising sales than knowledge. "Company trials are very much product-oriented", he said. "Government-sponsored studies are trying to answer bigger questions."

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"What we've seen as a result — not only of Concorde, but of recent trials in the United States — is that it's dawning on people that the drugs we have are not useful."

Culled from *London's The Sunday Times* of 1/8/1993

ENVIRONMENT

Polythene bag

The silent killer

The supposedly harmless polythene bag is dangerous to the environment

If the above is a question posed to selective respondents, I am sure many will not come close to identifying this silent killer of our nation. Not even when the victims are identified as living organisms and the ecological nature of the entire environment.

A green peace member who may have the misfortune of visiting Lagos our most famous city of the "good, the bad and the ugly" (courtesy of Clint Eastwood), could have convulsion on the sight of the countless European scraps known as *Tokunkbo* running the streets of the city emitting poisonous gases from both the exhausts and the front engines, and many a time stalling and breaking down which adds to the problems of traffic. A second thought of how Nigeria could manage the carcasses of the numerous vehicles may well paralyse his mental bearings but he is yet to see the silent killer at its worst.

Yet others may look at the growing gap between the rich and the poor; the dwindling value of the Naira; the absence of discipline and accountability in the management of our economy; the endemic and high level of corruption which runs wild in the system; the escalating rate of crimes of all sorts; and other social ills of no lesser debilitating nature as the silent killer(s) of our nation.

The night crawler may come to his wits end when he thinks of the dreaded killer disease, AIDS, especially when prostitution is on the increase, to give it the leading role; while the comic may see the endless play of musical chairs between the armed forces politicians and civilian

By
M.B.G. Dogonyaro

politicians for running the nation into a *cul-de-sac* as the silent killer.

Yes, all of the above are killers of a nation in their own rights and until recently, in the case of AIDS, their antecedents in Nigeria are much higher than in other contemporary nations of the world.

This slow but surely silent killer is an item we commonly but widely



Tafida: health minister

use in our everyday lives. It is, virtually in every household of both urban and rural habitation. We use it to store food items as well as use it as a transparent container for saleable food items (both liquid, solid or pieces). It is, also, widely used as shopping bags. I am referring to polythene bags, and if you should have a mild rebuke at me for taking you on what you might say "a wild goose chase," please bear with me

and also take a look around you.

Polythene bag is a by-product of petroleum. It looks simple but it is almost indestructible. It could either be destroyed by natural process nor by simple combustion such as burning or incinerating. It has very limited usage and no after usage value at all.

In clinical terms, it offers protection to the items it contains, which may be said to provide health care and safety but such premium is only achieved on a par by the highly developed countries. For developing countries like Nigeria, the hazard the bag brings to bear on the citizens and the environment is by far greater than its benefits.

Since my return from five and half years of foreign service, I have been taking note of these bags littered all over on major cities with great concern but my recent drive from Kaduna to Kano, via Jos, Bauchi and Maiduguri has turned my concern to nightmares. Everywhere I looked had polythene bags scattered indiscriminately and when I took a drive within Kano metropolis, I could see some parts totally submerged in this ghastly waste.

This carelessly thrown wastes are not only an eye sore, but truly killers of any living organ. All lives whether in the air, on the surface, below the sea, and underground, depend on air and the absence of or denial of it will result in ultimate death. Consequently, when the environment is highly polluted and ecology destroyed, life ceases to exist, and this is what polythene bag and its mates are doing to us.

An estimate of the usage of polythene bags and its related products per day is put at a unit of 20 million. In a year, the total comes to 7.3 billion. In 50 years and using the same ratio, the total will be a staggering figure of 365 billion and believe it or not, this quantity is enough to cover the entire open surfaces of Lagos metropolis, Ibadan, Kano and Port Harcourt.

This situation is further aggravated by our collective disregard for even the elementary environmental sanitation rule common in any decent human society. Just as a show of affluence in the midst of abject poverty is obscenely vulgar, so also the only keeps his inner home clean and gives no damn about his neighbours and the surroundings. It is certainly the collective inputs of the community rather than a shining singular effort which protects the environment from decay through uncontrolled waste management.

Nigeria might have taken some few progressive steps forward since independence, but it was certainly much cleaner and beautiful 20 years ago than now. In other words, our current efforts towards environmental sanitation is one of diminishing returns, and this spells doom for the society. Indiscipline within the society, lack of maintenance culture, disrespect for the rules of nature and the laws of statute governing our environment and the abdication of the common responsibilities of individual members of any given community towards keeping our surroundings clean and tidy; compounded our problems.

The only singular effort of any magnitude seen in the last 10 years, was the introduction or rather the imposition of WAI — War Against Indiscipline — on the citizens by the Buhari/Idiagbon regime and the monthly "sanitation day" which is carried out to date but without any of its original substances. Indeed this exercise has become not only a nuisance but unworthy of its objectives.

How do we fight this phenomenal hazards? The answer lies in our collective resolve and the effective inputs of all the tiers of government.

Fighting this foe and others cannot be planned and executed in a matter of selective days or a short period of time, but rather through a comprehensive concept involving both individuals and corporate institutions and spanning a life-long period.

I recall when I was the chairman of KCAB (Kaduna Capital Development Board) in 1981, I attended a national seminar organised by the federal government's environmental protection agency in Sokoto and part of my contribution was a suggestion to establish an environmental sanitation campaign running for a period of 50 years as well as introducing this subject right from nursery, through primary and post primary schools.

My proposal for this long period of campaign was informed by the simple adage which says "habits die hard." Any habit which has been built through the ages, can only be fought by an equal number of period among the grown-ups, while it infuses its influence in the up-coming generations and eventually becomes part of their culture.

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Culled from London's *The Sunday Times* of 1/8/1993

SPORTS

USA '94

NSC usurps NFA's job

A silent but dangerous rift between NSC and NFA could destroy Nigeria's preparation for the Nations Cup and the World Cup



Westerhof: disappointed

the chairman of the association's technical sub-committee.

When the list was submitted to the NSC however for clearance, *Citizen* gathered that the sports commission felt slighted that the football ruling house compiled a list without first seeking clearance from it. NFA list was therefore thrown into the waste basket. NSC responded by telling NFA that only one person, the association's chairman was approved to travel on the ground of the new military government's restriction on trips outside the country by government officials. Surprisingly, however, NSC came out with their own list. Heading the list was NSC chairman Chief Akinwunmi who earlier on said that Super Eagles technical adviser Westerhof had no business going to US for the draw. He was to be accompanied by the commission's public relations officer, Alhaji Abba Yola. Already one of the commission's director, Dr. Amos Adamu was already in US more than a week before the draw.

A top staff of NSC who spoke to *Citizen* on condition of anonymity, believes that the NSC chairman and the director general might have put in place a covert master plan to frustrate NFA from carrying out its functions effectively. He further told



Super Eagles: what chance in the World Cup?

A crisis of confidence or a silent rift that could spell disaster for Nigeria's participation in next year's World Cup finals in United States of America, is brewing between Nigeria Football Association, NFA and the National Sports Commission, NSC. The mutual suspicion began following the change of guard that brought Chief Silvanus Akinwunmi and Alhaji Babayo Shehu to the NSC as chairman and director general respectively to replace Chief Alex Akinyele and Alhaji Habibu Aliyu.

Citizen investigations revealed that uneasy calm descended over NFA board members and staffers

following moves embarked upon by the new top men at NSC to remove some members of the country's football governing body and replace them with their own men. But recent happenings over who should represent Nigeria at the World Cup draw conducted on Sunday December 19, at Las Vegas, US, actually brought to the fore the silent rift between NSC and NFA. *Citizen* learnt from one of the deputy directors at NSC who declined attribution, that NFA initially drew up a list of people to represent Nigeria at the draw. The list was made up of NFA chairman, the secretary general, Eagles' technical adviser, Clement Westerhof and

Citizen that there were moves immediately Akintunde came to NSC to dissolve NFA along with other associations but the idea was dropped as a result of caution that FIFA, the world football governing body, might suspend Nigeria as was the case in 1992 when the Effiong Okonkwo NFA board was dissolved. The move to dissolve NFA or remove certain individuals from its board was also said to be connected with personality conflicts with some NSC staffers who felt that they now have god fathers at NSC top echelon to settle scores with some NFA members.

The source also said that there were strong fears that any sanction by FIFA could also deprive Nigeria the chance of playing in the World Cup for the first time and it could also make the country lose her provisional right of hosting the Junior World Cup in 1995. It was also believed that NSC chairman's attempt to remove some individuals in NFA board and bring

NSC to assume complete control of NFA and render it useless by usurping its functions. If not so, how do you explain a situation where out of the four men that went for the draw, three are NSC officials while only one was from NFA, the association that ordinarily should have taken full responsibility for such trip?," an

learnt that failure of Super Eagles' technical adviser to be in US during the draw could affect the national team in many ways. Westerhof, according to NFA programme for the draw, was expected to meet other coaches and arrange for friendly matches with countries that are not drawn in the same group with



Yola: NSC spokesman

Shehu: NSC director-general

NFA board member told *Citizen* at the premises of the association's secretariat last week.

One of the obvious consequences of the current attempt by NSC to

Eagles. He was also expected to inspect some of the training pitches and stadia that the national team would be using for their matches and obtain relevant information on Nigeria's group opponents. *Citizen* met Westerhof at NFA secretariat after the news that he would not travel was relayed to him. He looked greatly troubled and declined to comment on the twist of event. He simply said, "I am not in the mood to talk. I can't understand what's going on." One of the indigenous coaches attached to NFA told *Citizen* in Lagos however, that "I will not be surprised if the Super Eagles fumble badly in the Nations Cup and the World cup. It's now obvious that some people at NSC want to use their personal interest and old grudges to destroy the country's collective interest."

By Joe Olajuwon

"I believe there is a subtle policy by the NSC to assume complete control of NFA and render it useless by usurping its functions"

in some people to replace them or to trim down the size of NFA could not be done unless the decree establishing the board is repealed. But repealing the decree would also amount to instant dissolution. "I believe there is a subtle policy by the

usurp the functions of NFA or frustrate it from smooth functioning is the danger of derailing Nigeria's preparation for Africa Nations Cup in Tunisia and the World Cup in United States, US, in March and June next year respectively. *Citizen*

League '94

Ranchers Bees are back

Ranchers Bees Football Club is bouncing back to division one of the national professional league with a big mission after an excruciating one season in division two

The dark period of misfortune that for one year confined Ranchers Bees Football Club of Kaduna to the unenviable corner of Nigeria's national soccer league and prevented the game's followers from watching the excitement of top-flight football actions in the premier division last season, are gone for good. The beleaguered club which, after a crisis-ridden 1992 season, was relegated to the second division of the national league, has now bounced back to the elite circle. Ranchers Bees which before their trouble started in 1990, ranked among the three most outstanding clubs for three years in Nigeria because of their success in the local league and international competitions will play in professional league division one next football season, having gained promotion from division two at the end of last season, after finishing among the first four clubs at the top of the league table.

But the Kaduna based-outfit which in 1990 pioneered professional soccer in Nigeria with 15 other clubs, are coming to the premier division one to surprise their old rivals and reclaim their old glory and honours, according to the club chairman, Alhaji Nuhu Kuso, who for the one gloomy season of relegation presided over the affairs of Ranchers Bees and nursed them back to division one. He told *Citizen* in Kaduna last week that they are coming back to division one with a big mission. "Our mission this time in division one is to go there and win the premier league title. We are not going to be passengers. We want to go and top the league", Alhaji Kuso said.

Alhaji Nuhu Kuso, a practising lawyer is quite aware of the multiple

challenges of division one and he is already preparing the ground to enable the club tackle these challenges squarely next season. One of the arrangements that is expected to put Ranchers Bees in sound footing



Mohammed: former skipper

is inadequate funding. To this end, the club proprietor, Alhaji Mukhtar Mohammed Aruwa is to return as the major financier of the club, according to the chairman. Alhaji Aruwa who in 1986 bought the club from Defence Industries Corporation (DIC) of Nigeria, and for three years pumped in a lot of money to make the club rank among the best in Nigeria, greatly reduced his financial commitment to the club in 1990 and 1991, following management crisis and allegation of lack of

proper accountability of how funds advanced to the club were spent. This lack of strong financial base also largely contributed to the club's relegation in 1992, as most of its good players were snatched by clubs who could give them better offers.

Certain positive signals have however convinced Kuso that Alhaji Aruwa has changed his lukewarm attitude towards the club in the past three years to full commitment. He (Aruwa) is putting in place a concrete source of regular funds for the club. The proprietor has also undertaken to repair at over one

hundred thousand Naira the club's bus which was grounded in Akure during this year's challenge cup preliminary. The proprietor has also secured the service of an European coach to take the club through division one next season. Alhaji Aruwa is also expected in Kaduna this week to meet with club chairman and fin-

nalise budgetary and structural plans for the club's effective campaign in the league next year.

Alhaji Kuso also believes that without strong financial base, the club will not be able to attain its objectives because of keen competition that obtains in division one. He said that Ranchers Bees needed very good and highly dedicated players to compete effectively in division one and that could not be done without money. "You can't get quality players without good inducement", he

said. The chairman has also mapped out plans to fortify the club. Eight players will be recruited to reinforce the club. About three or four of the eight new players are likely to be the club's former utility players who left for other clubs when Ranchers Bees was in financial crisis. Alhaji Kuso who did not disclose the names of the former players, said they agreed to come back if the club could pay them what they were taking in their current clubs.

The club is also to embark on widespread search for sources of revenue to complement whatever comes in from the proprietor and gate-takings. The chairman said the management would solicit for sponsorships from organisations like banks, financial companies and textile companies.

The club's management will also solicit for assistance from the state government. The chairman is optimistic that the change of guard in the state from civilian to military could bring a new lease of life to sports in the state. "We hope the

current military administration in the state will be favourably disposed to us". Ranchers Bees which were runners-up in the national challenge cup in 1987, and missed the Mandela Cup after losing by a lone goal

time, were easily convinced that the club had a mission which should be pursued with dedication and maximum sacrifice. The few members of the management too also worked hard and made a lot of sacrifice to see



Kuso: Ranchers Bees' chairman



Yusuf: NSC secretary-general



Bees' Zakariya (right) and a Jigawa stars player in a league match last year

in the second leg final to A.C. Bizerte of Tunisia in 1989, will witness complete restructure of its management for effectiveness, according to Alhaji Kuso.

Ranchers' sojourn at the lower division of the professional league was quite a trying period and getting back to the elite division was not an easy task, according to the club chairman. But this was however made possible through cooperation and understanding of the players. Alhaji Kuso said that players, most of them young boys who were cutting their teeth in the pro-league for the first

The change of guard in the state from civilian to military could bring a new lease of life to sports in the state

the club back to division one. But Ranchers' chairman says the biggest appreciation should go to their supporters, especially Habib Nigeria Bank Limited who rallied round them and gave them financial backing at a time of great need. "The assistance they (Habib Bank Nigeria Limited) gave us was a big morale booster and I hope other companies in Kaduna would emulate their gesture."

By Joe Olajuwon



WORLD OF SPORTS



BOXING: American Riddick Bower, who lost his world heavyweight boxing title to **Evander Holyfield** last month, will next fight on February 5 against South African **Frans Botha**. Bower's manager **Rick Newman** announced the fight on Monday.

Bowe has one defeat in 35 fights while Botha is unbeaten in 25 fights since turning professional in 1990.

***The World Boxing Council (WBC) will hold its annual congress this week in Las Vegas with about 600 delegates expected world-wide. Three major issues that would be discussed and given clearance by the house are:

The possibility of returning to South Africa, WBC professional status. The South African nation had had the status withdrawn after it was expelled 17 years ago following its apartheid policies.

It will also discuss the idea of introducing passports for all its professional boxers. The WBC thinks the passports which will carry among other things, personal biodata, will help to check mismatch of boxers. The congress is also expected to approve an AIDS tests for all boxers before any fight.

*** **Roberto Duran**, the man who cried "no more" is still fighting 13 years after that public humiliation against **Sugar Ray Leonard**.

The man once known as **Los Manos De Piedra** — "hands of Stone" — will have his 100th fight in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi against **Dender's Tony Menefee**.

The Menefee fight will be the fifth bout of a come back for a man who has long since lost his reputation as the meanest fighter in the business.

Duran reigned supremely as lightweight king until 1978 and two years later interrupted the unbeaten record of Leonard in Montreal to take the WBC welter crown.

FOOTBALL: John Fashanu has been ruled out of any possible invitation

into the Nigerian national team by FIFA. The world football governing body restated over the weekend that players who have been picked by countries to wear their colours at any level cannot play for another country.

The latest development comes in the wake of **John Fashanu**, still enmeshed in an elbow incident with **Spurs' Garry Mabbut**, thinking of playing for Nigeria as it has qualified for USA '94. The Wimbledon captain who was in the Nigerian squad in 1985 but was not picked for any game due to injuries later went on to win two full England caps in 1988 in the **Sir Stanley Rons Cup**.

***Zambia has outlined its preparatory programme for Tunisia '94 African Cup of Nations. The side which failed to qualify for USA '94 will be involved in a mini tournament in January and go on to tour some European countries.

But before the January tournament, the Zambia Football Association will search for 600 million Kwachas (about 800,000 dollars) to contract their erstwhile part-time manager, **Lian Potterfield** for one year on a full time basis.

Potterfield was in charge of the Zambians when they failed to grab a world cup ticket. He took over after the entire squad perished in an air crash enroute to Senegal for a USA '94 qualifier.

***The Ivorian Football Federation (FIF) has said that it would appeal against the expulsion of Ivorian teams from next year's three African tournaments. "We will make an appeal and see eventually what is to be done" FIF president **Dieng Ousseynou** said.

The Confederation of African Football decided in Cairo last Friday to ban Ivorian and Ghanaian teams as the penalty for violence in the two neighbouring countries both before and after a match on October 31 in which at least 25 people were killed.

The trouble began before the Champions Cup semi-final in Kumasi, Ghana, between **Ashanti Kotoko** and **ASEC Mimosa** of Abidjan.

Meanwhile, the Ghana Football Association has also appealed against the decision by CAF to ban Ghanaian teams from continental competitions.

ATHLETICS: World Champion Linford Christie looks set for a return over his retirement plans after hinting he could defend his Olympic title in Atlanta, US, in 1996.

"Keep your pens ready I'm not counting out the Atlanta Games at all", said Christie, who is already the oldest man ever to win Olympic gold.

"I'll be 36 then, but every year I seem to get better. I don't think I'm any where near the pinnacle of my career. Whatever I do, I will make sure I go out at the top".

Christie, voted Britain's top sports personality as well as the sports writers' sportsman of the year flew out to Australia to continue his Winter preparations.

*** World record holders, **Nouredine Morcelli** of Algeria and **Wang Junxia** of China are among six finalists for the 1994 **Jesse Owens** international trophy award.

Morcelli holds the mile record of three minutes 44.39 second and also boasts the second — fastest runs ever at 1,500 and 3,000 metres, while Wang, heading China's astonishing women's squad, broke the 10,000 metres record and won a world championship in the event. She also twice established global marks at 3,000 metres and ran the year's fastest Marathon.

Other finalists for the award, to be presented on February 8, include US runner **Gail Devers**, the 100 metres hurdles and 100 metre world champion, Spanish Cyclist **Miguel Indurain**, who won his third Tour De France.

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DEFINITIONS IN HUMOUR



Realignment of horses

Most people, it is said, fancy themselves instances of those crimes of which they cannot be convicted. And many are the persons who are disciplined, honest and straight — only because they have audience. But then someone has already said that "There are no such things as honest people, there are only people less crooked." Today it is survival of the fittest.

Especially among the privileged class — not those who drove Volvos and thought profit the greatest sin in the world — but those who littered the path of history, and are set to litter the path of future history. Remember that definition of history given by the great devilish lexicographer, Ambrose Bierce; it is, "an account, mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves and soldiers mostly fools."

Well, yes, those. And where does that leave you? High, dry and emaciated, not unlike the fellow who was used as rope in the great tug of war (tug of whore?) between the political juggernauts and the military triggermen — bulging eyes, sockets sunken, elongated neck, twisted torso, empty Charles Atlas tummy, boy legs. You are dropped for dead. I hope you understand what I am saying.

The country has been turned into a horses fair. It has little time or patience for you — a mere human being. Especially now that the horses

are being realigned. In addition, each now draws its gilded chariot. And the idea is that each will trot, scamper and disappear with his load.

Now, of course, coming with indignant haste is a Na-

tional Conference. I have always believed that it should hold. Along the sidelines I will have a good laugh.

The most important agenda at the conference is Revenue Allocation Formula. Much noise has been made in arguments about it. Remember, discussion is said to be an exchange of knowledge; argument is an exchange of ignorance. Hal! hal! How true!

The crisis on the allocation formula has been settled a long time ago. Officially, it is as follows:

Federal Government: 50%

State: 24.5%

Local Government: 22.5%

Ecology: 3%

But the truth, if the truth must be told, will look more like this:

FG: 5%

State: 3%

LG: 2%

Politicians, businessmen and government officials: 90%

So who is complaining? Perhaps you also believe that all this is due to over level of development? That it is in the nature of human beings to act like this?

One can have faith in human nature to cure us of our corruption and indiscipline. Faith in this case becomes "belief without evidence in what is told by one without knowledge, of things without parallel."

Abacha has reversed many of Babangida's acts. Now, if he's really as serious about fighting corruption — as Abubakar Rimi began to dem-

onstrated himself — I advise that he should try to borrow General Buhari for three months — if Buhari will agree.

Of course, if he agrees by the time he picks up the battle once again, half of the reserves and the swamp will probably be on the border while the remaining half will rise up against him. And as you know, two halves make a whole — good for escape.

The few exceptions cannot do anything except prove the rule. And the rule is the only successful one ever waged in this country is the one against discipline. War against discipline — WAD, and appropriately enough, the weapon in the war is a wad of money. What more can one ask — or give?

Komandan Iska

When they told me Tom & Jerry and Charlie Brown have a way of making a kidult out of you I didn't believe them. And then included someone who must not be named and can only be identified by saying that he is on his way to becoming a komandan iska, of the Kalarawi variety. He once told me that when he retired he would want to become a farmer.

Ahem. I cleared my throat. I didn't believe it. Farmers as a rule are the people who feed us, while those who retire to the farm only sink money there before they are overcome by that sinking feeling — and they try to do something more useful. A farmer is a man who makes his money on the farm and spends it in town. An agriculturist (otherwise known as a large-scale farmer — a farmer who requires a large scale to weigh himself) is a man who makes his money in town and spends it on the farm. He fell silent — and handed me this:

CON — Collector of Naira

CFR — Covetor of Foreign Reserves

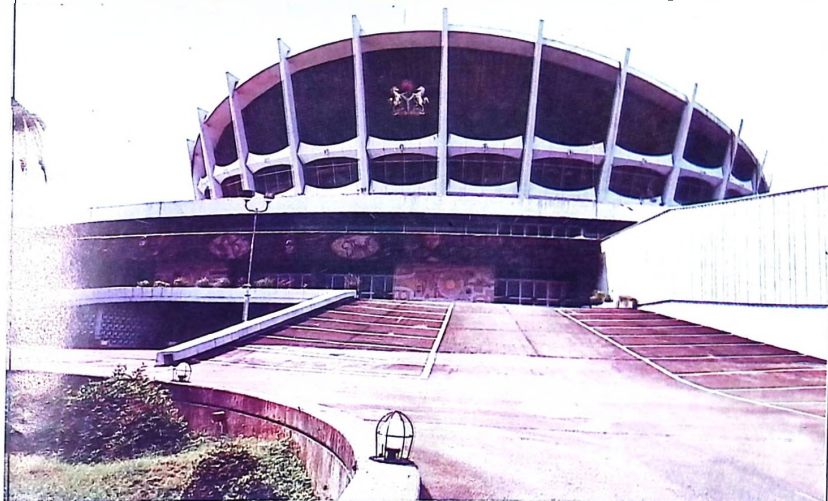
— Converter of Federal Re-

sources

MNI — Monopoliser of Naira

MNI — Mismanager of National Income

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