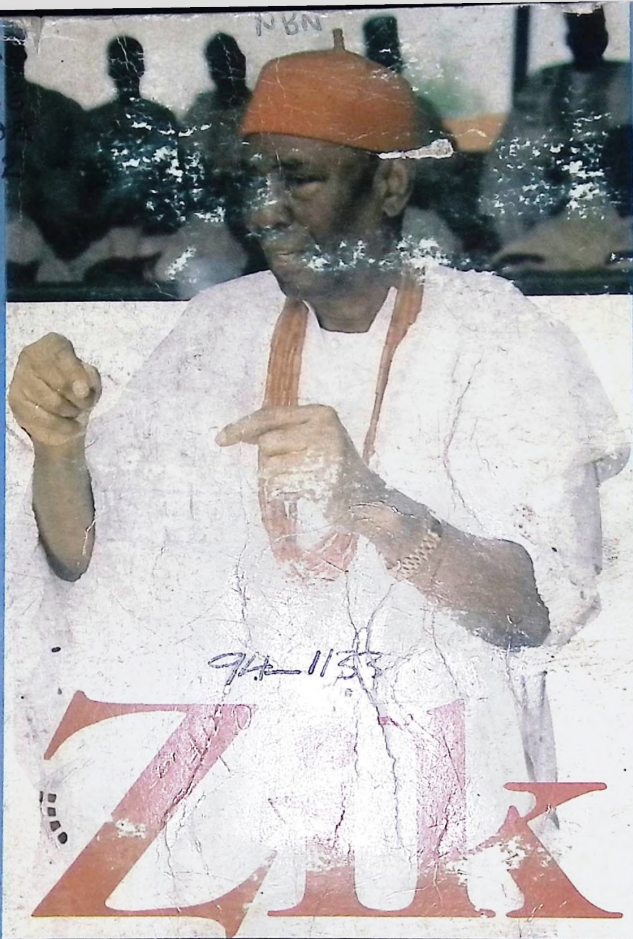




The Last Campaigns

Godson Offoaro



ZIK:
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For

Uzoaku *and* Ogu'ike



The Great Zik addressing a rally during the 1983 campaigns

Introduction

The melodrama that preceded the famous accord between the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) in 1979 surprised only youngsters and the politically naive. Twenty years before, a similar accord was signed and the principal actor between the two accords was the same person — the venerable Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha, Nigeria's first indigenous president.

If the motif force behind the 1959 accord was the preservation of the Nigerian nation, the overriding force behind the 1979 accord was the preservation of participatory democracy. In 1959, Nigeria was eager to obtain political freedom from the unwilling colonial master — the British. The British, having mastered the political art of divide and rule, which they had tested in such countries as India, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Ghana were willing to exploit the inherent suspicion among many competing interests (tribal, class, religious and ethnic configurations) that served as potent forces waiting in the wings either to derail the nascent political process or postpone the march towards Nigerian political independence. The British would have loved this scenario. However, the accord between the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which had Zik at the centre stage, (it is believed) saved Nigeria from disintegration, and sent the British out of Nigeria. In any political process, especially the kind of politics practised within the ambience of a departing colonial power, there will be winners as well as losers. The departing British overlords wanted it to be so, and so, it was with Nigeria. No doubt, the losers in this tribal game-play and first class manipulation, were the Action Group (AG) — the political

party that was dominated by the Yorubas of Western Nigeria. The winners were the NPC and the NCNC. The former, represented the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy and the latter represented the Republican-minded Igbo nation of Eastern Nigeria.

Worse even, was the winners-take-all mentality of African politics which distributed largesse, perks, powers and privileges unevenly and in most cases excluding the losers. The animosity which this created was to linger on till the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 - 1970. Ironically, this Civil War broke out largely because of the breakdown of the pre-independence accord, the preponderance of corruption, dishonesty, and political aggrandisement that crept into the new nation's political fabrics. The inherent wish of the losers to this obvious, lopsided political arrangement was to see that the status quo never prevailed. Most importantly, the remote hand of the colonial master which hovered over Nigeria like the sword of Damocles, had at every point, guarded the political radar like a laser beam.

When the military intervened in January 1966, ostensibly, the aim was to restore sanity in the Nigerian political system. For a fleeting moment, the military intervention was hailed as God-sent. However, when the smoke began to clear, reality rather than emotion began to identify some of the major actors as having been driven by political ambition and tribal loyalty. That Nigeria plunged into a Civil War that cost millions of lives and severe damage to its young economy was a vote of no confidence on the military — an institution that once symbolised the great Nigerian dream. Nigerians ever since, have had a shattered dream.

Between 1966, and 1979, the military was at the centre stage of Nigerian politics. They manipulated the professional politicians, dolled out largesse and perpetuated the very insidious acts for the same reasons they had seized political power. For twelve years, the military had sat at the helm of the Nigerian political scene. Let it be known that General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's

second military leader (who led Nigeria through thirty grueling months of civil war) had promised to relinquish the reigns of power come October 1976. However, in 1974, Yakubu Gowon announced he would not after all quit in 1976. His colleagues led by Murtala Muhammed gave this as an excuse for overthrowing him in 1975 when he was attending the OAU summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. If the reason for sacking Gowon was to restore political democracy, the Murtala regime pursued this goal with a singleness of mind that perplexed his observers. Not even his death at the hands of assassins in 1976 could stop the march to civilian rule. Under the leadership of General Obasanjo, the 1979 general elections were held.

The stage that ushered in the 1979 accord between the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) was in many ways similar to that of 1959. The difference now if any, was the absence of some of the principal actors. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of the Republic had been killed in the 1966 coup. So was the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello — the architect of modern northern Nigeria. But the absence of these gubernatorial gladiators did nothing to diminish the negotiating power or the political skills of their progenies. People such as Alhaji Shehu Shagari, Bamanga Tukur, Aminu Kano and the Sultan of Sokoto, backed by the loud silence of the military, had overpowering impact. On the other hand, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo were still alive and indeed had led their respective political parties to a defeat in the hands of a northern political heir — Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

Another major difference had to do with how the power was transferred. Whereas the British supervised the 1959 general elections, the 1979 general elections were being organised and sometimes manipulated by the military. As was with the 1959 elections, the 1979 elections produced a stalemate, stalemate in the sense that the defeated parties combined, produced a ruling majority, both in the House of Representatives and that of the Senate. Under this

circumstance, transition would have been virtually impossible without a form of alliance.

The NPN-NPP accord of 1979 orchestrated by Nnamdi Azikiwe helped save the day. By this arrangement, the cooperating parties would have control of both houses (Senate and Representative) and this would enable the passage of bills sponsored by the president or those beneficial to the interests of the NPP.

Zik's obvious finger in every political pie in Nigeria from the colonial days, until now had been interpreted from different angles. Whereas the intelligentsia — particularly the western Nigerian intelligentsia see Zik as an Achilles heel to their mentor's (Obafemi Awolowo) dream of becoming Nigeria's President and would do anything to stop him, most Igbos see Zik differently. To them he is the venerable. To the Hausas of Northern Nigeria, Zik was important so long as he prevented Chief Awolowo from getting a taste of the Nigerian presidency. This triangular inter-tribal mutual hostilities had been the bane of Nigerian politics. It had been the root of instability and had led to many unworkable political alliances. No wonder as it was with the accord of 1959, the 1979 accord broke down after thirty months. When this happened nobody was surprised.

If the breakdown of the first accord produced events that culminated into the first military intervention and the Civil War, the breakdown of the second accord prepared the ground for the failure of Nigeria's Second Republic and what appeared to be the most concerted efforts by Nnamdi Azikiwe to shape the course of Nigerian history. It is Zik's role in the 1983 presidential campaigns which happens to be his last that forms the basis of this story.

I cannot clearly recollect now, when I did first hear the name, Nnamdi Azikiwe. As a child, I had sang his name. I had heard numerous fairy tales associated with his mystic and ponderous powers. His having stowed away; the secret of his prowess residing on the efficacy of an old woman he had met before embarking on the stowing away mission. How this old medicine woman had only demanded half a penny from Zik, in addition, to being corked up in a bottle and thrown right into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean and of course Zik's custody to the mysterious key to the Atlantic, locked at Lagos Bar Beach. I had equally heard of Zik's ability to disappear at the approach of evil, how the colonial masters had planned to kill Zik on an electric chair and how he outwitted them and cunningly made one of the plotters' men to rather sit on the chair and was electrocuted. I had heard other tales associated with Nnamdi Azikiwe. How he had killed his first wife who was said to be white and whose offence was that she colluded with the colonial masters to kill him (Dr. Azikiwe) and how the ashes from the charred body of this wicked white woman had been converted into the most flourishing raw material for a face powder known as "Saturday Night." The stories of Zik were many including his wizardry at the art of conversation. Zik, the story went, coined amazing English words from Igbo words which further confounded the colonial masters.

Politically, I had learnt nothing significant of Zik except that he betrayed the Biafran cause towards the tail end of the Nigerian Civil War. This he was later to explain to me

in 1983 at the Government House, Minna, Niger State, that the role he had played was in the best interest of the Igboman and the survival of Nigeria as one and indivisible nation. But I had not seen Zik at a close range before then except in April 1979 at Campos Square, Lagos.

It was during the electioneering campaigns that was to herald Nigeria's Second Republic. By then, I had grown fervently desirous to see him and would have missed seeing him but for the kindness of my English Literature teacher at the Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos. This teacher, a Ghanaian named Emmanuel Amah taught us Advanced Level History as well. He had in one of the lectures described Zik as the greatest living African Statesman. Mr. Amah had granted a fifteen-minute break to enable those of us interested in listening to Zik's campaign speeches at Campos Square — a stone's throw away from Methodist Boys' High School, Lagos — to go. I cannot quite make out now how I felt then, but suffice it to say that I had relaxed nerves after seeing Zik through a network of legs. There he sat, surrounded by his surrogates, admirers, and aides. He did not quite look human. Dark-complexioned, he had a set of eyes that looked younger than the grand Zik I had heard of these past years. He wore a face that permanently radiated endless smiles. He seemed, from my hiding place, to be looking at me. When he eventually rose to speak, there was a thunderous ovation from the crowd. Frankly speaking, I did not see him stand, but I heard those parts of his speech not submerged by ovation.

For example, he spoke of being welcomed by a sea of heads, he spoke of power belonging to God and people being its repository on earth. He begged the crowd to use their strength to vote for him in the coming elections. He recounted how he and others, dead and alive, had bare handedly challenged the colonial masters from the place he was now speaking. He thanked them and pledged to uplift their dignity should he be voted for in the coming elections. Whether the people's agreement was to materialise now is left to history, for Zik and his party

came a distant third in the elections. In spite of this, I still loved Zik. I believed in him. I had the intrinsic belief that I would be a politician after my education fashioned after Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, but when will this opportunity come?

In September 1979, I enrolled into the University of Lagos to read History. On campus, I met Igbo friends from Anambra State who did not speak well of Nnamdi Azikiwe. For the first time, these boys' claim to understand Zik better than I, was based on an account of closer kinship. By state creation, I am an Igbo of Imo State origin. My friends, particularly Emmanuel Ogbumuo, Chris Okonkwo both came from the same Onitsha Local Government just as Zik and Emeka Nnubia from Enugu-Ukwu, all in Anambra State. There was Paul Okafor from Umuleri — a stone's throw from Onitsha.

While Paul was an avid admirer of Azikiwe, Emeka, Chris and Emmanuel, openly cast aspersions on Zik. They called him an ultra-mundane selfish capitalist who capitalised on the Igboman's tribalistic sentiments. They hated him for being "deceptive", they hated him for disagreeing with Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu's Ahiara Declaration. They hated him for developing Anambra North to the detriment of the South from where all of them had come from. In fact, the diatribe from these boys were more or less the actualisation of one of those biblical injunctions that "a prophet is not without honour except in his own land." That thought was the fate of poor Zik.

Nonetheless, my belief in Zik did not waver. I spent time in the Ghandi Library of the University of Lagos, going through collections on Zik. I liked him as well as Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu. I had seen the former not the latter, though the latter is as mysterious to me as the former.

On campus, Zik had been attacked in write ups, at public lectures, and in lecture halls. Dr. Walter Ibekwe Ofonagoro, a History lecturer from Imo State had in one of his lectures on Nationalism, attacked Zik. He traced the root of tribalism in Nigeria to Zik's formation and leadership of the Igbo Tribal Union in the 1930's. He did

not attack the Yorubas openly in the lecture halls. Privately, he looked down on them as great opportunists who cashed in on the absence of the Igbo people during the Civil War to become the *nouveau riches*. His ulterior motive was: To seize the opportunity created by the manoeuvrable intricacy of partisan politics to dismantle the Yoruba economic hegemony. He then openly supported the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The party was seen by many as having its roots from the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy of northern Nigeria. Since Zik led the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Ofonagoro saw the NPP through the lenses of the NPN. He had access to the party's heart by analysing lopsidedly the process of the 1979 elections. Ever since, the Yorubas had hated him not because he was an Igbo man, but because he had helped the NPN rob Obafemi Awolowo — the Yoruba demagogue — of another chance of ruling Nigeria.

My sympathy then went to Ofonagoro not because he supported the NPN, but because of the antagonism he suffered from the Urhlag community. I felt he had a right to belong to any party of his choice. Ofonagoro in turn had misunderstood me. He had believed I admired him because of his inclination to the NPN. He subsequently sought to use the latent radicalism which he confessed he found in me to push the NPN's cause on campus politics. To this end he introduced me to one Mr. Joe Agbro, a member of the NPN Youth Wing to inculcate the ideas of the NPN into me. Since I had formed my opinion, I did not take Agbro's supplications seriously. I, however, learnt one or two political tricks from my close association with Joe Agbro and this helped me tremendously when I contested in the campus elections during the 1980/81 academic session.

One day in 1981, on the campus, I had made a declaration that was to form the first of my future political career and belief. I had during a discussion with Emmanuel Ogburnuo confessed that I loved politics, and that my style of politics would be fashioned after the Fabian socialism (a term I hardly understood then) of

Nnamdi Azikiwe, but, that my greatest problem was how to meet Azikiwe, to obtain his approval and blessing.

To actualise this aim, I set off to Onuiyi Haven in the university town of Nsukka in the first week of April 1981. At the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, I sought after a relation of mine named Rowland who was majoring in Pharmacy. I discovered from discussions with him that he liked politics and secretly admired Nnamdi Azikiwe. He had told me that my political exploits in Unilag had frittered into Nsukka. He told me of the myth already spreading, regarding my belief. He volunteered, at little request, to conduct me round Zik's home at Onuiyi Haven. At Onuiyi Haven by six-thirty an ominous aura of secrecy, fear, suspicion and myth hovered around the set of buildings surrounded by trees inhabited by lower animals such as bats, owls and squirrels. The bats were conspicuously present as they perched and flew from tree to tree devouring available fruits from one of the numerous mango trees. The Onuiyi rivulet itself provided a picture of inspiration and awe. The rivulet flowed obtrusively down the sloppy lanes that beautified the landscape that was Zik's residence. Although it looked stagnant from a distance, its serenity was suggestive. A custodian of things ominous to the outside view. We approached the area with great trepidation. At a point, I was afraid, growing frigid and scared. I told Rowland that we should leave. I had gotten to Nsukka, to Onuiyi Haven, seen Zik's flats and home, but could not enter. I could not have entered, for nobody, according to Rowland, knew when Zik was around or when he was away. Questions were not even asked. Asking questions was not forbidden, but people generally did not ask. They simply knew that Zik lived there. By seven in the evening, rays of light could be seen from afar creeping out of the sea of trees that almost shielded Zik's house from the outsider. I returned to Lagos without seeing Zik. I was not altogether disappointed for not seeing him, since I had been forewarned that it was not going to be easy in the first place.

Back on campus, I had subconsciously lamented what I

called a personal handicap. A handicap that had crippled my aspirations and desire to meet and possibly have direct personal communication with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. I had lamented this disability that stemmed from my rather "low" birth, for had I belonged to the few privileged Nigerians, I would have as a matter of routine seen and talked with Zik as many times as I wanted in my short stay on earth. Whether in a soliloquy or open discussion now, I cannot remember, but one thing I vividly remember is that one day on campus after a heated argument on the subject, "Zik" with my classmates, I had pleaded with God to grant me the great chance to meet the great Zik. I had made a pledge that before I go into active politics, as I was sure I would one day do, I would go to Onuiyi Haven with camping materials. There, I would request audience with Zik. If it becomes difficult for me to see him, I would unroll my mat, prepare a makeshift home at the gate of Onuiyi Haven till I saw and discussed with the great Zik.

But what will I be talking about should the opportunity of meeting Zik just call? First I would ask for his blessings. Second, I would demand acceptance or refutation of all those mythological innuendos associated with his name. I would demand to know if they were just rabid imaginations or just an extension of my childhood fantasies and weirdness. I would demand an explanation to why he thought in 1952 that whoever went to Lagos City College should "live to learn to create". There were other things that boiled and receded almost immediately in my memory as I lay on my bed in Room 264B, El Kanemi Hall, Unilag in that month of May 1982.

When I had the first opportunity of realising my dreams in March 1983, I lost it. In fact, I forgot my pledge on campus. How I lost the opportunity I cannot just tell now. Suffice it to say that I lost that chance because of an overflow of emotion and sentiment. A sentiment not unconnected with an Igbo proverb that translates into something like this:

"When you give a child a gift least expected, he will demand an explanation for whom the gift is meant."

My first opportunity of talking with the old Zik was in Jos during the NPP national convention. There, it was rumoured that the Balarabe Musa faction of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) and other such partymen as Abubakar Rimi and Abubakar Barde and Goni's faction of the Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) would fuse with the NPP to form the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP).

At Jos, a cream of Nigerian liberals in the Republic gathered. Those attending were Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Governors Abubakar Rimi, Abubakar Barde, Sam O. Mbakwe, Jim Nwobodo and Solomon Lar. Others included strong partymen such as D. B. Zang, Adeniran Ogunsanya, Shettima Mustapha, Chief Arthur Nzeribe, (the millionaire who had a week earlier donated executive jets to the movement) Senators Wash Pam, Emeka Echeruo, Obi Wali, Mrs. Uche Offia-Nwali, Rtd. Colonel Philip Effiong, Edwin Ogbu, Ndidi Edewor, Alex Fom, Paul Unongo. Timidly, amazed at the presence of the galaxy of personalities, the consequence was that instead of trying to steal an interview from Zik, I only got one from Mbakwe, one from Arthur Nzeribe, Emeka Echeruo, Mrs. Uche Offia-Nwali and Patience Mbakwe, the daughter of Governor Mbakwe. I spent the whole period of the two-day convention in Jos thinking about Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Was it his real person or spirit that I had really seen. I marvelled and pondered over this question for a long time, until I met Zik again at the Abuja airport lounge.

What exactly transpired behind the scene in Jos succeeded, at least on the face value, in putting the

journalists in a much more complex dilemma. Days before the convention, speculations were rife that election primaries were almost completed and almost all the gubernatorial candidates of the NPP for the forthcoming elections had been known. The latest and last on the series was the election in Benin of an Urhobo chief named D. A. Ewherekuko. His nomination had provided a myriad of protestations from NPP supporters in Bendel State. Mrs. Nnidi Edewor, the woman activist who later claimed in an interview with me to have followed, had supported and worshipped Zik all her life, had contested and lost to Chief Ewherekuko. In Jos, she declared a truce and openly called on her supporters to team up with her and support the candidacy of Chief Ewherekuko.

However, behind this facade of massive solidarity and support was the big poser that haunted the NPP — the awareness of the fact that it was a party born of crisis, thriving on crisis and bound to encounter more crises. The NPP was aware that left to fight the elections alone on its present strength (which was by far stronger than was the case in 1979), it would still come a distance third to the NPN and UPN in that order. Political tact and diplomacy, however, demanded that the party should keep thinking of winning the presidency till the last minute.

Coupled with this thought was the anxious moments created by the highly radicalised class of northerners, epitomised in the attitude of such men as Balarabe Musa, Abubakar Rimi, Shehu Musa, Shehu Yar'adua and Solomon Lar. Collectively, these modern vibrant politicians of the Kano, Jos and Kaduna axis looked elsewhere for an umbrella under which they would get to power.

It is interesting to point out that while Yar'adua, a retired general, was hated by the NPN who accused him of entering into secret agreement with Awolowo's UPN, Rimi and Balarabe Musa were Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) renegades. They had climbed to the governorship of their respective states riding on the back of the PRP, but soon deviated on their promise to be moderate leftists as

prescribed by the founder and mentor of the Party — Mallam Aminu Kano.

Their disobedience which earned them expulsion from the party had by the beginning of 1983, made them executives without party base. Their expulsion from the PRP implied that they needed membership of a new party to be able to qualify to contest any elective posts.

The Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) under whose umbrella many moderates could have used to contest the 1983 elections had been denied registration by the FEDECO, on the grounds of illegitimacy. Because of this, political theoreticians and analysts had before the Jos Convention gone to town with the opinion and idea that the NPP would outwit FEDECO's trap and that this would attract the moderates who seemed to have no where to go after FEDECO's rejection of the registration of the PPP. This theory was based on the ground that most of those who had already signified their intention to form the PPP were original members of the NPP. The speculation had gone further to predict that Abubakar Rimi would be the presidential candidate of the PPP. This speculation gained credence on the eve of the convention when Abubakar Rimi resigned his governorship post of Kano State. This expectation, however, died when the much expected Rimi failed to show up at the convention on its first day. By the time he showed up the following day, he was only to witness the nomination and ratification of Zik and Mustapha as the presidential candidate and running mate respectively.

The present NPP was a faction of the original NPP which split in 1979 when Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim wanted to retain the chairmanship and the presidential candidature portfolios. Some believe, it was Zik's entry into politics that split the original NPP, thus creating the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP).

On why he could not attend the convention the first day, Rimi explained to the emotionally charged audience that it was the death, the previous week, of some fourteen members of the Kano legislature in a ghastly motor

accident that terrified him. Investigations made by newsmen revealed that the radical Rimi wanted not to be persuaded to be Nnamdi Azikiwe's running mate. He had evaluated his achievement (of a near egalitarian society) in Kano as a sure ticket for a second term in office no matter under what party he contested. He had reasoned that Nnamdi Azikiwe, come what may, will not supplant incumbent Shagari easily. He had reasoned also that a bird at hand should be worth two in the bush, therefore opted to nest his egg in Kano. He was to be proved right after the election though he had lost the same election in a most bizarre way that puzzled the most fanatically inclined supporter of Alhaji Abubakar Rimi of Kano. Zik and the NPP had a distant third position, which naturally couldn't have been the case.

Perhaps, if the PPP had been registered and Rimi had been nominated its presidential candidate, the results of the 1983 general election would have been significantly different from what it turned out to be if granted a free and fair conduct. Rimi, a born leftist, had read History at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He had followed it up with a masters in International Relations and this seemed to have prepared him. From History, he seemed to have learnt that events are influenced by people. He had learnt of the role the ancient city of Kano had played in shaping the history of present day Nigeria and its seat as the traditional home of the original home of the Hausa Bokwai who had defended the city from generation to generation, including the resistance against the Fulani Jihadists.

From his study of International Relations, he might equally have drank from the cups of vibrant diplomats such as Robert Stewart Castlereagh, Andrei Gromyko, Fidel Castro and Henry Kissinger. Thus, Rimi had grown into a full-fledged diplomatic tactician using his ego, personality and oratory power as the deadliest weapons in his arsenal. When he entered the convention venue that morning, shouts of "chan-ji! chan-ji!!" rent the air.

At the Government Lodge Jos, a day before the convention proper was a beehive of activities. When a politician of Nnamdi Azikiwe's calibre goes to any town, there is usually a myriad of followers. Amongst them are political hangers-on, most of whom are sycophants and praise-singers whose very existence depended solely on their constant showing before those that matter in politics. Prominent in this class were advisers — genuine and charlatans, contractors, thugs, young girls and old girls, the Press, fans — real and spies. There were members of the armed forces — the Police, the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO), plain clothed security men. Among these, the most ubiquitous and sometimes nauseating is the NSO. Armed with an apparently unlimited power which he openly exhibited, nobody not well-connected dared say something that would run contrary to the desired aims of the master-politician. At Jos, the ubiquity of the NSO official was even noticed during meals. Whatever he did, he did it in the direction suggestive of one having vested interests. He supervised the food in such a manner that'll make you think he is afraid the food would hurt the master-politician.

Genuine advisers sometimes are outnumbered by fakes. Fakes show off a lot. They go to the man at the high table to whisper one thing or the other into his ears. In most cases, they are thugs. Throughout my travels with Zik, this persisted. Ignoramuses intended to dominate and direct the flow of events. This was the case in Jos, Makurdi, Yola and most glaringly in Calabar. I will speak on this topic in

later parts of this book. But suffice it now to point out that the activities of these sycophants cost the NPP well-articulated advice. It cost them the services of well-trained and experienced tacticians such as Dr. Henryline Ibezim and Dr. J. O. J. Okezie. While Dr. Ibezim was working as a non-committed paid official who could not brook nonsense, Dr. Okezie was a committed partyman. In fact, he was as at then enjoying the patronage accruing from his ardent support for the NPP — the Chairmanship of the African Continental Bank (ACB). When Ibezim felt he could not take any more of the administrative lapses from the NPP he quit and joined the NPN. Okezie could not resign since he was already suffering from the nausea associated with turncoats having once left the NPN for the NPP. I will talk more on this when I bring you my personal interviews with both men.

I must point out in this book that the NPP differed greatly from rival political parties at the national level in many regards. For example, while the NPN and UPN had strong and respected central bureaux for the articulation and implementation of party policies and decisions, the NPP relied and even over-dependended on the personal charisma of the man Nnamdi Azikiwe, to see them through. Explaining away this apparent lax, Senator Emeka Echeruo, told me that while not denying the fact that the party had some degree of dependence on Zik, the party's central policy was the way it was because the three states controlled by the party tended to dictate what happened in their zones. Secondly, the absence of money men in the NPP made the party over-dependent on the states for funds to run the party. Because of this, the states which financed the party had to dictate what happened at the national level. In essence, what made the party assume such posture of unseriousness was the communication gap that the states created between them and the party's national headquarters in Lagos. Senator Echeruo even admitted that this lax sometimes made the NPP legislators at the national level follow different directions on matters that demanded unanimity. He admitted that because of

this, the NPP national policies at times tended to have been misdirected. No doubt, therefore, that was a preponderance of mediocrity, luck and some hirelings who could have given the same services to any party that had accosted them with relevant fees.

Prominent amongst hangers-on at the Jos Hill Station Hotel — the venue of the convention proper — were women. They were at times the cynosure of events. This was a result of their peculiarly charming beauty and alluring demeanours. Pressmen, mostly those of the younger age bracket restlessly became inquisitive on sighting as many women as they were in Jos. You may think that they (the women) were unwanted guests. You may think they were political sisters in diaspora who had voluntarily turned up to grace the great event such as the arrival of the Great Owelle of Onitsha in town. The girls were not. Half of them were non-residents of Jos. They were a class of easy virtue and low morals that had emerged with the advent of partisan politics. They were out to make money, name and personal pleasure. Some did make fortune. Some did not make and were simply discarded soon after use. Written on some of their faces were bold determination never to stop trailing politicians till fortune smiled at them.

At Jos, fortune did smile on one of them, according to reliable information leaked to the press by one driver to an NPP party-stalwart. According to the account, one of these girls had strayed into the chalet of the politician, to the waiting embrace of the old man who had taken sufficient running about in the day to have more energy left for a suitable comfort of a teenage girl-prostitute — a girl young enough to be his grandchild!

According to this story, the old man had hardly had the required satisfaction with his night-old love when he slept off in the morning of the night. The girl only made sure her old man had slept fine when she emptied his briefcase containing some fifty thousand naira — contingent amount set aside for the prosecution of party emergency duties. When he woke the following morning to discover that his

money had disappeared with his love, he made no fuss about it. He instead vented his anger on his driver and attendants for the rest of the day and throughout the convention.

However, the case of the stolen money, at the chalet of the Jos Hill Station Hotel, was one of the secluded event and isolated cases of devious roles of prostitutes and their sponsors. If for example a genuine thief had broken into the man's suite, surely it would have been front-page news. But this was a most despicable situation, a situation borne out of political ethics and attendant consequences. Not one, out of the numerous politicians, did not have a mistress on tour with him. Just choose not to go to bed in time if you are checked into the same hotel and you will see wonders. The wonders wrought on the Second Republic's society's psyche by protocol officials. And it was these officials that contracted the flooding of any political gathering with women whose duty it was to service the aging politicians.

Sitting on the high table that day were Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, National Chairman of the Party, Chief R. B. K. Okafor, first Vice-Chairman, Chief D. B. Zang, Plateau State Chairman and another Vice National Chairman of the Party. There were Lieutenant Colonel Philip Effiong (Rtd.), Chief D. A. Ewherekuko, Chief Francis, Mrs. Uche Ofia-Nwali, Mrs. Ndidi Edewor, Mrs. Ifunanya Udom Azogu — Special Adviser to Sam Mbakwe. Others include Sam Mbakwe himself, Jim Nwobodo, Abba Rimi, Chief Peter Nsek, Olutoyo Solarin, follower of Zik since 1947, Abubakar Barde, Edwin Ogbu, Alex Fom, Paul Unongo, Shettima Mustapha, Solomon Lar, J. O. J. Okezie, Emeka Echeruo and a host of other party faithfuls that had a thing or two to do with the NPP.

For the first time, since 1979 when I saw Zik at the Campos Square Lagos, I was now opportune to come in close contact with the Owelle of Onitsha. Let me now confess that by this moment I had forgotten the numerous fruitless efforts I made to see Zik, to receive his blessing, and to be associated with him. By now my major

preoccupation revolved around his image, not to miss any aspect of what he does in Jos. This is very important because a Zik wearing a broad smile when he should not have, could mean more than a headline news item. Moreover, mine was a television agency needing to cover every aspect of what transpired in a gathering he attends.

I conjecture, the inability of Abubakar Rimi to attend the convention in time created a world of uncertainty in the camp of the NPP. How could this convention end without the NPP nominating a presidential candidate? How would the party explain away this bearing in mind that the FEDECO deadline for the nomination of candidates was almost coming to an end. Now Rimi would not attend the convention. The NPP has not changed to PPP, of course, if NPP does, what would the unpredictable FEDECO do? All the same, something must be done and very urgently too.

Few minutes before the convention began, Chief R. B. K. Okafor had in a most dramatic turn moved a motion seeking for an immediate amendment to the party constitution, the aim of which was to legalise and authorise the submission for election, name(s) of any person(s) who might not have been a member of the Nigerian People's Party. Seconded by Nddi Edewor, the vivacious woman activist from Bendel State, the convention unanimously adopted the motion. Soon afterwards, Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya announced to the glee of anxious conventioners that one Dr. Shettima Ali Mustapha, until that morning a member of the GNPP, had declared for the NPP with more than two hundred thousand of his supporters. There was a thunderous ovation. The ovation had hardly subsided when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe rose, seized the microphone from Adeniran Ogunsanya, and quoted relevant aspects of the Constitution which empowers any presidential candidate to appoint his running mate in any election that was to be conducted by FEDECO. Said Zik "In accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, do hereby appoint . . ." He looked round and round as if he was surveying members in

attendance and possibly chose from amongst them before announcing the candidate. When he paused, there was again a thunderous ovation. He again began, this time more cautious, than when he first began. "Distinguished conventioners, ladies and gentlemen of the Press, the man with whom I am running for the coveted seat of the Presidency is no other person than a man of letters, a PhD holder in Agronomy, a former Civil Servant Commissioner in Borno State, Dr. Shettima Ali Mustapha."

He held Mustapha by his right hand and showed him to the conventioners amidst the click of a multitude of cameras and a battery of television cameras. Thereafter, Zik began enumerating the great achievements of Shettima Mustapha. According to him Mustapha was a man of humble upbringing, having lost his father at the age of seven, he had undergone the hardship that is always a feature of orphans in Nigeria. This singular attribute, he went on, has prepared his mind towards appreciating the plight of the common man; besides, Mustapha's career in the civil service was a chequered one, having risen through the ladder and having attained the topmost position of a permanent secretary, he will no doubt be in a position to appreciate the plight of the highly neglected, cheated and oppressed civil servants. Not all, Shettima Mustapha is a specialist in agriculture. Having obtained a PhD in this field, he is much more opportune to appreciate the agricultural problems facing Nigeria. "An Agronomist", Zik pointed out, "will no doubt transform the vast and wasting agricultural resources in Nigeria. What we want is a change from a rice-importing nation to a rice-exporting nation. All we are saying is that a situation whereby Nigeria, a once agricultural nation, now imports even palm oil must stop. This I am sure will not be achieved without a technocrat versed in the field of agriculture. The importance to which the NPP attaches to agriculture should therefore be seen from this appointment. I hope we have made a right choice and we will be voted into office come August. Ladies and Gentlemen, meet Shettima Ali Mustapha." Again there was a thunderous ovation.

Shettima Mustapha is a tall dark-skinned man from Borno State. He is of the Gwandu extraction. A Moslem with the Alhaji honorific, he is equally of letters and I must say he belonged by act and not disposition, to the bourgeoisie class. He looked affable, kind and crafty. He was a politician of note at least, but not the controversial figure that Nigerian politics would respect and honour. He, however, appeared to me a sly fellow that could undo his confidants only after a period of endured provocations. He was a good choice considering Nigeria's geo-religious situation. A Moslem from the north pairing with a Christian from the south.

Accepting the offer, Dr. Mustapha pledged to run *physically* with the Owelle of Onitsha. Said he, "I am now before all of you here accepting this offer to run *physically* with him (Zik) to the State House come October, 1983." There was again a deafening applause.

When Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe rose again, this time to read his prepared speech, most of the pressmen around scrambled for vantage positions. Vantage positions in the sense that they equally looked for comfortable places not only to have access but to also relax should Zik have a marathon speech. I did not care to do so for my enthusiasm at seeing Zik had vanished.

"Gentlemen of the Press," said Zik, "I must tell you from the onset that the speech I have with me is a very short one, nonetheless, when it gets longer than you expect, I appeal that you be patient till the last. . . ." The speech which later turned out to be the bedrock of the NPP manifesto for the impending elections touched on many aspects of the nation's serious political and economic life. It lasted for more hours than expected.

First, Zik began by reminding the conventioners and by implication Nigerians of the need for change. He lamented that the period of Nigeria's existence as a sovereign nation, which by 1983, in twenty-three years, "had witnessed technological backwardness, economic dependency and cultural self-estrangement. According to him, every change of government in Nigeria had witnessed its

rulership by the same parent elite who owe their aspiration to high office not to achieve individual merit, but to the members, dependents and agents of certain families in certain parts of the country, an elite riding to power on the backs of millions of their countrymen, on the basis of birth privilege, connection and patronage; a mafia elite holding authority through electoral fraud, police terrorism, military intimidation, massive bribery and the appeal to ethnic and religious fanaticism. This corrupt bourgeois elite is represented today by the leadership of the NPN, whose wealth allures them to impose their exploitative control on the people."

Continuing, Zik said that "since independence, the people of Nigeria have waited for a redeeming CHANGE in the conditions of their life. They have waited for peace, fraternity and progress in the nation. They have waited for jobs, planned manpower utilisation and the punctual payment of workers; they have waited for clean cities with regular water supply, electricity and basic sanitation; they have waited for a modern technological education that will enable them to assume control of the economy and of their own well-being, they have waited for a government dedicated to their service and to the positive transformation of their lives, they have waited for a LEADERSHIP that can mobilise, direct and inspire their energies to strive towards agreed national goals; a leadership that responds to the creative challenges of government while accepting a democratic restraint on executive powers, they have waited for recognition and respect in the wider world believing that they too can become a force for peace and justice in the international community; but, their government has offered them nothing but planlessness, squandermania, nepotism and mediocrity." There was another deafening ovation coupled with shouts of "Chan-ji! Chan-ji!! Chan-ji!!!"

Amidst this ovation, Zik's ringing tone went on and on to assert that the party he represents, rejects in all totality, the present distribution of political and economic power, the mismanagement and abuse of public institutions,

economic dependency and client relationship to Western Capitalism, the oppressed condition of the common people, corruption, social injustice and indiscipline in every walk of life.

He then enumerated what turned out to be the pivot of his party's electoral campaigns in the weeks ahead. According to him, NPP believes that a deep-rooted transformation of Nigeria's condition on the basis of freedom, equality and social justice will lead to a new and progressive social order drawing its energies from the power of a conscious, organised and vigilant people. He then pledged that if his party is elected to power it will strain every nerve.

* * *

The NPP Manifesto

"To unite all the people and mobilise all resources for the effort of modern nation-building to increase the productivity of the Nigerian economy to turn austerity into prosperity to take the benefits of development to the rural masses to provide a purposeful and functional education for all, and to create a just and disciplined social order.

To give effect to the above principles, we pledge that on taking over control of the affairs of the nation, the NPP Government will be: Committed to promote and defend the unity of the people of Nigeria over and above all sectional interests; we shall also be committed to preserve and defend the constitution and to uphold the due process of law as an institution which sets limitation to governmental power. The NPP government will be committed to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons lawfully residing in Nigeria without regard to their ethnic origins, sex or religion; to emancipate the people from ignorance, exploitation and oppression and to mobilise them to defend their rights. The government will be committed to ensure, promote and defend the process of democratic elections and open democratic activity in all organs of government and the elimination of all feudal and fascist practices which violate the fundamental human

rights of anyone; we will be committed to promote social and political policies that will consolidate and advance Nigeria's struggle for social, economic and political change; we will be committed to enhance the productive capacity of the Nigerian state in order to generate more wealth and enhance the quality of life of the people; we will be committed to the promotion and support of scientific, technical and other creative ideas in order to enhance productivity in the industrial, agricultural and technological fields; we will be committed to impose state control regulations on all strategic economic activities particularly heavy industries, banking and insurance, mineral resources and infrastructural facilities; we will be committed to bring to an end the present concentration of wealth in the hands of a tiny minority and to abolish throughout the Federation the system of community tax and cattle tax, otherwise known as *haraji* and *jangali* respectively since these typify the major instruments of feudal and colonial oppression, exploitation and extortion; we will be committed to a guaranteed national minimum wage and the regular payment of salaries and allowances to all wage earners; committed to a programme of integrated rural development centred around the peasant farmers; committed to guarantee land to the tiller especially the small-scale agricultural producer who has in the past fed the nation, but is today alienated from the land; committed to a programme of building new and modern industries in each state in order to ensure rapid and balanced industrialisation and the increase and spread of employment opportunities; committed to a programme of urban renewal to save old towns and cities from decay, congestion with filth, and to the creation of new towns to promote the work, health and happiness of all our people; committed to a free, universal and purposeful education at all levels; (there was a deafening ovation apparently in reaction to this). We are also committed to a free and effective health care system based on the provision of adequate medical centres and hospitals in each of the local government areas in the Federation; on the intensification

of drug research and drug production locally, and the extension of the preventive aspects of health care; committed to advance the social and economic conditions of the workers, peasant farmers, teachers and other producers of goods and services in the country; committed to the promoters of the dignity of women through the building of women centres run by women themselves for accelerated literacy, the development of skills and the enhancement of civic rights; committed to mass literacy campaigns for all adults; committed to the creation of more states in the Federation in accordance with the Constitution and the wishes of the people in order to promote harmonious and accelerated social and economic development; committed to answering that our Armed Forces are strengthened and our Security Forces fully equipped with modern weaponry for the effective defence and policing of our borders; committed to support African Unity and the liberation struggle of all the people of Africa, black people everywhere and all oppressed people fighting for liberation from imperialism and its aggressive instruments apartheid and racism in whatever form, whether in the Middle East, South Africa, the Americas or anywhere else in the world; committed to a purposeful and dynamic foreign policy which is directed towards the achievement of a more just and peaceful world; and committed to producing a change in our style of government and our lifestyle, in order to infuse into our various peoples a renewed sense of patriotism and devotion to our nation, Nigeria, rather than the pursuit of private sectional and ethnic interests as practised by the NPN-controlled Federal Government.

In order to promote harmony and the spirit of cooperation between the Federal Government and the states, and in recognition of the separate jurisdictions of state governments under the Constitution, an NPP Government will:

- (i) promote and support consultations between all federal institutions and their counterparts in the states;

- (ii) review the Revenue Allocation Act having regard to the responsibility of the state governments for the provision of educational services, health service, water supply and other social amenities to most of the people of Nigeria;
- (iii) ensure that every state receives a fair share of federal investments and services in accordance with the spirit of Section 16 of the constitution;
- (iv) direct federally-owned newspapers, radio and television stations to provide impartial coverage of the activities of all governments and political parties in accordance with the laws establishing them;
- (v) ensure that Section 195(4) of the Constitution is observed by State Police Commissioners in the interest of law and order and of the security of the states of the Federation;
- (vi) set in rapid motion constitutional machinery for the creation of new states in accordance with the wishes of the people;
- (vii) take legislative, financial and other measures to ensure the effective functioning of democratically elected local government councils as the third tier of government in accordance with Section 7 of the Constitution.

Law and Order

The NPP will uphold, sustain and defend the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as the supreme law of the land and we commend the Supreme Court whose verdicts in many fundamental cases brought before it, has defended the Constitution against sustained attacks from the fascist administration of President Shehu Shagari.

The NPP will support and sustain a just, efficient, fearless and independent judiciary. In view of the ongoing discussions about the status of the judiciary at present, an NPP Government will appoint a high-powered commission of reputable jurists and administrators charged with the responsibility of finding ways of giving the fullest

autonomy to the judiciary. For the convenience of the people, the NPP will increase the number of judges and magistrates in order to speed up the hearing of court cases. Conditions of service will also be made more commensurate with the dignity of the bench. The NPP will create a new information order that will promote the free flow of information and ensure through frequent press briefings, that the public is fully conversant with the activities of government. The NPP will create a new information order that will promote the free flow of information and ensure through frequent press briefings, that the public is fully conversant with the activities of government. The NPP believes the freedom of the Press is derived from the right of the citizen to know what his government is doing. Press freedom should, therefore, be regarded as an instrumental function in our democracy. But the Shagari Administration has systematically undermined the Press, prosecuting in the first six months of this year alone no less than a dozen journalists on frivolous charges which (in all the cases that have so far been determined) were thrown out by the courts.

In order to free the Press from arbitrary restraints, an Information Access Commission will be appointed to review (paying due regard to the need for national security) the official Secrets Act and other official regulations restricting the operations of the media. The NPP will end the present ineptitude and negligence in the treatment of the Nigeria Police. Massive retraining programmes will be introduced for all ranks. New barracks will be built to raise morale, to revive the *esprit de corps* that made our police so effective before, said to isolate the force from corrupt influences from outside sources. Several sets of uniforms will be issued to the men to restore their pride and authority. For operations, sophisticated modern equipment for combating crime will be supplied and a programme drawn up for the development of cooperation between the police and the people. A general review of the conditions of service will also be undertaken to make the Nigeria Police Force a popular and effective instrument of public security.

In the interest of peace, security and unity, the NPP will repeal any presidential orders affecting Section 195 of the Constitution, and it will ensure that the original provision of the Constitution regarding the relationship between State Governors and State Commissioners of Police is restored. The last four years have witnessed several major breakdowns of public order, notably in Kano and Maiduguri during the Maitatsine riots and in the confrontations between the police and the people in Keghara Dere (Rivers State) and Bakolori (Sokoto State) and in Anambra State. The NPP believes that such incidents of popular resistance against constituted authority will cease only in a just and consultative democracy of the kind which the NPP will usher in.

Defence and National Security

On defence policy, it is a virtue to be reticent. However, Nigeria's need for the best trained, best equipped, best officered Armed Forces in Africa is beyond question. Our leadership position in the continent requires it. The defeat of the C. A. U. in Chad has shown that the peace-keeping role of the organisation cannot be taken for granted. Now can we speak of decolonisation and alternative defence strategies for the Southern Atlantic without increasing and modernising our defence capability? The NPP will give special attention to the equipment of the Air Force as a branch of the Armed Forces which plays a most critical role in modern warfare.

The NPP views the functions of the Navy not only in the context of National Defence and our increasing international responsibilities, but also as the force which must guard our national waters against piracy, smuggling, unauthorised fishing, and other attacks on our economic welfare.

For the arms and ammunition needed to fulfil the above responsibilities it is imperative that we extend and diversify Nigerian defence industries. It is also imperative that Nigeria should acquire nuclear capability within a decade. Nigerian nuclear scientists working abroad should

be positively encouraged to return home for this task, and the exploitation of our reserves of uranium should begin without further delay.

Comprehensive training and retraining programmes for all services and ranks should be introduced to make our armed forces the most modern defence machine in Africa. In this connection, the NPP will give every encouragement to the upgrading of the Naval College, Oron and the Defence Academy, Kaduna to military universities.

Although, the NPP thus recognises the need for military readiness and unremitting vigilance, yet our policy towards all nations will be based on consultation, friendship and good neighbourliness. The National Security Council will meet more frequently to advise the President on national security.

The Economy

The main cause of the collapse of the national economy is the failure of the Shagari Administration to control imports. This analysis is borne out by the following figures supplied (except for 1982 items) by the Honorable Minister of Commerce during his November, 1982 Press Briefing.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Foreign Exchange Earning</i>	<i>Imports</i>
1979	\$10,379 million	\$6,169 million
1980	\$14,198 million	\$9,059 million
1981	\$10,874 million	\$12,919 million
1982	\$10,000 million (about)	\$11,400 million (about)

Had the expenditure on imports been kept at the 1979 level, there would have been comfortable foreign exchange surpluses in 1981 and in 1982; and our economy would still be buoyant today. Moreover, it is apparent that our foreign exchange earnings have remained fairly constant except for the boom year of 1980 when the war between Iran and Iraq inflated sales.

When it became clear that we were on the edge of the of bankruptcy in 1982, President Shagari introduced "austerity measures" so ill-conceived that instead of curing the disease, they worsened it. The measures had the effect of closing down existing industries, of throwing hundreds of thousands of workers out of employment, of terminating the capital projects of state governments and private entrepreneurs, and driving consumer prices far beyond the reach of the common people.

An NPP Federal Government will immediately revise the Economic Stabilisation (temporary provisions) Order so that they affect industrial raw materials and spare parts. All industries and social services being financed by external loans would be permitted to import spare parts and raw materials without import licence, import duties and prohibitive deposits. The effect of these measures will be to reopen all industrial establishments which have closed down, re-engage laid-off workers, revitalise dormant factories and flood the market with locally produced goods at reduced prices. Abandoned capital projects in the state will start again where they stopped; and the old tempo of economic life will be restored.

The Nigerian economy needs expert management and an NPP Government of the federation will institute several special committees of the National Economic Council bringing together industrialists, economists, political leaders, labour leaders, financial experts, academics, technologists, et cetera, with the object of determining attainable economic goals and charting the way to reach them. In addition, such bodies as the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, the Institute of Applied Industrial Research, the Inter-Ministerial Industrial Development Coordination Committee, and other similar institutions yet to be established will be given added financing and responsibility for planning.

It will be the responsibilities of these expert agencies, working under the leadership of the Presidency and the Party, to work out a coherent long-term plan for industrialisation. This plan will provide a framework for

all development programmes for the sectoral structures of various industries, programmes of financing, manpower training and utilisation, the promotion of science and of contracts, currency trafficking, the main finance of foreign accounts and other crimes of economic sabotage.

Financial Policy

The most ambitious programmes of economic and social reconstruction will fail if finances for their execution cannot be found. An NPP Government will, therefore, undertake the most thorough survey of investment resources, domestic and foreign, which are available to us. The following points are only preliminary indications of what the policy will be. The NPP is convinced that Nigeria can, in the long run, generate most of the capital needed for national development through the floating of internal loans provided that the Central Bank does not continue to treat potential investors as if they were seeking favours from the bank.

Notwithstanding the above, the Party welcomes, and invites, the participation of foreign investors and international agencies and will review the package of incentives to make them more attractive to genuine investors. The NPP will re-examine prevailing guidelines for the conservation and management of foreign exchange in order to protect the international value of the naira and maintain an adequate credit balance for the importation of capital goods and other essentials.

The NPP will completely overhaul and monitor the operations of revenue collecting services, particularly the Federal Inland Revenue, the Department of Customs and Excise, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, with a view of seeing to it, that the tax burden does not continue to lie heavily on workers alone. Computerisation and other modern methods of cross-checking incomes in the private sector will be introduced to ensure that the rich contribute their quota to the cost of national development.

The NPP will also introduce consumer taxes for luxury goods to raise funds for development. The NPP will

review the regulations governing banking and insurance, ascertain that these financial institutions play their proper role in the economy.

In particular, the present ratio of one bank branch for every one hundred thousand citizens will be improved upon. The number of banks outside urban centres will be increased, and the loan policies of rural banks will be regulated as to ensure that the rural sector is not under-capitalised. The NPP Government will encourage financial institutions to give easier credit to industrial and agricultural establishments and particularly to small-scale operators whose work contribute so much to the survival of national employment opportunities and production. It is apparent that one of the causes of inflation and recession in our economy is the free flow of unearned petrodollars among the idle rich. For this reason the NPP will re-order the conditions for the award of contracts and consultancy. Generally, the volume of currency in circulation will be controlled to maintain a healthy economic climate both for the businessman and the consumer.

Oil

The NPP expects that oil prices will rally after initial fluctuations. There are, however, permanent structural changes in the energy situation in the world such as the exploitation of sea reserves of petroleum, the emergence of liquefied natural gas as an industrial fuel, the growing use of nuclear power, the new dominance of non-OPEC oil in the petroleum industry, et cetera. These are matters calling for study and long-term policy decisions. For the above reasons, long delayed proposals for the establishment of liquefied natural gas and petrochemical industries in Nigeria will be implemented as matters of utmost priority. An NPP Government will also work towards the national control of the petroleum industry in all its aspects from exploration, production and refining to transportation and marketing. Until this is done, the nation will not be in charge of its own affairs.

To promote efficiency and accountability, the NPP will

in due course decentralise the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation with the object of ensuring that the various aspects of our petroleum operations are under expert management. To achieve the above goals, an NPP Federal Government shall promote the rapid training of Nigerians in every aspect of the oil industry. Faculties of Oil Technology will be introduced in our Universities of Technology, in addition to training facilities at the Petroleum Institute, Warri. The NPP will seek to strengthen the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries as the only third world organisation which has been able to impose its own terms on the West. OPEC, however, will be encouraged to establish a sales stabilisation fund to enable its weaker members to resist short-term attacks from the capitalist world. This fund will act as a counter-weight to Western stockpiles of oil.

Manufacturing

Although manufacturing has grown steadily since independence, our factories have depended too much on overseas suppliers for both plant and essential inputs. This unsatisfactory situation will change only if we are able to establish a viable industrial base of our own. The NPP will implement an industrialisation strategy that ensures effective utilisation of our natural resources.

The NPP welcomes the setting up of iron and steel works in the country despite the original inflation of costs and mismanagement of resources. Steel is a basic requirement for the development of manufacturing, and the beginning so far made will be strengthened until the country achieves self-sufficiency in these essential products. Another basic industrial need of which we are in short supply is power. In a country blessed with under-utilised reservoirs of oil, large coal deposits and many rivers that could be damned, the insufficiency of power is inexplicable. An NPP Government will help the development of indigenous capital by opening credit facilities to small scale manufacturers and cottage industries. The NPP will also encourage financial

institutions to support the modernisation of production facilities in industrial establishments. Moreover, industrial advisers will be available to give counsel on ways of improving production and management. Special attention will be given to the production of building materials based on local resources. It is futile to promise housing to the masses if building materials cannot be made available to them in sufficient numbers and at suitable prices. In view of the situation in our hospitals, pharmaceutical industries will also be given priority. Several existing industries such as car assemblies and textiles, clearly need increased protection from importers and smugglers. The NPP will therefore take legislative and administrative action to restore the viability of these threatened industries. At the same time, every industry will be required to follow an approved programme of steadily increasing the local made component in its finished goods.

Modern industrial technology is both an investment and a discipline. It takes the difference between a weak nation and the full achievement of prosperity, power and democratic freedom. Only a disciplined party like the NPP can make Nigeria a modern technological nation.

Mining

The expansion of mining operations in Nigeria is an imperative partly in order to diversify the economy and partly as a source of industrial raw materials. Fortunately, our reserves of mineral ores are impressive, and they include iron ore, chromite, columbite, gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, uranium, phosphates, coal, distomites, thorium, and cetera. Many Third World countries derive all their foreign exchange from resources inferior to our own. The NPP will vastly expand the scope of mining operation in the country in order to exploit these resources.

Agricultural Transportation

The NPP is committed to the principle that Nigeria must be self-sufficient in food production. Beyond this, however,

increased agricultural effort will yield handsome returns:

- (i) as part of a programme of rural community development;
 - (ii) as an investment in the production of industrial raw materials; and
 - (iii) as a potentially limitless source of export earnings.
- To attain the above objectives, the NPP will revitalise all the planning, research, marketing, finance and implementation agencies connected with agricultural production. River Basin Development Authorities, presently used as treasure chests by NPN party stalwarts, clearly require reorganisation in order to renew their motivation and cost efficiency.

Expansion of agricultural production will require a sustained redirection of capital investment to rural communities, the raising of their level of consciousness and skills, the setting up of farm institutes for primary school leavers, the organisation of agricultural service centres as sources of improved seeds, depots for tractor hire services, the provision of fertiliser, pesticides and extension services for the benefit of our peasant farmers. But instead of giving due weight to the upgrading of the farming communities who have fed the nation for centuries, the NPN agricultural programme has been structured round party stalwarts, contractors, importers, river basin bureaucrats, fertiliser impresarios, foreign manufacturers agents and other members of the NPN elite. Consequently, the programme has had no real impact in the rural setting and the effect on the production of our staple foods had been negligible.

Existing dam, irrigation, and integrated farm projects will continue to receive support and funding. In addition, large scale public owned mechanised farms for crops and livestock will be set up in every area. Such farms shall be closely related to the natural resources base of various parts of Nigeria. The object of this policy is to ensure the massive production of both food and industrial raw materials. These farms will also serve as demonstration

centres for adjoining rural communities and will be source of farm inputs, extension staff, and other support services for the farms in the neighbourhood. Abundance of agricultural output will enable farm-based industries such as milling, packaging, refining, juice extraction, canning and other types of food processing to be sited in the rural areas. The NPP will accelerate the rehabilitation of major cash crops as cocoa, groundnuts, oil-palm, rubber, and cetera. Relevant commodity boards, research institutes, marketing and financial institutions will be revitalised to ensure that the old levels of production are good, attained and exceeded. Since the primary thrust of the national agricultural effort is towards self-sufficiency in food production, the present neglect of our staples will be made good through the provision of high yield varieties, fertilisers, pesticides, storage facilities, improved marketing and scientific support services.

The NPP will support programmes of beef production and encourage the effort of various state ranches. Corrective emphasis will, however, be given to the small-scale herders who have always been our national sources of beef.

The extraordinarily high cost of chicken in Nigeria highlights the urgent need to extend and rationalise poultry production. Accordingly, an NPP Government will promote the development of hatcheries, feed mills, stock farms, and other services which will raise supply to meet the level of national demand. As the cheapest source of protein, the fishing industry will be assisted through a programme of support to fishermen, trawlers and fish farmers. An NPP Government will not allow the Fiat and Steyr tractor assembly plants to become idle while agricultural tractors are imported from abroad. Instead, the productive capacity of these factories will be expanded to cater for an increasing proportion of our domestic need.

We are presently using about 1.5 million metric tonnes of fertilisers. The Kaduna fertiliser plant produces less than ten per cent of the national requirement. An NPP Government will expedite the construction of the proposed

nitrate factory in Onne (Rivers State) and move rapidly towards national self-sufficiency in fertiliser production. The NPP is of the opinion that agriculture is not a federal subject since it is neither on the exclusive nor on the concurrent legislative list. While federal funding for research, planning and implementation is necessary in the national interest, direct supervision of programmes must be left to the state.

Integrated Rural Development

The NPP recognises that a substantial proportion of Nigerians live and work in the rural areas. The party is, therefore, strongly committed to a rural development programme that will promote socioeconomic progress and transformation of our rural economies to bridge the gap between the rich urban elite and the neglected rural poor. Our rural development approach centres on a strategy of rural transformation that would ensure equitable access to productive resources, employment opportunities and income for the rural masses. We recognise that strong political will on a continuing basis is necessary to reshape the political, economic and social fabric of rural Nigeria, so as to ensure progress, productivity and social justice. The key aspect of our rural development strategy include:

- (i) mobilisation of the rural population for effective rural industries.
- (ii) provision of essential infrastructures such as health facilities, water supply, rural energy supply, road networks, rural housing and educational services;
- (iii) creation of employment opportunities through the diversification of rural economic activities from agriculture to fisheries, forestry, and small-scale industries;
- (iv) provision of credit facilities to enable rural producers purchase appropriate technology for agricultural production and rural industries.

Our rural development programmes shall be kept intensely relevant to the basic needs and aspirations of the rural masses.

Land Policy

The NPP regards land as being much more than a material resource since it involves a bundle of interlocking social relations defining rights, privileges and obligations of individuals in a given society. Unfortunately, much of the fabric of traditional customs which ensured access to land has been replaced by individual acquisitiveness. In many parts of the country today, there is a powerful battle for private possession of extensive tracts of rural land.

An NPP Federal Government will not allow any class or group of individuals, however powerful, to turn peasant farmers into landless labourers. We will guarantee access to land for agricultural purpose to the tiller, especially to small-scale farmers who have fed this nation for decades.

Land improvement for agricultural purposes will be a major NPP policy to serve as the rural counterpart to the provision of industrial estates and infrastructure for manufacturers. The NPP will ensure that adequate compensation are paid to all those whose lands are acquired for public use and wherever possible alternative land will be provided for proper resettlement of displaced farmers. Grazing reserves with adequate watering points will be established at appropriate locations for the benefit of cattle herders.

Labour Relations

The last four years have witnessed an unprecedented number of trade disputes and strikes in the country. Workers were forced to show their rejection of deteriorating living conditions and of the reactionary labour policies of the NPN administration. In contrast, the policies of the NPP will be based on partnership between Government and workers. This is by no means a marriage of convenience for the avoidance of trade disputes, but a cardinal principle of party of the common people and the workers. An NPP Government will give the portfolio for labour to a member of the trade union movement to ensure that the interests of workers are fully considered in the

formulation of government policies. The Trade Disputes Acts of 1976 and 1977 will be reviewed in consultation with the trade union movement. At the same time, national arbitration courts will be brought into line with the practice obtaining in other free democracies.

There will be a standing National Wages Review Commission charged with the responsibility for keeping the salaries of workers under constant review. A scheme of productivity incentives will be in force in all appropriate public enterprises. Cultural and educational programmes will be arranged for workers to raise their political consciousness, productivity and cultural awareness. Furthermore, the NPP will support the establishment of a reputable National Labour College capable of becoming the standard bearer of Labour Studies in Africa. The NPP recognises that the Nigerian worker will only exert himself fully when Nigeria, under an inspiring political leadership, achieves a sense of national purpose and the people become partners working together in good faith and fellowship to create for themselves a home in which the citizen is no longer alienated from the conditions of his life and labour.

Urban Development

Our urban environment is in decay. Residential areas rapidly become slums. The unpaved roads are checked with traffic and refuse. Gutters overflow with filth. Traders' stands and mechanics' workshops spill into the roads. The lights do not work. The taps are dry. And the city swarms with touts and thieves. The failure of every previous administration to attend to these problems largely explains the belief of workers and the common people that Governments are not interested in their welfare. The NPP will inaugurate a programme of urban renewal. In particular, work will begin immediately to provide light, water and good roads in all our towns, modern waste disposal systems will be installed in our major cities. And where it is not possible to do so because of the cost, effective refuse collection will be organised.

Indiscipline is clearly one of the causes of rapid urban deterioration. Our people have been slow in adopting the communal disciplines of city life. The NPP will encourage the formation of neighbourhood associations and cooperate with them in enforcing public sanitation regulations.

State governments will be encouraged to set up urban planning commissions whose responsibility will be to rationalise the use of the living space in our crowded cities. In due course, every residential district should have its own shopping centres, banks, post offices, health clinics, recreational facilities and markets. Suitable corners should also be found for the carpenter, the tailor, the refreshment vendor, the shoe-maker, et cetera. The failure to make these provisions in the past has been a source of inconvenience and disorder.

It will be a part of the role of the Urban Planning Commission to propose the establishment of new towns and satellite towns for the convenience of the people once there is population pressure on services in the existing towns. The NPP notes that the Federal Government has housing programmes in the states. Those programmes do not, however, satisfy the need for urgency, communal integration, minimum standards and the vast number of housing units that must be supplied. To remove our present acute shortage of homes for the people, it has been estimated that we need ten new dwellings every year for every thousand persons in the population. Since this target is not being met, quantitative and qualitative shortfalls in housing are, therefore, bound to increase rather than diminish in the years to come. Housing is, however, not on the exclusive or the concurrent legislative list and is, therefore, not a federal subject. Accordingly, an NPP Government will hand over units that are suitable for this purpose. At the same time, the formation of an adequate long-term housing policy will receive the urgent attention of an NPP Government of the Federation. The reclamation of our cities from decades of neglect and muddled improvisations will be a long-term undertaking. Until we

achieve some degree of success, life in our country will lack convenience, order, humaneness and cultural elegance. The time to begin the process of renewal is now.

Education

The formative importance of education in the development of the country is fully recognised in section 18 of the Constitution. It provided that education will be free at all levels as soon as our finances can carry the burden. In 1977, for the first time national guidelines and educational objectives were set out by the Committee for National Policy on Education. The NPN Administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari has, however, not followed these guidelines. This failure added to other negligence and has created innumerable problems, in planning, and the linkage of education with manpower needs and employment opportunities. To catch up with the areas of neglected educational planning, an NPP Government of the Federation will revitalise, support and co-ordinate the work of such organs as the National Education Research Council, the Science Education Unit, the National Teachers Institute, the National Universities Commission, the Comparative Education Studies and Adaptation Centre, Academic Subject Associations, the National Board of Technical Education, the Special Education Unit, the National Policy Implementation Committee, et cetera. It might be necessary to set up new advisory bodies such as a National Council for Teachers Education and an Adult Education Council.

The 1977 guidelines provide for the introduction of the technical and business studies in Senior Secondary Schools. On paper, this scheme (the 6-3-3-4 system) came into operation in September 1982. In practice, it was simply dropped because the NPN Administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari did not plan for the technical staff, laboratories, workshops and the considerable funding which was needed. And yet, the scheme was designed to be an important link in the grand-plan for national economic self-sufficiency and industrial development. The sabotage of

this critical programme takes its place beside the gross mismanagement of the national economy. To ensure that enough money is available to implement the 6-3-3 programme, an NPP Government will review both federal arrangements for education and the formula for revenue allocation to make more money available to the states. The case for a reconsideration of financial arrangements for education is all the more pressing because the Federal Government has next to no responsibilities in primary education, and there are only forty-six federal secondary schools with an enrolment of forty-three thousand pupils. Below the tertiary level, the contribution of the Federal Government to national education is less than five hundredths of a per cent. At the tertiary level, the responsibilities of state governments are steadily increasing. It is clearly apparent, however, that the cost of education is so enormous that the contributions of private entrepreneurs and voluntary agencies should be accepted. Public resources are now already overstretched even though we are still far from the target of full enrolment. An NPP Government will, therefore, welcome the establishment of community and private educational institutions under the supervision of the appropriate ministries.

We cannot begin on the road to self-sustained economic growth until all the people can read, write and calculate. Moreover, an illiterate population cannot exercise the democratic freedoms guaranteed to them by the Constitution, nor can it work to raise the overall quality of culture and life. An NPP Government will, therefore, give priority attention to primary schools, adult literacy and mass enlightenment programmes. It will regard expenditure incurred in this regard as investment in economic, political and human resources enrichment. Very firm foundations for this effort have already been laid by state governments. Its maturity awaits national coordination and funding.

In accordance with section 18 of the Constitution, an NPP Government will work towards the introduction of

free education at all levels in all public institutions. To prepare the way for the introduction of free education, the Federal Government will, in cooperation with state governments increase the number of teacher training institutions from grade two colleges to colleges of education. Effective school work in and out of the classroom depends in a large measure on the quality of motivation and contentment of the academic staff. Frustrated teachers are not likely to take much interest in the all-round development of pupils nor in awakening them to the love of knowledge and other forms of value. An NPP Government will therefore ensure that salaries and other benefits due to teachers are paid punctually as and when due, and that their general conditions of service are more attractive. The NPP also promises to transform the academic environment in our schools by stocking libraries with books, equipping laboratories, and providing facilities for sports and other creative leisure activities. We have presently thirteen federal universities, seven universities of technology established or planned, and six state universities all together enrolling about eighty-two thousand undergraduates. These figures do not include an increasing number of polytechnic and degree-awarding colleges of education. But there is still room for the expansion of university places in view of the number of qualified entrants who are turned away annually and in view of the large contingent of Nigerians studying abroad. The NPP Government, therefore, undertakes to expand university enrolment. The documents published during the 1982 strike of the Senior Staff Association of our Universities indicated that our institutions of higher learning are miserably under-equipped, and that professors sometimes doubt the validity of the degrees they were obliged to award in such unfavourable circumstances. An NPP Government will therefore review the funding and financial administration of our universities with a view of effecting a transformation of conditions. In addition, steps will be taken to ensure that the academic autonomy of universities is restored. In addition to

industrial capital and raw materials, Nigeria needs technologically trained manpower for her industrial development. So far the foundations of technological education have been laid through the creation in most of the states of the Federation of trade schools, technical colleges, polytechnics and universities of technology. One major shortcoming in the training programme is the serious lack of engineering workshops in which students can do practical work. There is need also to intensify research and to link it with indigenous resources and skills. Presently, twenty-four federal research institutions are charged with this responsibility. A reorganised Ministry of Science and Technology under the NPP Government will monitor, coordinate and promote technological education and research. It will also formulate policies and programmes for the effective technological development of the country. The state of neglect of special education is reflected in the fact that we have only two teacher training colleges devoted to the needs of the handicapped; and the only Braille press in the country is a gift made by the Rotary Club of Lagos. The awakening of public concern for the blind, lame, mute and retarded children is not only a work of human reclamation, it is a necessary element in our rediscovery of humane solicitude for the needs of other people. An NPP Government will, therefore, give particular attention to special education to ensure that disabled persons can support themselves through their own work and that the intellectually gifted among them can pursue an academic education up to university level.

Health

The good health of a nation is its most valuable possession to which all its other assets are subsidiary. And the level of health care in a community is usually an index of how much the Government cares for the well-being of its people. In Nigeria, today significantly, the standard of medical services is appalling. And the inept and callous NPN Administration have rendered bad conditions even worse. Six factors are responsible for this unhappy

situation:

- (i) inadequate public funding of medical and health institutions;
- (ii) lack of health institutions particularly in rural areas;
- (iii) scarcity of drugs;
- (iv) scarcity of trained medical and paramedical personnel;
- (v) the prohibitive cost of medical treatment for the common people; and
- (vi) inefficient use and management of existing resources.

The NPP will make sufficient funds available for the operation of our hospitals such that no Nigerian will be denied medical care on the grounds of his inability to bear the cost of treatment. The NPP will extend health care delivery to every village and hamlet in the country either by establishing clinics where there are none or by introducing a mobile doctor services in remote districts. It is estimated that at present only thirty per cent of our population have access to modern health care. Inducements in the form of tax incentives and financial support, will therefore be given to medical practitioners and voluntary agencies to set up private hospitals particularly in rural areas. Special attention will be given to teaching hospitals to maintain and expand their capability as standard bearers in health care delivery, and to attend their capability as standard bearers in health care delivery, and to attend their research and teaching facilities for the training of doctors, nurses, midwives, and other para-medical personnel.

The NPP will encourage, promote and finance the local manufacture of drugs in order to satisfy the ever-increasing need of our people. The NPP will ensure the proper management of health institutions by setting up effective hospital boards and health management boards insulated from political and civil service control. We will enter dialogue with medical and para-medical associations with a view to finding a lasting solution to the problems of

inadequate motivation, corruption and industrial unrest in our health institutions. We will also set up a National Environmental Commission charged with the responsibility for promoting environmental hygiene, organising health education campaigns and advancing the cause of preventive medicine in consultation with public health authorities. It is recognised that in the long run the good health of the nation will depend on the provision of all-round development, the promotion of food supply and good nutrition, clean and adequate water supply, health education and sanitation in the environment, good housing and adequate standard of living.

Social Welfare

A comprehensive social policy will include a dozen different programmes on many matters which have already been dealt with in other parts of this manifesto. It should contain some proposals about the achievement of full and better employment, the improvement of working conditions in both the rural and the urban sectors, housing schemes, pension funds, improved health arrangements, the creation of social and cultural facilities, plans for increased social and political participation, supportive programmes for families and children, and arrangements for the care of the old, the sick, the disabled, and the unemployed, the NPP recognises the responsibility of Government in all these things, but we must also reckon with the severe limitation of our present resources.

Notwithstanding the financial constraints, the NPP will introduce free prenatal and postnatal maternity care for women. Special effort will be made to create adequate health care for children. A national health insurance scheme will be introduced in order to bring the amenities of expert medical attention within the reach of the common man. As a gesture of gratitude and reparation, the NPP will establish rehabilitation centres for all persons who were disabled during the Nigerian Civil War, and special care will also be arranged for the aged, the infirm and the disabled. As a people-centred party, the NPP will

formulate a full range of other welfare programmes for the masses, but their implementation must wait until the buoyancy of our economy has been restored.

Communications

Our national organs of public communications are in need of overhaul and modernisation. The federally-controlled newspapers, F.R.C.N., N.T.A., the mail services, telephone, telegraph and telex services required reorganisation. The inefficiency of posts and telecommunications in particular is an important factor in the inefficiency of administrative and business processes. As a means of social integration, our organs of communication have also been a liability.

The scandalous political misuse of NTA and FRCN stations by the NPN Administration highlights the need of completely restructuring government-sponsored broadcasting in Nigeria. In the interest of peace, fairness, the objectivity of reporting and the establishment of high standards of professional practice, the NPP will set up a National Broadcasting Commission in which all the governments in the Federation will be represented. This Commission will be charged with the responsibility for:

- (i) the allocation of wavelengths;
- (ii) the establishment and monitoring of professional and ethical standards;
- (iii) the granting of licences to private operators;
- (iv) the coordination of broadcasting policies; and
- (vi) the harmonisation of conditions of service of broadcasting staff.

The NPP will foster and promote the emergence of the highest standards especially in the electronic media in order to give Nigeria a national broadcasting service comparable with the best in the world. Under the Fourth National Development Plan, there is already a programme for building many new post offices and appointing new postal agents particularly in rural areas. The NPP will systematise and extend this programme and implement it expeditiously.

Preparatory work will also be commissioned to ensure house-to-house delivery of mail to be reestablished in major cities. The total number of telephone lines in the country is estimated at about two hundred and fifty thousand units. This is hopelessly inadequate in a country of eighty million people. The NPP will expedite construction of transmission lines and the training of engineers, technicians and operators in preparation for massive expansion of telecommunication services. For this purpose, several new training institutions will be established to supplement the Posts and Telecommunications Schools in Oshodi and Kano. It is evident to every Nigerian that Nigerian External Telecommunications (NET) is in need of complete reorganisation. Quite apart from financial scandal, this institution has not realised half of its potential which was supposed to be the best in Africa.

The total budget of one thousand and seven hundred million naira earmarked for the development of Posts and Telecommunications under the Fourth National Development Plan may not be reached owing to our diminished economic circumstances. But the creative potential of Posts and Telecommunications in social and economic life is such that we must seek ways of ending the present muddle.

Tourism Industry

There is acute shortage in the country today of tourist facilities: first class hotels, amusement parks, efficient telephone and telex services, night clubs, modern beaches, agreeable and efficient transport, museums, et cetera. These facilities do not, of course, serve the foreign visitor only. They are used also by the local businessman and the community at large. What the tourist industry needs is, in fact, the social and cultural enrichment of the total environment. The NPP will promote tourism as a potential source of foreign earnings accounting in some countries for up to fifty per cent of the gross national product. The target of spending three hundred and fifteen million naira

in the Fourth National Development Plan is possibly too modest because investments on tourism will pay handsome dividends. The NPP will reorganise the National Tourist Board as a full-fledged parastatal having responsibility for the development, in collaboration with private capital, of hotels, travel agencies, beaches, amusement parks, resorts, zoos, spas, tourist villages, et cetera. The Board will also undertake as a matter of urgency the classification of hotels and the regulation of their tariffs in order to ensure that the image of the country is not tarnished by unscrupulous operators. In an industry wherein effortlessness, smoothness and good public relations are vital, training programmes require special attention, and it is important that both public and private establishments should participate in them. The development of resorts around places of natural interest needs cooperation between federal and state institutions. In this connection the NPP re-emphasises its intention to create a participatory government which operates through consultations and joint action.

Foreign Affairs

During the four years of NPN Administration, the fortunes of ECOWAS have declined and the good neighbour relations which we have so carefully built up with our brothers in West Africa have turned into enmity particularly in Chad, Camerouns and Ghana. We have not been able to keep our leadership position in Africa; nor have we dealt any new blows to the citadel of racism and repression; largely we have made a reputation for duplicity by preaching non-alignment while practising partisanship with the capitalist West. An NPP Government of the Federation will redefine Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, in the context of our national interests, the liberation of Africa, the principle of non-alignment and the establishment of a just and peaceful world order. To this end, the research arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, the Foreign

Relations Committee of the National Assembly, faculties of Political Science in our universities, and research institutions of the Ministries of Defence and Commerce, will be mobilised to contribute to intellectual effort of redefining our policy objectives.

The NPP will discontinue the practice of treating foreign affairs as the private business of the responsible Ministers. From time to time, and always subject to security considerations, the President will render account to the National Assembly on the conduct of our foreign relations and invite legislators to participate in the discussion of principles and policies. We shall re-establish the Organisation of African Unity as an effective force in international politics by strengthening its institutions, its finances, its role in the settlement of African disputes, its role in political liberations, and its legal and peace-keeping capabilities. In particular, we will give support to the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa as potential instruments for the economic liberation of our continent. With regard to Namibia and Azania (South Africa) it is our responsibility, acting under the auspices of the C. A. U., to break the evil spell which the Reagan Administration has cast on the process of decolonisation in those two countries. In this context Nigeria should promote a new conception of the defence of the South Atlantic, different from that presently flouted by South Africa. The West should recognise that the joint forces of Sub-Saharan Africa and South America will have more weight in any international conflict than its present South African alliance. The NPP will promote international associations not only with our traditional partners in the West but also with countries of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China, Japan and the rapidly developing countries of Southeast Asia and South America whose experience is parallel to our own. In particular, we will participate actively in the Non-aligned Movement and in the institutions and consultations of Third World countries.

For the Middle East, NPP policy will be directed towards the reaching of international agreement to give a sovereign

homeland to Palestinians and permanent peace in the entire region. An NPP Government will work, in concert with other Third World countries, for the establishment of a new world economic order following:

- (i) commodity agreements and international funding for buffer stocks;
- (ii) indexation of prices to obtain correlation between the prices of agricultural and industrial products; and
- (iii) the recognition of the sovereignty of every country over its natural resources and national economy.

As the fifth largest oil producing country in the world, Nigeria can play an important role in the politics of global energy supply, and it is in our national interest to do so. From the proud and noble heights which Nigerian foreign policy reached under General Murtala Mohammed, we have failed today into confusion and drift. The NPP is firmly convinced that we have the resources, the expertise, and the will to recover the lost ground."

* * *

After the address, the NPP launched a long playing record composed specifically to mark the official take off of its 1983 presidential campaigns. A beautified lyric no doubt, its embodiment rested solely on one of Zik's enduring philosophies of "showing the light and leaving the followers find their ways." A copy of the long playing record was then officially presented to the party's leaders. That evening, a rally was staged at the Jos Township Stadium where Zik told eager supporters that there was a sick Nigeria. An urgent diagnosis had been conducted; there are positive indications that Nigeria's problems are not beyond redemption. He pointed out the ills of squandermania, nepotism and planlessness and favouritism as the bane of the Nigerian society under the National Party of Nigeria's leadership. He told them of NPP's plan to change austerity to prosperity.

It was a very grand occasion marked here and there by cannon firings amidst bounties of goodness and one that characterised the whole period of the convention. Jos, strangers and indigenes united in a friendly show of love, understanding and brotherhood. The Igbos in particular displayed no sense of foreigners nor did the Gwari and Nupe who are the dominant tribes show any sense of overlordship. People went about their businesses in the anticipation of the change which Zik and the NPP had promised to bring to town come October.

The first time I went to Makurdi, capital of Benue State was in 1981. Then as a part-two History student in the university, my appetite for information gathering had greatly been enhanced. Nevertheless, my first visit was more or less unimpressionistic because, frankly speaking, I was not opportune to scribble a detailed account. That was in the summer of 1981.

Two years later, I came to Makurdi not just as a passer-by as in the first visit, but a fact finder, detailed by my boss from the onset to get to the minutest detail, the role Makurdi would play in the big political battle that was to be fought that year — 1983.

Makurdi to my boss, was of importance to the race ahead. Besides being the capital city of Benue State, it was considered the gateway to the North for people from Imo, Bendel, Anambra, Rivers and Cross River states of Nigeria. Politically, its geographical location had made it assume the role of a power broker in the heyday of politics in what was considered Nigeria's First Republic. Its people, though now practically estranged from Igbos as a result of sad memories of a Civil War, were called the Igbos of the North by admirers.

The appellation, they claim, stemmed not only from the physical disposition of the peoples of Benue, but also manifested in some other characteristics of theirs which had striking similarities with those of the Igbos. Having been sharing the same boundary with peoples of the East, the Benue man had also embraced Christianity. Consequently he resisted the incursions of Islam.

The Benue man unavoidably had to grapple with attendant consequences including benefits. And so, while the Christian Igbo neighbour down south grappled with the trappings of Christianity such as Western education, mode of dressing and travels, the Benue brother up north was dexterously following and even catching up. With this in mind, a popular political parlance had it that "you go Benue/Plateau, you get into the North." That the Nnamdi tried this magic and almost succeeded is great credence to this assertion.

Benue State was to be my first state of call as a current reporter with the highly partisan Imo Television Owerri. The mission was solely to get information on Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's presidential campaign tours of northern Nigeria. Until this assignment, I must mention that I had reported on Assembly proceedings for the Television House back in Owerri and had on weekends presented news and current affairs programme called "In the Lobby". "In the Lobby" was not my invention, but that of a preceding Youth Corps member whose imagination and creativity contributed in no small way into making the young television station a success.

From the onset, when my boss, a highly talented young news manager, had given the assignment to me, I knew I could not afford to fail. How could I? I had realised that besides the importance associated with an assignment of that magnitude, my ability was equally on trial. Yes, on trial. The reason being that the television broadcast and report is very, very different from those of say, the radio or print media. In television you either make or mar yourself by your approach, and input to work. Secondly, I was not a trained broadcaster, I had only learnt and quickly too on the job as an inquisitive young graduate Youth Corps member wishing to impress the community.

I had returned from Lagos the day before the journey. A bachelor, I had nobody to bother about my frequent absences from home nor a sick child to attend to. In effect, I accepted the assignment with delight and curiosity. I would go to Benue, from where perhaps I would go to

Plateau or Niger States depending on Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's itinerary.

But television news gathering is multi-dimensional. The bulk never stops until viewers, who are principally the consumers have had it on air. Yes, the bulk stops on their eyes.

News gathering starts from the Director of News and Current Affairs (DNCA), who, considering the degree of news, must see and if possible approve of all assignments. With politics, being (in the Second Republic) the beginning and end of all news materials my travels assumed a centre stage position. From DNCA as far as the ITV was concerned, possible news assignment was routed through his editor who finally assigns the specific duty to a reporter. A reporter in TV news parlance leads the crew which must be composed of a driver, his vehicle (which must be in good condition), a cameraman and his assistant and of course the heavy equipment called the camera. For a television cameraman to be satisfied he was going to have a successful assignment, he must have a camera or two, a recorder, a tripod (in cases where panel interviews will be necessary), as many recorder batteries as possible plus equipment for charging and recharging the batteries. This television recorder consumes batteries at such alarming rate that without a standby charging equipment or space, the whole assignment might be ruined.

The reporter? Yes, the reporter might be, as I was told, the least paid in the crew but armed with his notebook, pen and unrecorded video cassettes, is automatically the leader of the crew. He it was who accepted praise for success or blame for failure of any assignment. It was this role I was to play on a wider magnitude. So to Makurdi, that 6th May 1983, I was to go with one Mr. Geo Iroh, a cameraman and his assistant.

Going through the campaigns schedule given to me by my boss, the Benue campaigns which were to kick off in Makurdi a day later would take the train to other big cities in Benue. Cities such as Oturkpo and Gboko after which the train would move to Plateau or Niger. This will be

possible if the schedule would be most convenient for man who was bearing the flag of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) in the 1983 general election.

Mr. Geo Iroh is of short and bulky personality. A stammerer, he more often than not lost his temper. He must have known this trait that he would prefer keeping quiet in most of the discussions only putting in a word here and there when he felt like doing so. He is from Mbai. His wife was nursing a child in addition to two earlier ones. He was plain, dedicated and hardworking. He looked after baby food wherever we went. Baby food was gradually becoming a luxury at this time. His assistant, a defect from the NTA Aba, had before coming to Imo Television been fully indoctrinated to the ideals which the NTA which served as the National Party of Nigeria's mouthpiece pursued. Having been schooled in this thought, all his actions, dispositions and mannerisms still were clouted by the injunctions of the National Party of Nigeria. I respected this man as an elder but in my mind, whatever he did, his actions, utterances and demeanour, were rather repulsive. He was equally married with children, and an ageing mother, to whom, it seems by his constant mentioning occupied an important place in his life. He smoked, drank and snuffed. Not all, he seemed to admire any beautiful woman that we passed on the way as we travelled. He was later on in the course of the journey to fall out with a woman in a hotel where we lodged. He had, it seemed, undeclared intention to have a "taste" of all Northern women for memory's sake.

The driver, Mr. Obilonu does not talk. He reacted to discussions through broad laughs and sighs when he is not interested. Masculine in all, Mr. Obilonu handled driving with all amount of grace, displaying maturity, talent and articulation behind the steering. This first disturbed me. I was then suffering the illusion that he would be a cog in my ambition to satisfying my boss bearing in mind that news gathering needed speed and precision. Mr. Obilonu was equally married. Probably older than myself, I was to discover later that the alleged lack of interest in the

discharge of his duties was unfounded. He turned out to be the second most trusted and hard working member of the crew.

We left Owerri rather late. Too late because we were made to stay more than necessary at the Co-operative Bank branch where we cashed cheques meant to sustain us during the tour. By the schedule we had, the campaign tour for Benue was starting in less than twenty-four hours from then. Every bit of what happened from, if possible, when Zik alighted from the aircraft, must or ought to be recorded. Also, the whole exercise could be denied the following day. If this happens you needed not blame anybody. Not even your opponents. What with recent reports that political parties were paying upwards of ten naira to get as many people as possible to attend their rallies particularly at places where they considered their position weak. There were even stories of those who dubbed television recordings of opponents' successful campaign rallies, inserted and super-imposed the candidate of their choice over sound and crowd and aired to their unsuspecting gullible supporters. There was even the case of a gubernatorial candidate whose newspaper played the most annoying tricks of the year by inserting his photograph over the campaign rallies recorded for opponents in far away Aba in Imo State.

With all this in mind, I made sure we did not miss any jot of whatever campaign I would cover. By eight o'clock in the evening of the day in question, we were refilling our car's petrol tank at the Ninth Mile Corner some twenty kilometres from Enugu. My crew had consented that we should continue the journey after a heated argument whether we should continue or rest somewhere on the Ninth Mile Corner Hotels so as to take off the following morning. We got to Makurdi at exactly ten thirty at night. Significantly, one of us observed the listlessness in the atmosphere — the lack of any air of activity coming to town. Soon we started casting doubts amongst ourselves. Would the campaign not hold? Why are there no bountings? Under normal circumstances, when a

personality as important as Nnamdi Azikiwe is coming to town, the town inevitably wears a festive mood. Maku this pre-visit eve, was wearing none. Okay, we agreed it would be better for us to find out from the NPP's headquarters if the campaigns have been put off. Where in town is the party's secretariat? No one would give us this vital information except the Police. So we drove to a nearby Police post we had passed when entering the town. Having introduced ourselves and our mission, the inspector on duty volunteered the rest of the assistance. He however expressed doubt that anything like campaigns would be held in Benue State for sometime. His reason for further enquiry was that the Police in the state had banned any form of political rally beginning from that morning.

Explaining further, the inspector told us how only the previous day, there was a serious political clash between rival groups. He told of the death of seven pupils of a nearby primary school that had shouted the slogan of an opposing party to that of its opponents.

That notwithstanding, the police officer volunteered to take the crew to the state secretariat of the NPP for succour since, at least, we were a news organ by every measure and degree sympathetic to the course of the party. We got to the party's secretariat at about eleven thirty at night to discover to our delight that the caucus of the party was holding a meeting which they later explained to us was in preparation for the campaigns starting in Niger State in two days time. That night a reception was organised for the entire crew by a community that described itself as one charged with the election of Comrade Paul Unongo to the Governorship of Benue State. Making a short speech, the chairman who simply identified himself as "Over-heat" lamented the barbaric attitudes of the National Party of Nigeria in the state particularly in Makurdi. Beating his chest amidst tight gritting of his teeth and clenched fists, he narrated how NPN thugs had attacked and killed seven primary school pupils the day before. Now all the pupils had by accident or design been stranger elements and how the personal residence of Paul Unongo, the NPP

gubernatorial flag-bearer in the forthcoming elections was almost burnt down the previous day. He cautioned we conduct ourselves in a manner that would not expose which of the parties we had sympathy for. As he spoke, anyone who cared could vividly see anger and despair on the faces of his mates who sat in a most dejected disposition signifying their approval of "Over-heat's" comments either by sighing or open retort. Concluding, he told us that Azikiwe's campaign tours would commence in Minna, the Niger state capital on the 26th of May 1983 — that was in another two days. At our request, he asked one of his men to introduce us to one of the hotels in Makurdi from where we would take off the following morning. He did not, however, fail to give us a sketch map of the route we would take to Minna, after consulting with his colleagues. There were two possible routes, he said. One is that which would take us to Jos and then to Minna. But that route seemed a bit longer. The second route, he said, was that which went from Akwanga to Keffi then to Abuja, to Suleja and Minna. By consensus of majority of the party leaders present, the Akwanga-Keffi-Abuja route was approved for us. One of the men did not however fail to observe that this route was rough because of the bad nature of the road which was undergoing reconstruction.

With these parting words, we left for the hotel where we slept till the 25th of May. By our plans, we would have left the hotel by latest 5:00 a.m. on the 25th of May. But this same David, the defector, once more nearly put the whole crew into trouble, real trouble. The story is that while we had gone to bed the previous night, we were to learn that David had overwhelmed our driver, into going out in search of a Tiv girl to pass the night with. It was only when David woke up that morning immersed in a scuffle that it occurred to us that he had fulfilled one of his pridings the previous day when I overheard him narrating to the less-travelled members of the crew of the virility and sagacity of the Benue women in bed. This time around, David had breached a contract with the bulky-framed lady who insisted on collecting all the amount both of them had

agreed. David's own case which he confided to me was that he had miscalculated. He had thought we would leave the hotel say by 8 a.m. and had bargained with that time-target in mind. If he had known, he would have intensified the thing instead of the gentlemanly approach he had used. After the scuffle and the woman settled, we left the hotel by 6 a.m. on our way to Akwanga a distance of nearly two hundred kilometres from Makurdi.

We refilled our tank at the petrol station on the north bank end of the River Benue. That done, we sped off to Lafia, where we had been informed good food of all sorts were sold at relatively cheap prices. While we broke fast in Lafia, we did not fail to inquire, for re-assurance, from the hotel attendants who spoke Igbo, how many kilometres more it would take us to get to Keffi en route Abuja. "Are you going to Minna?" they asked. "Yes," I replied. "How did you know?" I asked, surprised.

"It's because I heard that Zik will be going there tomorrow, besides, when I saw the ITV crest emblazoned on your car, I guessed you are billed to be with Zik," one of them said.

"Yes my brother, we are billed to be with him but our main problem now is how best to get to Minna without trouble. We would want the easiest way to Minna." Reminding him that we had been directed to go to Keffi through the Akwanga road, the boy shrieked. On his face stood sadness and dismay as he spoke.

"Brothers, there are two ways to Minna from here. One which is very straightforward, is through Jos. But it is very far. The other is the Akwanga-Keffi. Though short, you will suffer a great deal because the road is under reconstruction and dusty. If you can stand the dust, you can take it, if not, I advise you go through Jos." With the picture vividly painted, we opted for the Akwanga-Keffi route. One reason for this was curiosity. The other was the belief that no matter how rough the road might be, we would be in Minna before nightfall.

Meanwhile, we were accosted by two people. One, a man; the other a lady. They both were in the same need –

a means of travelling to Keffi or as we learnt later, to Abuja. They had come to us after identifying us as media-men who probably were going to Minna in respect of Zik's campaigns. The lady who introduced herself as Lynda, was the first to speak to us. She was so open in her request that no sooner had she finished than David — that lustful David in our midst — started pleading with grave concern for her. But if we must give Lynda a ride what of the man who said he was Obeya, an Igala businessman who later told us of his contract exploits in Abuja — the new Federal Capital Territory under construction? If we would give Lynda a ride for David's sake let's do same for Obeya for humanitarian and fair play's sake. I reasoned and pleaded. The two of them having won, we started the journey that was to last longer than we had anticipated.

At first, I had thought Lynda with her bulky personality and frame, to be from Benue. To be precise, of the Tiv or Igala tribes. Her long silence and feigned ignorance to our discussions lent heavy credence to my assumptions. But she was not. Lynda we were soon to discover, was Igbo. Even Obeya the Igalaman was Yoruba whose real name is Kayode Agboyega. He told us later why he had to go by Obeya. The reason is contract.

"I must be frank to you my brothers," he began in a tone that portrayed every amount of innocence and sincerity. "In the NPN government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, you must belong to be able to get this contract. In Abuja, if you are a true Igboman or Yoruba or other tribe for that matter it means you are doing the contract on sub-basis or that you must have done what I have done, that is change your identity in order to belong."

On this, I took him up pretending to be ignorant of the point he was driving at. "Do you mean all those Obis, Oghenechis, Igwes, Olandos and Petersides doing contracts in Abuja came over them only by belonging?" To this he answered "Yes".

"Yes, it's either you are an established tribesman or you're a proved supporter of the ruling party," he went on

as some mischievous strands of laughter effused through his broad thick lips.

"Kayode", I enthused, "you're a Yoruba-man doing business in Abuja, where do you then live?"

"Ah, I live in Minna, capital of Niger State."

"Did you go into the contracting business as a full time vocation or are you what people nowadays call emergent contractor?" I further enquired.

"My brother, I must be frank, by training, I am a political scientist, having read politics and history at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. I have even worked as a journalist with the Radio Nigeria Kaduna soon after graduation. However, during the 1979 General Elections, I hurriedly and stupidly resigned my post at the Radio Nigeria because I had erroneously believed I could contest election in any part of the country judging from the spirit, if not the letter of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. I was proved wrong not long after the 1979 elections. I had resigned my job, joined one of the five registered political parties, but was subtly disqualified at the last minute on the grounds of tax evasion. I know I was strictly up to date. But what I did not know was that some local linchpins were out to frustrate any outsider more so when you have no money. Now I had lost my Radio job, got booted out of the election race, what was to be done? I queried myself without getting any reasonable answer. At last I thought if I must get into this game once more I must get rich. I mean real wealthy. How then does one do it. The surest means was joining the band of the portfolio-carrying contract seekers that swarmed around successful politicians of the Second Republic. That's not all. If on the first instance I have been deprived of my inalienable right on account of where I come from why don't I change my name to conform to what is in vogue then — treachery, deceit, cheating and fast-tongue in order to survive?"

"Obeya, do you then mean that most if not all politicians, are corrupt, fast-tongued and treacherous?" I enquired further.

"Not quite, but judging from what the textbooks tell us, and to be precise, it was Niccolo Machiavelli. What Nigerian politics of today stands on, is on the principle and theory of the end justifying the means. In other words, if you can cheat, kill, rob; be treacherous, by all means do, provided these means are designed for the attainment of a goal that would be good for humanity; provided when you climb on top, you will not forget so soon those on whose back you have made your stepping stone — those you have cheated, robbed, maligned and deceived. Machiavelli even suggested that the ruler must have the characteristics of a fox (in order to outwit his enemies). He must also disseminate a public image of himself as a man of high dignity, value and endowed with a maximum of five virtues namely: mercy, faith, integrity, humanity and religion."

"Tell me, Obeya, how do all these relate to the Nigerian politics of today ... and ... and"

"Well, if I must tell you, I will say that one basic point to note of the Nigerian political scene is its precarious balance on a tribal tripod. This I need not explain. But suffice it to mean that since no leg of this tripod could easily be put away or done without, every event is regrettably interpreted on the suitability and satisfaction of all the parties concerned. In a bid to meet this demand, a lot of things go wrong. People step inevitably on other people's toes. Friends who had since their university days shared views on the same ideological plane are immediately divided by tribal affiliation. Otherwise, what and who would have told me I would not contest and win election in Minna metropolis, a place my father and I have spent our lives; helped in its development and the social upbringing of its inhabitants. Tell me who on earth would believe that when my father died, his corpse was treated like carcass made for the dogs? Who would believe that even the Emir who wanted to help could be advised against it because of mundane interpretations given to his death; a result of machete cuts, he received on his way back home from a fraternity meeting he had attended this past

years before I was born. Yes, they had to hire those who did the job. They were paid assassins. Because they had the money, the deceitful means, the treacherous dispositionary tendencies and above all the heart to do this."

"Kayode, was all this the reason why you changed your name to Obeya?"

"Yes, in fact, I changed everything. I changed my name, my illusions, political belief — that the saviour of the suffering masses must evolve from Marx's dialectical materialism concept. Nowadays, I am an inveterate believer in capitalism. I had brushed aside Marx's theories and indeed any theory for that that preached egalitarianism. I have, though against my initial wish, joined the oppressive club — I mean the bourgeois class. I don't no more believe, as the Jews once did in the apocalyptic world of bliss, a place where no sorrow, no pain nor death exist. I now believe that there can be no other lustful world than the one we are in. So I changed my name, my political orientation. Right now, I have no political belief. I believe in contract. I worship contract and its twin sister — money. I don't no more give a damn what happens to this bloody country called Nigeria."

"Look, can you believe that the only politician of note living in Nigeria today is Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe? I mean what I am saying. At least you know I am a Yorubamar bred in the North or where the ignorant Southerner would call the Hausaland. Ask me how I came about my conclusion? Let's forget his role as a student, his untiring efforts in the fight and subsequent successful banishment of the colonialists, his shining example for being the first non-Yoruba to win a seat in the then Western House of Assembly and all that. Let's talk on his recent achievements. First, when he was to join a political party, he joined that which reflected a wider political spectrum. I mean the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroun (NCNC) later changed to National Council for Nigerian Citizens. His broad perception of things and futuristic broad gaze gingered him to establish a newspaper he

called, *The West African Pilot*. He then set up the African Continental Bank (ACB); the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), and lately joined the Nigerian People's Party. All these point to one fact — that the man is in no way a tribalist. Skeptics may wonder what the names he gave to his organisations meant. To this I will point out, that the name you give anything rubs off on the object. See, my name is Kayode, by the way, what is your own name, eh?" When I told him, he then asked how appropriate or otherwise this had reflected on me, I also told him. He then argued that the names Zik had given to institutions he founded or joined reflected his implicit belief in one indivisible nation called Nigeria. If we may even extend this we can say that Zik has a vision of a greater and bigger world starting from a bigger Africa. Note also the names he gave his sons, Chukwuma, Bamidele. "By the way, what does Chukwuma mean?" I told him. He then explained the significance of Bamidele.

"Obeya, you said you have lived in Minna since you were born, can you tell members of this crew, what chances the Nigerian People's Party has in the forthcoming general elections? Niger State?"

"Oh, very bright, very bright. Let me tell you. If the elections are held today, the NPP would win in Niger State. This might not have a direct link with the personality of Zik. Forget the euphoria that follows his being born in Zungeru. The reason has a historical tincture and a veneer of modern Gwari/Nupe political career city. A curiosity hinged on the wonders performed by Solomon Lar of Plateau State. In 1979, I would not have said this. You know, in politics those who are able to cash in on the mistakes of others make good political fortunes and gains. Again the NPP would reap from the magnificent grace and determination of Lar who it seems has vowed to fulfill the life-long dream of the Nigerian Middle Belters — of making their region, the gateway towards a stronger, united Nigeria. A Nigeria where tribe or tongue would have little or no room in determining your political gains — or losses as the case may be. I will tell you more about

this when we have heard Lynda's story. It seems she is not interested in all this political talk of ours."

Meanwhile, the road which we have been made to understand was rough from Akwanga proved actually rougher than could be imagined — pot-holes, dust, narrow and lonely. Under construction or reconstruction it appeared to have fallen into the hands of one of those contractors who collected mobilisation fees only to abandon the job. I teased Obeya again and again reminding him of the ignoble roles played by the emergency contractors. To this he retorted by saying that that was what Nigeria under Shehu Shagari needed.

As our car sped and sometimes tumbled the undulating route, the other members of my crew except Lynda and the driver fell asleep.

"Lynda," I teased, "you look so dull, depressed and moody, something good must be hidden in your radiant beautiful face. What's wrong? Don't you like our company? Is discussing politics boring and too masculine that you cannot even laugh, react or participate? By the way who are you mourning that has made you wear a black ribbon around your wrist?" Apparently piqued by this unsuspecting question, Lynda suddenly burst out crying. I was amazed as well as Obeya. "What is wrong? Lynda," Obeya queried. "Did you lose someone dear to you? Have you been jilted? Tell us, maybe we can share part of your sorrow. What is it that depresses the mood and composure of a beauty like you?"

Beating tears back with all amount of summed up willpower and courage, Lynda began her tale of woes that kept us enraptured till the other sleeping members of the crew woke to listen.

"My story is too long, it is too personal to bother men of learning and thought like you. My story is that of an orphan who can no longer cope with the tribulations of this world. I would, naturally have continued brooding my calamity if the climax had not come too soon. Too soon for me to continue to brood alone. It is the death of my mother. Not that there is anything peculiar or strange by

one losing a mother. After all many people have lost mothers without outsiders noting it. I consider my plight a special case. It has probably, got something to do with the gods. I am a girl whom the gods love. I am destined so soon to go back to them in fulfilment of that prophecy. Right now, you may be surprised I am going to no place in particular. I have decided to wander the length and breadth of this country till the prophecy fulfills." For the first time she tried a smile, a senile smile, a feigned one.

"However, in this period of my wandering, I have come across a lot of things that would beat hollow the zeal, and imagination of any good citizen. It is not that I am apolitical, not to show any sign or react to your discussions nor am I an island in the turbulent politics of Nigeria. The fact is that Nigerian politicians bore me. You see, since I have no defined means of livelihood and coupled with the knowledge that I would go back to the gods any moment, I have tried to utilise my short stay in the world doing such things that would please me and maybe displease your ears. Right now, you may be surprised to hear that my real destination is Niger State. Precisely Minna. Yes, Minna. The town where political attention is focusing this week. I am neither a politician nor a follower of any such party. But my mission is purely on personal grounds. I am going to Minna for money. I developed this appetite since my days in the university when candidates who vied for Union positions would entice us with many gifts ranging from success cards during exams to real money — I mean cash lavishly squandered at parties organised merely to inform us of 'my intention to run for the post of Presidency, Secretary-General, PRO,' and such other posts as were contested for in my university then."

At this juncture, Obeya interrupted. "Lynda, you seem to be telling us too many things at a time. Why don't you finish the story on your ill-luck, permit me to use that term before going to talk on politics which in Nigeria is a male pastime."

"There you are," retorted Lynda. "You men, I mean the Nigerian man would never be purged of his inherent male

chauvinistic disposition. Do you mean it's wrong for twentieth century Nigerian woman to be at least aware of her political environment?"

"Not in the least, Lynda," said Obeya. "I was only moved by the explanation you made about yourself concerning the loss of your mother and the follow-up revelation that you're a girl whom the gods would sooner than later devour. You see of all the children of my parents, I have been made to understand that I took to my grandpa who had an immeasurable sympathy for other people's problems. It is even told that he left his problems unattended, to concentrate on marshalling out strategies towards solving other people's problems, this initially had led me into politics and, it had also led me out of it, at least for now."

"Okay Obeya," Lynda began. "If you must weep over my problems, then weep, for the dead mother I was talking to you about is none other than the symbolic mother Nigeria who had been killed unless it be resurrected, I, the daughter, will soon follow, and the black you see all over my body is no more than fashion. After all it has become fashionable nowadays to put on black ankara over a light complexioned skin, is it not? Look here," she went on, "politics has killed the country. I cannot explain this properly. And I don't think any contemporary Nigerian can. You see politics has turned our societal values upside down. Imagine you quitting the struggle to salvage the common man because you want to get riches and money. Look at me still, who would roam the streets, perch in the most important towns of Nigeria in order to extract money from money-minded politicians. Imagine a situation where attention and priority, (since the era of politics in the Second Republic) is given to ephemeral problems while such issues as constant electricity supply to the masses is given the utmost minimal attention. A situation whereby politicians with the aid of diplomats, export marijuana, cocaine and opium in diplomatic bags and turn round to organise the setting ablaze of an institution that might have exposed them as principal actors. A nation whose

well-placed citizens, roam about in principal garbs, organise and mastermind the open sale of our hard-earned Naira in the black market. Visit any of our top hotels: Bristol, Mainland, Durbar or even the counters of our security agents at the ports; sea or air. Travel outside this country and discover by yourself, the mess our politicians have made of the Naira abroad. Do not be surprised how I got to know all this. Truly speaking, as I have almost travelled to all parts of Nigeria so have I travelled to almost all parts of the world. All in the company of these politicians of the Second Republic." Ironically, she looked at me and smiled, "Nigerian journalists of the Second Republic are worst offenders. They dance, it seems, to any politician's tune provided that that politician dishes out something — you can be sure what this something is — money, opportunities, perks, and power. In some cases, they do not have to give physical money. The politicians do this by simple intimidation. I will tell you one story. One day last month, a governor's wife summoned all media executives in her state to her kitchen in the Government House. I was there in the company of one of the executives as a newly recruited no-nonsense reporter to his organisation. You need to witness what happened at this meeting. A meeting whose attendance could simply be described as a roll call of who-is-who in the media world of the state. There were Board Chairmen, one of them a known Professor of Arts in the country, managing directors, directors of programmes, those of News and Current Affairs and of course all the hired image-makers of the governor who have their offices in the Government House. When all were seated and since there was no strange person in the kitchen of Her Excellency, someone went to inform her that everybody who should be at the meeting was there. Then as graceful as ever, Her Excellency walked in, greeted, as all rose to acknowledge her presence."

"I have called this meeting here this evening to drum to your ears one or two important things that my husband has been frowning at'. Her Excellency began in a tone that

sounded more instructive than appeal. " 'It has been brought to our notice that some of you, in total, open flagrant connivance with our opponents are out to bring my husband and I down in the forthcoming elections. May I promise here and now that we are doing everything within our reach to bring those person(s) down before they achieve their nefarious aims. Let me tell you, that there is no how rain will fall in this world without the earth knowing. We have received reports (and are still receiving) of all your plans. But be assured, the next moment heads will be rolling.' "

"When she said this what was the reaction of the men spoken to?" I queried. "Ah, they said nothing. They sat down there like humpty-dumpty looking perplexed at the rate the governor's wife got to know of the evil forces who were working towards bringing she and her husband down." "You mean none of them said something like refuting or accepting the accusation?" I further pressed. "None." "Not even the Professor of Arts?" "Oh, except him and one other who was the Director of News at one of the broadcasting houses. All the rest just sat like kindergarten pupils receiving moral instructions from the senior prefect from a neighbouring township secondary school. What a shame! You need to hear how those who claimed to represent the masses by their often misapplied usage of the catchy-phrase: to inform, educate and entertain, responded. One of them, pity me, a lady, stood up, boasted to Her Excellency on the efficacy of the murderous machinery she and other members of her Board have set up to deal with those bad eggs. She boasted further of the effectiveness of this machinery. 'Look,' she continued, 'Your Excellency, didn't you hear of what happened at the Daily Express the other day? Did those boys not try to do some funny things in accomplishment of instructions from their mentors? Did you not hear of the way we handled them? Imagine them demanding for a pay rise in these austere times. Imagine their leader dishing out ultimatums to management and emphasising bogus conditions under which peace could be achieved.

And imagine what could have happened if we had allowed them a day stay in the Express as vanguards of instability and retardation of progress, imagine, imagine. . . !"

"What did the Professor of Arts say?" demanded Obeya once more.

"Oh, I am coming to that. It was the professor who rescued me from near madness that evening. When he stood up, he gave no apologies at all nor did he pretend to give one. He simply lambasted Her Excellency. He told her to name who amongst those in attendance that have implicitly colluded with political opponents." Still Her Excellency would not speak. She instead kept repeating that she and her husband know those behind it all. It was there and then that the Professor of Arts spoke his mind.

" 'Look Madam,' " he began, " 'you should be very mindful of rumours in this state. I cannot believe that anybody amongst us here would support any subversive action. That would tantamount to undermining the good work Your Excellency has been doing in the state. This state belongs to all of us, and we who you and your husband have chosen to help in our own little way cannot at this last minute turn round to undermine our collective efforts. That will mean nothing other than cutting one's nose to spite one's face. Is it conceivable? The answer is a capital NO. You see, Your Excellency, the elections are only a few weeks away. You cannot therefore rule out the possible infiltration of Your Excellency's kitchen by little-minded people who all these days of hard electioneering campaigns had gone underground or at best sat on the fence to subterraneously undermine our efforts. I have a feeling that since their nefarious acts have almost hit the rocks, they have devised another intrigue. I am pretty sure of what I am saying. Sorry Madam if I appear to be rude. What I am saying borders on strategy. It happens more often in developed political environments and culture. Ours cannot be exceptions. Desperate political opponents could use any instrument at their disposal to deal a deadly blow to their more enterprising challengers. This does not happen at the beginning of any election but in most cases at

the last minute. The aim of this is multiple. First, it creates a crisis of confidence amongst allies who had hitherto been redoubtable and when men begin in any venture to doubt themselves, they always end up walking straight into the waiting arms of their opponents like sheep without a shepherd. Second, a crisis of confidence mostly at periods like this has multiplier effects, which reverberates within the rank and file of any political party to give room for more often than necessary, senseless distrust that would shake the grassroots and cause a last minute change of heart by gullible electorates.' "

" 'In this regard therefore,' " the professor continued 'Your Excellency, I would rather suggest that when you hear anything about one of your media men or women, do not hesitate to call our attention, at least to find out the true position. I am saying all this because any noticeable division in our camp at this crucial time will be disastrous. It will mean that all our efforts at mobilising the people and enlisting their support these past three years and a half is a waste.' " As soon as he had finished, the young director of one of the broadcasting houses under Her Excellency's control rose and spoke in a way that depicted a sense of pride and at the same time a piteous spectacle. In his speech, he neither apologised for wrong doing nor did he pretend to show any sense of contrition. He was not apologetic. He simply, in a manner similar to that of the professor, asked Her Excellency to name whoever she thought was privy to any efforts to sabotage the efforts of His Excellency. He did not of course say all that without first throwing a challenge that sounded like this: " 'Your Excellency, if I am the person who by design or accident had tried to undermine our electoral success in the forthcoming elections, I demand that I be sacked.' "

" 'Seven days after this declaration, the young director of news was actually sacked. He was reinstated seven days later. How and why this happened, I will tell you before we get to Suleja.' " Lynda flatly concluded.

We got to Abuja, the new federal capital well in time to be tempted to drive round the city. Tempted because

politicians have made a lot of noise about Abuja. My first impression of Abuja was simply put fantastic. This was derived from my knowledge of Lagos and the knowledge that Abuja was being built to replace it (Lagos) as the capital of Nigeria. In Abuja, great edifices had sprung up: skyscrapers, high rises, mansions of the highest imaginable standards, eight-lane roads and bus stops built with a touch of Islam; A permanent haze-sprinkled atmosphere. A visitor to Abuja for the first time could not resist the alluring call by nature to drive round and possibly discover the secret behind Abuja's panoramic fantasy. But we were not totally disposed to doing that. We were already worn out, fatigued and jaded by travels. Mr. Obilonu, our driver had already started complaining although he had to suppress it as he would explain later because he was overwhelmed by the beauty of the city. Moreover, he said the lively discussion we had been having from Akwanga had given him inspiration and courage to do his job. He was also on the lookout for baby food for his six months old baby.

Our journey to Minna through Suleja and a host of other big towns was smooth. Though the road was rough it was a big relief when compared to what we encountered from Akwanga to Keffi or Keffi to Abuja. It is when you are on such a journey that you will be disposed to appreciate the vastness of this country called Nigeria.

"Nigeria is too big," said Iroh.

"Yes," David replied.

"Look at the rock over there," continued Iroh. "It is even belching fire and smoke."

"Not fire," said David in a manner seeking to confirm from an authority in Geography asked "Abi Oga Godson, is it not volcano?"

"No", I replied. "It could be called a fog. What you are seeing is evaporation from the rocks. Eh, em, I might not be absolutely correct, but if my geography, God damn it, I've forgotten my geography! It is, it is this theory associated with rise in altitude, that is the theory that says the higher you go the cooler it becomes. I have forgotten the basic theory but take it that what you are seeing is nothing other than water vapour."

"Oga Godson, what causes evaporation?" inquired Iroh, now cupping his right hand over his brows to get a vivid picture of the seeming mirage.

"Is this the first time you're coming across these types of hills?" asked Lynda.

"No!" thundered David. "I have seen those rolling hills along Okigwe-Enugu express road, I have seen a mass of rolling hills on my way to Cameroun but that was when I

was a kid. I have even tried a climb at the Cameroun highlands. That was when we went on excursion.

"Have you gone to Jos through Langtang and Ayaragu?" Lynda further queried.

"No, I have not."

"No wonder, when you do, you will be purged of the belief that the hills and hillocks you are now meeting are belching smoke. If you have been to Jos, for example, you will on approaching Bukuru Road, (that is at the point through which you go to Jos airport), see a series of rocks arranged in splendid order as if God came down himself to arrange them. Nearing those rocks you will see numerous streams streaming down their slopes to congregate and in turn form big rivulets that on a longer course would develop into big rivers. That was how most big rivers of the world were formed, for example, the River Missouri descended from the Appalachian highlands in the U. S. A. It was how the River Niger sprang from the Guinean highlands or the Benue rising from the Cameroun highlands. This is not to say that all rivers emanate from highlands. There are exceptions to this. However, they are few. And these include the Nile that rose from Lake Victoria in Uganda and the Mississippi from the Great Lakes. Even at that, the Blue Nile rose from somewhere in the Kilimanjaro highlands. So that is the case. Most rivers take their rise from hills or highlands and take their course along the natural valleys created by mountains or lands that had folded in the past."

"Eh, eh!" exclaimed Iroh. "That could be why Iyiogwugwu sprang from near Ugwu Eke. And that would be why Ezeala is near Ugwu Ikpa." He suddenly burst into a hilarious song that goes thus:

When you see a good thing appreciate it, appreciate it;

Praise it;

Try to do good if you can;

If you cannot

Anybody who does should be praised

God has done good. His work is great

Praise him, Praise him.

He repeated the song over and over substituting Zik for God and at times ITV for making it possible for him to learn at first hand all he would not have learnt in all the wretched years he had spent on earth.

From Suleja signs of a big event about to happen in Niger State started filling the air. As we drove past we saw the numerous make-shift shops built by Igbo traders. They were common sights on the Abuja-Suleja-Minna road. At a brief stop in Suleja, anxious Igbo traders swarmed round our vehicle eager to have first hand information what had been happening at home. One inquisitive trader inquired if actually Zik had withdrawn from the presidential race for Awo as was being rumoured. They complained about the demolition of their market stalls at Abuja and the constant harassment of Igbos by those they described as NPN zealots. However, they remained confident that if Zik did not withdraw, the NPP would surely capture Niger State in the coming elections. They cautioned us against possible assault by NPN supporters but believed that we would be bold enough to contend them.

From sixty kilometres to Minna, we began having a feeling of a big event about to happen. A graffiti writer went to town with unrelenting relish, lavishly painting the victory of the NPP on any available object that would contain it. "Up NPP, Down NPN; NPP - Power; NPP Chanji; NPP - Abinci; NPN Amana. Niger State for NPP. Up Zik of Africa; Zeek Zeek Zeek!" read one of the major banners that superimposed the dual carriage lane that opened its mouth swallowing all visitors entering into Minna into its endless belly.

Looking straight down the lane was a crowd chanting slogans. At first we thought the end was prematurely in sight but behold they were NPP faithfuls heralding NPP representatives from other states who were in Minna to add colour to the campaign about to kick off the next day. At present the jubilant crowd was welcoming their political brothers from Plateau State. And in their midst was Solomon Lar, the Plateau man of the Gwari extraction whose cross-ethnic political exploitation had become the

talk of the day. With the knowledge that those chantings were for the same purpose why we were in Minna, I asked the driver to stop to enable the cameramen to get their machine ready for possible news gathering. In television, seeing is believing, we reasoned.

"Iroh, we have to get ready to record this scene," I ordered.

"Why, Sir," Iroh retorted.

"Because the crowd we are seeing could turn out to be jubilant over the campaigns kicking off tomorrow."

"They could be opponents of the NPP and could smash our camera at the slightest notice that we are the pro-NPP," Iroh reasoned. I agreed with him but insisted that he should nonetheless assemble his equipment. The worst news in journalism is always the best news. Whatever it is, we will record this spectacular event. I must beg here not to bother the reader with all other things that transpired but believe me, as soon as one articulate member of the surging crowd discovered that our van bore ITV crest, he jumped up in weird ecstasy, broke through the crowd, came forward to the crew to ask us how we felt, where we were coming from and when we got to Minna. We told him to just keep off us till we had filmed the jubilant crowd and recorded what we have seen. In a short while we had got what we wanted and were ready to talk to the excited man.

"Mr." I started as cautious as ever "What is your name?"

"My name is Aminu Baba from Minna."

"Sir Aminu, you look so excited amidst the crowd, what's the excitement about?"

"It is about the impending change. When I remember that by October, the oppressive rule of the NPN will automatically cease in Niger State I feel elated. I have a life full of expectation. Oh, I want the election today. Chanji! Chanji!! Chanji!!! Chanji '83 - this is the newest in town."

ITV: "Aminu why are you so sure that the NPP will win in Niger State come the gubernatorial elections?"

Aminu: "First, I must tell you that the people of Niger

State are disenchanted with the rule of Awwal Ibrahim who represents an extension of the Hausa/Fulani political oligarchy in Nigeria. Would you believe me if I tell you that Awwal is not from Niger State. He is of Sokoto parentage. His parents came here during the Dan Fodio Jihad and settled. It is not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with that. After all anybody can contest election anywhere in Nigeria if things are allowed to go the natural way. But that is not with Awwal. Awwal rode to power on the back of the Gwaris. He soon, however, discarded them after acquiring the power. He did not represent them adequately either in appointment or the extension of social amenities that make the world go round. What did he do you might ask? The man simply turned the government and people of Niger State into a wholesale political patronage to the Shagari cohorts. He went as far as bringing people from Sokoto State or those with a trace of Sokoto blood in their veins to come to Minna to overlord us. Just look at the composition of his cabinet, you would be forced to think that you are reading political directory of who is who in Sokoto State. Can you believe that the secretary to the government of Niger State Alhaji Ibrahim Aliyu is from Sokoto State? The Director of Information is an Hausa while the Education Commissioner is from Katsina. Not all, about nine permanent secretaries and thirteen Board members are all Hausas." Aminu Baba concluded the story by lamenting that Niger State predominated by Nupes and Gwaris is being colonised by the Hausa elements who are in the minority.

"Basically we would not have minded if these "colonial masters" are delivering the goods. In 1979, Awwal ascended the throne through a ninety-eight per cent massive vote he received

from Niger State indigenes. Today, four years after, Niger State remains the least developed of all the states in Nigeria. No industries. No good roads, no new schools, no improvement on health facilities, not to talk of electricity supply. But Awwal has spent by my calculation up to ₦1.6 billion between 1979 and 1983. We know all this and that is why we have decided to change NPN, change Awwal, change Shagari come October 1983.

You can see it for yourself. See the reception the people are according Solomon Lar. Lar is a man of the people. His development-oriented programmes in Plateau State (Plateau and Niger and neighbouring states) has caused sensation in Niger State. It is having what politicians call bandwagon effect, no, it is contagious effect.

When you are coming from Suleja you would have noticed the deplorable state of the roads. Civil servants have not been paid their salaries for the past five months, teachers have received their pay only once this year (it was May). The result is that in schools, teachers and their pupils have vowed to stamp out the evil called NPN come next election. In Plateau State under Solomon Lar, the result is different. Our Gwari brothers there live in perpetual bliss, enjoying all the good things of life. In fact, Solomon Lar in his infinite kindness had in spite of party affiliation extended good services to border towns in Niger State whose peoples are Gwari. Our sons even go to Plateau now to school free of charge and our university graduates go to Plateau to get good and well-paid jobs including teaching.

Not all, when for instance other people say the Nupes from Niger State visit Plateau State they curse their stars for having voted for Awwal in the first place during the 1979 elections. They

- have soon discovered that in Plateau (NPP state) civil servants are paid in time, new roads being constructed and old ones maintained. They discover that in Plateau State the supply of drinking water is no luxury and that civil servants receive their salaries as and when due.
- ITV: "What plans have you people marshalled out to wrest power or do you think all these shouts will lead you anywhere without concrete arrangements?"
- Aminu: "First, we have taken care of adequate representation of the people in the NPP-controlled Niger State. This, we want to achieve by the designations we have made for positions. For example, our gubernatorial candidate is Alhaji Alhassan Badakoshi, he is Nupe from Bida. His Deputy, Alhaji Bosso from Gwari, the Chairman of the NPP is of Gwari extraction. The Secretary to the party is from Nupe while Alhaji Shehu Tukuya of the GNP has recently resigned his minority leadership in the State House of Assembly and has now declared for the NPP.
- ITV: "What chances has the Owelle of Onitsha in Niger State as a presidential candidate in the coming elections?"
- Aminu: "Let me take you up there. You should have been in a better position to know. Zik first and foremost is from Niger State. Don't you know he was born in Zungeru? Don't you know that that automatically qualifies him for the home base vote? Zik's birth at Zungeru in 1904 has some secret plan of salvation for the people of Niger State. This secret plan, people believe has not been effectively harnessed or exploited because of successive deceitful rulers under the Hausa/Fulani canopy, who had made them see Zik in the past as an Igbo progeny, who does not deserve the votes of the people from the North.

We are happy that this senseless belief has been broken by the exemplary display of quality leadership by Zik's party in Plateau State.

This time around, the people of Niger want to ask God for forgiveness and give them a Federal Administration headed by Zik, the Owelle of Zungeru."

At nightfall, Aminu who then introduced himself as the Chairman of the NPP Youth Wing in Niger State arranged a hotel where we lodged. All of us slept sounder than before having been terribly worn out by the rigours of the travel that took more than six hundred kilometres the previous day.

What day 26th May, 1983, was, I have now forgotten. Reflectively, it looked like a public holiday in the Minna metropolis. Only a city that had a unity of purpose or a generally agreed reason for joy would have displayed such a general festive mood. Beggars, professionals, soldiers, pupils and their teachers, public servants, all, behold, there was a state-wide festival. The markets were empty. Mini-shop owners took a vacation. Public servants reported late for work. Those who came early left early in anticipation of the arrival of Nnamdi Azikiwe. Buses were not running but there were a lot of taxi cabs doing business. As a matter of fact, the few vehicles found on the road were those owned by people with a high sense of economic rationality. They were, according to investigation, those of them who had anticipated a possible sabotage. In the Nigerian political game, the man who is able to undo his opponent by whatever conceivable means ultimately has the upper hand. And so in Minna that morning, there was a scarcity of fuel. One man who failed to join in the collusion to cause artificial scarcity was a Nupe man, Alhaji Bello who intrinsically believed that all hands must be on deck to "Change '83." As early as 6 a.m. that morning, we had left our hotel rooms to look for fuel bearing in mind the information we gathered the previous night of the possibility of fuel scarcity. When we got to Bello's filling station he stopped general attendance to any customer in order to ensure that we got fuel. Now, our tank filled to the brim, we left for Abuja airport where Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was scheduled to arrive by 1 p.m. that afternoon.

At the Abuja airport lounge to receive Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe were among others, all officials of the Niger State NPP, Solomon Lar, Governor of Plateau State, D. B. Zang, Chairman Plateau State NPP and the entire crew of Plateau Broadcasting Corporation (PBC). The presence of the PBC boys was absolutely necessary because all media houses in Niger State were controlled by the NPN. The danger in this was that whatever political marks a party, especially a rival one makes in Niger, will either not be highlighted effectively or downrightly blacked out. So, since Plateau Broadcasting Service could be picked from anywhere in Niger, Solomon Lar saw to it that every assistance should be given to his party in Niger with all available machinery within his disposal. Worse than that for people of Niger, there were no print media in the state. Literate ones in the state depended solely on whatever the Jos-based Standard newspaper or the New Nigerian newspaper from Kaduna State offered. But because the *Nigerian Standard* had circumstantially become partisan majority of literate Niger people relied on the *New Nigerian* for information. Luckily for them, the *New Nigerian* played this role effectively as an unabashed mouthpiece of the ruling NPN.

Seeing another news organ other than the *Nigerian Standard* at the airport lounge was a good psychological moral booster for the Northerners, most of whom had started wondering if they had not made a wrong choice in the first place by supporting the NPP. When we told them that we had travelled all the way from Owerri, their faces radiated with abundant happiness.

Explaining why he had absolute confidence that the NPP will win Niger State in the forthcoming election, Solomon Lar simply asked me to look outside the tarmac.

"I need not emphasise this more than necessary, look out there. The long queue you are seeing, is it a mirage? Those vehicles outside there, referring to the truck load of NPP fanatics. You did see them while you were coming perhaps. They are the people yearning for change not only in Niger State but at the Federal level. They want Shagari out and Zik in. They want Awwal out and Badakoshi in.

They want illiteracy out and literacy in. They want austerity out and prosperity in. The crowd outside represents a cross-section of the population of Nigeria. All of them would have been here had we the wherewithal, I mean if we are like the NPN — Naira Party of Nigeria. A lot more of them could not travel from Minna to Abuja. The distance is far, about 180 kilometres. So they are waiting to cheer the great Zik into Minna. Pray you will see them. Since the past two weeks they had waited for today."

On why he was talking with such absolute confidence, Lar replied that whoever wears the shoes knows where it pinches most. "I know that the people are tired of Awwal because the NPN distanced itself from the electorate, mind you, this callous disposition is not peculiar to Niger State. In almost all the states won by the NPN in 1979, the atmosphere had been Amana, Amana, ('had I known'). We in Plateau, Niger's next door neighbouring state have noticed this apparent disenchantment and that is why we are offering them the next better alternative. I am hopeful the people have learnt everything. They have seen that party they relishly embrace in 1979 is a pack of failures. We have come to rescue them. I am happy they are appreciative and that is why you are seeing thousands of people outside there who have come to the airport to usher in the harbinger of "Change 1983."

Lar had hardly finished when the boisterousness of the crowd outside virtually drowned whatever other pleasantries we were to exchange. In fact the crowd first noticed the plane's bearing, preparatory for landing. And within seconds, behold the continental airline Boeing 737 that conveyed the Owelle and his entourage had started emptying what it had swallowed in its stomach.

At the airport also were traditional dancers representing all the cultural shades in Niger State. There were in attendance, Igbo traditional dancers resident in Minna. They sang, clapped their hands and eulogised the past works of the great Zik, including how he went to get education from the land of the whites, how he is the

epitome of knowledge and wisdom and how when the poor cried, he wept.

We departed the Minna airport amidst cacophonous bauntings and sing-songs, stopping briefly only at the place of the Emir of Suleja Alhaji Ibrahim Bodo Musa to whom Zik decided to pay a courtesy call. At the Emir's palace, Zik explained that it was customary to pay such visits to any traditional ruler before entering his domain.

"As a traditional ruler myself, I understand the implication of such a gesture. Besides," Zik went on, "the party which I represent, I mean the NPP has a lot of regard for traditional institutions. And perhaps that is the reason why we had carved out a comfortable place for you in our manifesto knowing that you are the true custodian of a people's desires. We understand this and have accordingly pledged that traditional institutions being fundamental in the growth and effective administration of a people, any ruler who God has chosen (through the consent of a people) to rule, must be accorded the respect and honour such a leader deserves."

Replying, the Emir, a frail old man whose gait betrayed his age recounted the numerous constitutional conferences he had attended with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in order to facilitate the liberation of Nigeria from the shackles of colonialism. He thanked Zik for recognising his importance but reminded Zik of the implication of his (Emir's) position as a father to all irrespective of political leaning.

"You people have said it times without number and the constitution even said it. We are insulated from partisan politics. But the only blessing I will give to you, is that may your road be rough. I wish you what you wish yourself. Go about your campaign in peace, do not provoke your opponents. If you are provoked always urge your followers to endure. That is the mark of a good leader." After that parting speech the Owelle signed the visitor's register and we continued our journey to Minna.

However, we had hardly departed the Emir's palace when opposing supporters clashed. We did not witness it

nor did my cameraman. All we saw was a blood soaked arena where we learnt a prince from the Emir's palace had stabbed an NPN fanatic who had shouted *Abinci* the NPN slogan representing food, against earlier warnings that should any party be around, opponents should do everything to avoid unnecessary provocation. A stone throw away from the scene, a multitude of jubilant party supporters from Suleja and Abuja had asked the Owelle to address them. I don't know whether the Owelle was keen or not. His protocol officials had intimated the crowd that Zik would not address them. The crowd insisted. "We want Zik; we want Zik," rent the air and they literally blocked the road demanding that unless they be addressed, Zik would not continue his journey. The Owelle took a wise decision by acceding their request. As he mounted the rostrum, there was deafening ovation. Whatever else Zik said to them, they did not hear and did not bother. Newsmen did not hear either in spite of their vantage positions. As we drove down the Minna road, we kept hearing ovations and chanting that demanded immediate elections and a Zik presidency whether "he sabi rule or not." Before we got to Minna there were other brief stops at Izom, Kpakuti, Feri and Ndoki.

We were overwhelmed by the crowd we saw at the Polo Ground in Minna. We had not seen such a crowd since the campaigns began. Our vehicle literally rode on people's back into the Polo Ground and it was by providence that the rostrum erected for the purpose of Zik's visit did not collapse. Every person at the Polo Ground wanted to see Zik. When he mounted the rostrum, they seemed contented with just seeing him. He addressed them in Hausa language to which most of us were not versed in. Later, he spoke in English telling them why there must be a change of government in 1983. Repeatedly he talked of the bane that was NPN nationwide. The bane graphically illustrated by their inability to perform and not having the courage to relinquish political power in the face of failure. He then introduced the gubernatorial candidate, Alhaji Badakoshi, his running mate Alhaji Baso and other party

officials. When it was time to introduce Solomon Lar, the crowd went berserk. Some cried, while others tore their *babariga*. Those that could not control their emotions wept. Lar to them was not just a politician, he was a beacon of light, a political tactician and wizard who had changed the lifestyles of the Gwaris within the period he ruled. To them, he would be the proverbial light that would shine after a long and protracted period of darkness. Lar came purposely to unchain them from the ills and illegalities that were the cornerstone of Awwal's misrule. They hailed and hailed him. Thereafter, Lar asked in a thundering voice,

"Do you want a change?"

"Yeeeeee e e sss, Chanji, Chanji, chanji."

"Do you want a change?"

"Yeeees, Chanji, chanji do-le."

"Do you want to change austerity to prosperity?"
"Kowe, Yowa, Caskiya,"

"Okay," said Lar. "If you want your sufferings to end with 1983, the only sure way to it is through the NPP."

"Let me tell you, the NPP is not on Igbo party. See the number of people it has presently attracted to its fold. The NPN is a false party. Look at its new members — Ojukwu, Okpara, Mbadiwe, all of them are the great Igbo tribal kingpins who want to divide Nigeria. Are these the people you want to rule Nigeria?" "No! No! No! chanji, chanji," the crowd responded in annoying unison. "If "No" be your answer, my honest brethuen, then let me remind you again that the Zik standing before you here is your own Zik. He was born in Zungeru. If it were to be in other parts of the world, Zungeru would have been his political constituency. His father worked here. His mother too did. Besides, he is the only sane man from the maddening gang of the members of the First Republic whose rule had the interest, unity and survival of Nigeria as an integral nation at heart. He is a man of action. If I extended electricity to your Gwari brothers from meagre resources doled out from the NPN-controlled centre, contemplate what will happen when NPP controls the centre. Surely we will be better placed to enhance and improve on whatever

performances we have been able to perform these past years."

The rally ended with the stunning declaration of the immediate younger brother to the incumbent NPN Governor of Niger State for the NPP. According to Useni Galadima Ibrahim, the iniquities of the NPN represented by the action of his elder brother, Awwal, were no longer bearable. He had (according to him), seen where the political tide was blowing and had decided to make hay while the sun shone. His declaration for the NPP, he later explained was to indict his brother whom he had these past years advised secretly against his avid implementation of the anachronistic policies of the NPN in Niger State.

It was at the Government Lodge Minna that I was opportune to interview the great Zik of Africa. The date was Friday, 27th May 1985. I had not arranged the interview. It was arranged by Chris Anyanwu, the NTA Reporter billed to cover Zik's campaigns in Niger State. And let me now confess that up to the time I asked Chris of permission to throw in one or two questions to Zik, I was not sure which of the numerous questions agitating my mind I would ask first. When I made up my mind, I began by asking the Owelle what gave him the courage to seek election in the 1983 election having lost the same post in 1979. His reply was succinct.

"Thank you very much," he began, "First you must realise that I am a constitutionalist who believes in fundamental rights of every individual irrespective of place of birth, creed, age, race, religion or sex. As a Nigerian, I think that I am effectively covered by the tenets of the constitution to run any elective post. Besides, politics is first and foremost my calling. People have misunderstood this. I have watched from a vantage position how those not well-schooled in the art of the game have been playing it and I said to myself, why don't you go to teach them? 'Go let them learn from you' an inner voice said to me. So I decided to come out once more to contest and by so doing I want to use a constitutional means to change the corruption-infested NPN. I cannot sit down and watch those who were not born when we struggled to build Nigeria destroy her in the name of politics. I decided to contest not only to win but to set a standard for the

upcoming generations to emulate."

"Sir, in one of their campaign rallies at Enugu, Chief Emeka Ojukwu and Chuba Okadigbo had alleged that you deserted the Igbos at their most crucial hour of need, that is, during the Civil War. Can you use this opportunity to clear your good name? I asked.

"He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day," replied Zik. "Our brothers in Nigeria annoyed us in the mid- sixties. We protested and said we were no more going to stay with the Union. They said no, you must be a member. Fight ensued after so many aborted peace conferences. This world is ruled by opposites. By this I mean there is for example white and black, man and woman, day and night, heat and cold, water and fire, sin and forgiveness. Each and every one complements. And so after having fought for more than twenty months, I discovered the loss in human and material property on both sides. I realised that this was an unnecessary fratricidal war. A war that benefited none other than the imperialist. It occurred to me that those being destroyed were if nothing else blacks. I realised that in spite of all the flaunting, the war was heavily weighing against the Biafrans. I decided that I must use my little power to end it. Then I travelled outside Biafra to commune with respected African leaders on the urgent need to bring about the cessation of hostilities. This I did with all intent and purpose to save more souls from untimely deaths. So as I said before, the world is full of dialectics or the predominance of opposites. If the two sides have fought for more than two years and no side had up till then recorded victory it showed that something evidently intrinsic existed in the two that should call for mutual respect. If we today forget the human tragedy occasioned by that war, we should be saying that Nigeria emerged from the Civil War the better, for it had succeeded in stamping mutual respect — a vital ingredient necessary for peaceful co-existence."

"Sir, my name is Odafe, I write for the Daily Times newspaper. Is it true that you have reached a consensus

with the UPN for a possible merger that you will be stepping down for Chief Obafemi Awolowo any moment from now?"

Zik readjusted himself on the sofa, but looked visibly rattled. "I know the source of your information," said he. "It is the *New Nigerian* — the petty-minded literary hirelings in that paper that have been doing everything in the dictates and tones of their masters to run me and my party down. They are jealous of us. They are afraid of us and are jittering. It is a scandalous publication designed by reactionist *New Nigerian* newspaper and its cohorts to cause confusion in our party. They have seen the handwriting on the wall. They know the NPP is now poised for a final fight to finish in the coming elections. They are jittery. The publication is merely divisionary. There is no iota of truth in it. I urge our numerous supporters and adherents to disregard the publication as a figment of the writer's weird wild imaginations. I have not stepped down for Awolowo or any other person for that matter. Our ultimate aim is to translate to living reality the people's general resolve to change the government in 1983 for good. That is the task now before us. Until we do that we will not rest and of course, the NPN will not rest."

With that I took my leave feeling a hundred feet taller. I have interviewed the Great Zik. I have talked with the indomitable Zik of Africa. Yet the myth did not seem broken. He was the same old enigma he had been to me since I heard of him. His eyes flinked and shone, with audaciousness. They flinkered like those of a rattle snake under provocation and looked to no one in particular when answering questions although you will vouch they were focused on you just as I did the first time I saw him at Campos Square in Lagos. He had not changed. The same Zik.

At precisely 9 a.m. Friday, 27th May, 1983, Zik and his entourage called at the palace of the Emir of Minna, Alhaji Ahmadu Bahago. In the palace, Zik again explained that he was in the Emir's palace in fulfilment of the dictates of protocol and reverence for traditional authorities

throughout the land. Said Zik, "My campaign team and I arrived here (Minna) very late yesterday. And by the time we came our supporters literally hijacked us to the Polo Ground where we addressed them. In fact, after the rally we would still have called on you but for fear we might disturb your Royal Highness' peace at that time of the night. So, we said first thing tomorrow, that is today, we would call on you before going forth to do our campaigns. That is why we are now here, Your Royal Highness, to inform you that we are here and request your blessing and permission."

Replying, the Emir, who all the while had been communicated with through an interpreter, thanked Zik and his entourage for doing him the single honour. Respect, he said, is reciprocal. "As you have come to me, being a Chief in your own standing, I must not fail to pray to Almighty Allah to guide you and members of your party in all you do in Niger State. But one thing you should help me tell your supporters is that they should eschew violence," said the Emir, "I am not accusing anyone in particular but reports reaching my palace have it that members of your party have been worst offenders in all the violent clashes between political parties in Niger State."

He displayed a copy of the *New Nigerian* newspaper of that day carrying photograph of debris left by inter-party clash that occurred in Suleja the previous day, alleging that from reports within his source that the NPP provoked the clash. He had hardly finished when a stout woman speaking in Hausa challenged the authenticity of his claims. There and then the woman walked outside the Emir's Inner Chambers from where she called on other party supporters to disregard the Emir's supplications which she later described as crocodile tears. "The truth," explained one other fellow who said he was a cousin to the Emir, "is that the Emir was partisan." "Never mind," he continued, "we shall take care of him after the elections, when an NPP-controlled Government will rule Niger State. Then we shall let him know that the seat he is now occupying does not belong to him. We shall tell him the

home truth." Whether or not they told the Emir the home truth later I cannot say, but I noticed a new addition to Zik's messages wherever he went in Niger State. He had, starting from Zungeru, which was his next port of call, told his supporters to always try to eschew violence in the face of provocation. He had at every point in time cautioned against the use of vile language against opponents. According to him, violence and rotten language belonged to the uncultured polity represented by the NPN.

We got to Zungeru, Zik's birthplace at about twelve noon on 27th May. Zungeru is not a big town. It is more or less what one of my lecturers would call a glorified village yet, it was the birthplace of one of Africa's foremost leading politicians. At first, I did not believe that Zik was born in that town, and when I complained to the crew, it was Iroh who quipped that after all Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem at the outskirts of Judea and besides, that he was born in a manger, where animals lived. The other surprise of that day was the discovery that Nnamdi Azikiwe was born in a conically-shaped mud house whose dilapidated remains lay a few metres away from the Zungeru railway station's office where Zik's father, Obed, had eked out a living.

There, one of the sons of Zungeru never failed to show his displeasure with the status of Zungeru and indeed Niger State. The man Alhaji Isyaku Adamu Kata, Niger State chairman of NPP, subtly told Zik his mind. Said he in an emotion-packed speech.

"Great Owelle, it gladdens our hearts to note that you were born in Niger State in fact on the spot we now stand. It is also our pleasure that you have visited here today. But it saddens our hearts to note that Zungeru is one of the least developed towns in this underdeveloped state. Owelle," he intoned, "do you know that the nearest secondary school to Zungeru is about fifty kilometres away, the nearest hospital is about the same distance away? We do not talk of good drinking water because that is an anathema. We are not talking of electricity because that equally is a taboo, neither can Niger State boast of good roads. You have seen it yourself. But Zungeru is one of the oldest towns visited by the white man at the turn of this century. Your father worked in that postal agency there, (he pointed to an equally archaic building) and we learnt your mother was the first to teach our children the art of home management. See now for yourself, after nearly a century of civilisation, Zungeru still gropes, being hunted and chased by the shadow of its very old self.

Owelle of Zungeru, we must not fail to incriminate you in this wild and wicked plans to obfuscate the pride of a people blessed by God. Why is it that you don't come to Niger State except during elections? As soon as elections are over you run away forgetting us your brothers and

sisters. Why? Do you not know that blood is thicker than water and that you should be paying us at least annual visits to consolidate what God had done? Do you not know that your birth here was a secret plan by God to keep Nigeria permanently united? Do you even think of the reasons behind this secret plan of God? Okay, Owelle, we have now decided to bring you back home. We have decided to erect a befitting house on that same spot where your parents lived. We shall call it Zik's Zungeru. We shall make it comfortable enough to provide a better alternative to Onuiyi Haven. This place too will be a better Haven for you our son"

Responding, Zik explained that he shared the same feeling with his brothers and sisters in Niger State. "Tell my people," he said, "I will be home and when I come, it will be to stay forever." Remember when Jesus was born in the small village of Bethlehem, he was supposed to evangelise to the utmost part of the world. As you rightly pointed out, that seem to have been my mission in Nigeria. This time around however, I must not fail to make this firm promise that Niger State and indeed Zungeru will not be forgotten in the scheme of things as has been the case in this NPN dispensation. An NPP-controlled Niger will use all available means to uplift the status of Zungeru and give it its rightful place in Nigerian history. We cannot afford to fail, otherwise posterity will judge us of a serious error of omission. We will not do that." And with those parting words, the campaign team continued to Kontagora a senatorial zone most indigenes considered as NPN stronghold in Niger State. Zik was to give credence to this, there was not that wild eagerness to see Zik as were in Suleja, Pakuti, Minna or Zungeru. Majority of those who turned out to see and hear Zik speak were either buoyed by sheer sense of inquiry or undecided voters who came to gain one or two things from the Owelle. There were, however, in attendance more strangers than indigenous Kontagora people. Later we were told that the NPN had gone to town to threaten the lives of whoever ventured to attend the rally. They had predicted violence, fire and

brimstone. And it was this that instilled fear and kept most people who would at least, have gone to see Zik for curiosity's sake away from the rally. All the same, the politician in Zik did not let him waver. When he mounted the rostrum, he lamented that Niger State has the richest and greatest agricultural potentials in Nigeria yet, Niger was a wasteland.

"Look at all the sprawling land we have passed on our way from Zungeru to Kontagora. All green, plain, rolling and sometimes undulating. Look at how successive regimes in Nigeria have wasted riches, neglected agriculture and made Nigeria a mono-crop economy, in spite of the fact that we are blessed. I am sure that if the agricultural potentials of Niger State are effectively tapped, we can feed the whole Nigeria and have excess for export. And that is what an NPP-controlled government will do. In doing this, we will not neglect the goose that laid the golden egg. That means that any government under our control will surely make life worth living in Niger. We know that most of you are cattle-rearers and the importance of protein cannot be over emphasised. But before we do this, we shall have a well-articulated policy on agriculture radically different from the present NPN arrangement where a medical practitioner is in charge of rice importation. In fact, what does a medical practitioner know about agriculture? Absolutely nothing. And that is why we appointed a seasoned agronomist, Dr. Shettima Ali Mustapha to be my running mate in the forthcoming election. Dr. Mustapha has promised he would remove with immediate effect the bureaucratic bottleneck that had constantly stood in the road of a truly agrarian revolution in Nigeria. We must not fail." Zik then introduced the NPP gubernatorial candidate as well as the senatorial candidates from Niger State in the fast approaching elections. Thereafter, we left Kontagora for Bida, a distance of more than three hundred kilometres.

It was during the ride to Kontagora that I appreciated the import of Zik's concept of the agricultural potentialities of Niger State. There was land. A huge landmass,

uninhabited and stretching out for such length of distance. At one end of the sky, you see water vapour encapsulating the atmosphere, then you begin to imagine if there was a great sea that welcomed the sprawling land. At another, you think the vast land had touched the sky's bottom far far away. It was the anxiety to prove either of those theories right or wrong that shortened the rather long journey. For you keep being disappointed at the approach of a projected distance that the sprawling land did not merge with the sky or roll into the waiting embrace of a big sea. It was land, land and land from Kontagora to Bida. I had already experienced some head, belly, and waist aches all associated with the long distance journey. In fact, at Kontagora, I had to bend down or sit down at vantage positions to last throughout the time Zik spoke. There, I complained to Mike Eke of the Nigerian Statesman and Emeka Onyeabor of ABC Enugu that Zik never tires. Imagine an old man of seventy-eight riding this long distance cramped at the back of a car, with all the attendant fatigue and still stands on the rostrum to deliver unending speeches to the crowd. And here was I bending, squatting, stooping and at a stage I actually got tired. Imagine!

Approaching Bida from Kontagora was a great task, a task greater than going to Sokoto from Minna or even from Minna to Kontagora. And on this I call on the reader to take a map of Nigeria and see for himself. You have to ride literally into Sokoto State before making an about-turn diversion that would usher in the real journey. We had initially respected protocol and obeyed the order not to break the convoy. However, as the journey progressed backwardly and reaching Bida appeared an impossible task, we disobeyed protocol and broke convoy, overtaking all vehicles (that rode towards Bida) except the vehicles conveying reporters from the News Agency of Nigeria and Plateau Broadcasting Corporation, Jos. There were so many little towns we passed on our way to Bida and all of them showed signs of great event about to happen. It was at a town called Kutigi that a jubilant crowd once more stopped our vehicles and demanded they be addressed.

To me, stopping would have meant riding a willing horse to death for I conjectured that the Owelle in spite of all the brayado, must by now be feeling the pangs of tiredness. We and other pressmen up front stopped at Kutigi, and busied ourselves recording traditional dances, acrobatic displays and banners all for Zik and the NPP. At the same time, we waited for the main train, hoping that as was the case in other places, Zik would succumb to the overwhelming demand of party supporters of Kutigi. He did almost succumb except that the convoy was not broken after all. What really happened was that advisers convinced Zik that Kutigi was a strong base for the NPP and that whether Zik stopped or not the people had made up their minds on personal conviction that they would vote for Zik. And so, instead of a full-fledged rally at Kutigi what happened was a flag stop. A stop which only gave the people opportunity to shower greetings and encomiums on their hero and accepted only acknowledgements in recompense. How a hero reacts to this type of flag stop greetings affects his chances and could if not properly handled, work against him. Zik appeared to be a grandpa in the art of acknowledging others. For he radiated an unending degree of pleasantries even in possible pain and tiredness.

Twelve kilometres to Bida the whole route was overtaken by NPP fanatics on motorbikes. They rode and displayed various styles as the road to Bida opened up wider and wider engulfing its new possessors. It was on this road that I noticed the first casualty, because a cyclist did fall from his bike and was overran by approaching cyclists without minding. The following day it was officially reported and confirmed that three NPP fanatics who had fallen off their motorbikes did die of injuries sustained therefrom. Discussing the incidents later a News Agency of Nigeria correspondent remarked that what was amazing was that the death of a fanatic never deterred approaching party fanatics from showing an unmitigated sense of pride as exemplified by their acrobatic display. And so, before twelve noon when we left Bida on the 28th

of May 1983, the death toll had reached six by unconfirmed, but very reliable sources.

We entered Bida at twilight and so, I did not have an ample opportunity to assess the town. However, the tempo generated by the fanatical cyclists did not subside in Bida till about 4 a.m. 28th May 1983. Everybody was in a festive mood. Bearing in mind that this was Bida, the home of Alhaji Badakoshi, the NPP gubernatorial candidate, every man from Bida, it seemed, had started identifying himself with the impending success of Alhaji Badakoshi.

Before our crew could take their breakfast and join the entourage on the morning of 28th May, Zik had paid a courtesy call on the Etsu Nupe at his palace in Bida. Thereafter the entourage took a drive round the Bida municipality and aroused such curiosity and generosity of the people that resembled a well-attended carnival. But the real taste of support did not come till that afternoon when the last most impressive rally was held in Niger's centre of political activity — Bida.

Recounting what Zik said on that occasion would be mere repetition here and might only succeed in boring the patient reader. One thing which was not left out was the introduction of officials of the party and candidates for the NPP in the coming election. The job was done by Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya who radiated hope and confidence in every move he made. One needs not blame the officials now because, the people did not even care to scrutinise what lay in stock or what plans the party had for them. They were just contented that the NPP represented by Badakoshi and Zik was a veritable agent of change in 1983. Every effusion that came from any party official therefore was greeted with rancorous shouting of *chan-ji, chan-ji*. They would yet have shouted *chan-ji* if any of the officials had cursed them.

A spectacular event at Bida was the declaration of a group which claimed that up till that morning they had "foolishly" remained in the NPN. As a true sign of total rejection of the NPN and what it represented, they

collected and assembled their NPN registration cards at the table of Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya. There and then, they renounced their membership of the NPN, set their party cards ablaze and procured with minimum delay the NPP registration cards.

"Na lie them de talk," said David cynically. "This people represent a sect in the new political culture of the Second Republic. What they have done is their preoccupation and stock in trade. Meet them at an NPN rally tomorrow, they will openly burn the NPP cards and declare for the NPN. They are clever rogues who have perfected in this act as a means of enriching themselves."

Before I could argue with David, he had given me a dozen instances to buttress his case. "Let me tell you," he continued, "I have followed politicians more than all of you. I at least have followed them during elections in 1979. Ever since then, I have enjoyed their company and can now write a whole book on their antics. They are a deceitful lot. NPN, NPP, NAP or UPN, whatever name you call them, politicians and political parties in Nigeria are the same. However, I tend to agree with people when they accuse the NPN of overdoing things. Yet, these people tend to forget that all the parties have the capability or potentiality of doing what the NPN is doing if they have the chance. Remember the story Lynda told us on our journey from Akwanga. Would you believe what she was saying could happen in the NPP we are following and dying for. In fact, it happened in your own state, Imo. My brother, since the termination of my services at the NTA I have learnt to work according to the dictates of my conscience and when time permits, I enjoy myself. Burning of cards, destroying effigies, dancing to new party songs and dressing like them, all is balderdash. Let us record what they are saying bo, I am homesick. My mother, my child. I beg we go enter town so that I look for baby food. I hear say the thing dey cheap for Bida. Na that one concern me now. See them. See that one (he points to a new declarant) for him eyes you fit see all amount of lies."

Sort of assured that nothing extraordinarily newsworthy

would come out of the rally, we obeyed David. He would not only go to town to look for baby food, especially the one called Nan, we would equally go back to the hotel to collect our belongings and check out officially. It was while on this short mission that the rally wound up and Zik began the homeward journey through Agaie and Lapai. And though we got the baby food at considerable price, we paid handsomely for the frivolity because, after the departure of the campaign train, we had to do extra speeding and running before catching up with them at Suleja. We had miscalculated, for if the schedule had been strictly followed and obeyed, we would have met them at Agaie. We later learnt that as Zik did at Kutigi, so he did at Agaie and Lapai, having been fully convinced by the locals that these areas would vote for Zik, Badakoshi and the NPP come August 1983, the entourage saw no need for further campaigning.

Racing towards Abuja airport where an aircraft was stationed, waiting to convey the entourage to Enugu and Lagos, a lot of things agitated my mind. We had since leaving Owerri about a week ago not sent any news material home. Initially there had been an arrangement for a courier which would shuttle between Benue (the originally proposed campaign area) and Owerri. But the Niger campaigns cropped up later and perhaps my news director back home was equally ignorant and so no adequate alternative arrangement for distributing and disseminating information we had gathered on the Niger campaigns was made. A day delay would make our news more stale than imaginably pardonable. As we raced to Abuja, our initial plan had been to see the Owelle off and record that he departed Abuja in peace. But as our car raced the beautifully tarred road of Abuja, I decided to board the same aircraft to Enugu so that I could possibly that night race to Owerri to relay the first story of our Niger campaigns and adventure. I then sold the idea to other members of the crew who saw with me and consented. That settled, the next thought was how to write the stories in order to coat them with a freshness that

would at least make them consumable by the Imo electorate who were eager to have a feedback on the level of Zik's support and popularity up North. When we boarded the plane, I expected that in less than an hour, we would be in Enugu, instead the journey lasted for two hours and thirty minutes because we made two landings, one at Jos and the other in Lagos before Enugu. The effect was that I could no longer meet my target of using the stories that evening. One benefit though of the longer journey was that the period provided me the chance of recollection and communion with my inner-self on the mode and pattern the story of Zik's campaign tours of Niger State would take. Surely, I had gone to Niger, seen, and conquered. I must add that my boot was full with pride and adulation. But how best can I present these almost stale news materials? The idea haunted my mind when some newsman made up of boys from the Satellite newspapers, *Daily Star*, ABC Radio and the up and coming sensational ATV 50 burst out singing. They were reminiscing and reliving the events that happened in Niger State. They were recollecting the outright indictment Zik received from his beloved people of Zungeru, the machete-totting Prince of Suleja, the four or six fanatics that died, the uncontrollable crowd at Bida, the declaration of Awwal Ibrahim's younger brother for the NPP, the never-say-die attitude of Zik and his seemingly inexhaustible strength. There sat Zik as I carefully penned down those aspects that made the subject matter of my stories.

At the Enugu airport, that evening to welcome us were government officials from the State House Enugu. Whatever else they were up to I did not much care as my main preoccupation was getting my stories down to Owerri — the reason why I had left other members of my crew behind. At the precincts of the airport was packed, a Mercedes Kombi bus reserved for the press corps. Emeka Onyeabor of the ATV 50 and I were the first to take our seats. Soon after, other media representatives came in to take their seats.

Meanwhile, we had noticed that night was fast approaching and going to Owerri would virtually be impossible. This I explained to Onyeabor who assured me that a comfortable place would be found for me at the Press Centre Enugu. "The place is quite good," he assured, "and you will have at your disposal all necessary facilities you need to help you do some writing. Booze is cheap there. A lot of fun, self-contained room with modern electronic gadgets like video, colour television. It has even got a tennis court you will like to relax should you catch one of those sheep that patrol Enugu all night long, he concluded forcing back the mischievous smile that effused from his mouth as he made the last recommendation.

Our vehicle had hardly left the junction where Emene and Nsukka roads passed each other when some one tapped me gently on the right shoulder. Turning with equal immediacy, I saw Lynda, sitting behind me laughing without courage or any scruple of goodwill. "Lynda!" I enquired, "how did you just vamoose at Minna? Man no see you again. Where have you been and where are you going to?"

"You mean to tell me that you did not see me at the Emir's palace in Suleja and Minna? You mean to tell me that you did not see me when you people were having that lavish lunch at Baguda Hotel in Bida or do you mean to say that you did not see me at Ikeja airport when I boarded the flight that brought all of us down to Enugu. Oh! You press men sef, sometimes when you set your eyes on work, you throw yourself into it with all your body and soul without caring if any other person around you is breathing. . . ."

"You know you told me, though as a passing remark of your mission to Niger State. You know that I had taken seriously your resolve to undo the Nigerian politician and I had imagined that you had struck gold in Niger and did not need any more distraction from achieving your goals; after all it has become fashionable these days to use what one has to get what one wants. By the way, where are you heading for? For me, I will stay at the press centre where Emeka has promised to check me in, I will be there till early

tomorrow morning then I will rush back to Owerri with the first available taxi. My stories are getting stale and I must have to start filing them from tomorrow evening."

"Wherever you're going is where I am equally going to," was Lynda's reply that jolted my composure and my hitherto undisturbed countenance.

"But I am not sure if I will be accommodated yet. I am only hoping that Emeka will succeed and I will gain through his privileged position as a custodian of authority over the centre, being the chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Anambra State branch. So you see that it might be virtually impossible for both of us to be accommodated at the centre."

"I know you must give excuses to reject me, I know you don't like my guts for being honest, I know you detest girls of my moral standard, but I want to go with you to enable me narrate to you, the secret of my life. The story I told you that I will narrate to you and that man you gave a ride along with me to Akwanga."

"Lynda, if there is any night I would have needed your company and story, surely that night is not today. I have a lot in my hand. The adventure I have taken is a test for me by my boss. How I perform will greatly affect subsequent assignments. I will be obliged to hear your story when next we meet. Surely, this is not by any means going to be our last meeting so long as the campaign lasts and I am sent to cover it, I know we will always meet. So dear Lynda, kindly reserve your story for some other nights. We will have more nights to stay together."

When Lynda, Emeka and I got to the Press Centre, it was a ghost town. Everybody except the security attendant had left. In frenzy and total disarray, Emeka almost smashed the aluminium railings used to decorate the front entrance to the storied building press centre. When the tension in him subsided or appeared to be, so Emeka apologised for the disappointment. Instead, he drove us to a hotel right inside the town where we slept till the following morning. During the night, I had concentrated on doing my report to have the slightest thought that Lynda existed in the next

room. Besides, I had convinced myself that in spite of Lynda's claim to learning which could be corroborated by her display of intellect, she was of cheap virtue and easy means. She was not a girl one would have sleepless night over. She represented an epitome of low moral. A girl who would leave her parents' home for an upwards of one week, two weeks and more has nothing reasonable to tell our world. They should not come near me. I would rather set out my story lines, write them that night and if possible arrange them so that the next day will be that of rest and rumination over Nnamdi Azikiwe's chances. I thought of the outline of my stories and concluded that a special feature to be published in the print media would do a lot for the success of the man I had followed through the length and breadth of Niger State. But Niger is not the only state we would travel to. Let me not use this small Niger State as a parameter for measuring the success or failure of Nnamdi Azikiwe. I must wait till I do another campaign with him before I write on a wider scale. Lynda! Lynda!

Apparently impressed by my coverage of the campaigns of Niger State, the Director of News broke previous arrangement of alternating me with Ogbonnaya Ndukwe for the coverage of presidential campaigns and decided to send me again, this time to Plateau State. I had been to Plateau State once, and that was during the NPP convention that ratified the nomination of Zik in April.

The crew going with me this time was altered. I must confess I had no right to choose whoever should go with me. But suffice it to say that whoever would be assigned to an event of the magnitude of covering Zik's campaigns must have been adequately tested and his sagacity equally attested to. The man who was to be the cameraman was one Emmanuel Okoronkwo, a London-trained cinematographer. Emmanuel Okoronkwo, I must admit is an accomplished photo journalist who would, give you an excellent recording of events. He was reputed to be the only cameraman who had the singular ability to edit video films while recording. Emmanuel knows what would make news and always strove to record them for the reporter. He often told us he was in his late thirties but single. The result was that he was virtually married to his job.

Emmanuel Okoronkwo's impressive job performance is very much different from his character. Here is a man who had waded through many turbulent times in the conservatively thirty-nine odd years he had lived on earth, fought in the Nigerian Civil War which he often boasted sharpened his wit and sense of value. He was ironically shy

and slothful. He depicted treachery par excellence. He always raised gossip-oriented discussions only to use the products of such discussions to seek cheap favour from the Chief Executives of the Imo Television Authority. On the surface, he wore a treacherous garb of humility and service and hard work. But down in him as events later proved, you see the reprehensible part of this workaholic, who any day, (in spite of the treacherous inclination), was an asset to any result-oriented employer. It was with Emmanuel Okoronkwo that I was billed to cover Zik's campaigns of Plateau State.

Going up north from now had become a regular routine. The only persons who had excitement were the assistant cameraman and the driver. This excitement was shortlived because our vehicle developed mechanical trouble at Otukpo in Benue state. How the trouble started, I do not quite remember but I have in my records that fifteen kilometres to Otukpo, we had a flat tire which we replaced with a spare.

At Otukpo, we had stopped to eat and give the flat tire to a vulcaniser. This would guarantee continuity. When the car made a terrible noise after only some metres drive away from the vulcaniser's shop, we started smelling rat. Truly, before anyone knew what was happening the car had grounded to a halt. At first we all thought that what lay in stock was a job that will only last a few minutes or at worst an hour. Repairs on the car did not yield any positive result till about six o'clock in the evening. It was then we realised we were carrying an equipment four times costlier than the car we were repairing. The importance of the camera equipment had been emphasised at a pre-campaign meeting we held with the Director General. I remembered that at one of the meetings, he had stressed the need for the safety of "his" equipment even at the peril of the lives of the crew. His explanation for this inhuman stance was that it was extremely difficult for the procurement of new ones at the period under review. The NPN-controlled government according to him, had banned the importation of any equipment it perceived would in

one way enhance its opponents' chances in the coming elections. Since the press, most of all, the electronic media, was one of these powerful instruments used to wrest power from opponents, procuring new equipment and spares were but under licence, by the ruling party who supervised the issuance of licence.

Now that the safety of the equipment had become uppermost on our minds, we felt we should check into a hotel till the following morning. At first, we found it difficult getting a hotel. However, our problem became shortlived as one of the mechanics introduced us to a hotel off the Federal Road Otukpo (we had nicknamed this hotel Federal Palace Hotel Otukpo) and it was in this hotel that we checked in till the following morning. We decided that waiting for the repair of the vehicle would mean our getting to Jos later than Zik. And so, we decided it would be better if we hired a vehicle that would take us to Jos. The most important thing was for us to get to Jos, assured that other media representatives would oblige us the facilities of their vehicles in reciprocation to the gesture we had extended to one or two of them during our past travels.

We got to Jos at about 5 p.m. on Saturday the 4th of June only to discover to our greatest shock and relief that Zik's tours for Plateau had been postponed and that it was rather the campaigns for Gongola and Sokoto States, that would commence on the 6th of June. The source of our information was the NPP Secretariat at Bukuru Road, Jos. There was no need therefore to doubt the veracity of this piece of information. Since we had arrived on a hired vehicle which would abandon us and the precious equipment to our peril and danger from the unknown, we decided that the driver should take us to the Government House where we reported our plight to Government House officials. One of them took us directly to the Governor. After listening to our plight the governor blamed it on communication gap. He wondered aloud why we did not get the hint that Zik's campaigns for Plateau had been rescheduled. He grudged about this Mbakwe who would

not come out of his Imo shell. That notwithstanding, Governor Lar paid the driver of the hired vehicle, gave us some money to go to town and quarter ourselves in the Jos Hill Station Hotel till the following day when he would give us any other possible assistance. We thanked the Governor, left a message for Ogbonnaya Ndukwe who would be in Jos to take over from me should he per chance call at the Government House.

The following day, we decided to check out early from Hill Station and made directly to the NPP Secretariat in Bukuru Road hopeful that should Ogbonnaya work on intuition he might have the inclination to call there first. Verily, before mid-day Ogbonnaya was there in a Volkswagen car. His primary aim was to use the Volkswagen for the courier purpose. Now that the main vehicle had broken down, I had to go home in a public transport while Ogbonnaya managed the Volkswagen Beetle car for the Gongola campaigns that would even stretch to Sokoto.

As I boarded my vehicle the following day on my way home, I pondered over the highly flaunted talk of coordination between the NPP National Secretariat in Lagos and its Imo State counterpart. I pondered over Solomon Lar's grumblings the previous night about Governor Mbakwe's sitting in Imo State as if Imo was only what mattered. I was more worried because, the Plateau State incident was the second, of such incidents. The first being that of Benue which led to my going to Niger State. Could it be that there exist some cracks somewhere? I wondered what could have been the cause of the break in communication, after all the Chairman of the presidential campaign committee was our own J. O. J. Okezie, who would be disposed to providing us in Imo State with up-to-date information on Zik's itinerary. I pondered over the issue more because of Lar's rather cynical comments. The NPP might after all not be as united as it appears on the surface. The secret behind the uncoordinated campaign programmes of the NPP flag-bearer in the 1983 Presidential elections blew open in Benue.

Having now fully been assured that Zik had gone to Sokoto from Gongola from where he would hit Benue State, I had set out again for Benue. Up till the morning of Friday 9th June, 1983, no person in Makurdi knew for certain when and how Zik would arrive. Most people though seemed to have agreed that he would come in from Sokoto. The well-printed programme presented by the officials of the party in Benue did not help matters either. According to the contents of the booklet set in elaborate form, the presidential team would arrive from a place called Agenebode via Benin and Zik would be received by NPP officials from Benue State. The programme went further to explain that Zik, the Chairman of the party, Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, and all the NPP governors would depart by police ferry to Ida, while others go by boats.

Another source had it that Zik would reach Enugu from Sokoto and would drive straight from the Enugu airport in the company of Jim Nwobodo to Opi Junction where they would be met by Paul Unongo, the gubernatorial candidate, and other party officials from Benue State.

Yet another, much saner contention had it that Zik would touch Makurdi airport that afternoon from Sokoto to be met and received by not only Paul Unongo, but by Governor Aper Aku, the incumbent NPN Governor of Benue State.

Action rather than words therefore would determine which of these three options would be taken. Unanimously, most officials around agreed that whatever was on the programme schedule which Zik had in Sokoto would prevail. We then set off for the route that would connect us to Agenebode, a border town between Bendel and Benue States. We had passed Otukpo when the driver of a Range Rover overtook the convoy and signalled to us to stop. His information was that Zik would be coming from Enugu in the company of Jim Nwobodo. This piece of information was well received in the belief that at least unwarranted anxiety should cease therefrom.

When Jim Nwobodo eventually showed up at the agreed meeting point, it was here that he gave what appeared to

be the most reasonable route Zik would take. According to him, a radio message from Sokoto that morning to Government Lodge in Enugu had said that Zik would be going to Makurdi by air and would have landed at about now (it was 11 a.m.) at the Makurdi airport.

The implication of Jim's explanation was that we would all drive to Makurdi, a distance of more than two hundred kilometres. The irony was that, that evening all of us were expected again to come back to Otukpo where Zik was billed to address a rally that had started forming from the previous day! Nevertheless, with mixed feelings of disappointment and excitement we drove back to Makurdi. From the south bank of the Benue River Bridge, we made for the airport where we got wind of the message that Zik had not even landed. But as we approached the airport the whole air became saturated with sounds of siren — a sign that an important person was approaching. Soon, there was stampede. School children and their teachers abandoned classes. Market women, loafers, party supporters, including supporters of the other parties milled on both sides of the road. As for us, we had to make a quick "U" turn so as to be able to join the convoy should the brouhaha be for Zik.

Those who witnessed it told the story. While the cream of those who would have received Zik were without adequate information on where and how to get him into Benue, the NPN Governor, Aper Aku scored a good political point against his less experienced and ebullient Paul Unongo. How he got the accurate information I cannot explain, but suffice it to say that in the midst of the heat that associated the 1983 campaigns in Benue (between followers of Aper Aku and Paul Unongo) Aper Aku turned out to be the only person of worth from Benue State who was on hand at the airport to receive Zik. Aper Aku did not waste the chance. He drove Zik to the Government House in Makurdi where he had started giving him a befitting grand reception before we arrived in the company of the two petulants — Paul Unongo and Jim Nwobodo. It was at the Government House that Aper Aku recounted

his childhood respect and adoration of Zik. He conceded that should Azikiwe win the forthcoming elections, he would be prepared to work under him. He extolled Zik's virtues. He spoke of Zik's outstanding contribution to nationalist activities in Africa and his unrelenting efforts to sustaining what political gains he made from the exit of the colonial masters. Aperc called Zik a living legend, a defender of the oppressed, the greatest freedom fighter of all times and a leader whose gait could be succinctly put, "Endowed by the Grace of God the Almighty."

With the Government House reception over, the campaign team must move soon to Otukpo where anxious supporters had waited all day long for the arrival of Zik. As was the case when Zik entered Otukpo that Monday evening, anxious supporters had literally taken over the route twenty kilometres away from the campaign ground. The story about the stupendous reception arranged for Zik bordered on many variables, one of which was the Idoma-Tiv-Igala rivalry for supremacy in the political administration of Benue State. There were other reasons associated directly or remotely to this age-long rivalry. The most visible revolved around the issue of neglect. But the politics of Benue State was more than meets the ordinary eyes, as Ochiama Ojoko, the *Satellite* correspondent in Makurdi would later reveal to us in a special interview. And as it turned out, before we got to Otukpo, all available space on the city's temporary stadium had been occupied. Anxious to get a glimpse of Zik, people especially youths, climbed roof tops and tree branches from where they secured vantage positions to see Zik.

"En Pee Pee!" thundered the shrill voices from the public address system and the people chorused. . . . "P A W W A A A" "N. P. P.?" The voice came up again each time sounding shriller and more confident and business-minded than before and the people responded in an equally thrilling manner that suggested that the envisaged NPP Government that was being expected had made a covenant with them.

"N. P. P."

"Power"

"P. A. W. A. A."

"To the People."

"Now when I say NPP, you reply change. When we say change, you say Change Shagari and when we say Change Shagari, you say change NPN." There was applause as the State Chairman of the NPP Mr. Joe Omakwu took the people on a brief lecture session of what would be the bedrock of the party's task on the elections ahead. Soon after, the National Chairman of the NPP, Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya mounted the rostrum to speak. "EN PEE PEE" he bellowed and the electrified crowd responded with unison by shouting "PAWAA". The ritual done, Chief Ogunsanya told the Otukpo faithfuls that the NPP was a peace-loving party which has the interest of the generality of the people at heart. He explained, that with that in mind, the party had carved a timetable and programme that would see the freeing of our great nation from the grips of Kleptocrats and buffoons who have put Nigeria on the course of austerity. He then told them that he would introduce without further delay the entourage of the NPP that have brought the gospel of change to the doorsteps of the beloved, suffering people of this country, with the assured hope that they would listen to the voice of reason and vote the NPP when the election comes up. First, he introduced himself. "Great and beloved suffering people of Otukpo," my name is Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, the humble chairman of our Great Party. With me here this blooming and wonderful evening to address you is the Governor of Plateau State, Mr. Solomon Lar," to this there were thunderous shouts of "Lar, Lar". "Next is the Governor of Anambra State, your beloved Jim Ifeanyichukwu Nwobodo," the people shouted again and again. "There is also former Governor of Kano State Alhaji Abubakar Rimi". It was this last name that shook the campaign ground as Rimi rose to acknowledge the obvious approbation to his untiring work as Governor of Kano State. "My good people of Otukpo, there are others I would have mentioned but I will let the great leader and

presidential candidate of the NPP to do the rest. And this brings me to handing over the affairs of the campaigns today to no other person than a man you all do know perhaps as much as my humble self. I am talking of the Right Honourable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha and presidential candidate of the NPP." He held Zik by the hand and showed him round to the uncontrollable crowd on the campaign ground who burst into chanting "We want Zik; we want Zik", until a plea from Zik succeeded in calming them down.

"N. P. P." Zik began stretching his clenched fists in the air.

"Pawa"

"Power""To the People"

"Yes, we have come here today to address the people of Otukpo on the reasons why the austerity-infested NPN should be changed by the forward-looking prosperity-oriented NPP. We have come here to expose the iniquities of the austerity government of the NPN headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari. We have come to show you, if you will listen why austerity should be changed to prosperity, why the imported rice merchants at Ribadu Road should vacate the seat from 1st October, for an agriculturally-oriented party and our country with all the facilities including abundant human resources to feed its citizens without mortgaging our pride, conscience and future of our children to small countries like Thailand and Singapore. We have come to tell you that the NPN Government is suffering from an acute disease called planlessness. "Besides planlessness, there is squandermania, and the people responded, yees!! "There is also this hanky panky one, you all know what I mean. A system where you cannot get a job irrespective of the fact that you are qualified except you rub someone's back and he rubs yours, I mean still, the idea of greasing people's palms, (he demonstrated by scratching his palm) to get what you want, I still mean the idea where Hassan cannot get a job in an institution where Adekunle or Chukwu is at the head. I mean favouritism. And my party is equally

against the idea where mediocrity reigns, that is a system where unqualified people are employed into a job they are not qualified to do."

"Take the NPP for instance, we have in our team a list of seasoned administrators and specialists who if you elect them into office in August, will use their abundant experience to transform Nigeria from a rice-importing nation to an exporting one. Transform Nigeria from a dependent nation on industrial technology of Europe to an exporter of expertise. And that would mean we have attained some measure of sufficiency. That is why we have chosen a man of Paul Unongo's calibre to be your Governor from 1st October, 1983. Paul Unongo is a bundle of political energy. He is vibrant. He is a philanthropist. A clear-sighted upcoming ruler who would use the same hand he used in seeing his business through to transform the abundant human and material resources in Benue State for the benefit of the generality of the greater majority of the people of Benue State and Nigeria. Do you like Paul Unongo?" The people thundered their response in unison accepting Paul Unongo.

"If you like him and will want him to be your governor from 1st October, 1983, please raise your hands." They obeyed. "Now, the NPP believes in the safety of life and property. We believe in freedom to work, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. In short, we are constitutionally minded and that is why we have elected Dr. E. I. Obe, a legal practitioner to be Unongo's running mate. We believe that two of them combined will give Benue State under an NPP administration a leadership second to none in Nigeria." Again, he asked if they would vote for the two and the crowd responded in the affirmative.

"Lest I forget, it was the Holy Book that says if you don't say you are, nobody will say thou art. My name is Nnamdi Azikiwe. I am seeking election to be the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from October 1983, will you vote for me?" To this, the raucous crowd went wild. The response was such that would have swept any candidate off his feet. The crowd chanted Zeek! Zeek! Zeek!

"EN PE PEE," Zik bellowed with caution.

"P A WAA," they responded again.

"EN PE PEE" he continued as his voice receded with accompanying deafening ovation.

From my previous experience during my tours with Zik, it was always dangerous for any reporter who wanted to be on the forefront of news hunting to stay till the last topic on Zik's programme. If you did, you might end up not meeting up with the preambles that would herald his activities at his next port of call. So we decided to set off for Makurdi immediately. We noticed the gradual decline in the fuel gauge signalling that any moment there would be not enough fuel that will take us up to Makurdi. When we left the campaign ground therefore it was for the fuel station, where to our astonishment other media vehicles had lined up for the same purpose. It was at this fuelling station that we met Ochiama Ojokolo once more. Instantly, he abandoned the News Agency of Nigeria vehicle he was temporarily following to ask us for another ride back to Makurdi. Having got the sufficient fuel we required, Ochiama confessed he enjoyed the trip from Makurdi to Otukpo in our company. By the way, I didn't mind his company too as this gave us an opportunity for an important on-the-spot analysis of the chances of Zik and the NPP in Benue State. "I am a Benue man, I will not deceive you, Zik has a better chance this year than in 1979. And the reason for this are so many. First there is the Joseph Tarka factor, the state creation factor, the Ojukwu factor and the present non-performance factor of the incumbent Governor, Mr. Aper Aku."

Elaborating further, Ojokolo said that the schism in the rank and file of the Benue State NPN which had become NPP's fortune, started soon after the death of Joseph Tarka, the Gboko born progeny of emancipatory rulership and the apostle of adequate representation of the minority interests.

"Joseph Tarka when he lived," Ojokolo went on, "had taken his section of the Middle Belters to the NPN on the illusive belief that NPN would provide for them a launching pad towards political emancipation; a

well-represented share of their interest in participatory democracy and an eventual attainment of stardom. These ideals might have been achieved to some extent during the short but now nostalgic period of Tarka's reign."

"However, at Tarka's death, Mr. Aper Aku, the man Tarka planted in the Government House in Makurdi without wasting time proved himself inept. He must have been overwhelmed by the diverse nature of the Middle Belt. He proved himself not only as unable to tackle the diverse and variegated problems of Benue State such as industrialisation, education, provision of social amenities such as electricity, water and good roads, but Aper Aku the one time champion of the cause of the down-trodden, now basks in the opulence and warm embrace of the elite and bourgeois class in Benue State."

"In Benue State," he went on to explain, "the arithmetic of Election '83 is simple. It cannot be totally divorced from ethnic balancing as exists in other parts of Nigeria. You know, there are three major ethnic groups in Benue. The struggle for power among these competing factions has been the bane of Benue State politics. It seems that the Hausa/Fulani overlords up north had always tried to capitalise on this inherent confusion to the detriment of the people. And since it had happened before, it is bound to happen again. The struggle for power in Benue is between the Tiv, who are in the majority, closely followed by the Idomas. In the 1979 elections, the Tivs had followed Joseph Tarka to the NPN. Today, they are no longer inclined to such a move. The Tivs feel sorely disappointed that a Gboko man (Aper Aku) who Joseph Tarka put in the Government House in Makurdi is an embodiment of political disaster. They have silently resolved to punish Aper Aku for straying from the path of the 'Rightly Guided Messiah' of the Middle Belters as represented by Joseph Tarka."

As for the Igalas, the issue of the creation of an Okura and Kogi States out of the present Benue has had a serious effect on the people's acceptance of the NPN which overtly supports the movement for the creation of Kogi with the

proposed capital not in the present Igalaland. The NPP in Benue has cleverly capitalised on this. Having felt the people's pulse and obvious dislike for the idea, it had supported the creation of an Okura State which will have its capital in Igalaland.

Strategically, Ojokolo conferred, the NPP noted the importance of the Igalas in the politics of Benue State and had chosen Dr. Obe, an Igala son as its gubernatorial running mate to Paul Unongo. Going further, the NPP has equally reserved the post of the Speaker of an NPP-dominated House of Assembly for an Idoma son.

It was 9 p.m. when we got back to Makurdi and went straight to the meeting point which was the Presidential Lodge at the outskirts of the town. On hand to receive Zik's entourage was Dr. J. O. J. Okezie and a battery of protocol officials belonging to the numerous governors on the campaign train. Among these protocol officials, one man, simply called Afam, exhibited prominence and dominance over the rest. He was good-looking, sleek, tall and an imposing personality. He belonged to Anambra State's entourage. Stories went round that he was on first name acquaintance with Jim Nwobodo and thereby exerted a lot of influence, power and authority. He was ubiquitous and seemed to know details of all planned programmes including sleeping arrangements for all dignitaries that were in attendance. His presence so mattered, he wore an air of someone who was virtually in charge of the campaigns. He hired girls who would sleep with politicians. It was this aspect of his duty that he attended to with every zeal and dedication. We, the pressmen noticed this soon in Afam. Perhaps we would not have but for the seeming encroachment on the rights of the pressmen. At twelve midnight that day we were still clustering at the precincts of the Government Lodge where we amused ourselves and talked about the massive support Zik's NPP was gathering over the land. Soon somebody, a pressman from Anambra Television sneezed. 'Aaaaafam!' All of us laughed. We all enjoyed the mischief but this was not to last as we discovered that we (the

pressmen) had not given a thought to our sleeping arrangements. Such gestures were normally taken care of by the host state through the political party. That was how in the first instance I had been lodged at Hill Station Hotel in Jos, Baguda in Bida and Hotel De Exclusive in Otukpo. If what obtained on previous visits could be an index, then the Benue State NPP would automatically quarter us the pressmen. I consoled myself. I would no longer bear the embarrassment. I enquired from the *Daily Times* correspondent who sat close to me what experience he had had from his visits to Bauchi, Gongola and Sokoto. He affirmed that protocol demanded that the press be taken care of. He feared that his publication on the front page of the pro-NPN *Daily Times* that day must have caused the current degeneration of interest towards the press. He, however, affirmed that if the neglect he was getting was the price to be paid for honest report, he had no regret and would stand by it.

We were still discussing when somebody drew our attention to a gathering, a respectable distance away. It was another gathering of the members of the press who were listening attentively to Afam's allocation of hotel rooms he had booked for them. He called the names of all the pressmen that were present except those from Imo and Anambra States.

About an hour later, Afam arrived and took another roll this time carefully omitting the names of the pressmen from Imo State. To crown it, he did not as he did when he took the first roll call assure us, the remaining pressmen from Imo State whether or not he was coming back for us. We demanded an explanation for the exclusion. He explained that he assumed we would be taken care of by the NPP Imo State branch. To this Emmanuel Okoronkwo agreed with him but politely pointed out that he could observe that among the strong partymen present in Benue State there was no strong person from Imo State except J. O. J. Okezie who was there on the ground of, and in his capacity as the National Chairman of NPP campaign committee. Afam then thundered that we could then "go

to..." because the money made available to him by Jim Nwobodo was strictly for Anambra press. Visibly infuriated, we disagreed vehemently pointing out that the press from both states should be treated on equal terms. When he wanted to ignore us, we jumped into the 504 station wagon he had stationed for the Anambra crew of pressmen and insisted he quartered us. Anyway, when he noticed the obduracy in our throats and faces he yielded, but not without making a cynical comment of something like, "Mbakwe will sit in Owerri and think that Jim will win Nigeria for him."

I did not quite comprehend the import of Afam's remarks the previous night until the following day 10th June, 1983, when we approached Dr. Okezie to complain about Afam's attitude towards us. I had wondered what type of campaign manager he (Okezie) was when a "motor park tout" such as Afam, manipulated events with such an ease. It was there and then that the petty squabbles that had characterised the hierarchy of the NPP burst open. Okezie himself evoked a piteous spectacle as he narrated his case. "My brother, I am happy you can see for yourself. I am supposed to be the campaign manager in charge of all happenings. Instructions were supposed to flow from one source controlled by me. But what do we have: a cluster of conflicting interests all seeking to be seen by the Owelle. If you were here yesterday, you would have noticed the embarrassment we got. Aper Aku utilised the opportunity. He scored so many victories and points against us yesterday. He (Aper) knew the exact time and place Zik would be in Benue. He accorded him (Zik) a reception that could attract sympathy vote in his favour. These boys from Anambra do not allow me (an Imo man) to have a say. Yet I am supposed to be at the helm of affairs. It is the breakdown in communication or the lack of it that has characterised our campaigns. If you look around, you will not see Dr. Henryline Ibezim, the man the NPP National Secretariat appointed its director of publicity. He has disappeared right from Gongola State.

And it was partly this that earned us the damaging

publication in the *Daily Times* of yesterday alleging that Alhaji Aliyu Mustapha, the Lamido of Adamawa refused to see Zik. The Anambra boys have virtually hijacked my role, that of Ibezim and in fact all Imo citizens that hold prominent positions in the caucus of the NPP. Yet, it is the Imo populace that are crazy with NPP. Yet it is the Imo populace that are fanatical with the Igboman's cause in the Nigeria of today. This Anambra boys. Forget them. We have been doing our best to uphold the unity, integrity and progress of the Igbo nation. They have unfortunately had the upper hand. They regard us with outright disdain. And the funny aspect is that the rest of Nigeria see us through the lenses of the Anambra man. Talk of federal appointments today, the majority of the Igbos so appointed or elected come from Anambra. The Vice-President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Special Advisers such as Godwin Odenigwe are from Anambra. Even in terms of industrial development when the Federal Government sites an industry in Enugu, they conclude that the Igbos have had adequate share. The irony of it is that were these appointments and industries located in the geographical expression called Imo State, the Anambra man would not give equal support as we the Imo people do to them. If Zik or Ojukwu for instance were from Imo, the Anambra man would not support them. The facts are legend and I just do not want to unveil hidden facts for we have a cause once more in hand. We must finish it first before sculpting up another. But in all, the Anambra man looks down on the Imo man. Rangers Football Club of Enugu does not feel victorious enough if she had not defeated Spartans of Owerri. Oh! This our Anambra brothers!"

Just as Okezie was saying the parting words, Ibezim emerged from nowhere, full of smiles and almost looking weather-beaten. Ibezim recounted how he had forgotten some luggage in the aircraft that took the campaign team from Yola to Sokoto. How he had trailed the jet to Lagos for a possible recovery of the luggage; how the task had been arm-twisting, laborious and painstaking, and how the

pilot and his crew had been extremely good, rewarding and helpful. He was angry at the publication of the *Daily Times* of the previous day, pledging to call the attention of the *Daily Times* correspondent who carried the "malicious" and false story. When Okezie reminded him of the disarray that attended his absence for two days, he quipped: "But these Anambra boys wanted to do everything." He smiled a benign smile, once more pledging, we grant him leave to confer with Chief Ogunsanya his boss before returning to us.

From now on, I know that a big crisis of confidence was raging among the party bigwigs and planners. If someone else told me, I would not have believed, but this is what was happening. Does Zik know about all this, I kept asking myself. If he does not know, cannot his intuition which I thought he had in abundance, and which had stood him out as hero these past years reveal it to him? Cannot Zik know of this and stop it with immediate effect? The questions agitated my mind. Has he in anyway depreciated in quality and substance? He ought not; he has not, I reasoned to myself.

The time now was about ten o'clock in the morning and Zik had not been seen. He is of course not easily reached unless on previous arrangement. Outside the presidential lodge scores of supporters who had one form of praise song for Zik, Unongo or even Joe Omakwu (the Benue NPP chairman) did not fail to perform their duties.

Across the lawn, a group of girls, big girls in real sense, who looked selected were singing in Tiv. The song sonorous as it was was saturated with the names Paul and Iyorpuu. At first you will think they were praising another Paul other than Paul Unongo, for Iyorpuu so dominated the song that you would think that either Iyorpuu was Paul's father or that Iyorpuu was the opponent that should fizzle out on sighting the approaching onslaught of Paul. You just did not understand that Iyorpuu was Paul Unongo's middle name and that this bevy of beauties were Paul's mates who understood the full import of the name Iyorpuu.

At some other distance, a group of warlike men clambered their war instruments dispersing people as they moved uncontrollably in different directions. People especially curious onlookers did run. One man who sold walls ice cream did spill the contents of his cooler as he ran. He sprained an ankle in addition. It was a genuine sacrifice for a man Zik had described as a bundle of political energy. A man who had within his first forty years on earth attracted national attention.

Paul Unongo, talking of him, is a man by all standards. He had within the twenty-four hours or so he had access to the presidential lodge, got so acquainted with the place that you think he had been an old time occupant. He moved from room to room receiving visitors, hosting others and discussing with others he had known before then. I had been monitoring Paul Unongo's movement. I wanted an interview with him. I had booked an interview the previous day but was only obliged on the condition that he had the chance. If we hadn't the chance, I must talk to some other dignitaries. There were two men I considered of importance whom I had spotted on the presidential lodge. One of them was Dr. Edwin Ogbu former Nigerian Representative to the United Nations, and, Colonel Philip Effiong, the man who officially surrendered on behalf of Biafra at the end of the Nigerian Civil War. Edwin Ogbu, I had learnt had a soft spot for Paul Unongo. He had a soft spot for the Igbos, Zik and the NPP. He had not as of then declared for any political party. However, he had previously been associated with one party or the other. But certainly not the NPP. I was anxious to find out what he was doing in Makurdi at the time under consideration.

When I came across Edwin Ogbu, he was sitting face-to-face with Unongo arguing over a topic I did not understand because they spoke in Tiv. From Unongo's countenance, he looked rebellious as a child would to a father whom he considered old fashioned in opinion, thought or approach. Their exchange of words was so intense and prolonged that when I decided to be rude and cut them off, Unongo descended on me. "Get out," he

bellowed. "Sir, I am a friendly press from Imo." "I don't care," he replied, pointing out that pressmen do not know when a man is serious. "That is why you have messed this country up through your inaccurate reports. You want an interview to go and misquote me tomorrow. Go to the campaign ground and wait for anything you would want to hear." "What of you Sir?" I queried Chief Ogbu. "The same," he wryly answered. Defeated and tired, I moved to Colonel Effiong who promptly assuaged my thirst for an interview.

He sat on a sofa clad in a well-tailored native attire, with a red cap to match perhaps for the occasion. The cap was decorated with the beautiful plumes of a bird. It must be a brave rare bird I thought to myself. Effiong still conjured a great deal of aura. He seemed to be conscious of this. He was flanked on both sides by two stubborn-looking young men whom I reasoned must be his body guards. Philip Effiong had attained the rank of Army General and the administrative-cum-political role of the second in command in the Biafran army, but now reduced to a mere Colonel and retired on that rank. People still addressed him affixing the title, 'Colonel'.

"Colonel, Sir, pardon me, why are you in Makurdi?" I queried.

Effiong: "Why? For the campaigns."

ITV: "Sir, are you a member of the NPP?"

Effiong: "Not yet but in less than an hour from now you would have known my stand."

ITV: "Okay Sir, assuming you are declaring for the NPP, why have you chosen to do so now and in Benue State? Why have you not since all these days declared for the NPP? Why?"

Effiong: "Look my son, a seasoned soldier like me ought not dig a hole where nothing exists. When I say nothing, I mean associating myself with party or parties that have no programmes for the populace. Look at all the parties, except perhaps the NPP (and I am sure you know the origin) that has something to say for the people in the

manifesto and slogan, all the other parties except the NPP have no such thing as a people oriented-programme. First you look at the name: Nigerian Peoples Party. Mark the word People's. Who else other than the people does a politician aspire to rule for their betterment and general well-being? Cynics might ask, 'What is in a name,' to them I will say that a man is known first by his name. His name is his identity. He wears it. Besides I want to join the NPP to further debunk the postulation by the NPP detractors that because Zik is its presidential candidate therefore, it is '*ipso facto*' an Igbo party. In fact, a careful observation would reveal to you that it is only the NPP that has adequate national spread without making any fuss about it. Look at the set up of the hierarchy. The chairman is a Yoruba man — Ogunsanya, the presidential candidate is Zik, an Igbo man, the vice-presidential candidate is Mustapha — a northerner of Gwandu origin. Okay, if it is an Igbo party why did it win the gubernatorial election in Plateau State? Why did people from Niger, Benue and Gongola desert their 1979 parties for the NPP? So, if me, an Effik, joins the party, one does not need any more oracle to explain the national spread of the NPP. And just wait till my formal declaration today. I promise that most of my people who had sat on the fence would decide once and for all. And believe me, when I carry the change message to Cross River State in the next two weeks, the whole state would be grabbed by the NPP fever."

ITV:

"But Sir, one would have expected an Ojukwu disciple and associate to have joined any party Ojukwu joins. This to my mind, would have given you a sense of continuity of the spirit of comradeship that existed between you and Ojukwu."

Effiong: "Ojukwu is a fine soldier. He is neither a coward nor a rebel as people would want others believe. He is not in the NPN with all his spirit, let me prophesy, he will return. But politically speaking, it is not expedient for him to have joined the NPP. Had he joined the NPP, those labelling the NPP an Igbo party would soon rename it a Biafran party. They will not remember that Ojukwu, though a bourgeois by birth, is a replica of Engels, the son of a wealthy lawyer and merchant who stood on the forefront for the liquidation of his parents' accumulated wealth, just for the benefit of the masses, the people, the proletariat. I don't want to blame Ojukwu yet. I would rather leave that to history and posterity."

On why he decided to declare in Benue, Effiong stated that it was a device he had carefully mapped out. According to him, the people of Benue belong politically to the minority. "My people in the Cross River, belong equally to this grouping. My intended declaration in Benue is aimed at energising, galvanising and arousing the political consciousness of the minorities in Nigeria. The minority interest as is presently represented politically, economically and socially is not enough. We want to harness the already diverged efforts. I want to use Benue State and the NPP as the rallying point. I want it, I want it. It is not a day's thought. It is a thought that had agitated my mind since the end of the Nigerian Civil War. Now can you be proud to belong to a nation where interests are considered first from sectional standpoint rather than from a national perspective? And you know when two elephants fight (as in this case — three elephants) the grass will suffer. Why not form a resistible and durable block that could stand a fair ground in the equitable creation and distribution of national wealth? Why not.... Why not a front that will be able to endure Nigerian hazards. A block that could once produce the president of a united Nigeria. Or if I may ask, is the rulership of this great country an

exclusive reserve of any one section or persons?"

Ochiama Ojoko, the *Satellite* reporter had told us the previous day why the NPP campaign team in Benue would not be visiting Gboko the home of Paul Unongo and Joseph Tarka. He observed that Gboko is considered a safe haven for the NPP in Benue. The reason behind this is akin to that which you could ascribe to Zik not campaigning in Onitsha or Awolowo not campaigning in Ikenne or Aminu Kano not campaigning in Kano or Mbakwe not doing so in Avutu in Obowo. These areas are considered "safe" because they are home bases of contestants. Even in the so-called advanced countries of the world politicians never lost in their home bases. Andrew Young would always win on the first ballot in Atlanta, Georgia and Ronald Reagan would always win in California. According to Ochiama, it is not that the NPP would not capture other areas of Benue on the first ballot even without campaigning. But it was for political expediency and necessity that an opponent challenging an incumbent must shake the incumbent to his foundation should he want to make appreciable impact. That was why in his mind, he thought that the NPP needed to campaign at all in Otukpo the previous day and now about campaigning in Makurdi, the Benue State capital.

The morning of 10th June, 1983 in Makurdi was unique. The Zik fever was visible everywhere in town. People attending rallies from far and wide Benue State had started converging in Makurdi the previous day. Party faithfuls had been arriving in hordes: lorry loads of human beings; car loads of important personalities all coming from far away places in Benue State. That morning, before the campaigns, an over enthusiastic child had been knocked down and killed by an over-zealous party outrider, some metres away from Makurdi Trade Fair Ground, venue of the rally. According to eye witness accounts the driver had surrendered himself voluntarily to the police requesting that before he is detained he be allowed to go to watch Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's campaign rally that day.

By 10 a.m., the rally ground was agog with festivities.

Radio Benue's outside broadcast van was stationed on the grounds. NTA Makurdi was there. This was a strange occurrence. When we campaigned in Niger State the NTA came there just for the opening ceremonies, even though they were sent from Lagos. Radio Niger did not appear. Here in Makurdi, the presence of Radio Benue and NTA Makurdi was a departure from the political norms of news media during the Second Republic. Because (news media houses were divided along party lines) it was sometimes a taboo for opposing media to be present except it was on a strictly fault-finding mission. Radio Benue was not on a fault-finding mission that day. In fact, the previous night the NTA Makurdi, had given an elaborate coverage of the arrival of the NPP campaign team. It had eulogised the political wizardry of Zik and the rise of Paul Unongo. One of the discussants even opined that at the rate Paul Unongo was advancing, he would eventually be as great as Zik if not greater. One of them likened him to Joseph Tarka. The panel later urged that Zik and his entourage should be given the support and conducive atmosphere necessary for a hitch-free campaign. "What we ask of the winning party in the forthcoming election is good governance, good education for our children, good health facilities, good roads and in fact the necessary amenities that make life worth living," concluded the moderator.

Spectacular about all this is that in Imo State, for instance during the 1983 campaigns what prevailed on the screens of both the ITV and NTA were naked antagonism personified. No discussant on ITV for instance could venture to say anything good about the opposing party. He could however shower all sorts of praises on the NPP. So was with the NTA. So when the NTA Makurdi and Radio Benue mounted the Outside Broadcast Vans out there on the rally ground, it was a clear indicator as to the preparedness of this great instrument of state to lend their support to Paul Unongo should the NPP capture Benue State. Ochiama Ojoko had equally told me that except when Shehu Shagari came to Makurdi, no other presidential candidate of all other registered political

parties ever enjoyed that kind of patronage and support. He alluded that this was a great indication as to where the wind of victory was blowing. After all, the state governor himself had pledged to work with Zik should Zik win the presidential election.

The crowd that assembled on the Trade Fair ground to hear Zik's message of change was from the beginning uncontrollable. Every sentence was greeted with "Chan-ji". All that Zik said to them, I could not hear not even from my vantage position. He however did not fail in his solicitation to enumerate the woes that were synonymous with voting for the NPN again. Zik reminded the people of Benue that a great wind of change was blowing across the land. To drive the point home, he told them in plain language that this wind was that of CHANGE. Accusing the NPN further, he extolled the virtues of the NPP using the neighbouring Plateau administration under the NPP as an index. "The NPN is synonymous with austerity. In NPN states, teachers do not receive their salaries as and when due. Nurses and civil servants do not get their pays either. Hospitals in almost every part of this country today sing the lamentable song of "out of stock". Our roads are bad, our economy is in shambles. When we ruled this country in the First Republic we depended solely on proceeds from agriculture. We built many edifices including the Kainji Dam, the Universities of Nigeria, and Ibadan and Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) from proceeds accruing from agricultural exports. We fed ourselves, we imported whatever we lacked not whatever we wanted. We gave education to those who needed it. We did these because we were prudent in the management of scarce and limited resources. Still people were happy. But look at the NPN-controlled Nigeria of the Second Republic, what do

we have? What have we seen? Squandermania, uncontrollable graft, pork-barrel projects, planlessness, bribery, nepotism, mediocrity, high-handedness and above all a haven of corrupt imbeciles parading themselves about as those who will salvage Nigeria. The sum total of all this is that austerity has plagued our land like locust. And to correct that serious anomaly which would break us if not checked, is the business of the NPP. It will be of little need saying it again here since we have said it wherever we visited that the NPP is a masses-oriented party. Our aim is to change austerity to prosperity, if we could make do with proceeds from common palm kernel in the 60's and early 70's, why can't we do so now? Why can't Nigeria use petro-naira to transform this our very blessed Nigeria? Unless you have chosen to die in perdition and abject penury which I knew from the looks on your faces that you have not, the NPN has got to the limit of its performance, and we want you to say so to them at the polls. It cannot heal itself. The moment it tries to heal itself, it will crumble the more, after all, was it not this popular political philosopher Butterfield who propounded the theory that the moment a bad government starts trying to reform itself, it inevitably slips down the throes of anarchism and conservatism. Would it then not be better if we try a new party with energy and zeal and programme for the downtrodden. The NPN since 1979 had metamorphosed into an octopus for the money class in Nigeria. It is no longer a party that can represent the interest of the masses. Look at those that make it up today — the Umaru Dikkos, the Akinloyes, the Wayas, the Uba Ahmeds — all belong to the millionaire-class. It was one of them who did not feel ashamed the other day to publicly say that "hunger had disappeared in Nigeria because you and I have not descended to the level of going to the refuse bin to search for food." To this remark, the crowd booed again. "Imagine! Imagine dear good people of Benue State, would you vote for such a person", he queried. The people in a thunderous response said: "No!"

Introducing Mr. Unongo later, Zik called him the affable

son of Benue State. He called Unongo an achiever. He reminded them that Unongo their son was so incorruptible that he resigned his post as the Minister of Steel in the Shagari administration because he was not prepared to steal the people's money as the NPN master would want him do. He explained to them how Unongo's action was the first of its kind in living memory and urged that a man who would have such courage surely will have the interest of the people at heart. After he had introduced Unongo, the latter stood up to resounding ovation that lasted upwards of two minutes. What else Unongo said, I did not understand because he said them in Tiv, his native tongue and it appeared from the ovation he received, the people were appreciative. While Unongo's address lasted, I took time off to talk to some of the political heavyweights, who sat like lords on the podium. First I wanted to interview Governor Jim Nwobodo whose domain (Anambra State) would be the next port of call for the NPP campaign train. He was not disposed to talking to me. I turned to Abubakar Rimi who shoved me off with a benign smile and wafture. I turned the microphone to Governor Abubakar Barde who promised he would speak with me on board the flight to Enugu that evening. When he had done, I went to Jim Nwobodo to book an interview should I be opportune to fly back to Enugu on the same flight and he obliged.

It was during the futile efforts to get some interview that the most spectacular event in Makurdi happened. This was the declaration of Colonel Philip Effiong for the NPP. Reading a prepared speech, Effiong said that the claim that the Igbos were being reintegrated into the mainstream of Nigeria's body politics by some people was a ruse. According to him, the Igbos had since been reintegrated into the Nigerian polity and social life. He explained how he singlehandedly did it. He then read to the stunned crowd excerpts from the surrender speech he made to Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo in 1970. He pointed out that Yakubu Gowon's declaration of no victor no vanquished at the end of the war marked the real and lasting integration

of the Igbos into Nigeria. He told the crowd that the mere fact that Ojukwu was in the NPN has marked that party out as the harbour of one who wanted to dismember Nigeria because of his desire for power and glory. He reminded the Benue people of the great losses they suffered in the hands of Ojukwu during the Nigerian Civil War and asked if Ojukwu still deserved a place of worth in their politics and the people responded in the negative approbation. He then extolled them to see him as a fellow Nigerian citizen from the minority, seeking and soliciting their support for the cause which the NPP stood. He reminded them that the claim by NPP detractors that the party was an Igbo party was a bogey. Going further, on Zik, Effiong said, "I do not stand here to extol the virtues of the Right Honourable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe nor do I stand here to obfuscate his vices. If Zik of Africa has any vice today in Nigeria, you know them. If he is virtuous, you all know. No one is a saint. I am not. Ogunsanya is not, Unongo is not, Rimi is not, Nwobodo is not, Barde is not and Shagari is not. What we do in this world is to try to balance our vices with our virtues. Virtue being an attribute of God which in economic terms is relatively scarce. We try in all our doings to make sure we go to any length to bring the good of this world on our own side.

Standing among us this evening is a colossus in the person of Zik. In the famed Plato Republic, Zik and a few of them in Nigeria today will be regarded a special breed who government would always encourage to propagate themselves both in thought and in person. Let me ask a question. Does any body here know where Zik comes from?" to this the crowd yelled, "Yes!" Then Effiong called one person to the podium to tell the crowd what part of Nigeria Zik came from. When the man got up, he cleared his throat several times and hailed the crowd.

"EN PEE PEEE"

"PA WAAAAA!"

"EN PE PEE"

"POWER"

"EN PEE PEEEE"

"P A W A A A "

"To the People."

"PAWAAAAA"

"To the people."

"Any one amongst us here who does not know what part of Nigeria Zik comes from is not a true Nigerian. Zik is from our next door neighbour, Niger State." To give evidence to his claim, he invited Zik to address the rally in any language in Nigeria that Zik wishes to. He had hardly finished when Zik sprang to his feet, cleared his throat and begun:

"Wa ku keso!," (meaning who do we want in Hausa). The crowd responded: "Ze e e e k!" Zik said many other things in Hausa which were drowned in the cacophonous response that had greeted his first attempt. After the applause had subsided, Zik inquired if there were any Yoruba speakers in the crowd and a good number of people responded in the affirmative. He then reminded them of the Yoruba saying that emphasises the need for wise men to build on a solid foundation, possibly on a rock: "Kole kole si ori Apata; Kole kole." (When literally translated, is urging people to always construct houses on the rock.)

A house built on feeble foundation will collapse at the call of the first wind, but that built on rock, he explained will last forever. Building on any party other than the NPP in the coming elections will tantamount to building on quicksand. But putting your bet and votes on the NPP is akin to building on the rock and will yield all the good results that would give whoever does a rest of mind: abundant supply of food; good health facilities, good roads, and general economic prosperity for the entire nation.

The crowd was busy savouring the milk flowing from speeches at the rally when the siren started blowing, a signal that the campaigns were over and that Zik was about leaving. But before he leaves at least he would once more get their assurance that in the covenant they have signed they would keep their own side of it.

"Would you vote for the NPP?"

"Yes!"

"Would you vote for Zeeeeek?"

"Yes eeeee ss"

Having been reassured, he thanked them for the warm and wonderful reception they have given him and the NPP. Thereafter the rally gradually drew to an end with more songs and dances still echoing in the air as we drove to the Makurdi airport for Enugu in Anambra State where the next campaigns would start the following day.

On board the Continental Airline from Makurdi to Enugu, I held an interview with NPP officials of importance. The first person being Jim Nwobodo whose state we were about landing for the campaigns. But on my mind the most important person I should have interviewed was Abubakar Rimi. Rimi, Unongo and Jim sat on the same row. When I cleared my throat and introduced myself, Rimi was not forthcoming.

"You want to interview us here on board a plane?" Rimi queried. "No Sir, I solemnly explained. The reason why I needed the interview here is that I was not privileged to interview any of you in Benue State because of time and the exigency of duty." I further explained that I would not have achieved all I wanted should I leave Benue State, and having attended all the rallies without a personality interview with any of the bigwigs of the NPP.

"Okay, what is your question?" he queried.

"Sir," I replied, "what would be your reaction should the NPN win the coming election in Kano State?"

"Haba!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible? If the NPN wins, I will go into exile. I will ask fellow Nigerians to go into exile with me because that would mean another four years of squandermania and poverty and austerity. In fact should the NPN win the coming election which will not be possible except through foul means, then we are doomed. Another four years? Unthinkable!"

"What will happen if you lose in Kano?" I further inquired. To this he explained that the idea of losing had never once crossed his mind. "The signs are there for any

doubting Thomas to see. I will win the gubernatorial election in Kano on the first ballot. My works are there as testimony. In Kano, I have raised the literacy rate to nearly five hundred per cent during the four years I had ruled the state. Have you been to Kano?" he asked, then went on, "go to Kano. Go see for yourself. I personally invite you. The people in Kano are the real apostles of Change. They have exported the idea to Sokoto the home state of Shagari. They exported the idea to Kaduna and the idea is spreading like wildfire. How then do you think that it would be under any circumstances conceivable for the NPP to lose in Kano? I beg bury that idea."

Meanwhile, Emmanuel Okoronkwo, the resilient cameraman had zoomed toward Jim indicating that it was time I left Rimi and talked to Jim. Jim was full of delight and eager to talk. For him the next forty-eight hours were going to be hectic. He had prepared fully for a full-fledged rally in Anambra. He was confident Zik and himself would win the presidency and governorship elections on the first ballot respectively. "But your Excellency Sir, there has been an open antagonism against the NPP, you and Zik in Anambra, than say in Niger, Kano, Imo and Benue. Why is this so?"

"You know," Jim began, "The Holy Book is right when it said that a prophet is not without honour except in his community. But we know the genesis of this campaign of calumny against the NPP in Anambra State. It is the handiwork of a few disgruntled but powerful elements in Anambra State. It is the vicious work of political turncoats, scoundrels and reprobates. They are those who have the ill-conceit to believe that Anambra State and Zik should be subject for clue and denigration. At the moment, our aim is to win the election first. Thereafter we shall deal decisively with our detractors."

"Sir," I quipped, "does it mean you will indulge in political vendetta?"

"No, that is out of place. I have a place for all who live in Anambra State in my heart. I shall not in the least indulge in vendetta of any kind. I will rather try as Zik had

always postulated to accommodate our detractors for without their role, we would not perhaps have been on our guide towards the fulfilment of the numerous promises we have for the people in our manifesto." On what his reaction would be should the NPN win, Jim first cushioned off that idea saying that the idea was not in the least conceivable. "How can the NPN win?" he queried, rather furiously and very annoyed. "The NPN cannot win in Anambra State. The NPN cannot win even at the Federal level. It is a party of kleptocrats and mobocrats. It is a party solely concerned with thievery and looting. Nigerians have seen them. Nigerians now know them. The ordinary man is feeling the impact of the NPN misrule more than any other segment of the society and you know the common man has the majority of the votes. If the Nigerian common man is a rational being which I am sure he is, he has no other option than vote out the NPN at the first ballot. And if I were the NPN overlords, I would as a matter of political expediency surrender the mantle of leadership to the Owelle under the NPP. The NPN has no programme for our land other than the importation of rice and sometimes sawdust, at the detriment of our dwindling scarce foreign exchange. They cannot win. If by foul means they win, hell will be let loose and in fact it will spark off a chain of reactions the end of which no one will be able to foretell."

At this juncture we heard the shrill voice of the air-hostess tell everyone to fasten his seat belt preparatory towards landing. I was partially satisfied.

Enugu airport wore a fresh look that Friday evening. Traditional dancers, chiefs, Nzes, traditional rulers and school children were on hand to welcome the members of the NPP campaign team into Anambra. Press men had hurriedly alighted as was customary. I need not stress the importance of this. Now the crowd was terribly

* During Shagari's reign, sawdust were off-loaded at the Apapa Quays as rice from Thailand. Whoever owned the vessel still remains a mystery. But it was one of the many ways people misused import licences.

uncontrollable. They surged forth and backward in rehearsed fashion. "Zeeeeek, Zeeeeek," they cried to the high heavens. Suddenly as if in obedience to the calls, Zik stepped out of the Continental Airline staircase. Simultaneously, he unsheathed a sword, dangled it in the air and sheathed it as he danced gracefully down the staircase of the aircraft. The crowd roared and roared again. Followed by his lieutenants, Zik made straight to the Presidential Lounge of the Enugu airport where an elaborate arrangement had been made for him to address a world press conference. I never knew of this in advance, besides, I had almost exhausted the empty cassettes with me. Should I expend the remaining I had on Zik's press conference which normally lasts longer than expected, I might be compelled to borrow empty cassettes from the ABC TV or I go to Owerri for fresh tapes before I could do my other functions in Anambra adequately and accurately. It was this singular handicap that made it impossible for me to record Zik's airport press conference that evening and the subsequent interviews that followed.

Once more Dr. Harryline Ibezim had taken charge. He had seized the megaphone and announced that Zik would be making a brief speech after which few questions will be entertained from members of the press.

When Zik and his aides were seated, the microphone swung to him, "Distinguished personalities, my honourable colleagues in the pen profession. I want to seize this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful support you have all given to myself and my team during the past two weeks. With you all we have been to Gongola, Sokoto and Benue states in this arduous, but interesting venture of spreading the gospel of change. In my mind, I have no doubt that should everything be equal, the Nigerian People's Party whose banner I have the honour to carry all these days long will emerge victorious at the end of the day. Our journey so far has been hitch-free. And that is why I was appalled by the report in one of the dailies that I was ignored by the Lamido of Adamawa." Unsheathing the glistening sword once again the Owelle

told the press that it was the Lamido himself who gave the sword to him as a token. He asked them to make whatever interpretation they would when a traditional ruler of the Lamido's repute gives a sword as a token to a man of his (Zik's) calibre on the type of vanguard that had carried him to the Adamawa's doorsteps. "If the Lamido did not see me how did he offer me this token of a present? I am not making this assertion with bitterness, conscious of the fact that we ought to allow for human errors at times. But I must emphasise that constant repetition of such errors casts serious doubts and may impugn on the integrity and fairness of the press. I urge you therefore to keep the standard you have maintained so far so as to give the people of this great country balanced information on the true position of the progress made by every party during this period of electioneering.

Tomorrow we will begin the presidential campaigns in Anambra State and it is my hope that you all will give your continued cooperation in order to make the campaigns memorable. I hereby reaffirm that by the grace of God, members of my party and I would continue to be law abiding so as to witness a peaceful transition of power to an NPP duly elected officers come October 1983. Ladies and gentlemen of the press, once more, I thank you. It has been very wonderful." (There was prolonged applause).

It was question time and the rules as spelt by Henryline were clear. You raise your hand. If you are called, you stand up, mention your name, the media you represent and then your question. The first question was ventured by Roy Eze, the political correspondent of the Satellite Newspapers, "Sir, can you confirm or deny the rumour that you will step down for Chief Obafemi Awolowo at the last minute. If it is so, won't that cause some problems of identification with your numerous supporters. Would not those who had voted for you see it as a clear betrayal of trust. Sir can you explain?"

Answering the question, Zik thanked Roy before assuring him what he called his teeming supporters across the land that he was still contesting the presidency under

the banner of the NPP. That he had no plans whatsoever to step down for Chief Awolowo. "We might have planned that in 1979, not today. He is contesting alone and I am contesting on my own. Some people had even gone to peddle rumours that Alhaji Abubakar Rimi would be contesting the presidency. This is Rimi here to deny or accept. But I am very sure that Rimi would want to consolidate our gains in Kano before ever venturing the centre. To be precise, we have no such plan." (There was another thunderous applause). Another reporter stood up at the instance of Henryline. His name I have forgotten now, but he reported for the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). He had questioned Zik to explain how he hoped to achieve his target of abundant food supply as is contained in the NPP manifesto. Zik replied saying that he had spoken on this over and over again in the last few days. He pointed out that the Anambra River in Anambra State had a basin long stretched enough with what geographers called alluvian deposit rich in acidic content for all forms of agricultural purposes. He pointed out that three quarters of the states in Nigeria have River Basin Development Authorities that have not been fully utilised. We intend to put to use all these projects that are wasting away. If you had followed us during our campaigns up north, you would have seen by yourself the vastness of Nigeria's agricultural potential — the expansive landmass. You would agree with me that it does not necessarily require the services of the so-called experts to turn Nigeria into an agricultural zone again. If the NPP wins, the groundnut pyramids would rise again. If the NPP wins, timber production will be revitalised. We would produce enough rice to go round the hungry mouths of Nigerians and have enough for export. Palm oil will never again be imported into this country. Imagine the irony, that before the oil boom we were the world's greatest producers of palm produce. We will make cocoa production in Western Nigeria a top priority. We will be agriculturally self-satisfying."

"My name is Ikechi Obi. I repress at NTA Enugu."

"No! No!! No!!!," was the rejection that greeted his introduction. But quickly Zik intervened. "Gentlemen, in journalism thought is free and comment is sacred. Allow whoever wants to ask questions to do so provided (that) he is within the orbits of your points of reference." When he continued, Ikechi wanted to know from Zik, if it was true that an NPP-controlled Federal Government would close down the NTA, sack all its staff and in its stead promote the growth of private television stations and state-owned (broadcast) media houses.

"Thank you again," replied Zik, "Since the early 1930's when I made my entry into Journalism, my watchword had been freedom of the press both private and government owned. The two should exist symbiotically because the government as well as the private sector need the press. Whichever way, information flow in an NPP-controlled Federal Government, will be encouraged. We will not close any media house. But is that the reason why you people have relentlessly attacked us falsely these past weeks? If so please inform the powers that be at the NTA that an NPP-controlled government would not close them. Tell them that rather we are poised towards making NTA one of the best media organs in Africa. We would on attainment of power give the NTA the moral as well as financial encouragement that would boost its reception across the country and even beyond. But for God's sake tell them to stop maligning against the NPP. We are a peace-loving party. Thank you." (long applause)

In answer to another question, Zik explained that the NPP would strive to maintain an open door policy internationally. "We would if the atmosphere is conducive enough re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel. We can no longer continue to cry more than the bereaved. How can Egypt who caused the whole trouble be dining and wining with Israel, whereas we observers and onlookers carry the whole burden on our shoulders as if we are more Arab than the Arabs themselves?" When reminded of Israel's fraternity with South Africa, Zik retorted: "But we have diplomatic relations with France,

the USA and Britain — the principal supporters of apartheid. Why? we should have broken diplomatic relations with them.” He then went on to advance his theory of dismantling apartheid in South Africa. “The problems of the South Africans lie in their own hands. If for example they decide to fight the racists, we in Nigeria will do everything to help them. We would give them the financial support needed. We shall give them the diplomatic support they need. But we will not carry guns to go to fight for them. When we fought for our independence, did any foreign power help us?” He quickly added that the problems of South Africa and Namibia were the responsibility of an NPP-controlled government which will however act under the auspices of the OAU to break the evil spell which the Reagan Administration has cast on the process of decolonisation in those two countries. He affirmed that in this context, Nigeria should promote a new conception of the defence of the South Atlantic which would be different from that presently touted by South Africa. He warned that the West should recognise that the joint forces of sub-Saharan Africa and South America will have more weight in any international conflict than an apartheid South African alliance. With that, the press conference came to an end and we moved into town only to be welcomed by a complete power blackout. Some of us suggested it was an act of sabotage while others marvelled at such a wonderful coincidence. However, before 8:30 p.m. that 10th of June, 1983, power was restored and I sat down in my hotel suite to devour the sour grape served by both the Anambra Television and the NTA on their screens all in the name of politics.

Politically speaking, the arrangement in Anambra State is not based on any discernable ideology or class. In this case, it was not different from the politics of other parts of Nigeria. Like other places in Nigeria, the politics of Anambra State is sharply based on geographical lines. Geographically, the indigenes had divided the state into north and south. The north being relatively more

backward than the south in terms of infrastructural development, educational development, industrial development and even in terms of human behavioural pattern. The south on the other hand sees itself as the quintessence of development and achievement. Historically, most cities in the south such as Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi had seen and embraced the white man's religion, education and way of life before the rest of the people in Igboland. The Anambra south had exploited the opportunity the white man's religion offered to establish educational institutions that were to produce hundreds of the first Igbo educated class. They attended the famous Christ the King College (CKC) set up by the Catholics while the Anglicans had attended the Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS). The Christ the King College (CKC) and DMGS had turned out the first professionals like teachers, architects, doctors, lawyers, priests and nurses. The multiplier effect of this southern Anambra early contact with Europeans became tremendous, for they did not only become the first class in their immediate Anambra vicinity but extended unlimited influence beyond the boundaries of Igboland.

It was the situation that when the struggle for an independent Nigeria began, the educated Igbo elite from Anambra south formed the core. Besides, many southern Anambra indigenes had joined the colonial civil service and used their influence and salary to better not only the lives of people in their immediate environment but by extension the lives of people in other towns and villages adjoining Onitsha. Thus, Awka, Nnewi, Ekwulobia and Ihiala, all enjoyed the boom that had attended the white man's influence on the coast of the Niger.

Ironically, while this elaborate development in human and material resources was going on in Anambra south, the north was virtually locked out of the scheme of things. The result is that while the south developed, the north, just like all other parts of Igboland, stunted. Besides, the average Anambra southerner is as proud as the peacock. He is, if not wealthy, relatively educated. He then saw

himself first as a human being above any other. He developed a sense of snobbery. He called non-southerners "Onyeigbo" — a derogatory aphorism depicting backwardness and incivility. Unfortunately, the average Anambra southerner had the means to employ the services of boys and sometimes men from other parts of Igboland as house-helps, gardeners, cooks, stewards and drivers. This helped him to further sharpen his derogatory acceptance of other Igboman who do not hail from the Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi triangle. Fortunately for the southerners, they had produced a cream of Nigerian politicians and civil servants. Talk of the Nwokedis, the Ebosies, the Ojukwus and of course the greatest of them all, Dr. The Right Honourable Nnamdi Azikiwe. If all these men are from Anambra south, you do not expect them to sit by the fence or on the sidelines of Anambra politics. And so they produced Nnamdi Azikiwe the first Governor-General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Fortunately, Zik as a person was not given to snobbery or degradation of the human race. If he did, he concealed it very well. He was conscious of himself first as a fellow human being before his place of origin. The trait must have been inherited from his father Obed who went into the deep and obscure town of Nsukka in Anambra north to marry Zik's mother.

Unfortunately for the southerners, elective politics in Nigeria considers first and foremost numbers. The greater you and your kind are in terms or number, the better and brighter your chances of winning are. What must have been their drawback turned out to be blessings to the people of the Anambra north. Because they did not embrace "whiteman's education," he turned to the land and became successful at farming. They had food; they had land; they practised intensive agriculture and fed themselves. Furthermore, as a result of the discovery of Udi as a coal mining area and the consequent development of Enugu as an administrative town, strays of "civility" gradually crept into the north to complement their growing status as a food producing area of Igboland. With the construction of a railway line, the most interior of the

Anambra north hinterland such as Abakaliki was forcibly opened up. To crown it all, when the decision to site a giant academic institution like the University of Nigeria was to be taken, Zik used his influence to site it in Nsukka where it further helped to the opening up of the "Wawa" enclave. With time therefore, the people of the Anambra north started catching up. They had produced educated men. They had produced wealthy merchants comparable with any in other parts of Igboland, and this class of people had with the passage of time started seeing themselves as aristocrat and bourgeois class who would not tolerate any prolonged outside overlordship. They had arrived by the mid sixties, at least producing a son, Justice Daddy Onyeama, who had presided over the International Court of Justice at the Hague. They had arrived.

The tragedy of Anambra politics is that while Zik and a few southerners recognised the importance of the north in terms of population, few southerners imbued by a sense of parochial snobbery refused to acknowledge the arrival of this late starters. They still saw them through the lenses of the Anambra of the 1920's. They derogated them, called them "Wawa", blocked their ways and saw any person from the south who identified with northerners' aspiration as a traitor. Zik had identified himself by supporting Jim Nwobodo an obscure northerner from Amaichi Awkwunano for the governorship race of Anambra State in 1979. Jim a "Wawa" son, had ascended the governorship throne from where he became incommodious towards Shehu Shagari's Central Government. Shehu Shagari had fuelled the schism more by the appointment and retention of an Anambra southerner in person of Dr. Alex Ekwueme as his second in command. When the political battle line was drawn, it was between Anambra south versus the north as represented by the ancient grudge in one hand and political realignment in the other. It was fierce. According to Emman Ogbumuo, my classmate and friend at the university, the Anambra southerners would have tolerated a person of higher birth than Jim Nwobodo. They could have tolerated any person from the Onoh or

Onyeama family in Enugu Ngwo, but not Jim Nwobodo. The result was that most people who mattered in Anambra south conspired to transfer opposition and act as bulwark against the NPP as represented by Jim Nwobodo and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

Another issue other than dichotomy that influenced the Anambra politics in the second segment of the ill-fated Second Republic was what people there glibly referred to as the Ekwueme and Ojukwu factors. First, we have seen how the NPN and Shehu Shagari had appointed Ekwueme a millionaire architect from Oko in Aguata local government area as his deputy. The choice worked for the NPN. Ekwueme had before he joined politics identified himself. He had built colleges, given electricity to his people, built maternities, clinics and hospitals, and was generally known for his philanthropic activities. He awarded scholarships in their hundreds to deserving sons of Oko and Aguata. Through the establishment of industries such as breweries and his firm, Ekwueme Associates, he had provided employment opportunities to thousands of people. He had given life to the dying and succour to the suffering. He had been a philanthropist par excellence. Prior to the 1979 presidential elections, he had donated the sum of fifty thousand naira to the NPN Central Committee. Alex Ekwueme!!

When he got the ticket therefore to run with Shagari, it was no more secret that he would use his position to generate some political-cum-social leverage for the people of Anambra State. He had to do it. He must do it, it was obligatory if the NPN had to make any inroads into Anambra. But even if he had not got to do it, the psychological satisfaction that an Anambra son is the second-in-command to the exalted seat of the Nigerian presidency, no matter under what party was enough. Some Anambra people then had to support the NPN based on this factor alone. The Ekwueme factor therefore became an important element in the far-reaching decision of who ruled Anambra, the NPN or the NPP in the second tier of the Second Republic politics of Anambra State.

Another factor, was Ojukwu. He had led Biafra creditably during the Civil War and had been exiled after the war. During his absence, Igbos had believed the war was yet to be over unless Ojukwu was pardoned. Early in 1981, Shagari had pardoned Yakubu Gowon. It was for political reasons. He had been accused of treason as Ojukwu had been accused of sedition. He needed to be pardoned and the Igbos would be grateful. In May 1982, Shagari had pardoned Ojukwu. He (Ojukwu) had returned to a tumultuous welcome by many Nigerians, but more especially the Igbos. They were grateful and showed it by all forms of receptions they arranged for him. The Nnewi people, bestowed him with the title Ikemba Nnewi. Igbo leaders of thought bestowed him with "Dikediorama" of Igboland. Every Igboman was once more elated by this seeming magnanimity of Shehu Shagari, their political foe. Some swore they would vote for him come August 1983. Some took his gesture with mixed feelings. They would vote against him once more should he grant the revival and existence of the moribund Republic of Biafra.

It was the Ojukwu factor that galvanised political contest in Anambra State more than anything else during the 1983 political campaigns. Ojukwu had defied all predictions to join the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), a party mostly despised and hated by the generality of the Igbos who Ojukwu had led in time of crisis. The common folks were now visibly divided by two thoughts. The thought of what to do with or for a man that gave them protection with his life or to a new breed that had looked after them when Ojukwu absconded to Ivory Coast at the end of the Civil War. It was in the words of Frederick Forsyth, Ojukwu's bossom friend "A devil's alternative," for whichever option the Igbos chose, man must lose face, power, glory and life.

An interesting aspect of the Anambra State politics of 1983 was relegation of important issues to the backburner. As we can now see, most topics rested on personalities. It did not matter if Jim Nwobodo performed creditably well or if Ekwueme attracted Federal interest in Anambra.

What prevailed most often was how Jim became a beautician, had lived a life without a wife. How bastardly disposed he was. How he became Mr. Donatus — a derisive onomatopoeic innuendo to Jim Nwobodo's philanthropic disposition made manifest through his numerous donations. In Anambra State, personalities such as the State Commissioner for Police, Mr. Bishop Eytene, who became a law unto himself and the "Ijekebe" or Anambra southerners' sense of superiority mattered. An imbecile from Anambra south would have been appreciated more than the Nnamdi Azikiwe's hand-picked Jim Nwobodo. Every other thing that enhanced people's welfare such as education, health, industry, modern amenities such as the provision of electricity, pipe-borne water and good roads were not even discussed. When they were discussed, they appeared in an appendage presentation.

However, in an article that appeared in *The Guardian* edition of 13th August, 1983, the day of the gubernatorial election, titled "Nwobodo still has some edge," one Uche Nwafor wrote *inter alia*: "On the score board, he (Jim) has recorded some achievements within the period he has been in office. He has been able to establish a University of Technology with two functioning campuses at Enugu and Awka with others planned for Abakaliki and Onitsha. As the president of this university, Mr. Nwobodo was able to employ the services of Mr. Kenneth Dike, the renowned and respected Professor of History and the first indigenous Vice-Chancellor of Ibadan University. Mr. Nwobodo has also established two Colleges of Education, one at Nsugbe and the other at Eha-amufu. He also upgraded the Oko College of Arts and Science into a polytechnic. He has built a School of Agriculture at Agbarigin; Mr. Nwobodo also put into operation a mobile health clinic for preventive and curative diseases, free medical services, and resurfaced some roads . . . Mr. Nwobodo's critics might argue about how he set up priorities and how well-equipped some of these services are, but nobody denies their existence.

Mr. Nwobodo's rivals also have as a central point in

their campaign strategy to win over his administration, the industries functioning in the state before he was elected, but which have been closed down. Some of these industries are the Nkalagu Cement Factory, Anambra State Development Corporation (ADC), Ebony Paints, Vanguard Industries, Nigerian Furniture and Construction Company (NFCC), Nigersteel Emene, and the Vegetable Oil Refinery at Nnachi. The closure of these factories has caused hardship to thousands of citizens of the state especially now that able-bodied people do not easily get alternative jobs in the country... "



NPP Stalwarts

*Left to Right: Chief Arthur Nzeribe, Alhaji Abubakar Rimi,
Chief Jim Nwobodo and Mr Solomon Lar*

I had tuned to NTA Channel 8 Enugu on the night of 10th June, 1983, to watch its programmes. Dominated by political talks and jingles calling attention to the NPN, the station had not the little courtesy of mentioning the arrival of a personality as important as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in town. When it was news time, the campaigns kicking off in Enugu the following day did not form part of the headlines. Instead what attracted the news sense of the editors of the NTA Enugu was the declaration of former NPP supporters in their thousands (without any video film to support) for the NPN. When the boring news had gone half-way, the reader started what in my mind had been the most debased information I had gathered throughout the campaign about Zik. It began thus: "Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the grand old man of the NPP is now in Enugu to begin his tours which will take him to Nsukka, Abakaliki, Nnewi, Awka, Aguata and Onitsha. Answering reporters' questions on arrival at the Enugu airport this evening, the NPP Chief acknowledged the fact that arrangements have been concluded between him and Chief Awolowo on who should step down for the other in the forthcoming elections. Our source gathered that Zik had already made strict a bargain to relinquish his candidature for Chief Obafemi Awolowo before the elections which will kick off in less than one month's time. It is equally understood that Jim 'Donatus' Ifeanyichukwu Nwobodo, the beautician Zik put in the Government House at Enugu is worried about this latest development hence he had been making frantic efforts to stop the move. We shall keep you informed as

events unfold. Meanwhile, thousands of former NPP supporters in Njikoka local government area have declared for the NPN. Welcoming the new declarants into the fold of the NPN, the organising secretary of the NPN in the area, Chief Nathaniel Ogosi, stressed the importance of the Igbos being integrated into the mainstream of Nigerian politics. He assured them that the only party truly national in outlook which can do this is the NPN. He promised them of the unflinching support of the NPN and assured continuous flow of Federal presence in Njikoka. Addressing the declarants, earlier, the former chairman of the NPP in the area Mr. Ben Okochi said that NPP was a party that has lost bearing. He accused the powers that be at the NPP secretariat of confronting the Federal government. He observed that this confrontational attitude of Jim Donatus Nwobodo had caused them federal presence in all forms."

Shocked by this brazen defamation of character and blatant lie telling, I tuned in to the ATV Channel (Five "O") 50, to hear their own side of the story. The time was about five minutes to nine. On the screen was a cartoonist impression of a heavily bearded man with portfolio in one hand and a very large cigar in the other, the caricature was in a posture of a man driven by angry crowd wanting to devour him. Under the caricature was the inscription, "Ogboso I of Igboland." Ogboso I was the new title Ojukwu's detractors had labelled him since his declaration for the NPN. They had used it to remind the fickle-minded populace of the escape into safety Ojukwu undertook to Ivory Coast at the end of the Nigerian Civil War. Ogboso simply means a runaway. If Ojukwu is addressed with the honorific of Ogboso, it meant a lot. The caricature hung for a long time before the drum signals that heralded the news. "This is your favourite station ATV channel "Five 'O' " Enugu. First the headlines: The Owelle of Onitsha and the presidential candidate of the Nigerian People's Party, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, and his campaign team arrived Enugu this evening. As Zik's campaign fever grips Anambra, thousands of supporters of the NPP are hopeful on the

presidential election; my name is. . . good evening. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the presidential candidate of the NPP in the coming election has denied the rumour that he would step down for Chief Obafemi Awolowo to run for the presidency. Answering reporters' questions today on arrival at the Enugu airport (film rolls on screen), Dr. Azikiwe said the rumour was baseless as he had not met with Awolowo since the past six months and would not meet with him before the elections in August. He dismissed the rumours as the handiwork of NPP detractors who would want to do everything to bring confusion in the minds of millions of NPP supporters across the land. In answer to another question, Zik has promised that the NPP will flood the Nigerian market with rice produced locally and even have some for export as against the present system whereby the ruling NPN spent our relatively scarce foreign reserve on rice that would not reach every table in Nigeria. He revealed that a team of agricultural experts under his running mate Alhaji Mustapha have concluded plans towards this end.

In another development, thousands of former supporters of the NPN in Abakaliki yesterday besieged the Enugu airport where they declared for the NPP just a few minutes before Zik's team arrived from what NPP officials described as one of the most successful campaigns Zik has undertaken in his nearly half a century of political career...." As a TV journalist and an eye witness to some events that make the news, I deducted and concluded. But had I not the singular opportunity of being an insider, I wondered how deep I would have been lost in this brazen distortion of facts as represented by the media world during the politics of the Second Republic in Nigeria, particularly in the Anambra area of Igboland.

My eyes were still glued to the screen when I slept off and it was owing to the courtesy of the attendant who had called to enlighten me on the other facilities available in the hotel that I was able to get up. When he had gone I slept again perhaps sounder than I had done before. It was in this hotel — Royal Palace Enugu — that I dreamed a dream

that was to affect the efforts I had put in trailing Zik my idol these past months. It was not a bad dream altogether. It was this same Lynda. She is now back in Enugu in my room telling me of the rift my assignment had caused between the management and staff of the ITV. She narrated how those who considered themselves better journalists than myself had gone to petition the Director General, Mr. Ralph Obioha of ITV alleging that the Director of News, Mr. Chudi Onuzo and I were in close alliance to destabilise his position and thereafter create an opportunity for the over ambitious news director to become the director-general. She narrated to me, for the first time that the incumbent director-general was Machiavelli personified. She told me how the director of news was the first director of the ITV; how out of his immense benevolence and regard for the industry he had introduced the present DG who until then a senior technician with the NTA Aba to the powers that be so that he could man the delicate equipment that were being assembled. She narrated how after the place had been set up and a substantive DG needed, Ralph Obioha in collaboration with Dr. Cadjetin Duruji, the then Commissioner for Information, got himself appointed the substantive DG. Lynda explained that ever since, a big cold war had raged between the two and that junior and senior staff in the News and Current Affairs Department, the most sensitive department in a broadcasting house, had been polarised in their loyalty with a great percentage for Chudi. She wondered how I could not in my nearly one year stay in the authority have observed this conflict. She intimated me that right now Obioha loyalists in the organisation had petitioned several times against the continued use of corps members in the execution of one of the most sensitive assignments that the young ITV had been billed to undertake. She however assured me that their petition had not been successful due to the zeal and accuracy with which I had carried out the assignments. She praised my efforts thus far and departed with a warning that sounded like this: "Please do not expose

your loyalty of Chudi to the notice of Obioha. He is bent on doing you in." There was a knock on my door and I woke up with a start. It was one of the hotel attendants who had noticed my door had been open for a long time and had decided to check if all was fine with me. It was then, I realised I had been dreaming the whole time. When I got up the following morning I could not quite understand the import of my dream. Lynda? What kind of girl is she? This Lynda must be more than I had thought of her. Could she be a member of the notorious Shagari's Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) or could she be operating independent of outside influence? I was in this crisis when a knock on the door became more persistent. When I opened the door, one of the attendants informed me that somebody from Owerri had been downstairs since 5 a.m. waiting to see the ITV crew. "He even gave me this letter," which he (the attendant) handed to me. Quickly I tore it and saw it was the handwriting of Chudi praising the wonderful job I had been doing for the station over the past weeks. Concluding, he asked me not to fail to send to Owerri with the bearer, all tapes and stories I had on me that needed urgent relaying. He once more congratulated me for the improving quality of succeeding news materials I had sent back to Owerri. He concluded by alluding that only a continued sustenance of the tempo could give him the courage to defend whatever actions he had been taking on behalf of the NPP through the ITV.

With such a moral boosting note, I now saw my job as more important than I had hitherto presumed. Everything should be got ready for Zik's campaigns in Enugu. By the programme we have, he (Zik) would address a rally at the Polo Field on 11th June. On the 12th he would visit Abakaliki and Nsukka while on the 13th, he would be guest to the big town of Awka, Nnewi and Aguata. Not being visitors to Enugu, we decided not to make hasty preparations but felt that we must nonetheless acclimatise. Emmanuel Okoronkwo had suggested we move to the campaign ground earlier than the party stalwarts. I suggested we move first to the Government House Enugu

where we might be opportune again to interview some big-wigs. We could have executed my suggestions but for the non-arrival of our driver who had travelled by road the previous night while we boarded the flight to Enugu from Makurdi. Nevertheless, we were given a comfortable ride to the campaign ground by Mr. Mike Eke of the Imo Newspapers, publishers of the *Nigerian Statesman*.

Previewing Enugu from the balcony of Royal Palace Hotel at Agbani Road on the morning of 11th June, 1983, was an interesting spectacle. The air smelt of festivity. The city was bustling. Hordes of human beings trooped past Agbani and major streets of Enugu all heading towards the Polo Field. They did not move like mourners returning from the graveyard; they moved boisterously, each group displaying conspicuous banners that revealed the area of the state they came from. They sang and beat drums that attracted even the most unbelieving. Far, far away, cannons boomed although their sounds quickly disappeared in the cacophony that was the major attribute of such occasions.

Moving towards the Polo Field itself was a task greater than perhaps, walking uphill. We tried going through Agbani but failed because of an unusual hold-up occasioned by the sudden increase in human and car traffic which Enugu was now witnessing. We tried other minor routes which the driver suggested but met heavier traffic. Then we decided to go back to Agbani and Awkwunano from where we joined the Port Harcourt-Enugu Expressway to join the Trans-Emene junction to the IMT area and then the Polo Field. By 9 a.m. when we got to the field, practically all openings had closed. If we were not newsmen, we would have considered ourselves late to the occasion. Children, their parents, teachers and traders were on the field. I saw mascots fall flat on the ground. The rising and rising till gradually they disappeared inside their own bellies from where they made series of more interesting appearances. There were other acrobats and mobile arts troupe who rode atop of moving trailer backs and organisations who did not want to be outdone. They

did everything to identify themselves at least with the success of Zik which they had smelt. Voluntary organisations such as Boy Scouts and Girl Guides were more than occupied maintaining peace. Fierce looking mobile policemen were equally fully deployed to maintain law and order. Traffic officials and volunteers had hectic time controlling traffic. Recalcitrant supporters ignored appeals for orderliness and at intervals broke loose to the cheer and admiration of colleagues. Pressmen from all over the country and even the foreign press converged scrambling for vantage positions on the rather elaborate news-stand now cramped because of unanticipated explosion in media coverage. The atmosphere could not by any means be described as serene for danger as well as a prospective world of goodies, should Zik win enveloped the air. This Zik. I saw a fanatic in a traditional regalia made, I suppose specially for the occasion bearing an inscription like this: "Zik - Chineke of Africa," which literally translated equated Zik with powers of the Supreme Being (over Africa). He is now being tagged God of Africa. There was another Zik fanatic with a banner boldly inscribed, "With Zik everything is possible." And yet another whose fading T-Shirt bore an inscription "Long Live Zik, Long Live Africa, Long Live the People." Amidst all these, I saw a white photo-journalist straining the lenses of his camera to get a good shot of a disabled supporter who came on a tricycle.

The first person who spoke to the eager crowd was Alhaji Abubakar Rimi the originator of the concept of "Change '83." Apparently conscious of the implication of Ojukwu's membership of the NPN, Rimi did not waste time to educate the people of Anambra State. "My dear good people of Anambra State. My name is Alhaji Abubakar Rimi, I've brought you good tidings from Kano State — the most populous state in Nigeria. It is the message of Change '83. This message, like wildfire has spread to Niger State. It has spread to Kaduna State, it has got to Maiduguri capital of Borno State and, only six days ago the people of Sokoto State — the home state of Alhaji

Shehu Shagari — accepted the gospel without question. Today, we have brought you this gospel undiluted. It is as fresh as when the idea was first muted and hatched and all those who had a hand in it are here today. You can see Alhaji Abubakar Barde, you can see the chairman of our Great Party, Chief Ogunsanya, you can see Philip Effiong (there was a thunderous ovation); you can see Alhaji Shettima Mustapha, the Agronomist who will perform the feat of returning Nigeria to an agricultural nation. You can see all of us here, but there is one thing which perhaps you do not understand (yet) about one man who I learnt commands a reasonable following here, I mean the former Biafran leader Chief Emeka Ojukwu. I equally learnt that people here are being fed with the erroneous impression that the people of the North are not receiving this gospel of change. The true story is that up north, they have seen Ojukwu's entry into politics and his declaration for the NPN as a bad omen for the future of Nigerian politics. I want to ask you also to note that the Ikemba Nnewi represents the belligerency and confusion of Ojukwu. In fact, Ojukwu is a liability to the NPN rather than an asset. As for Alhaji Shehu Shagari himself, the NPN in his state, Sokoto, is on the verge of disintegration because of Ojukwu's presence in their party. "I wonder, my good friends, why the whole of this state has not changed in conformity with the new trend and political climate."

After Rimi, a man who simply described himself as privy to the Lamido of Adamawa mounted the rostrum. His aim according to him was to dispel the malicious publication in one of our daily newspapers' reports about the Owelle of Onitsha being refused entry by the Lamido of Adamawa into his palace. He accused Dr. M. I. Okpara in particular of being the architect of trouble in Nigeria. Okpara he went on, it was who in alliance with some politicians from the West started the fire that burnt the First Republic. He reminded the people that Okpara advised Ojukwu during the Civil War. He alerted the people that the same Okpara and Ojukwu had come a second time to ignite another fire that would consume only the common

people like him and (the crowd) while those who lit the fire would run away into safety in far away countries of Europe and America. He told the cheering crowd that he was in Anambra State for the singular aim of confirming the new resolve up north to see Zik elected as the next Executive President of Nigeria. "Will you vote for him?" he queried and the people simultaneously responded in the affirmative.

Who said the Igbos have not been reintegrated into the mainstream of Nigerian politics? asked Colonel Philip Effiong furiously as he mounted the rostrum without the courtesy of hailing the crowd. His act of impetuosity could have derived from his newness to electioneering campaigns. When he noted the lapse, he quickly retraced his steps. "My name is Colonel Philip Effiong." "Pa a w a!" The people responded. "NPP," he bellowed in a military voice and when the response came from the crowd, it really drowned Effiong's subsequent calls.

"You all know the sufferings we underwent together in Biafra. You all know the pains we suffered, the air-raids, the hunger, the kwashiorkor, the artillery shock, the booms of guns that influenced the character, the psyche and mentality of the adolescent Igbo. You remembered the tattered nature of the married, the endless thinking of the widowed teenage girl and the unforgettable agony of the mother whose son had not returned from the war front. The agony occasioned by insecurity of life and property and the fear of being conscripted into the tattered army. You remember all this. Now, I do not say Ojukwu was not important when you and I needed him. We needed him as a courageous war general. Now the war is ended, I remember having personally in my surrender note reintegrated you into the Nigerian mainstream of politics at the close of the war in 1970. I am sure that in spite of the ups and downs of life which was not peculiar only to the Igbos, we have had a fair deal in the general scheme of things. That which we did not attain had been radically pursued and attained by the NPP governments of Imo and Anambra States — the core of the Igbo nation — between

1979 and 1983. During this period, an Igbo man became the second-in-command in the political set up of the land. Cynics may ask if Ekwueme was in the NPP, but do not forget that had it not been for the attacks and the constant pressures mounted by the NPP, this would not have been possible. Today, the Igbos are no longer discriminated against in terms of appointment or the distribution of social amenities. In Imo and Anambra States today, you have more than ten educational institutions that have university status. Industries are springing up here and there. I cannot count them. If the attainment of this political, economic and social status is not full integration what is? I have gone all this length to debunk the theory that if Ojukwu who led you away from Nigeria does not lead you back no one else would. Remember, the idea of a country called Biafra was not his alone. He was merely a figure who obeyed our instructions and that was the reason why when we asked him to run away at the close of the war, he ran. And that is why we have unanimously today rechristened him with this unenviable title of the Ogboso I of Igboland." At this pronouncement, the hitherto patient crowd went berserk, with shouts of "Effiong, Effiong, Effiong".

Effiong had hardly sat down when Solomon Lar got up. At first people thought he would want to address them. No! He simply stood up, grabbed Jim by the shoulder and showed him to the expectant crowd. At this, hysteria and ecstasy greeted the act. Shouts of "Jim, Jim" saturated the air. For more than ten minutes the crowd remained uncontrollable, so long as Jim was standing, the people refused to hear any other thing. When Jim opened his mouth again, shouts of J e e m drowned him. After they were apparently done, Jim Nwobodo started his theatrics. Whatever he said was dominated by gesticulation. "Good people of Anambra State," he began solemnly when the crowd gave him time to speak. "NPN is nothing but austerity, no it is 'otanishi,' all say it after me!" The people responded. Henceforth the remaining part of what Jim had to say was by gesticulations. Any part of his body he pointed at indicated where the NPN-inflicted austerity

measures was damaging. When he touched the head, the people called it 'otanishi' — good mimicry of the austerity showing that it had affected the head more than any other part of the human anatomy. When he touched the leg, the people would respond 'otanukwu', when he touched the mouth, they responded 'otanonu.' It could be 'otanaka', 'imi', 'ukwu' or any part of the body.

At his instruction, hell was let loose as people cried falling or tilting their heads and bodies towards any part that gave them a good cry. It was a spectacle as some people really cried out their eyes. Then like obedient servants, after this round of caricaturing, Jim ordered his faithfuls to cry for the demise of the NPN and the fate of all those who had died from the pains inflicted on them. They stopped when Jim told them to. Interpreting what they had just done, Jim told them that the NPP under him and Zik will assuage their pains and wipe off the tears that had drained their cheeks these past years of NPN misrule. He asked them not to worry because the power to cleanse those eyes rested squarely in their hands. "All that we are asking for is your vote. When we get it we shall use all the apparatus within our disposal to show you that only the NPP can solve the people's problems because it is a party that is people-oriented."

"N. P. P.!" he bellowed three times and the people responded shouting "P O W E R !" three times too. "Now to this man called Onoo -- (referring to C. C. Onoo, his challenger), if a man is to be known by his name, you will better not trust your vote in him because anything trusted in his care would be swallowed." He asked them to reflect on the Igbo literary meaning of Onoo. "Whatever the Federal Government gives through Onoo, will be swallowed by him. Give him contract, Onoo, (he will swallow) give him anything under the sun for the people of this state, he will swallow them without remembering the people. Onoo is a gormandiser. He will swallow you and me. Would you allow that?" he asked rather red-eyed and bellicosity written all over him. "My dear good people of Anambra State, you have been worried because the evil

you know is better than that you do not know."

Hardly had he ended when a group of people comprising mostly of youths and women started to dance round the Polo Field, singing, dancing, and chanting, "we want Jim," as they ran round the field. Almost everybody joined in this song of festivity. Next on the rostrum was Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, performing the traditional rituals. Ogunsanya went straight to announce his mission in Anambra State. According to him, "The NPP was not in Anambra State on a pleasure trip, neither are we here on a war mission," instead he went on: "We are here on a business trip that is bound to reshape the destiny and bearing of this great nation for good." He lamented that the gospel of change that has been spreading across the land wildly has been pervading Anambra State in rather too slow a pace. He asked the crowd if they still know who Zik was and they thunderously responded in the affirmative. "No!" Ogunsanya said rather painfully, "You do not know who Zik is? Perhaps he is no more your son. He is the son of the people of Niger State who have promised to build him a home where he will rest for the rest of his life. No other place in Nigeria should have been more conducive for Zik to live in other than Niger State, but he is our son," a voice responded from the crowd, "Yes he is," said Ogunsanya. "But the type of vicious and malicious attack young boys, young enough to be Zik's great grandchildren unleash on him in Anambra State is painful. Zik will not receive such an attack from non-Igbos who perhaps understand his value more than you all here today. Here was a man, Zik of Africa, who appointed Dr. Michael Okpara as the Minister of Agriculture in the defunct Eastern Region, a man who sent this same Okpara to overseas countries to study their agricultural techniques for implementation in the former Eastern Nigeria. How has the articulate Okpara suddenly turned senile. I'm afraid Okpara's days are numbered on earth. Not all for Zik. When he returned to Nigeria, he established the *West African Pilot* in 1953 and gave it the motto: 'Show the Light and the people will follow.' Thereafter, Zik depending

solely on money accruing from his fantastic agricultural programme founded the University of Nigeria, Nsukka — a towering institution in the educational history of Nigeria today. It was your Zik that founded the African Continental Bank (ACB). A fine gentleman, your Zik was and still is, a boxer. He doesn't hit below the belt. A social organiser who founded many social clubs. This Zik you all are looking at here today single-handedly gave independence to Nigeria. It was he who led the 1945 Constitutional Conference to London after which, majority of Nigerians started having an air of racial equality. Nigerians after the 1945 Conference became emboldened in 1947 to ask for their right to attend and enjoy facilities at the Bristol Hotels, an act that was till then unimaginable. "Zik," Ogunsanya went on, "was an architect of the growing political consciousness that attained the post-World War II of Africa. He boosted returnee soldiers' morales through his vigorous criticisms of the racial discrimination of Nigeria. He made it open to them that the white men who scampered at the sight of German military firepower to the chagrin and discontent of his African soldier counterpart could even at the end of the war lord himself over his Nigerian counterpart who stood his ground and killed many Germans at the war front.

Ogunsanya kept his audience entranced. He kept them literally glued to his preachings. During this period, there was no interruption. Ogunsanya then thundered out a question that you think would have decided the campaign in favour of Zik. "If we allow Zik to rule Nigeria for four years in appreciation of his good works and sacrifice, would that be too great a price and sacrifice?" the people responded negatively.

"Okay!" Ogunsanya exclaimed, "if that is not, what we ask you is to elect Zik on the first ballot. He is your man, my man, their man. Shagari's NPN has failed Nigeria. Shagari has no moral sense of judgement. He should have no face to come here to look for votes. He and his party has confronted the people of Anambra State during the past four years. His, has been a long four years of neglect

to the people of this state. His refusal to transfer the police officer who became a law unto himself was an eloquent testimony to Shagari's covert plan to stunt forever the political growth, peace and stability of your state. Has he any moral reason therefore to come here to ask for your votes?" With this question, the rally was enlivened again.

"N. P. P."

"POWER!"

"N. P. P."

"POWER!"

"N. P. P."

"POWER!!"

"POWER!!!"

"To the People Power!!"

"To the People!"

Now his lieutenants have said all he could have said. Zik stood up. Towering as usual over and above all present, he commanded an absolute respect for his age, position and the mystery that was Zik. The gathering split into fragments. Some surged forth; others fell. Able-bodied men climbed tree tops, while some others made fast money carrying people on their shoulders for a clearer view of Zik. Jim Nwobodo fell down beside Zik, sobbing. He got up again hiding in whatever direction he found himself, not hiding his emotions towards his mentor, Zik. He understands that without Zik, there will be no Jim Nwobodo. Abubakar Rimi kept smiling while Mustapha wore the grim face of an agronomist seemingly purveying the terrains and landscape of the city. Apparently, he was convinced that Enugu city was not an agricultural city. May be an industrial city.

"N. P. P.!" Zik bellowed to the riotous crowd.

"P A A W W A A A H!"

"When I say down NPN, you say down Shagari."

"Down NPN," (Zik commanded.)

"Down Shagari," the obedient followers responded.

"My name is Nnamdi Azikiwe. I have come to Enugu, the capital of Anambra State today to preach and extend the gospel of change which was ignited in Jos some time in

April but which had since travelled to Kano from where it has been spreading. I bring you good tidings. I bring you the message of hope. The message of good aspiration, the message of good political leadership that would have good aspirations, the message of good political leadership that would have a good sense of direction. I bring you the message that has the trappings of agricultural revivalism as its embodiment. A message that will change austerity to prosperity; a message that would reorder the planlessness of the NPN to an ordered and well planned economy; a message that is about the abolition of squandermania and the introduction of the management of a nation's economy with the best possible disposition in frugality without appearing miserly. Above all, ours is a message of love and peace and unity of Nigeria. Nigeria, Ogunsanya has told you is virtually my baby. I am happy many people call me father of the nation. I merit it.

It was Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who gave me the title first in 1963. So I do not presume to wear an undeserved dignity if I go about allowing people to call me the father of the nation. As the father of the nation, would I turn back to kill who I have helped to preserve, nurtured and groomed? Nigeria is my baby. I will not let her die. But Shagari and the NPN want to kill Nigeria. We in the NPP and myself are saying no. Nigeria must survive. We in the NPP and myself are saying Nigeria must not die. But the power to keep Nigeria alive is a power to which all of you here today are its repository. It is this power that we are begging you to give to us so that we can use it to transform your lives for the better. To make food more abundant, to make shelter (not the NPN type) available to whoever needs it; to send your children school where they will receive meaningful education, not the elitist-oriented education policy of the NPN; but, to transform Nigeria's industrial potentiality into something of reality, not the mockery and sham as is the case now. Above all, to have respect for-elders, constituted authority and fundamental human rights. We want Nigeria to survive."

With that last statement, I felt I had seen Zik and heard

him enough, enough to deliver my story with all freshness in whatever perspective. I then focused attention on the people. At first I had done a vox pop whose response was good enough to buttress whatever claims I have to make on Zik. The first person I spoke with was the man whose T-Shirt bore the inscription "Zik - Chineke of Africa." His name on enquiry I found out was Hyacent Eze from Igbo Etititi. He explained that his sheer fanaticism was not a flash in the pan nor was it a coincidence. He had been associated with Zik for the past twenty years. In 1963, he claimed, Zik personally recommended him for recruitment and training in the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna. He claimed that Zik had further recommended his training at Sandhurst. The singular assistance (although as of then did not benefit him much), had further exposed to him the magnanimity of Zik — a man he hardly had known before 1963. "For what he did for me, he could have done to other thousands if not millions of people across the globe," he concluded. On why he now equates Zik's power to that of God, Eze became philosophical. "Have you not heard the saying that man is God to man?" he continued, "he who does not respect the greatness of his superior is bound to fizzle away fast. A man who respects and appreciates greatness is paving the way for his own greatness. Zik is great. He could be God if I deify him; do not blame me my brother."

Another person I interviewed at the Polo Field was a Tiv girl called Rose Terfa. She spoke little of English but was able to put across her message in a crisp straightforward manner that is full of logic and sound reasoning. "Since Solomon Lar took over Plateau State for Zik, people get fire, (meaning electricity) get water, get good food and happy. Shagari no know anything. He kill people for Bakolori. He no no book. He bring suffer for people. He bring austerity. If Zik rule, everything go better." But, I had a man who had been watching the day's events with utter disgust. So I decided to ask his opinion. Of course he grabbed the opportunity to tell me his mind. He did not tell me his name. He revealed without any qualms that he

hated Zik. He would vote for NPN come election day. He had attended the rally just to discover more loopholes on the NPP machinery. On why he hated Zik, he explained that it was because he (Zik) has not done anything for the Igbos. "He is not like Chief Awolowo of the Yorubas. He simply puts the interest of Nigeria first, that is, on the forefront rather than the interest of the Igbos." He went on to say that if Chief Samuel Mbakwe of Imo State was the presidential candidate of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) or if Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu was, he would certainly vote for the NPP. He predicted the loss of the NPP in the coming election. He had no proof either statistically or mathematically to support his argument. He only kept saying that the NPP would lose. He offered me his address to check him up to confirm what he had told me.

Perhaps, it will be pertinent to add here that many eminent Igbo people had seen Zik in the eyes of the young man I interviewed at the Polo Field. One of them, Chinua Achebe, for example, had in his book *The Trouble With Nigeria* published on election eve written copiously and reviewed by *The Guardian* of 25th September, 1983, on Zik. Alluding the attributes of treachery and abandonment, Achebe wrote in these words:

. . . The task before the up-and-coming Yoruba politicians was by far easier than what their Igbo counterparts had to accomplish. Awolowo had been a steadfast Yoruba nationalist from the 1940's to date. He had no record of betrayal, double talks in the pursuit of his goals. But above all he had in recent years as the leading civilian member of the Gowon administration presided over a monumental transfer and consolidation of economic, bureaucratic and professional powers to his home base. . . the NPP politicians had a different kind of problem because of Azikiwe's consistent ambivalence to his ethnic homeland. The eager young politician who needed desperately to latch on to Azikiwe's huge but heavily tarnished prestige had first to re-write large chunks of recent history to explain away Azikiwe's abandonment of the Igbo people in their darkest hour of need. . .

A month earlier, Dr. Stanley Macebuh, the amiable

urbane Igbo journalist from Imo State had in an article titled "Letter To My Cousin III (*The Guardian*, 5th August, 1983) written copiously on Zik. Said he: "..."

... It is fashionable today to be cynical about Nnamdi Azikiwe, to dismiss him as one who all through his career, saw politics as a game of wits than as a vehicle for achieving substantive social change. There is always, as always in these matters, some truth in this. But not all the truth. ...

'The first task of every man of affairs is to survive. It is only by being out there that he may either through his fellow men see the world through his own eyes....

'Nnamdi Azikiwe certainly has survived, and the means he employed were not always blameless... he was always committed to the unity of Nigeria, but he did not always submit himself to the full implication of that principle. He preached fairness and justice and legality, but was not always ready to accept personal risks in the defence of his creed. In every crisis of the First Republic he foresaw the dangers we lavishly courted, but seemed always helpless to forestall them. He could move men by the power of his words and the grandeur of his ideas. But he himself seemed, once the fight of independence was over, quite unable to transform the general enthusiasm into meaningful practical actions. ...

The precincts of the Government House Enugu the following day 12th June, bubbled: negotiations; caucuses; canvassers; and lobbyists, all. Acrobats most of them from northern Nigeria displayed their seemingly unassailable artistry by whichever form. A slim-built man whom we learnt was on the employ of Abubakar Rimi's government house displayed his dexterity atop a motorbike. He had the singular capacity of riding on the bike in any form or style he wished. The stupendous aspect of this is that he could travel tens of kilometres doing whatever pleased him while atop the motorbike. Whenever escort riders moved either to signal the entry or departure of a personality he accompanied them with gusto and zeal demonstrating to the admiration and delight of all. Here we were that Sunday morning watching the wonder boy from Kano State. After many bouts of displays, a police outrider who felt humbled by a layman doing what he (the police) was supposed to do and do better, mounted his BMW motor-cycle to imitate the cyclist from Kano. He crashed at the first try.

Elsewhere in a room was gathered the cream of the NPP: Solomon Lar, Shettima Mustapha — Zik's running mate, Philip Effiong, Rimi, Unongo, D. B. Zang, Alex Fom, Degarr Thomas — the Chairman of Benue NPP; there was his organising secretary Joe Omakwu a barrister at law as well as other dignitaries. My duty was considered incomplete without personality interviews. It was in my hunt for an interview that I bumped into this collection of stalwarts. The man who caught my fancy once more was

Effiong. But before I could talk to him, a battery of attacks descended on me.

"Yes, I hope you have enough tapes to record a message for your sit-at-home governor. If you do not have, make available some tapes for a very good and lengthy message. In fact, we all here were discussing Sam Mbakwe before you arrived just in time. Tell Mbakwe that Imo State alone cannot win Nigeria for the NPP. You probably have followed us through all the campaigns so far and from your aggressive looks, you will make a good television journalist. I hope you will equally have the courage to put the message across. Mbakwe has been the worst offender of all the NPP Governors. He has always sat in Owerri at times not even caring to fulfill party obligations both morally and financially. He should be reminded in unmistakable terms that whatever dislocation the party experiences during these nationwide campaigns he should be ready to be held accountable." After Degarr had spoken, Barrister Omakwu, apparently wanting to corroborate Degarr's contentions asked me to take count of the personalities of the NPP that had been with the campaigns. "Zik is here, Ogunsanya, Mustapha, Unongo, Nwobodo, Zang, Fom, Lar, Barde. You see no single person of political importance from Imo State except doctors Okezie and Harryline Ibezim. Does it augur well for our great party for some of us to sit back home and think that a negligible handful of party members can win Nigeria for NPP."

All those who were in the room behaved one way or the other that suggested their approval of Mbakwe's indictment by the speakers. Alhaji Mustapha simply kept quiet, nodding his head at intervals to approve the contentions of the two radical men who had said the minds of the rest. When they had finished, I asked if anybody had any more things to say because I was confident of relaying the news to the appropriate quarters. After the closed-door discussions had been recorded I sought for Emmanuel Okoronkwo's opinion on what had transpired. He advised that we take the tapes away and treat them as

non-issue since his excellency Sam Mbakwe the Governor, whom all the attacks were directed at would not be perturbed nor would his chances in any way be jeopardised by what he termed as jealousy on the part of the men who made the allegations of sit-at-home against Governor Mbakwe. I knew immediately that in spite of Okoronkwo's claim to excellence and experience in photo-journalism he was still to learn the intricacies of news-making events. In my mind, I had decided to ignore him and dispatch the tape to the Government House in Owerri with the least possible delay when I get back.

Later that morning, we moved to the agricultural district of Abakaliki. Abakaliki itself typifies everything a farming community should have. A lot of arable expanse of land rolling down many kilometres dotted here and there with mud, cave-like structures that go for buildings. People, healthy people, robust but timid lined the route. Cheering school children waved the Nigerian flag while the cautious school teachers amazed and bewildered at the maze of human locust that was invading Abakaliki. The town itself, sparsely populated, I learnt has electricity, though not supplied from the national grid. Their electricity was supplied from a power plant installed by Jim Nwobodo's administration. In Abakaliki, there was no visible government presence in form of social infrastructure such as good hospitals or public institutions of higher learning nor agricultural institutions. Abakaliki, an Anambra friend told me, is Anambra State's equivalent of Siberia. People here do not pay tax, not out of their personal volition or conviction, but because of the genuine apathy exhibited by tax collectors. We learnt that previous tax collectors who had visited Abakaliki for that purpose met stiff resistance by the unsolicited machete cuts they received from angry indigenes who saw no justification whatsoever for the government to brazenly want to reap where it did not sow.

Nevertheless, people assembled at the Abakaliki township stadium to hear the NPP message. We learnt that those of them who appeared came to see Zik or Jim Nwobodo the two men they had revered; the two men

who had tried to bring succour and a sense of belonging to a rejected citizenry. Why the rally at Abakaliki lasted such a short period, I do not know. Zik had addressed them quite all right. Nwobodo the same. One would think that the crowd was just satisfied at seeing Zik and Nwobodo — the two people who symbolised the Nigerian political elite who only descended from their Olympian heights once in a blue moon, and especially during election times.

From Abakaliki my mind focused on our next stop, Nsukka, the university town and Zik's place of abode. What would Zik be telling the people of Nsukka; would they be as inquisitive as people who have had the "Zik-drought?" Would their academic culture make them more critical to a politician's gambits? Would someone denounce outright all vote-catching appeals Zik would make to them or would somebody from the crowd call him Aristotle or Plato or Hegel? No one will call him Karl Marx. He had not in the least shown any scruple of Marxist tendency. Not even in the remotest past. He is a capitalist never mind his claim to Fabian socialism. No right thinking academician would say Zik is a socialist. A leverage for him towards Hegel is even a fantastic concession and radical deviation. What would Nsukka people say to Zik? Nsukka town has no peculiar aura, quite unlike other townships of the same age. Not like its fame, a one-route town. An indigene told me that when students of the university are on vacation, the place becomes a ghost town. Its other important residents, other than Zik, are the Vice-Chancellor and his battery of professors whose social lives are confined within the enclave of the university community. Other workers on campus populate the town and give it the only bite a town so often talked about deserved. Nsukka however refused to be beaten in this apparent contest of which town would beat the rest in attendance to Zik's political rallies.

The township stadium, venue for the rally was already agog with a sea of supporters! I had no parameter to gauge the percentage of Nsukka students in attendance. It was mid-June and both the sessional and degree exams were

lurking by the corner. In my reckoning, however; if students had shown any form of political solidarity with the founder of their great institution, the whole place would have been livelier than it appeared.

It was at Nsukka that I saw one of Zik's offsprings at close quarters for the first time in my life. The boy and his mother — Zik's second wife — had sat behind Zik on the podium. The boy, dark-complexioned, slim-built and tall would announce to an inquiring mind that he is a chip off the old block. He looked like Zik in every sense. Why he and his mother had come to grace the occasion is another matter. If Zik's mother was to have been a man, Nsukka would have been Zik's place. Apparently in a bid to display this, Nsukka people — men and women — came in groups and grades to pay homage to Zik. There was a women's group that dominated the dancing and singing contingents. Zik's wife danced with this group. The men also, Nsukka men, who had come with their war dance. They had also come with their symbolic gifts of spears, kolanuts, bows and arrows, tiger skin, and leopard skin, there were gun shots, they performed the traditional twenty-one gun salute to welcome their grandson and hero. Thereafter, their spokesman asked Zik to go and conquer his other political opponents with hope and precision.

At Nsukka, nobody introduced Zik. He introduced himself. He had stood up to address them. He had started in Igbo language, narrating the proverb that makes a man's mother's place his home. He emphasised this point by reminding them how he had built his haven at Onuiyi. He told them of the potential agricultural qualities of their home, Nsukka. He told them how if voted into power, he will better their lives by providing essential basic social amenities such as pipe-borne water, electricity, basic health facilities, provision of educational institutions and building of industries. As he spoke, there was a clear lack of support from the crowd, that is, the type of support that is manifest by cheering and responses. Zik noticed it and hailed them.

"N. P. P." and they responded weakly, "P a w w a a"
"N. N. P." Zik called again, they responded, this time louder and more enthusiastic than before. Before Zik could hail them again a voice pierced the still silence asking Zik to "Ta oyibo nwa nti nti" (Speak in English.) "Unu cholo ka mta oyibo?" Zik inquired. "Yes," they responded. "Okay," Zik continued, "I was making a statement that would benefit the academic community of Nsukka. I mean the issue of university autonomy in Nigeria. It is high time universities in Nigeria like their counterparts in other parts of the world start enjoying some measure of autonomy if not total freedom. Tell me, how can you expect to achieve academic excellence when you interfere with the day-to-day proceedings of a university? How do you attain heights and brilliance when you remotely bring the academic hands of universities back? You appoint a trader as a chancellor of a university. Not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with traders, but you know, my brothers, there are forms of traders. How can you appoint somebody who had not been to the university before into such a sensitive post? The NPP-ruled Nigeria would ensure that all chancellors in Nigerian universities would hold at least a university degree which would enable them to read addresses prepared by their vice-chancellors who are learned. An NPP-ruled Nigeria would make research grants available to deserving scholars. The aim of this would be to enable us utilise abundant local materials for the production of scarce essential materials whose importation had greatly depleted our resources. We would want to make Nigeria self-sufficient in everything we have the least comparative advantage. It is ridiculous that year in year out we run a trade deficit. Imagine Nigeria importing palm oil in 1983, when it was with proceeds from palm oil that we built the University of Nigeria. An NPP-controlled Federal Government would never import palm oil from whichever country. What we need is your vote. For without your vote all our dreams would not be translated into concrete practical reality. We need your support." (There were shouts and shouts.)

At Nsukka, there were those who came to declare openly for the NPP. The man who Nsukka people witnessed his declaration that day was called Chief Augustine Nwankwo. He, according to my source, lost nomination into the State House of Assembly under the NPN. His present declaration was clearly the last gamble of a drowning man. He however did announce at the occasion that he was bringing along with him, more than five hundred thousand of his supporters. With a handful of his supporters, he moved towards the dias where Zik sat, bowed and supplicated.

He was not alone in this type of showmanship. Many Nigerian politicians of the Second Republic were gamblers. They wanted to be where the food had been gathered, prepared, and served on the table. They did not want to be part of those who prepared the meal. It is this same old problem. They have no ideological inclination or conviction. They only jumped into politics to feather their very nests and only their own nests. Whenever this singular objective is not about being attained, they checked out. Which Democrat or Labour or Republican would simply swop allegiance because he lost nomination? He would not. Rather he goes back home, takes stocks politically and spiritually for the next nominations coming up in four years time.

Our campaign tours of Nnewi on 13th June, 1983, were of multidimensional importance. First on our minds, was the knowledge that Nnewi is the home of Emeka Ojukwu, one of the personalities that had conditioned the belief and political behaviour of the people of Anambra State this election time. Second was the knowledge that Nnewi is in Anambra south, this polarisation being the major attribute to the rift already existing in the party. Third is that Nnewi is the home of Chief Edwin Ume-Ezeoke, the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives. And perhaps the fourth reason being the contagious effect Nnewi politics would be having or deriving from Aguata, the home town of Alex Ekwueme, the Vice-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979-1983.

Firstly, Nnewi people are ultra-mundane capitalists. They are good craftsmen and technologists. They are men of wealth, having produced one of Nigeria's foremost millionaires in the person of Sir Odumegwu Ojukwu, the father of Emeka. Nnewi was the base of Biafra's technological wonders.

It thus became manifest that Zik made no mistakes. It was obvious that he was going to contend with so many oppositions. He was going to do a lot of diplomatic manoeuvres to be able to succeed. He is an old horse who knows his bearing. As he had done in most of his trips up north, Zik's itinerary to Nnewi included the paying of homage to traditional rulers. He did pay this homage to two or three traditional rulers before we got to the campaign ground in Nnewi where more than fifty thousand people had gathered to listen to Zik. He had started the campaigns by asking all present to observe a minute's silence. When that was over, he started by explaining who the minute's silence was observed for. He named him as Ogbatuluenyi (elephant killer). Ogbatuluenyi, according to Zik, was the name he fondly called Sir Odumegwu Ojukwu, who he said it was whose wizardry in financial management that the initial capital of £1.3 million used to start the University of Nigeria was realised. He explained that Sir Ojukwu's prudent management of the Eastern Nigerian Marketing Board saw the realisation of the dream that is today UNN. He eulogised the deeds of Sir Odumegwu to the point that all those present marvelled if Emeka Ojukwu had not secretly reconciled with Zik. But Zik was being his old self — a diplomatic tactician. He had circumvented talking of Emeka Ojukwu. He had ranked himself where he obviously belonged. He had told the gathering vaguely that Emeka was to him a kid not as wise or prudent as his (Emeka's) father, Sir Odumegwu.

By this, he had taken his opponents by surprise. Perhaps they had expected to hear barrages of attacks from Zik against Emeka. Instead, what have they heard? Soothing praises for his detractor's father. I think they marvelled. I

must confess that I too was marvelled. I had expected to see an explosive campaign tour than hitherto we had had; for at the moment, the people of Nnewi were still openly basking in the luxury of the clemency Shehu Shagari granted their son. The Nnewi people had followed Ojukwu to the Nkpor junction clash he had with Jim's supporters after which many people had died and many others seriously injured. With all indications, they still supported him and stood by all his adventures or misadventures at the time he had returned and joined the NPN. At least a young man who could not brook any form of moderation nor show any sign of respect for Zik or his entourage stood his ground on our way out of the Nnewi township motor-park, where we had had the campaigns. He had two placards. One boldly inscribed "UP NPN:" "DOWN NPP" and the other "IKEMBA IS OUR MAN." To make his protestations more visible, he added furious shouting; calling Zik names and denouncing the NPP. He was sweating as he jumped up and down almost blocking traffic. When he got to the car which Zik was in, he sought almost to paste the placards on the car but for the intervention of security officials.

When we got to the next campaign ground at Aguata, the melodrama of the impish school boy who almost ran amok formed obliquely the basis of Zik's introductory speech. Said Zik: "Our party is a peace-loving one. We do not believe in violence. We don't believe in intimidation. We are like sportsmen. We accept defeat in good fate and we do not try to hit below the belt. Our opponents are a complete manifestation of disorderliness. They have spearheaded a lot of political conflicts in every state they want to make inroads. Go to Benue State today and ask, they will tell you tales of woes about the NPN. In Lagos State, it is the same as well as in Kano and Kaduna States. We are not like them. That is why we want a peaceful change. We want to change NPN and Shagari in this year of our Lord 1983. So you say after me. "Change NPN!" The crowd repeated after him. "Change Shagari!" Zik roared, "Change Shagari!" they responded. "Yes, we are

talking of Change. A bad government cannot reform itself. It will gather more mistakes along the line. The government of Shagari's NPN is a government without programme. They have nothing in stock for the youths of the country. They have no place for education nor provision for food, employment nor a self-sufficient industrial policy."

The smooth flowing prose and language of Zik, its elegance in planning and rendition was captivating. The people of Aguata could, like my humble self, not resist shouting, "Power! Power!" till they were hoarse. Suddenly a group of young men in their teens and early twenties stormed the rally ground with placards most of them pledging solidarity with a Zik presidency. Some of the placards denounced Ekwueme and his "boy boy" mentality. One of the placards read, "Reign in Hell than serve in Heaven." It was philosophical stoicism rendered at its best and aptness, as far as I was concerned.

The programme had said we would equally campaign at Awka that same day. But by the time we finished at Aguata, it was almost night.

Having campaigned at Nnewi, under normal political circumstance, we would have made only a flag stop at Aguata. Why we stopped at Aguata, I am sure was because of Alex Ekwueme's influence. At least, to neutralise it. At least to destabilise it or at the most to have possible converts no matter the percentage. Having spent a lot of time at Aguata, most of us started thinking that the campaigns at Awka would not hold. I asked Dr. Henryline Ibezim if he thought we would still go to Awka and he confirmed we would. Dr. Ibezim was, however, no more the boisterous radiant young man he had been since we started the campaigns. He looked withdrawn, fagged out and jaded. He however tried to conceal his feelings by managing out smiles that could at best be described as dry. I kept wondering. This Anambra people. Have they finally relegated Henryline? Oh, it would be disastrous. Communication, the most important ingredient in any human endeavour was being sacrificed on the altar of

clannish belief. Nonsense superficial belief that holds no waters.

We were at Awka at 7 p.m. that day. People were racing towards the campaign ground with us. They had dispersed after a long and tortuous wait in the rain which we learnt fell that day more than it ever had done in Awka township. When they were assembled, Zik addressed them apologising for the lateness of the team. According to him, the reason being that it is not an act of neglect. It was just that a man that had so many children must try to show equal love else some start thinking papa hates them, said Zik, "Look at my team. We are almost weather beaten. We have traversed Nigeria during the past one month disseminating the gospel of change to the people and wherever we went, the reception has been the same. The people of Niger State want the election held today so that the NPP could mount the stage to salvage Nigeria. The slogan in town now is 'Change NPN'. Now when I say 'Change NPN', you say 'Change Shagari.'" He said so and the people responded. Whatever else he said as in other places where reception had been tumultuous was not the people's concern.

Onitsha the only senatorial zonal headquarters not yet visited is the home of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. He could not ignore this fact. Even in world politics, a candidate must first of all have the support of his home base no matter how more Nigerian he poses to be. Onitsha in itself is like Aba. What the former is to Anambra politics is what the latter is for Imo politics. In terms of natural endowment, population, civilisation and industry, Onitsha is a fertile ground for politicians. Whoever wins the heart and votes of the people of Onitsha in any election, had won. When we ignored Onitsha, I knew that something bigger and better was in the offing for Onitsha during the next campaigns. It came then to pass that of all the big towns in Anambra, we did not campaign in Onitsha: When I inquired of the reason behind this, Roy Eze, political correspondent of the *Satellite* told me it was for tactical and strategic reasons. I agreed without questioning.

I felt rather very relieved that the Zik campaign in Anambra State had come and gone. I felt within myself that judging by the attendance and reception we got wherever we went, the campaign had been a success by whatever flint of one's imagination. Something however, worried me as we left for Owerri that Tuesday the 14th of June, 1983. It was the worry of the unresolved problem of Chief Sam Mbakwe's attitude towards the NPP national body. I reflected in my mind how a sympathiser should cry more than the bereaved. I had understood that no matter what political expediency and prudence deservers would expect an NPP practitioner to profess, Igboland and the NPP were like an apple cleft into two. You dare not mention one in absolute isolation of the other. I know that it was this tribal stigma that had given its opponents a chance to label it an Igbo party even at the most ardent rebuttal and legal threat. I knew equally that it must have been this inclination and general interpretation that has influenced the outcry of the party stalwarts that had gathered at the Government House Enugu that day. If I had my way I thought, I would rush to Owerri, sit the Imo State Governor, Sam Mbakwe, down and play the "tape of complaint" for him to be on the guard and if possible, mend fences.

When we got to the newsroom, the whole place was wearing the aura of the "big thing" about to happen. First, on the Director of News and Current Affairs, Mr. Onuzo; in his office, I had, without delay, explained the complaints of the party members. I had handed to him the "tape of complaint" which he promised he would bring down to the temporary studio for preview before arranging how best the governor would get to know the subject matter (issues contained therein, or its contents). Mr. Onuzo did not fail to pay me compliments about the quality of the news materials I had sent down through the courier. He was much more fascinated by the interview we conducted aboard the flight to Enugu. He said it was the most lively interview among the series we dispatched to Owerri. He asked if the campaign team knew they were expected at

Owerri. He wanted to know if Zik had any chances of winning the presidential elections. He equally wanted to know what impact the Ojukwu factor or the Ekwueme factor would make on Zik's and NPP's chances in Anambra State in particular. He wanted also to know if it was true that the NPP would win Niger and Benue States at the first ballot. I explained that there were a lot to discuss only if he would allow me get to where I lived, and see my people as I was rather feeling homesick.

Refreshed and feeling great that all was well at home, I got back to the ITV studios in less than an hour. As I entered the newsroom, Mr. Bonnie Onwumere a very sly, fretful and subtle Supervising Editor, invited me out. He wanted to know from me, how on earth I could have hidden a news material of immense importance and significance as the one I was having from him.

"What news item?" I queried rather perplexed.

"The one you brought from Enugu," was his reply that sounded final.

"But Sir, I am yet to process some of the tapes. When I do, I would be able to retouch some of the news materials to make them still fresh to serve," I replied.

By now he felt, I was deliberately feigning ignorance or that I was out to deceive him.

"Mr. Offoaro, I mean the tape where the NPP officials attacked Mbakwe. And for your information, security officials have been here, searched your table and left with valuable materials. The Director-General (D.G) has instructed that you report to the headquarters immediately to explain how you thought it necessary to hide such materials from the authority. His Excellency and the party chairman are angry with you. I am telling you all this because I like you. You better start planning your defence," he concluded rather advisedly.

Soon after, the topic became the talk of the newsroom, the entire studio, and within hours had spread to the entire organisation. The story went about that the Director of News, in alliance with me, had planned to divulge sensitive secrets on tape to the NPN in return for big

financial returns. People discussing the topic stopped on my approach. There was hushness everywhere if I stepped in. I took the whole episode calmly having convinced myself that as far as I was concerned I have carried out the duties I was assigned with dedication, honesty and zeal that could only be expected of a trusted party supporter. I had reflected whether there were other things damnable in the tape or if I had inadvertently committed any offence that was likely to embarrass the governor and the entire NPP.

While I was struggling with my emotional and mental problem, and knowing also that it was my credibility that was on trial, I did not know that Chudi Onuzo was in a bigger dilemma. The D. G. with the help of security officials had stormed his (Onuzo) office in his absence ransacking every nook and cranny in search of the so-called tape. Having not succeeded, Onuzo was summoned to the Government House to explain the circumstance surrounding his retention of the tape that I brought from Enugu. Meanwhile, the D. G. had wanted to know from me why I should not have surrendered the said tape to him. Certainly, he must have forgotten so suddenly, that in the TV house hierarchy, my allegiance goes first to my immediate boss, to whom I am certainly answerable. That as a reporter in the News and Current Affairs division I should always report to my immediate boss whose duty it was to report to him (the D. G.). I explained that I would have sent the said tape to the governor but was only obeying laid down procedural patterns. Further, I explained, there was nothing of fantastic importance in the tape. It is only a message some worried NPP officials wanted the governor to be aware of and that I had hoped the content would benefit the governor.

Back to the newsroom, I was greeted with unconcealed cynical comments such as "we now hear you front for the NPN," and "NPN agent." The man who carried out this crusade of innuendo was called Ezinwa Ineh, a prince from somewhere in Etiti. He had a Master's Degree in

Television Journalism from the United States of America. Both of us were serving at the ITV. He often boasted of having an inside knowledge of what happens in the government. This claim he buttressed with the not so important fact that he comes from Etiti, the home town of Governor Mbakwe. Besides, the Imo State Government House then was festooned with anybody who was somebody in Etiti who could be of some help to the governor. Ezinwa was loquacious. He would taunt you openly with threats of reprisal from the Government House should you show any trace of misdemeanour towards the party in power. It needed not be an open antagonism. It could as well be that you had grumbled aloud while carrying out your duties. This grumbling could then be magnified and allowed to have a coloration that would definitely be weighty in the eyes of the powers at the Government House. Sometimes you started thinking if these boys were not planted to supervise the attitude and activities of journalists working for the Imo Television. All the same, not Ezinwa or any other surrogate of the government could boldly claim to be more pro-ITV and by implication the Government House and the NPP than I or Chudi Onuzo. The only difference was that the type of job we performed exposed us to the authorities that be.

I had frequented Chudi's office in anticipation he would return early enough to discuss the present crisis. He did not return until about 3 p.m. When I entered his office, we looked at each other for seconds without knowing what to say to each other. However, when the short silence was broken by me, I simply asked, "Oga what is happening?" To which he replied that it was Obioha. He had asked to know who and who were present at the time we recorded the protestation message of the NPP bigwigs. Further, he imagined why Obioha did not believe him, narrating that in his absence, Obioha had opened his office, ransacked his desk drawers, collected some tapes and gone to the editing room to preview them. He said that it was after none of the tapes taken away would reveal what information he was looking for that he (Obioha) came back to him, this

time asking for the tape from Enugu, that contained malicious threats and allegations against the NPP, Mbakwe and the good people of Imo State. "Yet after I had given the real tape to them," he continued, "and there was nothing very serious or incriminating or damaging, they did not believe that I had given them the real tape." There was nothing I could do at that point other than gape and express surprise at what was happening. Who went to inform the government house? Who else could have had the slightest knowledge of the vituperations of the disgruntled party lords on Mbakwe? I had to conclude that since it was only Emmanuel Okoronkwo, the cameraman, and I who recorded the interview, that were privy to the tape's contents, certainly it was neither I nor Chudi. If it were Emmanuel, what did he want to gain? He is from Etiti, to be precise, from Avutu. He no doubt had the Mbaise-Avutu connection. But he had dismissed the event as a non-issue at Enugu. Was it not myself who had preserved the tape for the NPP and Mbakwe? Who let the cat out of the bag? Who did it?

The office of F. A. N. Ndukwe had two other occupants when I entered. FAN, as he was called was the Special Assistant to Sam Mbakwe on publicity. His office was not elaborate. It contained a JVC radio permanently tuned to the state radio — Imo Broadcasting Service (IBS) — and a settee not big enough to contain more than two visitors. From behind his oak desk, Ndukwe wielded a lot of power, influence and authority.

He was disposed to troublemaking on behalf of the governor. He was related to Governor Mbakwe by marriage. You could not award him the medal of courtesy for he was in every sense rude. He didn't deserve one. He was proud and arrogant and showed it. He was the perfect example of a rabble-rouser. He would feign ignorance of anybody entering his office even after you had extended greeting several times. He was just pompous.

"You invited me, Sir," I began. (After a prolonged silence.)

"Y e e s. You're the ITV corps member covering the

presidential campaign tours," it was more of a statement than a question.

"Yes Sir," I intoned.

"Now tell me what really happened at Enugu, I mean at the Government House?"

"Sir, it is a secret I would not let any other person to share. Can the people here excuse us?" I requested.

"No, no. Never mind their presence. They should fear you, not you them."

"Why, Sir?"

"My friend I say you should tell me what happened at the Government House in Enugu, and stop pretending to be holier than thou!"

"Okay, if you mean to hear, nothing happened at Enugu other than that members of the NPP from the north were angry at what they described as the nonchalant attitude of the governor towards several issues concerning the party. They even insisted I should put their grievances on tape in order to replay it for his Excellency, the Governor of Imo State."

"Yes, yes, go on. What happened thereafter?"

"I returned with the tape, handed it over to my boss for onward transmission to the powers that be since I am a mere reporter."

"If you see the tape, can you recognise it?"

"Yes, Sir"

"By the way, where are you from?"

"Why Sir, Imo State."

"What part?"

"Okigwe."

"Where in Okigwe. I mean what local government area?"

"Oh! I'm from Mbano."

"Mbano, Mbano, Mbano, (as if trying to recollect). What part?"

"I'm from Obiohuru in the Osu Owerre Constituency."

"Who represents you in the House (meaning the State House of Assembly)."

"It is Mr. C. D. C. Akabusi."

"Do you like the NPP as a political party?"

"Yes."

"How have you shown this either by action or deeds or words?"

"You know Sir, that I am a corps member. I'm at least not supposed to show any inclination for any political party. But already my fellow reporters on the presidential campaign team call me NPP."

"Yes, how does that answer the question I have put to you?"

"Sir, if my fellow reporters call me that it means they had baptised me after a close observation of my actions, deeds and words."

"Now back to the tape, if we play the tape for you can you identify the objects?"

"If the objects are familiar, I can identify them, Sir."

"Okay, come over and let's preview this tape" (bringing out a JVC video cassette E.20.)

"Sir, but I did not use any tape like that for my assignment."

"No matter. Just look out if the contents are the interview in question." (Sliding the tape into a chamber in the recorder.)

We reviewed the tape together and behold it was a dubbed version of the interview I had with the party stalwarts. I was sure the item could have been dubbed while Chudi shuttled between his office at Orji and the Government House. I agreed that it was the interview and that there was no difference in content between this tape and the tape I handed over to Chudi.

"Okay, Mr. Offoaro, there is nothing extraordinarily serious about the tape. You know this is election time and all hands are expected to be on deck else our opponents overcome us. I like the way you have been doing your work. What did you read in the university?"

"History, Sir."

"Hm, one would think you are a Mass Communication graduate. Which university did you graduate (from)?"

"Unilag, Sir."

"That's a good university, have you been preparing for

Zik's campaigns kicking off tomorrow in the state?"

"Yes, Sir. One of my colleagues will cover Zik in Imo. It's been arranged in that order to avoid a breakdown. I would instead be in the newsroom to do some write-ups on "The Man Zik, His Person and Politics." I would join his team when they leave Imo for Cross River in three days' time."

"I wish you the best and good bye."

"Thank you, Sir."

That Zik would win unanimously in Imo State was a foregone conclusion. As the Anambra brothers would regale, Imo people constitute the hard-core of Igbo nation. They are the "Onyeigbos" of Igboland. They have been supporting Zik and the Igbo cause more zealously than the Anambra people. Religiously, they had embraced whatever political notion they interpret as aimed at bettering their lot. They had zealously believed in the case for which Biafra existed and collapsed. Not many of them, if any, were caught or executed as saboteurs during the Biafra War. When the Nigerians (Federal troops) pushed inland into the Igbo heartland, it was the Biafran people from the Imo area, that proved, a bastion to genocide and Nigerian vandalism. General Olusegun Obasanjo acknowledged this in his book, *My Command*.

In 1979, the Igbos only needed the NPP to nominate Zik as its presidential candidate before their sympathy for the party began to grow. It needed Zik to be involved in a tax tangle and for Zik to cry out during a press conference at the Hotel Presidential Enugu that he was undergoing the present tribulation because he was an Igboman to prove the point that NPP was their party. Since then, the Imos accepted Zik and the NPP philosophy without questions. The result of the 1979 elections did vindicate the contention of some hindsighted Imo citizens who did not support Zik. Because when Shagari won he rightly dipped his hand in the midst of the Anambras to pick those whom he gave any meaningful political appointment. Consider the reason, for example why Shagari did not pick K. O. Mbadiwe, an experienced, articulate and well-exposed Imo son in

preference to Alex Ekwueme, a green horn (in all aspects of politics) from Anambra. Why did Shagari site most of the industrial projects he earmarked for the Igbos in the Anambra State area? Shagari knew and understood that Mbakwe and the Imo people were more NPP than the rest of the people who claim to be NPP supporters. Yet, the NPN, under Shagari, saw the Anambra people from a better perspective than the Imo people. It was a classic case of political vendetta against a people who stood up for what they believed in. The Imo people have in all their doings, inclinations and aspirations upheld the brotherhood they believed should be solidified and preserved between them and their Anambra brothers. They even believe in an unsubstantiated prophecy that one day, the Almighty God would finally create an empire that would resolve the question of Igbo nationalism. That no matter where he comes from — Bendel, Anambra, Rivers or Cross River — being Igbo meant more than geographical location. He could be the Igbo of West Indies or that in Sierra Leone, one thing is clear, that the ultimate universal goal from Igbo cosmological standpoint, the Igbo nations will one day become one indivisible entity.

I learnt that it was the Igbos of Imo origin that had kept the Biafra propaganda machinery alive during the Nigerian Civil War. During the '83 Campaigns, the Imo people began to relive their not too distant past propaganda experience on the IBS radio. A month before Zik's campaign kicked off, the airwaves became saturated with different competing political slogans and jingles. One of the jingles had been popular. It starts with a thunderous acclamation. Then a female voice piercing through the thunderous ovation proclaiming the catchy slogan that goes thus: "Obodo nile ekpe biele sina Zik ga-chi," (all people have resolved that Zik will rule.) She would pause as if expecting some response. Then she would thunder again mentioning important places or towns. "Niger State ekpe biala - Zeek!" "Gongola State!" But the interesting aspect of this jingle is that played on the television "Zeek... Imo State. . . Zeek. . . Sokoto State. . . Zeek. . . Lagos State. .

Zeek!" It shows Zik campaigning to thousands of supporters who shout Zeek in unison each time the shrill female voice mentioned the name of the state whose indigenes had decided to vote Zik.

Imo state was like other states. Many competing political interests having won the state in 1979 and having fulfilled most of its campaign pledges, it was easier for the NPP to sell its agenda the second time around. The NPP would tirelessly explain to the people what it had achieved, that which it hopes to achieve if voted into power once more, what it intends to achieve, what its opponents would never achieve. Besides, the party machinery also played on the sentiments that the NPN is an Hausa party, a message that was subterraneously passed around. To the Imo man, the Hausas represent every bad thing that happened to them during the Civil War. He saw any vote cast for whomever he saw as an Hausa candidate as a sell out. It was a sell out of the Igboman's innate pride and integrity. Just remind them that the Hausas have been ruling Nigeria since independence and that it is time for the Igbos to rule, only then would they start to pay attention to whatever political message you might have. The Yoruba except by default had no chance of securing any meaningful Igbo vote. That's the reason why any talk of cooperation between the NPP and the UPN would spell doom for the NPP. Voting for Obafemi Awolowo, therefore, was out of the way. The Yorubas were, in this part of Igboland, considered as traitors who led the Igbos into Civil War, then backed out later only to amass wealth and opportunity while the Igbos sat on the sidelines. It will be a long time before an Imo Igbo forgives the Yoruba.

Talking of achievements, the NPP Imo State under Sam Mbakwe had done an elaborate job in terms of publicity explaining in every minute detail what the party had concretely achieved. Simply titled: "150 Reasons Why Imo State Wants the NPP," the pamphlet is a terse chronicle of NPP's achievements in the state. It was a masterpiece of a write-up. Any discerning mind, after reading it would appreciate what the party had achieved and vote the NPP

no matter who the governorship candidate was. Mbakwe is an achiever. Within four years, he had increased the number of primary schools in Imo from fifteen hundred in 1979 to nineteen hundred and forty in 1983. He had built an additional two hundred and fifty secondary schools, bringing the total number to five hundred and each of these schools had been granted the sum of eighty thousand naira to purchase science equipment. He had established the Imo university as a multi-campus higher educational institution. He had equally pressured the Federal Government into establishing the Federal University of Technology at Owerri. During the same period, Alvan Ikoku College of Education had been affiliated to the University of Nigeria and had subsequently been granted the right to produce degree holders in Education. His educational achievement according to the pamphlet, are legion and it had managed to squeeze in the most important which totalled twenty-two concrete viable projects. Industrially, the pamphlet highlighted the bold industrial ventures of the state which at least, aimed on paper, to give each of the twenty-one local government areas in the state at least a viable industrial project. Notable among them were the thirty-three million naira expansion of the Golden Guinea Brewery at Umuahia; the International Glass Industry at Aba; the Resin and Paint Factory at Aboh-Mbaise; the Aluminium Extrusion Industry at Inyishi-Ikeduru; the Imo Concorde Hotel — the cynosure of all the projects, the Poultry industry in Obowo; the Clay Products industry at Okigwe, the Standard Shoe industry at Owerri and Progress Bank. Besides, it was during Mbakwe's regime that extensive industrial layouts were established for Owerri, the state capital. The pamphlet also revealed that Mbakwe established three independent but interrelated electric power stations at Amarku, Izombe and Isiukwuato.

The result is that most of these visible achievements gave the Mbakwe detractors no room for malicious campaigns. Here was a man, an achiever by all standards, who had been nicknamed the weeping governor of Imo State

because of his open concern for the downtrodden. A man who had been instrumental to the building and reconstruction of the badly dilapidated roads that crisscrossed Aba — an open scar — and a remnant of the wounds of the Biafran war. His approach to the Aba road issue singled him out on the minds of the Aba voters. He was their idol. He was a symbol of the end of their years of prolonged suffering and neglect in the midst of plenty. "Mbakwe makes things happen" was his campaign slogan. He really made things happen. They had in recompense shown their appreciation by giving him the desired support. So much was their support for him and his party that when any political party other than the NPP went to Aba to campaign, Aba traders erupted in righteous indignation to chase the alien party away. Mbakwe and the people of Aba were so endeared to each other that they related with him on first name terms. They called him, "De-Sam," (Uncle Sam). And he called them "My good people of Imo State."

Another exciting aspect of Chief Mbakwe's quality was that he was a man given to being sentimental. He knew that the Imo people were emotionally and psychologically attached to whatever there was that could remind them of their collective sufferings in the past. They had a sense of a people perpetually suffering under the weight of humiliation occasioned by their defeat at war and subsequent exclusion from the real scheme of things — political, economic and social trappings of the contemporary Nigerian environment. Mbakwe noticed this in time. He had challenged Shagari, the Federal Government and the rest of the Nigerian people. He had asked them to give the Igbos the recognition they deserved. He was gradually emerging as an Igbo spokesman. No doubt most Igbo people liked his pragmatic approach to politics in general and to their collective cause in particular. The people in appreciation pledged to follow him always. Should he have suddenly decamped and joined the NPN, I think they would have followed him anyway. The NPN did realise this point and made several overtures from

Lagos to lure Mbakwe and by implication the Igbos from Imo State into the NPN, but that would have destroyed whatever identity and credibility the Igboman had had in the social club called Nigeria.

That is not to say that the Igbos of Imo State had no problems. They had theirs in abundance. As in Anambra, there was dichotomy in Imo State. But this was not a dichotomy based on geographical location of any part, though some parts of the state had once been described as Imo's own equivalent of Anambra north. This appellation was frequently used before the advent of the politics of the Second Republic. During the Second Republic, Governor Mbakwe made efforts, I mean real efforts towards thinning down this disparity which in the first place was not very pronounced. Having noticed that nobody of importance would listen to any person who preached evil against Mbakwe based on discriminations, Imo political mischief makers shifted base to such ephemeral things as religion. They began to divide the state along religious lines. Catholicism and Protestantism. They argued that protestants in Imo State had had more than their fair share in the political administration of Imo State. Of course, they backed up their contention with relevant and sometimes unassailable statistics. They argued that no Catholic had ever ruled Imo State even when it was part of the whole called Eastern Nigeria. They cited as examples names such as Azikiwe, Akanu Ibiam, Michael Okpara, Ukpabi Asika, Ndubuisi Kanu, Adenihun, Lawal and now Mbakwe. The implication of this they contended was that the Anglican brothers had deprived the Catholics of their fair share in the distribution of largesse since appointments had tended to favour the protestants. In fairness, they supplied convincing information to prove their case. The tragedy of using religion as a divisive tool for the aim of gaining political recognition meant nothing of real value to the Igbo people of Imo State. Christian majority is all right, but that was the end. Most of them never allowed their religious state of mind to interfere with their political belief.

And so, for whatever reason, Kalu Nsi, the newscaster

on duty who would have read the news on Zik's first day in Imo State failed to show up. I had prepared a news analysis in conjunction with Ogbonnaya Ndukwe. The presentation could have been by me. I got to the studios in time for the assignment only to be confronted with the burden of reading the news and the man who led me into this predicament was Bonny Akabogu, a news editor with the ITV. Perhaps I would not have read the news that night if not for the consideration and high regard I had for my boss; the consequences of a news failure on such a very important night. . . . My regard for Nnamdi Azikiwe and his party who had two days before lambasted the attitude of Sam Mbakwe.

Prior to my being hijacked to read the news that night, I had had my mind's eye set on the analysis, I had to make on Nnamdi Azikiwe. I had read and re-read the news analysis I had made on Zik. I got myself acquainted with it as is the norm in broadcast journalism. I bothered not to rehearse the main news since I had no inkling that I would present it.

When the time was almost ten past eight in the evening, and Kalu Nsi did not show up, I had no option than obey Akabogu's supplications that I present the news. Though the presentation was not the best any seasoned broadcaster would admire, it however filled the gap and saved us the embarrassment the failure to do so at all would have caused.

The following morning at the ITV newsroom, my boss Chudi was very crossed with me.

"Who asked you to present the news last night?" he queried.

"Akabogu, Sir," I replied, explaining the circumstances.

"Now the D. G. is not happy with it. He is threatening fire and brimstone. He has even warned me that no amount of projection I give you would make him employ you. You should not have read the news, no matter the pressure. It would have been better if the news failed," he flatly concluded.

I felt terribly bad at this. My flat mate had on my return

from the news presentation the previous night complained that I should never attempt presenting the news again. I had equally explained the circumstance while he subtly maintained that I should in future resist. I must confess that that news presentation gave me no happiness; there was only the reprimand. I was not happy that my job could be faulted on a day, in which, my idol, Zik, was in town. Up till this day, I regret the incident.

Later on, that day, I went to Chudi's office to solicit his forgiveness for my mistake. Displaying the largeness of heart for which he is known, he merely said that it was one of those exuberance that accompany youth. "Anybody could make a mistake, Godson." He narrated how the previous night at Owerri township stadium, Alhaji Shettima Mustapha, Zik's running mate, had been abandoned in the dark to fend for himself. Chudi insisted that that could be one of the reasons why the partymen at Enugu lambasted Mbakwe. How could a presidential running mate all the way from Borno have been left to fend for himself in a city he is not familiar with. Chudi explained that but for himself (Chudi), the previous night, Alhaji Shettima Mustapha could not have found his way back to the Government Guest House. He had no official guide, no car nor any form of protocol officer to attend to his immediate needs. He was just out there lurching in that cold night of 15th June. Chudi then promised that he would see the governor himself, may be after the campaigns in Imo. He would speak to him on personal grounds about his attitude towards other members of the party to make him see reasons (politically) why he should improve his image within the party.

Now, having been overwhelmed by my mistake of the previous night, I went home to put down in a more elaborate and extensive form, notes on the campaigns so far. I had time to rewrite rejoinders to one or two articles in the *National Concord* newspaper and then prepare myself mentally for the campaigns in Cross River State billed to commence in a matter of days.

The Cross River State campaigns proved to be a real

antithesis to all my previous campaign tours. Right from the time we were received by a handful of supporters at the boundary between Cross River and Imo States, I knew Zik had no chance in the state.

Cross River State belongs to the area described as the minorities within the context of Nigerian geopolitical expression. With Rivers and Bendel States they constituted the minorities of southern Nigeria. They often acted in concert except that Bendel State had often tended to act in concert with the people of Western Nigeria. Cross River and Rivers States on the other hand were part of what was Eastern Nigeria. They had attained "liberated" status at the creation of states by the Gowon administration in 1967. Liberated, one may say from the clutches of Igbo "Imperialism" in what was former Eastern Nigeria. They perhaps had not forgotten the role Zik had played in robbing their son, Eyo Ita, of the chance of governing what was Eastern Nigeria.

The story of Eyo Ita's disgraceful humiliation and by implication the humiliation of the Efiks is graphically illustrated by Chinua Achebe in his book *The Trouble With Nigeria*. Under the sub-heading of "Leadership", Achebe had traced the leadership crisis in Nigeria to the dangerous precedence set by Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Wrote Achebe:

Here was a nationalist (Zik) who championed the noble cause of 'One Nigeria' to the extent that he contested and won the first general election to the Western House of Assembly. But when Chief Awolowo 'snatched' the government from him in broad daylight he (Zik) abandoned his principle which dictated that he should stay in the Western House as leader of the opposition and give battle to Chief Awolowo. Instead he (Zik) conceded victory to reactionary ethnic politics, fled to the East where he compounded his betrayal by participating in a major crisis which was unnecessary, selfish and severely damaging in its consequences.

Mr. Eyo Ita, an urbane and detribalised humanist politician who had just assumed office as Leader of Government business in Enugu saw no reason to vacate his post for the fugitive from Ibadan. Neither

did most of his cabinet which in sheer brilliance surpassed by far anything Enugu has seen or is likely to see again in a long time. Using his privately-owned newspapers and political muscle, Azikiwe maligned and forced Eyo Ita and his team out of office and proceeded to pack his own cabinet with primary school teachers, ex-police corporals, sanitary inspectors and similar highly-motivated disciples who were 'unlikely to dispute anything he said. . . .

This animosity, seemed to have gained greater grounds during the Nigerian Civil War days when Biafran soldiers' brutality against the Efiks of Cross River State attained a saddening crescendo, forget that Colonel Philip Effiong, a Cross River man was the cosmetic second-in-command in Biafra. It is not that the Cross River State didn't have their own internal political problems of minority within minorities. The Efiks, the Annangs, and the Ibibios, in the face of a threat of collective socio-political annihilation from Eastern Nigeria or any political party that would so remind them, sought instead, to take refuge under the canopy of the National Party of Nigeria. This became evident in every part of Cross River State. Sadly, their lots did not improve with their romance with the National Party of Nigeria, represented by Clement Isong's governorship of their state or Joseph Wayas' presidency of the Federal Upper Legislature — the Senate. In the Cross River State, the roads were pitifully on the last stage of decay. They were gradually being overgrown by weeds that competed the right of way with legitimate commuters. During the four-year reign of Clement Isong, a seasoned financial administrator, no reasonable impact was made by the Federal Government on the lives of the Cross River State people. No new industries; no new ventures; no new roads. No nothing!!

Resolved, however, not to vote the NPP, the nearest alternative would have been the Unity Party of Nigeria, represented by Chief Awolowo. But Nigerians from the West had sharp tongues. They had derided, more often than not, the shortish, smallish nature of the man from Cross River. Every Cross River person is an Ette — a term very derogatory in intent and purpose. Besides, the

average Cross River man had not properly diagnosed the socialism of Obafemi Awolowo. He himself (the Cross River man) was not a socialist, had not enjoyed free social amenities like the people from Western Nigeria, nor does he fully understand the complexities of socialist ideology as propounded by the UPN. He could not understand how a once "colonial power" within Nigeria could be extending friendly arms. How could he effectively supplant one colonial master (the Igbos) for the other anyway. He was very apprehensive and seemed by his eloquent silence to be greatly worried. He had been tagged backwards in everything: education, industry and social development.

Our first stop in Cross River State was at the border town (Ikot Umo Essien) where the traditional twenty-one gun salute was fired for Zik and the NPP. There were traditional dancers and about twenty young men of between the ages of eighteen and twenty who danced round with a well-written placard that identified them as the NPP Youth Wing, the Calabar Polytechnic Chapter. There were no school children on the streets; there were no signs of any big event. We drove through a very narrow footpath to the palace of the paramount ruler of Itu. Pressmen could not, as a result, be present at the reception Zik and a skeletal member of the entourage were given. While we were trapped on the narrow road, apparently disturbed by the cold reception that the NPP received, the secretary of the NPP in Imo State, Dr. Joshua Ogbonnaya approached me to explore the possibility of obtaining one of the raw tapes containing Campaign Rally video footages we brought from the north. His aim, he explained taking me into strict confidence, was to replay the tapes as paid advertisements on the NTA Calabar. When I told him that the tapes were in Owerri, he went into his car, brought out an NPP letter headed paper from his briefcase and scribbled an 'SOS' to the ITV D. G. back in Owerri, asking him to send with dispatch, the unedited tapes the ITV reporters had brought back from the north. "When we play them (Cross River State people) the tapes, they would be forced to change their minds overnight and vote for

Zik," he confided in me. He dispatched the note through one of the ITV drivers that carried the crew that covered Zik's campaigns in Imo State.

Our second stop was at the palace of the traditional ruler of Abak. Here, the Chief in his address, did not mince words when appealing to Zik to use his powers to stop the protracted boundary disputes between the people of Cross River and Imo States. He told Zik to do everything within his reach to solve the problem once and for all. Replying, Zik said that "it was by accident of birth that the peoples found themselves on the other side of the respective boundaries. The people of Annang and the Itu Mbuzo are brothers and sisters. We can never allow a situation that pitch brother against brother to thrive for so long. That is why we are begging that through your effort, the two neighbouring states should be governed and administered by one party. The boundary disputes will end once the NPP controls the centre and even Cross River State in the forthcoming elections." From here, we moved to the campaign ground on Barracks Road, Uyo.

In my thinking, most of those who assembled on the ground of C. K. S. field on Barracks Road Uyo, were there for the sake of satisfying their inquisitive minds. The rest, (a negligible number of them) may have been there also to see their son, Philip Effiong, glorified and eulogised. Zik did not begin the campaign without telling the people who were gathered there of the anguish which the NPN regime had caused them. "Our mission," he began, "is to bring to your knowledge the ever-devastating impact, and the ravaging effects of the NPN-imposed austerity measure. We in the NPP would, once voted into office, change austerity to prosperity. The NPN has broken our system into pieces. Now is the time to correct it."

"Look at a state as richly endowed as the Cross River, an oil producing state, one of the geese that lay the golden egg, lacking in good roads, good houses, basic infrastructures. Your sons are out of jobs; I have not come here to ask you to take up arms and fight anybody. But we in the NPP are a constitutionally minded people. We are

all sportsmen and women, we do not intend to hit below the belt or beat the gun, but we want you to embark on a quiet but effective revolution from this day, so that on the sixth day of August and on subsequent elections you can use your ballot paper to vote NPP into power. Would you do that?" he thundered and the people responded in affirmation. "Yes, I know you will. Your own son, General Effiong is standing with us. He is solidly behind us. With an NPP-controlled centre, your able son would use his powerful and effective negotiating acumen to make sure that an oil-producing state such as the Cross River State does not sit on the sidelines anymore in the scheme of things. He will make sure that Cross River State is adequately compensated for whatever contribution it makes in the growth of the national purse. Perhaps you people do not understand the importance and relevance of the person you have as a son, I mean General Effiong, a man who had sacrificed everything to make Nigeria one." Zik reminded them of the role played by prominent people in the past to unify countries of diverse cultural and ethnic origins. He narrated the example of the United Kingdom under Oliver Cromwell, explaining that the people are so called because four countries — Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland — make up what we call the United Kingdom with the Union Jack as their symbol of unity. He said it was through the efforts of such men as Effiong that the United Kingdom today stands out as a model. Zik explained how he and other nationalists had asked the people of England to grant Nigeria independence otherwise, "We call them a disunited kingdom." Zik reminded the audience of the United States Civil War (1861-1865), the role played by Abraham Lincoln, and the popular speech Lincoln made after he had led the North to victory over the South in the United States Civil War, particularly, his now famous speech.

...with malice towards none and charity for all.

He then lamented that Nigeria does not appreciate her heroes.

"Philip Effiong," continued Zik, "is just another Cromwell or Lincoln. We would restore his rank of a general with all benefits so accruing, should the NPP win the forthcoming elections."

On university admission policy, Zik, unwittingly announced that there would be no quota system. He would have won some votes with that kind of promise in Bendel, Oyo, Imo, Anambra or Ondo States. Not in Cross River, a state Shehu Shagari had already dubbed backwards in everything including education. Any politician who breaks that barrier would surely incur their wrath and anger. Recollecting himself, immediately Zik added a rider: "Those who possess minimum entry admission requirement would automatically be admitted. We would expand the University of Calabar into a multi-campus university so that every qualified candidate would have the choice of entering the university of his choice."

Thereafter, Zik introduced the gubernatorial candidate of the NPP in the Cross River State, little known Chief Effiong Udoh Okon, and his running mate Dr. Jerome Ovatt Okpa and Chief J. D. Esemu, the Party's State Chairman. He equally took Effiong by the left hand to show him off to the crowd. Each of the trio spoke, mostly in Ibibio, to the half-hearted cheering crowd, intermittently supported by cannon shots.

We left the Uyo campaign ground for Oron, an ancient town about a hundred kilometres away. The journey was tortuous and tiring. The road though in fair condition was not the best in modern highway construction. We meandered through narrow bends enveloped by thick bushes on both sides of the road. Listening carefully on this lonely road one could hear owls, bats, squirrels and other animals hooting. Bewildered villagers came out from impoverished huts to catch a glimpse of the campaign trail. There was no cheering or protest nor any sign of welcome. There were no signs of a Zik victory in the air. For example, in Niger State, NPP supporters openly identified themselves, defying the antics of the NPN and in most

cases engaging in open and bloody confrontations resulting in loss of lives and property on both sides. Simply put, the message is that the NPP had made no serious impact on the Cross River State, what more posing as a recognisable threat to the incumbent. The prospect of a mandatory twenty-five per cent vote was very bleak.

By the time we got to Oron, it was about eight o'clock or a little past eight in the evening. At the paramount ruler's palace, Zik explained his mission which was customary. He reminisced their (he and the paramount ruler's) days as freedom fighters fighting for the liberation of Mother Nigeria from the yoke of British imperialism. Both of them agreed, with the chief apparently going down memory lane, trying to recollect those 'good' days.

At Uyo, on our way back from Oron, at about 10:50 p.m. some of our vehicles were running short of fuel. If we filled our tanks, we would get to Calabar safely. If we do not, it means most of the vehicles on the convoy would not make the journey to Calabar. While we refuelled, speculations went around that Sam Mbakwe did not want Zik to sleep in Calabar, not to mention other members of the entourage. Why did he have to do this? The NPP had no reason wasting its scarce resources on a venture that had been doomed to failure from the start. "Cross River State has been lost. This is not our State," quipped a journalist. If Mbakwe or Nwobodo or Shettima Mustapha or Zik thought in that direction, the chief hosts — Esema, Effiong and Okon — thought otherwise. A politician is like a soldier ant. He does not understand the language of retreat except that imposed by defeat. And so the brothers from Cross River State were somewhat angry and showed it. "We must sleep in Calabar," they openly implored. After a long period of consultation and reassurances, and probably after Zik's personal intervention, the team moved towards Calabar where the Metropolitan Hotel had been fully booked in anticipation of the NPP campaign team.

From Calabar, we did not see much of Dr. Henryline Ibezim. On inquiry, we learnt that he had again gone to Lagos to arrange for the aircraft that would fly the

campaign team to Jos, the Plateau State capital, where the next campaign would start on the 20th of June. Rumours, however, had started gaining ground that the young man had lost substantial confidence in the inner happenings in the party, particularly as they affected the publicity control. If he wanted to act like a true Nigerian, he might as well not have bothered himself if he would receive his salary and the additional trappings from such position at the end of every month, or whatever arrangements he made with the party. J. O. J. Okezie was not as visible as Afam (Governor Jim Nwobodo's Chief of Protocol), who had advanced knowledge of the party's next lines of action. He had called out names the previous night and allocated hotel chalets. He had, I think corrected his previous mistakes such as did occur in Makurdi. At Calabar, he was a bit civil, except that he monitored whatever anybody ate at the Metropolitan Hotel and even signed credit notes on behalf of NPP. Afam saw himself next to Azikiwe as far as the NPP 1983 Campaigns were concerned.

The morning of 19th June was memorable. We, the Press Corps, had hurriedly taken our breakfast at Metropolitan Hotel, believing that Zik would leave early for Ogoja. At the Government Lodge, however, nobody knew exactly what the next item on the programme was. Suddenly, a shrill sound went into the air. I saw one of the outriders perching on his motorbike and making some manoeuvres as if something was in the offing. Nobody knew for sure if Zik even slept in the Lodge. If it were before the campaign when I had not gotten used to Zik, I would have believed that he must have slept at Onuiyi in Nsukka to reappear that morning with his enormous mystical powers. Not even Afam would say what was the next item on the programme. In one of the rooms on the ground floor of the story building, politicians discussed boisterously. In that room that morning were Mr. Lord Enyia, Joshua Ogbonnaya, Ray Ofoegbu and a host of others from Anambra and the northern states. They spoke at the top of their voices. Ladies trooped in and out of the house with ease. Comfort Ejioгу, Pisto Killer (Mbakwe's chief thug),

Mr. Simeon Odunka (Mbakwe's Chief of Protocol), kept themselves busy doing nothing in particular; even Patience Mbakwe, the daughter of Sam Mbakwe was there. What could everybody be doing without informing us! Sheer planlessness, in reverse.

By twenty past one in the afternoon, my crew went to town to eat. Driving through the Calabar municipality brought the message clearer. Whether Zik was in town, nobody seemed to bother. Igbo traders looked at our passing vehicle with the ITV crest with coldness and open reservation. The town bustled with activities which were routine. At one o'clock in the afternoon the Cross River Radio had read the news without acknowledging the presence of Zik. We quietly went to one medium-sized hotel to have lunch in preparation for the journey to Ogoja. It was in the hotel that one of us who had gone outside to get acquainted with the environment ran in to announce that the train of entourage had moved. Rushing out, we heard the disappearing rhythm of the siren far, far away. We then jumped into our vehicle and drove as fast as we had never done before.

Going to Ogoja from Calabar turned out to be, apart from the Kontagora-Bida route, the lengthiest journey I had taken. Some kilometres outside Calabar, we had met a stranded crew of journalists from ABC, ATV 50 (five 'O') and the Satellite Newspapers. Happily, two of them, Roy Eze from Satellite Newspapers and Baldwin from ABC radio joined us. As he was boarding, Roy was at the same time complaining of "this type of job that would keep one away from one's home, days on end only to have little or no reward." He was particularly furious with the manner Afam was dominating the organisation, particularly, the welfare of the Press Corps. He vowed he was going straight to the governor, when he gets to Enugu to complain. He could not understand how somebody who knew next to nothing in modern politics could be charged with such a delicate responsibility as chief of protocol and publicity officer. He wondered at what could have happened with Henryline Ibezim, J. O. J. Okezie and other

decent people the NPP had employed to do the job. How could the party be so disorganised, and still charge their opponents of planlessness, austerity, and all the rubbish." Hardly had he finished, when Baldwin interrupted, accusing Roy of double-standards. "But you are the one that almost fought on their behalf at the press centre Enugu the other day. I have always said it, we just have to try our best. Whichever party we find ourselves serving by accident, we do it with the best of our ability. NPP, NPN, PRP, NAP or UPN, they are all a duplicity of associations. They are generations of Nigerians having the same goal, the same aim, the same objective, the same timetable and the same programme on the easiest and safest method of consolidating their gains. I have not seen any radical indication that any of them would embark on programmes that would benefit the common man. What makes me think back at times is that what we are doing with them will only help preserve the Igbo dignity and identity in the politics of Nigeria, else there is no hope at all."

Said Iroh (the assistant cameraman who took over from Emmanuel Okoronkwo), "Oga, I no no which one we go follow." This NPP people sef, be like say dem no get plan for this our country. See how them leave us stranded at Calabar today. If na NPN, all of us for chop-chop till everybody tire. They for even distribute money to all of us when doin de work for them since. All of them just pack themself inside the place to chop. Them just they dish out money to their girlfriends. Even the one them they call Pisto Killer, that foolish man wey run for Umuahia the other day when NPN chief thug meet am. He just sit down for Calabar to chop, de make noise as if na him dey more important pass we television people. If not say to get work day difficult for this time, this kind job no be better for man."

"Oga Godson," he continued, "I even hear say them give you query. Na true? Abi you think say we no hear? The news don spread finish for office yonder. No bi the thing I de tell you always? You work for morning to night, from week to week, month to month when you no even get

better place to sleep. You sef, no be the other day dem disqualify your brother for them party? We even hear say them send their party thugs to go remove the electric poles them put for your place, ha! ha! ha! ha! Them remove the poles because them think say your people go vote for NPP abi?"

Touched by these revealing facts about me, I could not resist chipping in one or two words of encouragement so that those with me would not suspect I was working against their interest though it is not impossible that anyone of them could be working for the NPP as a spy. After all, I could not tell how my interview with the NPP bigwigs at Enugu got to the Government House Owerri.

"Look here Iroh," I started in a very stern mood, "if it is because you want to 'chop, get money,' or sleep comfortably that you have been following the NPP about, then be prepared to stop at Owerri as soon as the Cross River campaigns end. Look, some of us in the ITV would understand that some of the NPP officials could be ungrateful at times, we equally understand that politicians would always be politicians. We are civil servants. I am not a civil servant as such. I am on a national assignment. I want to do my job to the best of my ability so that whatever performance I render would bear testimony. Nobody knows where this job would lead us to. I understand your sympathy for me. I have even been told that I would not be employed on completion of the national service. But does it bother me? But I get a sense of fulfilment by my involvement with the works of the man whom I have admired for long. I do not know if any of you has been to my place Obiohuru in Mbano local government area. A visit to my place would convince you that I am doing what I am doing out of sheer interest and personal conviction. In my place, as you rightly observed, there is no such thing as electricity and I do not think there is any plan whatsoever to extend electricity supply to my village. We do not have pipe-borne water. There is no sign of government presence in that area but should I because of all these abandon a cause I feel should be fought? No. I

must strive till the end. If, however, after all the troubles, all I get is uncomplimentary recommendations and sometimes outright condemnations, then I will leave the rest to posterity."

In Cross River State, the only good motorable road is the express road that goes straight to Ogoja from Calabar. We did not have to contend with bumps or poorly designed highways. The convoy was long and unbroken. But it was quite a distance going to Ogoja from Calabar. If it were in such states where the NPP had reasonable impact, no matter how tedious or long the journey was, the presence of enthusiastic supporters who stood guard to chant the "Change '83" slogan, gave one a feeling of satisfaction. But no area of Cross River State gave us this consolatory cheer. If we passed some market squares in a village, the people merely stood because there was the blaring of siren. Even when we were running short of fuel and had to stop to refuel at a desolate filling station in Ugep, villagers who got wind of our presence merely stood a reasonable distance. We did not generate the curiosity that was a feature of what obtained on previous outings elsewhere.

Entering Ogoja, we met a lively crowd. I learnt most of them were Igbo traders and craftsmen who reside in the town. The crowd shouted themselves hoarse praising Zik and the NPP. Cannons boomed. Poor villagers could as well have fired such weakening, yet noisy cannons to a relative on his coronation day.

As was on the programme, we did not make a flag stop at Ikom. We drove straight to the Metropolitan Hotel Ogoja where a live band played. The vocalist sang praises of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and the NPP, while enthusiastic Igbo people climbed tree tops to get a closer view of what was happening.

Many people spoke to the scanty crowd which Pisto Killer had effectively controlled without recourse to seeking the assistance of the law enforcement agents. The first man who spoke introduced himself as representing northern interest. He began by lambasting Joseph Wayas, Michael Okpara, Ojukwu and Mbadiwe, in that order.

"These men," he explained, "have one thing in common — trouble." They, according to him, were major actors in the events that preceded the Civil War in Nigeria. He saw them as wolves who have come back to disorganise Nigeria. He lamented why Joseph Wayas, an Ogoja son should identify himself with the old brigade. He challenged any of the people around, or any Ogoja man around to stand up and point to one reasonable thing Joseph Wayas had done for the people of Ogoja during his four years as the President of Nigerian Senate.

"My brothers and sisters of Ogoja, the people of the north have resolved to change the NPN government. They have decided that only tested and accredited politicians of Zik's status can bring Nigeria out of its present economic miasma. The NPN people have visited many evils on Nigeria. They have institutionalised planlessness and squandermania. They have brought bribery, nepotism and above all, have hoisted rulership by mediocrities on us all. The NPN rulership is now a national plague we must fight. That is the concept and the full import of Change '83. If we do not Change '83, 1987 might be too long for most of you, I may not be alive then to make any meaningful contribution. It might then be too late."

He had hardly finished when Sam Mbakwe who all the time had been dosing sprang to his feet. He requested the live band in attendance to play him the NPP "National Anthem." When they played, he shuffled his feet in an unlimitable rhythm that did not fail to receive applause. "Zik is the only person in Nigeria today that has the peace, unity, progress and stability of Nigeria at heart. Compare Zik and Shagari. How can anyone compare the two anyway. Zik is a pragmatist, Shagari's every move is coloured with mediocrity. Zik is a humanist; Shagari is 'shugbaist'; Zik believes in equal opportunity; Shagari believes in favouritism. Zik believes in one Nigeria of today and tomorrow; Shagari believes in a Nigeria of now. What! He exclaimed, is in Shagari that can make him rank with Zik? Shagari believes in a senseless quota system that gives credence to unpopulated land mass. But let me warn

all of you. Shagari and the NPN has finalised plans to rig the forthcoming elections. Do not allow the NPN's diabolical plans to come through. When you go to vote that day, go with your food, lantern, mat and extra-clothing so that when you drop your vote, you unroll your mat, sit down and if possible, sleep and wake up. But in the end make sure you're there when the votes will be counted. Make sure that it is only those voted for that would be returned. Anything short of this would be paving the way for the continued entrenchment of mediocrity, planlessness and squandermania." (There was prolonged roaring and gun shooting.)

Zik's speech at Ogoja was not the usual lengthy one. He merely got up, introduced his candidates in the Change '83 crusade in Cross River State and then told the people of Ogoja that "Nigeria is a country that could benefit from its abundant supply of solar energy. As soon as I step into the state house in October, one of the first projects I will embark on is the commissioning of our universities and polytechnics to study the possibility of obtaining energy from the solar system. In doing that, I will personally urge our scientists to go to the dry rolling plains of Ogoja and build their headquarters there." He reminded Ogoja people of the roles they had played in the political development of Nigeria, noting particularly the contributions of Chief M. T. Mbu. "My Nigeria and your Nigeria, you all know, is in a mess. We cannot feed ourselves. We cannot speak with our heads up in the OAU, UNO and other comity of nations. We have turned into a beggarly nation. How has the mighty fallen? We must collectively pool our resources together and save Nigeria. For me, I will never relent, I promise to fight till the last. I will not throw in the towel," he concluded. And with this promise the campaigns for Ogoja and Cross River State came to an end.

We were still waiting for the arrival of the campaign flight either from Jos or Lagos. From Jos because the campaign was scheduled to take off that evening of 20th June 1983. And from Lagos because Henryline Ibezim had

gone there ostensibly to arrange for the flight. Earlier in the day, the campaign team had sneaked out of the Government Lodge Complex to where we did not know and were not told. A hot pursuit had revealed that they were heading towards the Governor's lodge. Five hundred metres away, someone had stopped to warn us that no pressman would be welcomed there. Obeying the command, we retreated to the lodge where the real waiting began. There, speculations went wide that Dr. Clement Isong, the incumbent Governor of Cross River State had been defeated in the NPN primary elections. He was said to have accepted the defeat by Dr. Donald Etiebet, a former senator, in good faith. He was then, we understood willing to decamp to any favourable party. As his declaration would mobilise the state machinery available to an incumbent for the new party, yet it would be politically prudent for him to declare for a party that had significant following in the Cross River State. NPP had no such following. Declaring for the NPP therefore, would have been inexpedient. The secret visit by the NPP, therefore, was doomed to fail from the beginning, we reckoned.

By twelve noon, anxiety took over all proceedings. Why the delay. Why has there been no message from Jos or Lagos? What happened to Dr. Henryline Ibezim, who had gone to make the arrangements. The confusion that followed the anxiety had not been equalled since we began the campaigns. Obviously, the crack in the administrative machinery of the NPP was now very visible. I approached Dr. Okezie for comments but he declined leaving me with a beaming smile that belied the crisis all of us were encountering. Governor Jim Nwobodo ran from one room to the other conferring with his colleagues. Afam was helpless. He neither spoke with anybody nor displayed the annoyance that engulfed him. Overwhelmed, he went to a nearby lawn where he sagged on the base of one of the trees that adorned the compound.

The Cross River Campaigns left a sour taste in my mouth. It was a great antithesis to all the others put together. It was from Cross River that discernible disarray took very strong roots within the NPP. It was from here that once more Dr. Henryline Ibezim disappeared only to declare for the NPN a few weeks later. It was from this stage that a couple of other forces combined to sideline me as a reporter covering the Campaigns for Zik, the ITV and the NPP. Whatever the coincidence, however, I was satisfied. I had had my fill of Zik.

First, as a corps member it was time to go back to the orientation camp. This was in preparation for discharge. Second, a lot of noticeable strains had developed between my boss, Chudi Onuzo and his boss, Ralph Obioha, essentially heightened because of me. That the Youth Corps Secretariat unwittingly intervened to save the simmering imbroglio from noticeable eruption was an act of providence. It saved the fight on that front for another day.

Between mid June when I discontinued the reportage of the campaigns to 6th August, the day of the presidential elections, I watched Zik's last campaigns from the sidelines. But suffice it to say that after Benue, Niger, Sokoto, Angola, Anambra and Imo, the only remaining states, where the NPP could claim to have any strands of forte, were Plateau and Lagos. The former because of incumbency advantage as symbolised by Solomon Lar's governorship, the latter because of a sizeable Igbo population. Whereas the NPP was sure it would win

Plateau for Zik on the first ballot, it skirted the question when it came to Lagos State — the home of Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya the Chairman of the NPP. Nevertheless, political pundits believed that a consolatory twenty-five per cent would suffice for Lagos. Lagos State heartland was one hundred per cent Yoruba, but the metropolis could not boast of that kind of Yoruba numerical superiority. If anything, the stranger elements, particularly the Igbos, constituted a significant percentage of the population of the metropolis. It was to this factor more than the Ogunsanya's that gave the NPP sympathisers any hope of a Zik's strong showing in that part of Western Nigeria.

Deliberately, Zik and the NPP had not taken the campaigns into the Yoruba area because of two interrelated factors. One was certainly, the presence of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Yoruba demagogue whose personality towered above every other person in Yorubaland. Second was the off and on relationship that existed between the NPP and the UPN vis-a-vis their relationship with NAP, Rimi's faction of the PRP and Alhaji Waziri's GNPP. Together, these parties had as mentioned somewhere before in this book, sought to fuse into an alliance — the Progressive Parties Alliance — to fight the octopus, NPN. For the NPP to campaign the Nigerian way into a UPN stronghold therefore would put a strain into the fragile political alliance that was being consummated under the PPA. With this understanding, too, the UPN had restrained itself from campaigning the Nigerian way into the NPP area. Publicly and privately, the two Nigerian elder statesmen were as polite as ever in their comments about each other. At a stage, they even exchanged letters (these letters were leaked to the press) in which each effusively lavished praises to each other and made solemn promises not to antagonise each other anymore. With this kind of rapport and gentleman's agreement, the Nigerian people anticipated last minute wonders that would align two titans against a supposedly political neophyte in the person of Alhaji Shagari. After all, the last time a working

relationship almost crystallised between two southern parties in the form of the United Peoples Grand Alliance (UPGA), the association did carry the day.

Now having seen what both men have described as the rape of Nigeria by the NPN, it was a *fait accompli* that only a working relationship between them could salvage Nigeria. However, in as much as the two men were honest as to the extent Shagari's NPN had raped Nigeria, the two particularly, Awo was latently ambitious. Awo's dream had been to rule Nigeria, and Zik's dream, it appeared, had been to thwart that effort. Awo, had, you know, made it impossible for Zik to preside over the Western House of Assembly. And Zik in return, ever since had tried to pay Awo in his own coin. Their new relationship was therefore watched with caution by skeptics particularly, the NPN, and all those in the UPN and NPP who had grown to develop mutual suspicion based on the old fault-lines of rivalry of titanic dimension between Zik and Awo.

Because the PPA up till late June 1983, had not nominated its flag bearer for the coming elections, and because Zik was the designated chairman, it was logical to believe that Awo would be the dormant alliance's flag bearer. However, as months passed into weeks and weeks into days, before the election and no such arrangement had been brought to the attention of the public, the NPN and its supporters began to sing the dirge of an alliance that suffered stillbirth. In spite of this open derision by the NPN, the PPA and its principal architects kept drumming it loud and clear that a magic wand would be spewed before or soon after the elections. Political pundits began to speculate that because of the intense nature of the campaigns and the seeming popularity of the opposition, that the worst that could happen was a too close to call race that would force a run-off. This run-off could come in different forms. One theory saw it this way: Awolowo and Shagari will run neck-to-neck that neither would attain the mandatory twelve and two-thirds majority of states to win outright. That Shagari would win outright in Sokoto, Gongola, Cross River and Rivers State; that he would get

the mandatory twenty-five per cent vote in maybe Benue and Kaduna and that this will amount to less than the magic number. That Awo would win in Lagos, Bendel, Oyo, Ogun, Kwara and Ondo States. That in addition Awo would garner the mandatory twenty-five per cent in say Gongola and Bornu States — not enough either for the coveted twelve two-thirds. That such a scenario, which would likely give the popular vote to Shagari, but the percentage votes to Awo would warrant a run-off that would return the nation once again to the status quo. Yes, that status quo compelled Zik to describe himself as Nigeria's most beautiful political bride. Should such a scenario occur, nobody, not even ardent followers of Zik and Awo would predict whose side Zik would cast his net. Two times in the past, he had aligned with the North. But, the new romance between Awo and Zik tended to make a repeat scenario impossible. That had been why Awo and his supporters had refrained from calling Zik names.

The other scenario which was watched with a lot of political caution across the country was a possible strong showing by Nnamdi Azikiwe. Recent developments as epitomised by the craze and change fervour that had engulfed the nation, at a point made a Zik presidency almost a foregone conclusion. Zik and the NPP were strong in Imo, Anambra, Benue, Plateau and Niger States. Rimi faction of the PRP had embraced the NPP with the millions of the *talakawas* who rent their garments on a daily basis in anticipation of the Second Coming of Abubakar Rimi as Governor of their most beloved Kano State. Besides, Zik's people hoped that he would attain the mandatory twenty-five per cent from a couple of other states including Gongola, Lagos, Bornu, and even Sokoto States. If these were feasible propositions, why hastily relinquish the throne through an arrangement that may appear to be hastily contrived and gratuitous presentation of the presidential crown to Awo. With this scenario running wildly in most people's mind, it appeared reasonable for any of the contending three people to believe the presidency was his. Asked after a press

conference about the preparedness of the PPA to present a common front that would challenge Shagari, Zik said "Students of military science know that in a battle, you don't disclose your tactics to the enemy." This sound bite of a retort which was quintessentially Zik's, left a flicker of hope that something dramatic was about to happen regarding his party's relationship with Awo's.

Meanwhile, the NPN, enjoying all the trappings to come with incumbency, had gone about conducting its business as though nothing was amiss. If the NPN went about its business on the face value as though nothing was happening or about to happen, it was a facade. The party's octopus machine was at work. As early as 1981, the party had completed all relevant appointments that would guarantee the execution of whatever agenda it had for returning Shagari to power. Police commissioners in all the nineteen states were appointed by Shagari. They wielded such authorities that rivalled those of State Governors. A case in point was Police Commissioner Bishop Eyitiene, the man from Bendel State who never gave Jim Nwobodo a breathing space. He was an appointee with a motive. There were also, appointments (into the federal judiciary) of justices who could be amenable to the dictates of Shehu Shagari. But the biggest of all the octopuses was the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) headed by a retired High Court Judge known as Justice Victor Ovie-Whiskey. The role FEDECO would play in the forthcoming election became the most despicable in electoral organisation. Worse even was the fact that Shagari appointed General Managers and Chairmen of Boards of all the nineteen Federal Radio Corporations (FRCN) and all General Managers of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) throughout the land.

All these federal parastatals had their headquarters in Lagos. They depended on federal subvention for their individual and collective existence. They took orders directly from Lagos but sometimes over-zealously executed those orders. More often than not, they crossed the lines of decency. Not to say that the atrocities committed by these

federal agents went unnoticed in Lagos by the Shagari and the NPN. No, they rather looked the other way, while these Gestapos committed heinous crimes that would throw any sense of civility and decency to the dogs. Here, Shagari was very smart. Whenever he wanted to perpetuate any unholy act, he normally used southerners in places of authority. This always gave him an easy escape route whenever these over-zealous agents committed offences against their usually southern brethren that Shagari had remotely authorised. For example, the head of the Nigerian police during Shagari's reign was one Sunday Adewusi, a Yoruba man who was reported to have used all machinery of police operation to perpetrate acts unimaginably contrived ever before. He was reported to have used the police to suppress NPN opponents, detain journalists and disobey judicial injunctions. By this design, disgruntled Yorubas always had a running battle with Inspector General Sunday Adewusi, instead of with Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

The FEDECO too was another instrument of Shagari whose chairman was from Bendel State. Mr. Victor Ovie-Whiskey took the flaks for Shagari's indiscretions. For example, prior to the election, all of the nineteen State-electoral Commissioners who were supposed to be disinterested umpires in the coming elections were NPN sympathisers (those carefully hand-picked by Shagari and imposed on the FEDECO Chairman by Shehu Shagari).

Another arm of government that was stinking and ubiquitous was the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO). Headed by Mr. Umaru Shinkafi, a Sokoto prince, the octopus security outfit carried out its clandestine operation with the meticulousness and diligence of a brain surgeon. Its activities, some time ran parallel to those of the police. It had the power to arrest and detain without trial; break into or infiltrate any organisation or body with ease and sometimes deported hapless Nigerians that may have views not in congruence with those of the ruling party.

Now, with the security, electoral commission, federally-controlled press and the judiciary completely under the

control of Shagari and the NPN, the party went about campaigning when and where it deemed fit, assured of the fact that come election day all its grand design of retaining power would come to fruition. So much was the party optimistic of victory that, Dr. Kinsley Mbadiwe, one of Nigeria's most flamboyant politicians, predicted a political earthquake. And so, while Awo, Zik and the other less known party leaders concentrated on substance, the NPN did the exact opposite! Instead the distribution of largesse assumed an unparalleled crescendo. Operation earthquake was about to begin.

Worse still for Nigeria was the saintly image Shagari built on the international scene. Egged on by foreign journalists who saw him as urbane and harmless, the Nigerian democratic tragedy occurred even under the nose of tested foreign political correspondents. Writing in the *London Observer*, John de St. Jorre wrote *inter alia*:

Much of his success can be attributed to his ability to project himself above his party — indeed almost above politics — which are far less popular than he is. His tolerance, modesty and personal integrity have also helped and he has managed, as no other Nigerian leader has, to reach across, the still formidable barriers of tribe, language and religion....

The day 6th August, 1983, will forever, remain inglorious in the annals of Nigerian history. That day, Nigeria's experiment with participatory democracy was scuttled to death at infancy. And it may be long, indeed, very long before the nation recovers. For years, the rehearsals for the infliction of this unprecedented monumental tragedy had been set in motion. Ironically, the body which presided over the liquidation of this nascent political experiment was the same body — the FEDECO — appointed and paid by the Nigerian people to midwife the birth of modern governmental tradition.

First was the order in which the elections were scheduled. The 1979 Elections were organised in ascending order, thus, the House of Representatives, the Senate, Governorship and then the Presidency. For whatever reason the Electoral Commission had scheduled the 1983 Elections in inverted pyramid order. That is, the Presidential Elections, followed by the Gubernatorial Elections, then the Senate and House of Representatives' Elections.

Political pundits had analysed and interpreted this unique and strange arrangement and came to the conclusion that the ruling party had so designed it to precipitate a bandwagon impact that would secure for it, not only the presidential seat, but a working majority in both Houses. The control of a sizeable number of state Governor's lodges were also thought to have figured prominently in the estimation of the NPN. During Shagari's first term which produced governors with

varying degrees of political philosophy, allegiance and party affiliations, control had been minimal or non-existent. The effect, according to NPN insiders, had been that the President's efforts to fulfill his campaign pledges had met stonewalls in all the states not governed by the NPN. That argument, however, was lousy because at the end of 1983, NPN-controlled states turned out to be some of the most backward in all facets of political and economic development as typified by Niger and Cross River States. Besides, the concept of a presidential system allowed for divergence of views in order to integrate a formidable competition and healthy rivalry. But, the deliberate misinterpretation of the workings of the presidential system or the outright lack of understanding of the simplest components of its intricate mechanism prodded the NPN to believe it had to effectively control recalcitrant states and their chief executives in order to deliver on its agenda and promises. This, therefore, became the genesis of the NPN's grand design (which was executed shoddily by the FEDECO) to wrest political control in as many states as possible. If Shagari wins on the first ballot, therefore, the quake will so reverberate from Port Harcourt to Sokoto and Lagos to Bornu, that all subsequent elections will follow the Shagari/NPN victory trend. In essence, this would have turned Nigeria into virtually a one-party state. But as Wole Soyinka once observed, even a dictator sometimes tolerates farcical opposition.

The other parties had complained to no avail about this type of arrangement. Their last solace, it seemed, was to hope that the worst does not happen; that the FEDECO would remain the impartial umpire, which it had pledged and that if the signs seen on the streets, at homes and felt in people's pocket books were any measure of Shagari's popularity, that the most that would happen was for the president to get a narrow victory and thereby warrant a run-off election. This silent strategy was what the NPP and UPN had secretly wished would come to pass, when they kept to themselves, the grand arrangement that would

enable the PPA to win in 1983.

The second concern was logistics. In a country without a functional power supply, workable telephones and all other instruments of modern day communications, the tools for organising modern elections were essentially, primitive. The FEDECO said it imported thousands of lanterns from Korea to substitute for electricity; it said it had enough couriers as substitutes for telex, fax and telephones; it provided shacks as polling booths and ill-trained personnel — elementary school teachers, school children, motorpark touts, scoundrels, loafers and thugs as returning officers. Worse, was FEDECO's culpable negligence of elementary electoral rule — that of making voters' register a public information. Rather FEDECO, on the eve of the elections announced that it had completed the final voters' register and that it would cost political parties 1.6 million naira each to obtain a copy of the so-called final revised voters' list. With all the parties not ready or unable to come up with this type of money, the revised voters' list had become an exclusive preserve of the FEDECO and a few members of the ruling class with privilege. Thus far, FEDECO had wittingly prepared the stage for the execution of the modern age's worst electoral fraud.

Frustrated about the lack of authenticity in the reports from the Nigerian media about the results of the presidential elections conducted almost twenty-four hours before, I turned to foreign broadcast stations. First was the Voice of America which reporting on the Nigerian elections only mentioned that it would be days before the actual results would be known. It, however, reported low voter turnout occasioned by lack of interest and general voter-apathy. Next was the British Broadcasting Corporation which reported on the same line of thought. While scanning through various stations, I stopped at Radio Cameroun Yaounde at the slightest mention of Nigeria. And it was from this station that I first noticed where, to my greatest disbelief, the wind of victory was blowing. According to the radio which claimed it was

reporting from a very reliable source, incumbent president, Shehu Shagari, was leading its closest rivals by as many as seven states. The report went ahead to mention states in which Shagari had either won outright or had acquired the mandatory twenty-five per cent. According to the report, President Shagari had won in such states as Kano, Bendel, Ondo, Cross River, Lagos, Anambra and Sokoto. At first I treated the report with ignominy. "Shagari can never win in Anambra and Ondo states," retorted Chidi Emelgu, my flat-mate who listened to the Yaounde Radio broadcast. However, my rudest shock of the evening came through a visit to the NPP Secretariat in Owerri, where through a walkie-talkie message, a faint voice from the NPP office in Minna relayed a message that the FEDECO was about to declare Shagari the winner of the race in Niger State. It was from then I conjectured that Nigeria was about to witness its worst electoral disaster. For, if I were to put a bet, with my life, on Zik's success in Niger, I would have done so without hesitation.

A day after this day-dream-like revelation, FEDECO confirmed everybody's fear. Shagari had won a landslide capturing about ten states and winning the required percentage points in as many as fourteen states. Among the states Shagari won for the NPN were Ondo, Anambra, Bendel, Oyo as well as Kaduna. One interesting relationship among this streak of wonderful electoral triumphs was that these states had incumbent governors that belonged to either the UPN or the NPN. Second was the unseen hands of NPN personalities who happened to come from these states. And a third was the issue of geography.

First geography, in 1979, Shagari's claim to geographical balance in his victory had shaky roots in the NPN's success in Cross River and Rivers States. Even then, skeptics who noted the origins of the two states inclination to the North and vis-a-vis the NPN were quick to stress that Shagari's victory was narrow. By capturing Anambra, Oyo and Ondo in 1983, the NPN was out to debunk critics who scoffed at its claim to possessing a national spread.

Second was the issue of personality. Alex Ekwueme, the Anambra-born Vice-President, had time without number emphasised the need to deliver Anambra to the NPN. How he would do it, he never explained to the gullible electorate. But his lieutenants and surrogates had always talked about operations earthquake and caterpillar. They had boasted in both public and private discussions about the grand design to deliver Anambra and thereby reintegrate the Igbos into the mainstream of Nigeria's politics. Their dreams had been realised in whatever form. From Anambra, there were other NPN personalities of worth who had openly boasted that they would deliver Anambra to the NPN. Amongst them were Professor Odenigwe, Shagari's Special Adviser and Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Ikemba Nnewi whose presidential pardon, six months before the elections and whose subsequent declaration for the NPN added a new dimension to the political equation. But intelligent Nigerians were not fooled. Although, the bandwagon effect which the NPN, with the collusion of the FEDECO had hoped to achieve were initially realised, this master design at electoral malpractice soon began to hit the living rooms of discerning Nigerians through the news media.

Soon riots of immeasurable proportions broke out simultaneously from different parts of the country, all protesting the brazen act of daylight electoral robbery by the NPN. First was Ondo State whose indigenes erupted into excusable indignation when a week after Shagari had defeated Chief Obafemi Awolowo in their state, a UPN turncoat known as Chief Akin Omoboriowo dethroned incumbent Chief Michael Ajasin (as Ondo State's Chief Executive) in what pundit's described as the most unlikely electoral upsets in modern Nigerian history. The result of the violence left more than a hundred people dead and many villagers dislocated. There was property damage and the banishment of Chief Omoboriowo whose home was burnt down by irate mob. Shagari's bandwagon also spread to Oyo and Bendel where incumbent governors lost their seats. There were riots in Niger State, Sokoto, Kano as

well as Kaduna — all states where people did not have to grasp with all necessary details of election results to comprehend that massive electoral fraud had taken place. And there were pieces of evidence to buttress this view.

Take Niger State as an example, a state where voter turnout, in some local government areas, was many times more than the number of registered voters. Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, the NPP Chairman debunking the 1983 electoral result as released by the FEDECO pointed out that not only were people denied of the opportunity to cast their ballots by NPN-orchestrated design, the NPN-controlled FEDECO released results that baffled even disinterested observers. A case in point was the detailed results from Suleja, Magama and Mariga local government areas. In Suleja for example, the number of registered voters were 29,290, but the total votes cast were 48,198 — a difference of 18,908. In Magama, a LGA with NPP sympathy, the number of registered voters was 123,775, but the actual vote cast was just 10,578 and in Mariga, another NPP stronghold, the number of registered voters were 126,008, but the actual votes cast were 12,791.

Chief Ogunsanya had reports of deliberate attempts made by the FEDECO to defranchise registered voters sympathetic to the NPP at different polling stations. These acts, according to him were realised under the watchful eyes of FEDECO officials who stood by while NPP supporters were chased away at polling booths in Mariga and Magama local government areas respectively. Chief Ogunsanya also mentioned cases of illegal polling booths constructed in Niger State as well as the refusal of presiding officers (sympathetic to the NPN) to stamp the EC 8A forms — the official forms designated by FEDECO for the collation of election results. He also explained how NPP agents were chased away and how NPN agents had deliberately inflated results as they wished in the presence of the CID, the NSO and the police. Professor Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian Nobel Laureate expatiating this design to the world press in London concluded that the NPN: "Wherever all other measures failed, the secretaries

to the state electoral commissions simply announced the wrong figures or else, the Federal Commission in Lagos announced the forgeries claiming that those figures were passed on by the State offices. . . ."

The announcement of NPN routing of all the other four political parties put together achieved the anticipated NPN grand design. It literally threw the cooperating parties in the PPA alliance into disarray. Now, the possibility of a run-off was off. What happened was that individual candidates were scrambling for their individual survival. The NPN-controlled FEDECO had awarded the elections to the NPN, thereby rendering meaningless any idea of cooperation amongst the cooperating parties.

Having been outmanoeuvred in all departments of the game the other parties resorted to urging their supporters to boycott the remaining elections or to mount passive resistance to the NPN's victory galore. While Chief Awolowo and the UPN-controlled area reacted in form of legal agitation, riots and massive boycott, the Right Honourable Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe chose to address his grievances through an open letter to the people of Nigeria. It reads thus:

"I am seventy-eight years, nine months, one week today, and I thought that I should write and congratulate certain politicians on their inglorious and futile attempts to destroy the soi-disant, 'Zik Myth.'

In spite of the *New Nigerian*, the NTA, the FRCN, et cetera, whose propensity for calumniating my reputation blatantly, has become pathological and incessant, and whose penchant for sycophancy in order to entrench unpopular governments, is now an open secret, my head is bloody but unbowed.

They should take note of the handwriting on the wall of History that so long as there breathe Nigerian citizens of conscience and integrity, who are neither godless nor inhuman, so long would stratagems to impose unpopular political leaders on the silent majority of Nigerians fail woefully, because the latter is becoming enlightened, articulate and resentful of calculated acts of injustice

against the body politic.

Irrespective of the wicked manoeuvres of ambitious political wolves in sheep's clothing, I will continue to do good and speak fearlessly, as God gives me the spiritual strength, the wisdom and the foresight to do so. After all, no condition is permanent in this planet.

Despite the blizzards of inspired onslaughts on my person by evilly-disposed politicians or mercenary hirelings or literary hacks, I shall continue to remain calm, cool, collected and unruffled. Of course, occasionally, I shall be compelled to return fire for fire in the best traditions of the profession (not the occupation) of journalism.

So far as I know, I have never wronged most of these ravenous politicians and I have never gone out of my way to speak ill of them. Nevertheless, they have become so evil-minded that they cannot resist the temptation to hit me below the belt, all because of their desire to gratify their political expectations.

When the forces of evil and the veil of darkness enveloped the people of Nigeria my friends, the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, and the late President W. V. S. Tubman of Liberia, joined forces with me in the humane and ultimately successful mission to consummate a just and honourable peace as to preserve the corporate existence of Nigeria.

By the grace of God, I will yet disclose this aspect of our political history. Then will the present falsifications of our national scenario be unfolded without the trimmings of war propaganda.

It is an irony of fate that these politicians have become intoxicated with the lust for power that they are now in league with unpatriotic Lucifers in human form to destabilise Nigeria as a democracy based on popular sovereignty which is conventionally determined by a free and fair election.

They should recall that when the League of Nations prevaricated in deciding WHAT and WHO is right, during the naked invasion of the territorial integrity of Abyssinia

(now Ethiopia), Emperor Haile Selassie had the mettle to caution the League of Nations in these prophetic words: 'God and history will remember your judgment.'

Then came the World War II and its repressions. May I ask them, in all humility: Was Italy able to retain its grab? Where is Benito Mussolini today?

Let me come back to Nigeria. The Federal Electoral Commission, an appointee of the President of Nigeria, has announced the name of the person who shall be the President of Nigeria as from 1st October, 1983.

This announcement was made in spite of some outrageous violations of Nigerian Constitutional and Statute Laws. Despite the deliberate flouting of legal edicts, these ambitious politicians are rejoicing that the party of their choice has won a glorious victory.

Glorious? I would humbly describe it as an inglorious victory. History as my witness will yet demonstrate that it is a Pyrrhic victory and it will ultimately vindicate the just.

As a Christian, I have faith that, according to the Proverbs (11:21): 'The wicked will not go unpunished.'

Any fair-minded observer will agree with me that the Presidential Election held on Saturday, 6th August, 1983, was a debacle, judged by the universally accepted norms of the democratic process.

As I told a section of the Press, the result of the Presidential Election is an eloquent testimony that democracy is on trial in Nigeria, if after twenty-two years, ten months of our independence as a sovereign state, we cannot conduct a hitch-free election to make us one exception to the autocratic governments, which have infested Africa since Harold Macmillan's wind of political change swept across this 'Dark' Continent.

'That, as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I will discharge my duties to the best of my ability, faithfully and in accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Law, and always in the interest of the sovereignty, integrity, solidarity, well being and prosperity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;

That I will strive to preserve the Fundamental

Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy contained in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; (although this is not justiciable - my comment);

That I will not allow my personal interest to influence my official conduct or my official decisions;

That I will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;

That in all circumstances, I will do right to all manner of people, according to law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will;

That I will devote myself to the service and well-being of the people of Nigeria.

So help me God. '

With humility and a sense of responsibility as his predecessor in office, I request Alhaji Shehu Shagari to profit from the lesson of history and not allow his heart to be hardened like Pharaoh Ramses who did not budge in his decision to flout all the laws of decency and impose a dictatorship upon the people of Israel, only to have his formidable army perish in the Red Sea and rewrite the history of the Middle East with the blood of the oppressed and downtrodden *hoi polloi*.

If Alhaji Shehu Shagari and his cohorts have any qualms of conscience, it should have dawned upon them the last Presidential Election was unfairly manoeuvred to enable an unpopular but powerful political party exercise power, at the expense of the silent majority of the electorate of Nigeria.

I am not saying that they are responsible. I do not know those who are responsible; but the following incidents indicate that the elections were not free and fair; in which case, as a devout Moslem, he should search his heart and those of his party standpatters, and pray to Allah to give them the moral courage to do WHAT is right by setting the machinery in motion for rectifying this rape of Nigerian democracy.

Let me cite twelve instances of alleged flagrant violations of the Rule of Law in Nigeria:

Elections did not start in many polling stations throughout Nigeria at 7 a.m.; but they were stopped at 6 p.m. in many places, and thereby disenfranchised thousands of prospective voters, contrary to section 44 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

The symbol engraved on the ballot paper as that of Nigerian People's Party was not clearly set out. This is contrary to section 41, 82 and 83 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Some counting and polling agents were denied their legal rights to join in collating the results of elections in their sphere of operation, contrary to sections 42, 64 and 65 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Many voters were intimidated in some polling stations by known or unknown persons, said to be sympathisers of certain political parties, contrary to section 59 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Some voters were alleged to have carried in their persons more than one ballot paper and voted for the candidate of their choice with or without the privity of the electoral officer in charge of the polling stations, contrary to section 101 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Ballot boxes, ballot papers, voting registers, indelible ink, et cetera, were not available at some polling stations by 7 a.m. on the date of the Presidential Election, contrary to sections 40, 41 and 45 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Figures of results were alleged to have been falsified because those signed by the party agents and counter-signed by the presiding electoral officers were at variance with those endorsed by the Chief Electoral Officer at such stations and forwarded to the FEDECO Headquarters in Lagos, contrary to section 70 of the Electoral Act, 1982.

Controversial results were supposed to be shown to the Police and the NSO for confirmation or otherwise were ignored and in some cases the Chief Electoral Officer unilaterally acted in his deliberate judgment.

There were alleged instances of candidates who had certificates of validity as nominees for election endorsed by the FEDECO; but they were disqualified to stand for

election by the Chief Electoral Officer of their states. Sokoto is one example. If this allegation is true, and I have in my possession certain relevant documents, then it is a contravention of section 32 of the Electoral Act.

Elections did not take place in some designated polling stations on the date of the Presidential Election due to inefficiency or unforeseen circumstances. They had to be held on another date. This may not be contrary to law, but it is an indication that the FEDECO toyed with the destiny of the nation by stultifying the legitimate rights of the electorate, contrary to the spirit and letter of the Nigerian Constitution, 1979.

The Police furtively tried to prevent the publication of election results jointly signed by agents and counter-signed by the presiding electoral officer contrary to section 36 of the Nigerian Constitution 1979. This would have given fraudulent officers a free hand to falsify election result, in spite of the good faith of the Police in trying to avoid the mischievous misleading of citizens. Thank God! A fearless judicature came to the rescue of democracy.

Some of these allegations may be true whilst some might have been exaggerated or mutilated. Some of the alleged violations may be faulty. But the fact is that all of these conspired to make a mockery of a free and fair election in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

As one patriot who struggled alongside other compatriots to make Nigeria free, I see my country on the brink of dictatorship because of the arrogance of power exhibited by the party in power throughout. Not only have the print and electronic media been manipulated and subverted for political ends, but the incumbent President, who sought for renomination, left me under the impression that he was like a hardened Pharaoh who could not withstand the pressure of his party stalwarts and let the voters of Nigeria exercise their fundamental rights to decide the government of their choice.

In the Douay version of the Holy Bible, as used by the Catholic Church, it is written in Proverbs (11 and 12 *inter alia*):

The virtue of the upright saves them, but the faithless are caught in their own intrigue. . . . The just man escapes trouble and the wicked man falls into it in his stand. . . . A kindly man benefits himself, but a merciless man harms himself.

Virtue directs towards life, but he who pursues evil does so to his death. . . . The desire of the just ends only in good, the expectation of the wicked is wrath. . . . He who seeks the good commands favour, but he who pursues evil will have evil befall him. . . .

If the just man is punished on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner: No man is built up by wickedness, but the root of the just will never be disturbed. . . .

The plans of the just are legitimate; the designs of the wicked are deceitful. . . . The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the just stands firm.

As a student of Islamic religion and culture, I know that those who commit evil to aggrandise themselves and their kind shall, in the final analysis, pay for their shortsightedness. I shall quote from the Holy Koran two pertinent sections.

First, in Sura 38 (20 - 33), it is written (Rodwell's translation): Hath the story of the two pleaders reached thee, O Mohammed, when they mounted the walls of his closet?

When they entered in upon David, and he was frightened at them they said, 'Be not afraid; we are two opposing parties: one of us hath wronged the other. Judge therefore with truth between us, and be not unjust, but guide us to the right way. Now this my brother had ninety and nine ewes, and I had but a single ewe; and he said, make me her keeper. And he over-persuaded me in the dispute.'

He said, 'Certainly he hath wronged thee in asking for thine ewe to add to his own ewes: and truly many associates do one another wrong - except those who believe and do the things that are right; and few indeed are they!'. . . .

We have not created the heaven and the earth and What is between them for nought. . . . Shall we treat those who believe and do the things that are right like those who propagate evil on earth? Shall we treat the

God-fearing like the impious?

And in Sura 58:21-24, it is written:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

...

Can they not look up to the clouds, how they are created; and to the heaven how it is upraised; and to the mountains how they are rooted; and to the earth how it is outspread?

Warn thou then; for thou art a warner only: thou has no authority over them; but whoever shall turn back and disbelieve, God shall punish him with the greater punishment.

Verily to us shall they return; then shall it be our's to reckon with them.

Since in their blind hatred of the NPP and their mad ambition to support those who cling to power, irrespective of the unpopular will, they are determined

- to destroy the "Zik Myth,"
to destabilise the NPP states (as, indeed, the present elections have almost succeeded in doing),
- to baffle voters who constitute the electorate of Nigeria;
- to bamboozle the people of Nigeria by manipulating the instruments of coercion for the security of the machinery of the ballot,
- to try to justify a one-party state in Nigeria wittingly or unwittingly; and
- these bigots profess belief in an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God.

I am supremely convinced that Almighty God will frustrate their knavery and ultimately expose their machinations and consign them to the . . . heap of forgotten tyrants.

History will continue to vindicate the just and God shall punish the wicked.

In the timely thoughts of the American poet, James Russell Lowell:

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil sides; some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight, parts the

goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right, and the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Careless seems the great Avenger, history's pages but record One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word: Truth forever on a scaffold, wrong for ever-on the throne — yet that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown;

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes - they were souls that stood alone while the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone; stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam inclined to the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine, by one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design. . . .

For Humanity sweeps onward: Where today the martyr stands, on the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his hands: Far in front the cross stands ready the crackling fagots burn, while the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return to glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden urn. . . .

They have rights who dare maintain them; we are traitors to our sires, smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's newlit altar fires; shall we make their creed our jailer? Shall we in our haste to allay from the tombs of the old prophets stoat the funeral lamps away to light up the martyr-fagots round the prophets of today?

Now occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth; they must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth; lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! We ourselves must Pilgrims be, launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea, nor attempt the future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

Finally, may I now recount the disputations of those who are using the print and electronic media to make mockery of old age. Here, I kneel and pray to Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe — my Maker, who knows why I was created and what is my destiny, to demonstrate to infidels and miscreants that they will not live to be old.

And I trust that they will die unwept and unsung, like a flower that is plucked in its bloom, as an example of the vanity of human wishes and the futility of insulting old age.

Veritably, it is unAfrican and inhuman to make mockery of old age, because Africans and all human beings pray to God to prolong their life span. Nevertheless, those Nigerian politicians who indulge in this abomination shall not live to be old.

Unlike the hope of Prophet Joel (2:28), those beasts of creation shall not prophesy and see visions; but the old men and women shall dream dreams which shall come to pass and redeem their children from generation to generation yet unborn.

Edward Fitzgerald, the Poet, wrote in *Omar Khayydydym* (i.52):

The Hogging Finger writes; and having writ, moves
on; nor all thy piety nor wit

Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,

Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it.

So let it be, my God, my Creator, and the Governor of
the Universe.

Amen. Amin. Ise. Ashe.

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Zik: The 1983 Campaigns is an ardent admirer's account of the political stewardship of the acclaimed elder statesman: the Great Zik of Africa.

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