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Medium Size

**W**E make here, only an attempt to put the problems of the Nigeria Railways in perspective. The 92 years of this institution of public transportation have been a history of dwindling fortunes and systematic rot in a situation where, elsewhere in the world, the story is of giant leaps in modernity.

Senior Writer Abdul Oroh, recently undertook a journey from Lagos to Kafanchan, that took four whole days of smear and discomfort. His account mirrors a great deal of the every day experience of persons, who as it were, are forced to use the antiquated system to haul goods and wares over long distances.

Very many years ago, travelling by rail was said to be a great pleasure and a lasting experience of the panoramic view of the countryside. There was the magic of rail shuttle in an era when there were only very few motorable roads and, of course, not much of air transportation. Understandably, the subsequent expansion in air and road facilities should historically have had the impact of reducing dependence on rail.

However, this reduced pressure has appeared to manifest in almost total official neglect, to the extent that the Nigerian Railway Corporation as it exists today hasn't grown much more than suited colonial needs. The tracks that laid the foundation for political amalgamation in 1914, have remained unchanged. An obsolete network is compounded by a gross lack of equipment. For example, out of 189 locomotives in operation today, not



less than 87 have reportedly exceeded their designed life-span of 25 years.

At a time when there is so much talk of mass transit, it is unfortunate that the NRC operates at only 20 per cent of its capacity. And there doesn't seem to be any prospect of a major improvement in the near future.

Indeed, the signals point enough to a progressive degeneration which this Cover Choice anchored by Debo Adesina, highlights in the hope that something can be done to salvage the situation.

*Cindy Adesina*  
1988  
Editor-in-Chief

## Society

President Ibrahim Babangida's administration has rural development as one of its key policies for general development of the country. But it is the First Lady Maryam Babangida, more than any single individual, who has pursued with unrestrained vigour the drive for rural integration. Last week's Better Life For Rural Women's fair in Lagos under her general supervision attests to her unchallengeable role as chief mobilizer of Nigeria's women-folk.

But there are still unanswered questions.

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## International

With its 101 membership forming about two-thirds of the UN General Assembly, the Non-Aligned Movement is being daunted by several problems. Aware of these issues and set to challenge them, the movement, having considered several factors, has elected Yugoslavia to lead it for the next three years.

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## Nigeria

The statutory duty of the Nigeria Police is, among others, to maintain law and order; ensure that every citizen is protected from coming to harm and assist in the recovery of stolen goods. Not so in Warri where the citizens now loathe the police like a leper.



## Sharks at war

One very important difference you failed to mention between Abiola and Yar'Adua was the source of their enormous wealth.

While Abiola got his money through sheer hardwork, in case of Yar'Adua it was a situation of 'getting rich in the dark'. The Rtd. General has never for once made public how he made his millions in just nine years after leaving office, except that he was the nation's number two citizen under Obasanjo's regime and was born into the so-called ruling class.

Mohammed Kumo Abubakar,  
Lagos.

## Freedom squares again!

If Tai Solarin is serious about speaking for Nigeria's hot polloi, he should mount his "freedom square" now (August 29). This is the time we need his voice. To wait till 1992 and harass an innocent civilian administration which has committed no "sin" is to prejudice that government.

Solarin should realize that the problems of the incoming government are being hatched right now: Debt rescheduling, lack of democratic temper, making soldiers feel they are more patriotic than other Nigerians, etc.

If Solarin lacks the courage to face this regime, he should please relax or else he will be unwittingly re-inviting the military even before they march to their barracks abode.

Egbo Timimi,  
Ajojinlo, Lagos.

## Holding on the trump card:

Why all the hue and cry about cabinet reshuffle. If the President wishes or does not intend to change his ministers, does that benefit any of us? Is it not from among the same ruling class that he picks his men?

Hasn't Duto Onabule hinted that the education minister will remain till 1992?

Abiba Adams,  
Oyo, Oyo State

Address Letters to the Editor, typewritten double space, with writer's name, address and, if available telephone number, to: *The African Guardian*, Rutam House, P.M.B. 1217, Oshodi, Lagos Nigeria. Letters subject to editing.



## Airbus saga

It is now clear that plans for the recovery of the two Airbus aircraft of the Nigeria Airways seized four months ago in Bordeaux, France by SOGERMA, a subsidiary of the Airbus Industry, will just have to be speeded up.

Last week, a court in Bordeaux where the airline had gone to challenge the confiscation of the two aircraft by SOGERMA awarded judgement against the Nigeria Airways. The national carrier was given three months to pay up the N188 million owed the Airbus subsidiary, and in the event of a default, one of the seized aircraft is to be sold to recover the debt. During court hearings, SOGERMA's lawyers tendered two reports in the July editions of *The African Guardian* and the *Nigerian Economist* as evidence of the inability of the Nigeria Airways to pay up the debts.

On the other hand, the lawyer for the Nigeria Airways, Nadia de Baville, also tendered a report in July by Michael Smith, the industrial editor of the London *Guardian* of absolute mismanagement and lack of financial accounts in the Airbus industry to show possible vindictiveness and unnecessary harassment of the Airways by SOGERMA.

The Federal Government, which has been informed of last week's court decision is still continuing with diplomatic means to recover the seized aircraft. The French Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Jacques Thibau has made several trips to France on behalf of the Nigerian government to secure the release of at least one of the aircraft. Sources say that the proposal to SOGERMA is for the aircraft to be released while the debt is paid in instalments.



● Nigeria Airways Airbus: Grounded on grounds of indebtedness

## A bash for Ali

DETHRONED Cruiserweight champion, Bash Ali has made news again, but this time not in the boxing ring. Last week, Bash Ali spent a couple of days reporting "behind the counter" at the Bar Beach Police Station. The former champion had been accused by the management of the Eko Holiday Inn of wilful damage of the hotel's flower pots while he was being ejected from his room. His ejection, according to sources close to



● Bash Ali: In a fix

the hotel was because the ex-champion accumulated N5,000 in unpaid bills. Bash Ali, is said to have claimed on the other hand that about \$10,000 was stolen from his hotel room and as such he did not consider himself indebted to the hotel. But Eko Holiday Inn management is not taking responsibility for the alleged loss of the pugilist's \$10,000, as there is a general warning on safety of valuables at the hotel's foyer which states that guests cannot hold the hotel liable for loss of valuables not kept in the hotel's safe.

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## Waiting for the 'newbreed'

**W**HEN the transitional programme from military rule to the Second Republic began in 1976, there were high hopes that a new breed of politicians would emerge to ensure the success of the experiment in republican democracy that was about to be launched. The hopes were quite justified. Many of those who subsequently went into politics were probably in their teens when the First Republic collapsed, a casualty of corruption, intolerance, ballot rigging and inept governance.

But the wages of such venalities surely could not have been lost on them. Those who were full-grown adults in the First Republic, or had participated in the seedy politics of the era could reasonably be expected to have learnt the appropriate lessons even more thoroughly. None of them seemed irredeemably tainted. All seemed prepared to begin anew, with a determination to make the system work. And when young men and women who seemed driven by ideals of patriotic service became governors, ministers, commissioners, special advisers, board chairmen, etc. it seemed that a new era had indeed begun — the era of the "new-breed".

It is true that the elections which inaugurated the Second Republic were tainted with irregularities reminiscent of an earlier era. It is also true that horse-trading rather than principled bargaining was the basis for a political appointment. Withal, some of the discredited politicians of earlier times were never far from centre stage. Still, on the whole, the "newbreed" were very much in evidence, in the legislative as well as the executive branch. And yet, the experiment in republican democracy came to grief barely four years after it began, a casualty of the very factors that had brought down the First Republic. Nothing seemed to have been learned, nothing forgotten.

In drawing up his administration's own political programme, President Ibrahim Babangida set out to ensure that the past does not repeat itself. He would not rush the transition, as he once accused the Obasanjo adminis-

tration of doing. Nor would it be a matter of complete indifference to him whether he was succeeded by a crook or a cretin. Determined to create a stable democracy that would not offer the least temptation to soldiers to seize power again, he would ensure that the mantle of leadership was passed on to the right people.

How? By banning all the wrong people and all their associates from seeking or holding elected office in the next political dispensation. The path thus cleared, a new breed of political actors would emerge, take charge and lead the nation to democratic bliss. The nucleus of this new breed is supposed to have emerged already in the elections to the local councils and the Con-

*"Ours is not yet the kind of environment in which new men and women will emerge and thrive. For even if today's political aspirants are innocent of the past, they are neither blind nor deaf to the sights and sounds of the moment."*

stituent Assembly, providing effective leadership and dependable services at the grassroots level and debating the draft constitution.

But two full years before they take partial charge of the governance of the nation, they have already given President Babangida cause to doubt whether his faith in them is fully justified. In his address to mark the third anniversary of his assuming power, he charged that the "new breed", had not been "fully in charge of the opportunity created for them to love and serve Nigeria," and that they had converted themselves into "surrogates" of the discredited politicians. He warned that if they did not mend their ways, they too risked being banned like their mentors.

The surprising thing in all this is that the President was surprised that a great many of the "newbreed" were under the thumbs of banned former politicians. It is notorious that, for the most part, they would not have been

elected into the local councils or the Constituent Assembly without the sponsorship of the banned politicians. The chairman of one of the nation's largest municipal councils was the hand-picked candidate of a former civilian governor, now banned. Everywhere the former governor goes these days, the chairman is always on his entourage, as evidence that the influence of his mentor has not waned.

In many instances, election to the Constituent Assembly, for which the local councils constituted electoral colleges, was a matter of cash. The highest bidder won. Candidates who could not muster the appropriate naira power lost, regardless of their newness or their breeding. In Abuja, as in Lagos where the Constituent Assembly sat between 1977 and 1978, alliances are being formed, pacts are being made and offices and posts are being traded even as the draft constitution is being debated.

So, what went wrong? Nothing, really. Little has changed. There may be different actors on the scene, but they are waltzing to an old, familiar tune. "Public service" remains the surest path to private wealth and comfort. Patronage is alive and thriving. Yesterday's wreckers not only kept their loot, they are to be seen occupying places of honour at public ceremonies. The "newbreed", surely must want their own piece of the action now or very soon, not in the year 2000.

But it does not follow that the search for the new breed is misguided, and that the Third Republic is doomed. It is possible, at least in the long run, to cultivate a new breed of politicians, without going back to Plato's *Republic*. What is required in the short run is the development of a new political culture, with new values that are not just preached but lived daily by those who have taken it upon themselves or are mandated to lead.

Ours is not yet the kind of environment in which new men and women will emerge and thrive. For even if today's political aspirants are innocent of the past, they are neither blind nor deaf to the sights and sounds of the moment.

BOOK

# Managing the rear

Maryam provides guidelines on military matrimony

Title: *The Home Front*  
 Author: Maryam Babangida  
 Publisher: Foundation Publications, Ibadan.  
 Reviewer: Godwin Agbroko.

WITH the publication of her first book, layers of the official reticence of Nigeria's First Lady, Maryam Babangida are gradually peeling off, to reveal, no matter how tiny the fraction, the inner recesses of her mind on social issues. Not that she has not been visible to the public. On the contrary, since her husband, General Ibrahim Babangida became Nigeria's president in 1985, Maryam has cut a radically different image from previous first ladies, whose roles on the few occasions when they ventured out of their stately cocoons, were never far from ceremonial.

Not so for Maryam, who had had to champion numerous causes close to her heart with a messianic zeal using the appropriate state structures. In one breath, she is into campaigns against drug abuse; in another, she is engaged in charity work for orphans and handicapped children; and still more importantly, she has taken on full-blast, the daunting task of a "Better Life For Rural Women" whose fair was held September 14—18.

Always in public focus, Mrs. Babangida has, however, rarely discussed these weighty social issues that seem to be a passion with her; the very few occasions when she did, it was with the foreign media and only recently with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). That may change somewhat. With the publication of *The Home Front*, which hopefully will be launched this week, Mrs. Babangida has committed to print, her thoughts on one of the most ubiquitous, if not the most vital, institution in society: marriage.

Although her comments on this social institution are primarily concerned with the military, her more encompassing world-view is that "a solid, comfortable, and nourishing home front is a *sine qua non* for a qualitative regeneration of mankind." That position, she sustains in the epilogue with the argument that "it cannot be doubted that the woman, as wife and mother, is the fulcrum that works that springboard and the foundation on which rests the entire



• Maryam: Now contribution to military literature

substructure on which the superstructure of mankind is built."

Stripped of its moral underpinnings, that profound statement should worry marxists who would rather hold that it is the economic substructure that determines the quality and type of all other social superstructures, including the institution of marriage, that would be inevitably erected on the economic foundation. Even so, taking Maryam's position as given, her obsession with mobilising and motivating women, especially

the rural ones who though are in the majority, are severely neglected, becomes understandable.

Still, Maryam's immediate concern is not so much with the marriage institution *per se* as with the more specific role of the wife as a kind of institutional requirement for the successful career of an army officer. While admitting that marriages in the military, as elsewhere, are far from perfect, to her, "they seem more vital to the military institution than any other sector of the society, in spite of the popular joke that if the army wanted an officer to have a wife, he would have been 'issued' one along with his boots, socks, vests and underpants."

Her thesis on this score is straightforward: "Since the officer is always on 24-hour duty, seven days a week, to defend his country, there is the need to have a wife who is responsible, efficient and effective at the home front to oversee the activities there." Equally so, "a good rear management" is imperative because "soldiers work so hard that they need the comfort and warmth of a real home, not just a house, to which they retire when they have the rare opportunity of being idle, even if for an hour only." It is presumably within this set-up that the wife fits into the army structure; one of a symbiosis where "utility and pleasure have a place in conjugal love."

Against the background, of the role of the wife in the career of an army officer, and by extension the effectiveness of the army, *Home Front*, so aptly titled, seeks to debunk the confounding but strong impression that the life of an army officer's wife is one of glamour, prestige and plenty: the world... at her feet, hers to command with just a snap of her fingers... by attempting "primarily to paint the true portrait."

How well the author paints this portrait of the life of an army officer's wife in "candid tones" is highly debatable. The evidence she calls forth, the experiences of officers' wives, is at best sketchy on the subject, even though they did come, as the author promised, "as a pleasant revelation to many who are uninitiated in the ways of the military." Still, these experiences as relayed by the wives — all of them anonymous — are most poignant in times of wars and of coups (see box). Less traumatic but equally disorienting to the wives, both emotionally and professionally, are the frequent postings of army officers, their long absences from home and the hazards the husbands are exposed to

during bush exercises, all in the line of duty. Even so, the wives of other professionals — such as the policeman, the oil-rig operator, customs officer, the miner, and a host of others — face these traumas to a lesser or even greater degree.

What *Home Front* possesses in full measure, however, is its unqualified celebration of matrimony. Although, the author says it is not intended as a guide book, *Home Front* is a kind of compendium on the duties, and privileges, the dos and don'ts of an army officer's wife which "young officers' wives and prospective ones would find ... invariably very useful," as the First Lady correctly points out.

These tutorials, if they could be re-



• Maryam: Responsible officers must have responsible homes

## Even roses have thorns

**T**HERE is glamour, no doubt, in being the wife of a dashing army officer. But if by any stretch of the imagination, the life of an officer can be compared to that of the sweet-scented rose, then the wife definitely shares in the thorns, at least, once in a while. *Home Front*, Maryam Babangida's new book has chronicled some of the rare moments of anguish as recalled by the wives themselves. Excerpts on war memories:

### First wife:

She had been married barely two months in the midst of the Nigeria civil war when the husband was called up for the war-front. Already pregnant, she had to see her husband off to the railway station, the first step of his journey to the war zone. Said she: "At the station, after bidding ourselves goodbye, he turned and walked into the train, leaving me on the platform weeping my eyes out. It began raining very heavily but I stood in the rain waving at the train. Minutes after the train left I could not bring myself to leave the station."

### Second wife:

She thought her husband was pulling her legs when he told her he was going to the war. Yes, she knew she was married to an officer who was a soldier first before anything else; but she did not believe he could go to the war front "just like that." She even laughed when her husband mentioned it again. But she was surprised when her husband packed his bags later and told her he was going to report to his commanding officer on the first leg of his journey to the war front. I begged and pleaded with him not to leave me but he just stared at me without uttering a word.

### Third wife:

We were newly married when he went to war. I was very young and knew nothing about the implications of war. I knew he was going to fight but I expected that he would be back home very soon. But days went by and became weeks. I neither heard from him nor did he come back home to me. After some months, he got a pass and came home, but things were not the same. I had become a changed person and so had he. He only stayed a few days and left.

I was in the sitting room with a cousin of mine when my

garded as such, would be invaluable to this category of wives, given the military's own premium on marriages, if their husbands are to have a successful and unblemished career. Indeed, the author points this out in graphic detail: when an officer is about to cross that rubicon — from the rank of major to that of lieutenant colonel (he's expected to command a battalion of 1,000 soldiers at this rank) — many things are put into consideration, including his background and general performance.

"Before an officer is given such an enormous responsibility, his family background must be considered among other things. It is difficult, indeed, almost impossible, for an unmarried officer to be vested with the responsibility

husband returned finally. When I saw him walk into the house, I did not recognise him and I asked my cousin to go and ask him what he was looking for. My mother, who was watching everything then said to me, "is that not your husband?"

### Excerpts on coup jitters

#### First wife

We got married on December 4, 1965. The first coup came on January 15, 1966. On January 17, the tatoon which is an alarm to get the army ready for any eventuality was blown. All the lights in the barracks were immediately switched off. Mothers dragged their children from one corner of the barracks to the other. Children were screaming and wives watching and soldiers taking position on tree and rooftops. Some women dragged their children over barbed wire. There was blood all over. I thought the world was coming to an end.

#### Second wife:

On February 13, 1976, my husband had gone to office, and all of a sudden, the telephone rang, so I decided to take a bath and the phone kept ringing, so I decided to pick it up. When I picked it, a voice on the other end said "get out of there now or never!" I was naked and I ran downstairs forgetting that I was naked and I realised this. I ran back to my room, threw on a dress and on getting downstairs discovered that the whole barracks had been surrounded by soldiers. My children, who were in their quarters to a private house. My husband was in the mess and the military men who surrounded the quarters were ordered by the coup plotters to take over the house. It is an experience I'm unlikely to ever forget.

#### Third wife:

An officer who was implicated in an abortive coup d'etat was a frequent visitor to her home well before the coup. During the planning stages of the coup, he was using my car will and in retrospect he was using my car will for the planning the abortive coup. You can imagine the shock when the news of the coup was announced and I realised that he was one of the plotters. When security forces came to arrest my husband, I thought it was the end of my association with the officer.

ity for the career of 1,000 soldiers. But if he were married, the fact that he has been able to manage his home up to that point in time is an indication that managing other people's lives would not be a big problem to him." If so, it would have been a near miracle, for example, for Yakubu Gowon to have passed through the eye of the marital needle to become not only a colonel but a head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces before he married in 1969 in the midst of a civil war!

Even for a married officer, the wife, as the First Lady reveals, could be a voice to the husband if she does not live up to the expectations of the military. The hallmark, however, is in the Performance Evaluation Report in which the commanding officer may comment adversely on an officer who is good on the job but unable to control his family adequately. Such a report "is likely to tarnish the good image which the officer has nurtured and projected all through his career... (and) could militate against his progress when there is a vacancy for which officers are being considered."

True to its nature, the army with its rigid hierarchical structure of command, would have a hand, no matter how minor, in this institution it considers vital to the promotion of efficiency of its men. Consequently, the new commissioned officer (whose average age is between 22 and 25 years) is disallowed marriage because he is required to attend several courses away from his unit location that would have lasting impact on his career. However, upon being promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, which normally takes four years, he is "considered mature enough to think of marriage." And in fact, he is expected to do that three years into his new rank. But before he attains this conjugal bliss, the young officer must seek permission from his commanding officer, who could withhold his consent that "the timing is not right or that the partner is not acceptable to him if she is a foreigner."

Life as an officer's wife, as *Home Front* has shown, is not all duty and responsibility. If nothing, there are interesting and equally revealing vignettes about life in the army. There's, for example, the implicit training in the officers to have high regard for women. A sampler: "When an officer and his wife walk into a gathering of officers, say a mess, everyone is expected to rise as a mark of courtesy for the woman, the officer's rank, notwithstanding." As

the First Lady confesses, "Officers' wives do feel quite elevated by this gracious acknowledgement to the extent that quite a good number of officers' wives have consequently invested for themselves the military rank a step ahead of their husbands." A brigadier's wife would imagine herself a major-general!

On a more serious note, however, *Home Front* raises a host of seminal issues, some of them with serious import for the nation. This is to be expected, given the nature of the work which is a novel contribution to Nigerian military literature. Perhaps, the obvious question that arises inescapably



A Nigerian: A good wife is an asset to an officer.

is how much destruction the frequent coups (what the late Ali Buhari called coup-gemony) have wrought on the *esprit de corps* of officers, without which they cannot go to war as a united body. As Mrs. Babangida agonises: "The dramatic changes they (coups) engender often multiply into concentric ripples of new relationships between wives. Overnight, friends become enemies and enemies friends, depending on which side of the line the husbands are caught." She regrets "this knocking of the system because it tends to breed ill-feelings and strain relationships that can destroy both the army and the system." Is it not possible that that destruction has taken place already?

As one officer's wife wistfully regrets, the camaraderie of yesteryear among officers' wives is fast fading. With each successive coup, the promotion pattern of the military is displaced

Course mates rise several ranks above one another depending on who played what role in the coup. *Home Front* mirrors this dilemma well: "Since most officers' wives find themselves deeply involved in their husbands' activities as regards his career, there is a feeling of being cheated when their husbands' course mates are promoted and they are not." As one of the wives complains: "There is that sudden feeling of resentment especially when you know your husband is hardworking."

Obviously calling for more investigation is how far the long period of participation in politics has affected the soldierly qualities and judgement of some of the officers. A wife recalls how at the beginning of his political appointment, the husband used to be "frustrated about the way things moved at snail speed (in the civil service)." That officer was eventually tempered by the ways of the civil service. While the wife now adulates how that patience has now filtered home to the good of herself and the children, it is quite debatable how such an officer who has acquired some of the mentality of the civil service would fit into a command structure.

Although, not explicitly stated in *Home Front*, there's the distinct impression that the army sees the role of the wife too heavily in the light of the achievement of its object. Although, many wives said they would repeat the experience of being married to an officer, the emphatic complaint of one of the wives is instructive: "If I am to marry, I am not going to marry him. I wouldn't want to marry a soldier again because he (her husband) has not been loving at all. He is not romantic to me and he beats me. The husband treats you like a househelp." She even vowed that

"my daughter will never marry an army officer and my son will not be an army officer. I will make sure of this." She may be speaking from pique. Perhaps.

Aside matrimonial matters, *Home Front*, written in a simple but by no means simplistic narrative style, contains easily accessible materials on the structure and organisation of the military for the layman. Presumably in the spirit of the economic times, and in accordance with the principle of self-reliance, the type-setting, printing and publishing of the book were undertaken in Nigeria. The real strength of *Home Front*, however, lies in the simple fact that all it advocates in marriage within the army is equally applicable to the entire gamut of the larger society. Herein lies the salutary value of the work.



• Nigerian Railways train: *Relic of a past glory*

## A rail behind time

*Nigeria railway system puffs and pants under severe neglect*

**I**N March 1986, the situation was beyond recall for the average Nigerian railman. Salaries had not been paid for two months and the family was caught in the pangs of hunger. Home lost its comfort as the breadwinner could not afford even a loaf.

Having hoped for so long that the tempest would pass, the situation still seemed hopeless, and the hungry man could contain his anger no more. In what was the first and most violent of a series of protests by employees of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) in the last three years, properties of the corporation, the Nigerian Police Force and many others belonging to the public were destroyed.

In October of the same year, the railmen embarked on a six-day industrial action to protest the corporation's failure to pay the accumulated salaries and other allowances owed the workers. Train services were disrupted throughout the country and by the time the strike was called off, the NRC had lost about N2 million.

Things became a little better in 1987

when the Federal Government came to the aid of the corporation and provided it a N60 million grant to ensure prompt payment of salaries. The old order, however, returned early this year. And hardly has there been a month when workers' salaries are paid on time. On



• Kalu: *Retrenchment is to eliminate redundancy*

more than a few occasions, they have had to take to the streets to protest this.

From all indications, the Nigerian railway system is so far off the rail that it seems to have become a bad case only worth giving up. This, no doubt, is a sad development for the nation's first public corporation and trunk from which the Nigerian public service system grew. But what exactly is wrong? What is taking the glory away from service in the Nigerian railway system? "The over-sized workforce with the reduced scale of operation of the corporation is the primary cause of the prevailing crisis over salary payments."

In those words on August 3, Transport Minister, Kalu Idika Kalu summed up the NRC's condition when the workers took to the streets again to protest the non-payment of their July salaries.

Decrying "a situation where 1,250 locomotive drivers are employed to operate 40 locomotives, and up to 9,000 workers are employed to service the locomotives and a depleted number of other rolling stock," Kalu announced that the "President has approved the



• Bataju: Retrenchment a fulfilment of IMF conditionality

phased reduction of the workforce through rationalisation of staff to eliminate redundancies." About 9,000 railmen, he disclosed, would leave the services of the Nigerian Railway Corporation to keep it afloat.

This approach to solving the problem, of course, has been denounced by the railmen, who, through their President-General, Suraju Abiodun Odunuga, and Secretary-General Paschal Bataju, see the Transport Minister's excuse as misleading and aimed at fulfilling a World Bank International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality. More importantly, they contend, precedents have shown that retrenchment is not the solution to NRC's problems. For, between 1984 and now the corporation has laid off its workers in a record four times. Two thousand, one hundred and four were retrenched in 1984, about 400 followed in 1986 and another 1,380 in March last year. Only four months ago, some 1,600 workers were laid off.

"If anything," says Odunuga, "retrenchment will not only worsen the fundamental beacons of the existence of the industry, it would further complicate the already precarious transportation problems in the country, especially since the very experienced and specially trained workers are being thrown out." Spirited as the arguments are over the efficacy or otherwise of retrenchment in solving the crisis over payment of wages, the real problems of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) or what observers call the real problems of Nigeria's transportation system is not entirely lost on either the government or the railmen.

Odunuga calls it the "total neglect of the railways" and Kalu couldn't have

meant anything else when he talked about the "reduced scale of operation" of the Nigerian Railway Corporation. They are talking about the deficiencies in the operations of the railways in Nigeria. Or the decay. Currently, there are less than 40 functioning locomotive engines in the Nigerian railway system. This is a far cry from the minimum of about 148 needed for daily operations. Yet in 1984, about 99 of the engines were good on the tracks. Due to lack of spare parts and maintenance, this depleted to 92 in 1985, 76 in 1986, 40 in July this year and about 36 last month. Indeed, no new locomotives have been bought since 1976.

As a result of this dearth of engines, over 200 wagons and vans are left unutilised in the corporation's premises. And part of these are new wagons and vans brought into the country in February and last month from Romania. Besides the newly imported one, nearly 70 per cent of the wagons and vans in service have exceeded their design life span of 35-40 years. And in NRC's stock is a long line of rickety and rusted vehicles. Fanziz just as badly are the coaches which at best serve as the shade of the destitute often found in them.

Two projects have been laid out for solving the acute shortage of locomotive engines. One is the purchase of new engines and other rolling stock under the 183 million dollars debt settlement agreement with Romania. And the other is the World Bank-funded rehabilitation project of about 100 American-built locomotives. Even then, these are not expected to yield immediate results when they are vigorously pursued.

Of equal magnitude is the problem of worn-out tracks, bad gradients and lack of standard gauge on the railroads. Almost every kilometre of the rail track is bad, thereby leading to excruciatingly slow speed and frequent derailment. According to NRC's records, some 1,805 of the entire 3,565 kilometres of the rail track in Nigeria are overdue for renewal. Some have been due since 1948. The Minna-Bafo track of 179 kilometres and Kuru-Maiduguri (640km) have been due since 1943. Others are Ibadan-Otta (154km) due since 1962, Otta-Jebba (141km) due since 1961 and Jeba-Minna (258km) due since 1978. The Zaria-Kano track of 140 kilometres was due for renewal in 1982 while the Kano-Nguru (230 km) and Ifaw Junction-Idojo (63 km) have

both been due for renewal since 1963.

With this bad track, therefore, the maximum speed attainable on Nigeria's rail road is about 60 kilometres per hour. Which is less than a third of the 155 miles per hour inter-city express service offered by the Deutsche Bundesbahn, West Germany's federal railway. "I always assume I am going to be on the way for eternity," says Bontface Akalugwu, a regular train user. From this poor service, the NRC has consequently reaped a commensurate reward. Its estimated loss due to under-utilisation of capacity and dearth of facilities is put at N10 million monthly.

While it realises about N4 million monthly, the railways has a wage bill of about N16.5 million. In essence, the self-generated annual revenue of the Nigerian Railway Corporation is hardly enough to pay its 32,000 workers' salaries alone for three months. Which is why, even with a monthly grant of N87.5 million from the Federal Government, railmen have still had to go on rampage before they get their monthly pay. "Ours is worse than living from hand to mouth," says a senior official of the corporation. "We need as many extra hands as we can get to help reclaim to that standard."

Yet records say that before the mid-60s, the NRC had an operating annual surplus of about N9 million. But between 1975 and 1979, it operated at a deficit of N45 million. And it was in this hapless condition that the Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) experts were brought in on contract. The period January 5, 1978 to June 1982 when the NRC was managed by RITES is regarded as the best in the corporation's recent history. Services improved as many more locomotive engines were reactivated and put into use.

More importantly, however, it has been claimed, the Indians were able to improve the railway services because they got money from the Federal Government and they were given a free hand to run the corporation. Records have it that while N224 million was given to the Nigerian manager for eight years (1970-77) before the Indians came, they (the Indian experts) were given N55 million in 1979, N80 million in 1980 and another N80 million in 1981 (a total of N215 million in three years).

Though the railway services improved, the arithmetic was not the best all the same. By the time they left in June 1982, the Indians had received the sum of N431 from the government and they generated N214.7 million. Thus,

they operated at a deficit of N116.9 million. "How much of such money or encouragement has the Federal Government given to the NRC administration since the Indian experts left?", asks Abiodun Odunuga, president of the Nigeria Union of Railwaymen. And some observers say, the government has reduced its financial grant to the corporation partly because of the generally bad financial condition of the country and also because of the experience it had with the Indians. "Why should the government pump more money when it is known that the corporation can hardly balance up?", asks a Ministry of Transport official.

But another school of thought disagrees with this stand. "If we would find colossal sums of money for the trade fair complex, Iwopin Paper industry which are yet to influence the lives of the masses of this country," wrote C.C. Okoro, a lecturer at the University of Lagos in a recently published article, "we should be able to find money to provide efficient rail services for the nation".

The Nigeria Union of Railwaymen (NUR) says the railway is a social service and cites the example of "advanced nations of the world who already have modern railways" and "are beginning once again to expand and pour heavy capital investments into the rail industry." And experts also contend that railway system should be the kernel of any nation's transportation programme.

If this argument holds however, Nigeria has shown little or no appreciation of it. This is evident in the nation's history and development plans.

Though Nigeria has established giant industries that need rail services and 21 states with capital towns, no further extension of the rail lines has taken place since the Gombe-Maiduguri extension was done in 1969.

Besides, inadequate allocations were made for the development of railways in all four National Development Plans the nation has had. In the 1962-68 plan, the capital investment in the transportation sector shows that out of N309,092,000, highway was allocated N179,270,000 or 58 per cent while railway was allocated N30.9 million or 10 per cent. Water and air transport sub-sectors were allocated 25 per cent and seven per cent respectively. In the 1970-74 plan, highway was allocated the lion share of 67 per cent as against the railways' 9.3 per cent. Seventy and-a-half per cent was allocated to the highways while railways got 9.4 per cent in the third plan. And the same trend was up-

held in the 1980-85 plan with the highway getting 60 per cent as against 25 per cent for railways.

Although the last plan shows an increase in the allocation to railways, this, observers say, is still too meagre for the kind of system Nigeria needs. And they cite the example of India where in the allocation to the transport sector, railways lead by a very wide margin against other transport sub-sectors.

By investing so little on the railway system, Nigeria is believed to be missing the advantages of the most economic means of transportation. For according to



• Neglected coaches, abandoned social service

experts, railway consumes remarkably less energy than other mode of transit, makes use of all primary sources of energy-hydraulic, coal, nuclear-as against other modes of transportation that depend solely on oil and pollutes the environment the least. Besides, the railways can be as fast as road transport when fully developed and cost much less. Ironically, when the Nigerian railway system was established in 1896, it was for none of these reasons. Indeed the country has merely tried over the years to squeeze these advantages out of a system that was set up for a different purpose.

The colonialists set up the railway lines in Nigeria mainly for the purposes of transporting raw materials from the hinterland to the sea ports and then to England. Agricultural produce like groundnut, cotton, grains, hides and skin or minerals like, columbite and tin for export were freighted by the rail-

ways from the north to the southern sea ports. And this is the reason why the rail routes till today have only a north-south arrangement: Port Harcourt-Enugu-Jos and further on the east-north route and Lagos-Ilorin-Kano on the west-north route.

Initially, the Nigerian Railway Corporation was run by the colonialists as an arm of the civil service but the Federal Government by an Act of Parliament made it a statutory corporation with an autonomy to determine wages and other conditions of service in October 1955. The Gowon regime, however, reversed this status in 1969 and put the NRC under the Ministry of Transport as it is today.

This status, railwaymen are ever ready to say, is responsible for the stagnation in the organisation. Civil service red-tapism, they claim, has been pulling the hand of its clock backwards so much so that the rail line has not been expanded beyond the 3505 kilometres it reached in 1964. And for a very long time one of their most consistent demands has been the establishment of an autonomous Ministry for Railway Affairs. "Instead of creating this structure," complains the union, "the Federal Government created a ministry of aviation out of the ministry of transport. Yet aviation does not move one-tenth of men and property moved by the railways. It does not perform any social service like the railway."

In this regard, the railmen have a supporter in Paul C. Tarfa, retired Major General and managing director of the corporation. "So many interests dominate the overall interest of NRC," says Tarfa. And he adds: "If the corporation is given the opportunity to exist on its own, it would be able to take decisions and implement them faster and better."

Zakari Ahmed, a traffic and communication inspector at the Maiduguri Railway Station, also contends that to make the rail service improve, "there should be a body like the Nigeria Airport Authority (as there is in aviation) that would own the tracks, the bridges and the stations, maintain them and collect rates from users." The NRC, he says, should own the locomotives, wagons and vans.

Plausible as these suggestions seem, however, it is believed that things do not have to come to that before the services and revenue generating capacity of the NRC improve. Even now, it is said, NRC has vast potentials which could be harnessed to better its lot. The corporation has the reputation of owning

the best machine tools equipment in Nigeria. And its foundry and fabrication workshop in Lagos, brick factory in Enugu and bridge yard in Kaduna, it is often claimed, "can turn the wheels of many industries rolling and fill many homes with needed domestic products at affordable prices."

Indeed, as recently as the late 70s, the NRC was supplying spare parts for maintaining equipment to many industries and organisations like the Command Workshop in the National Electric Power Authority, West African Portland Cement Company and the Nigerian Coal Corporation.

Due to mis-management and lack of funds and materials, the corporation has also failed to harness the potentials of its divisions like the Railway Advertising, Plant Yard and Printing Divisions. These, observers say, are capable of rendering services that can net in millions of naira. "In fact," says an accountant in the Finance Department of the corporation, "all these sections used to function fully and raise a lot of money but these days, the clientele has reduced. It would take a very aggressive motivation to get the capacities fully utilised."



Computerized control room at Kalamshari. Under-utilized.

If the depletion in the number of clients for these services is saddening, the fact that even the NRC itself hardly patronises its divisions is much more so. According to corporation officials, the management does contract out even these jobs its divisions can handle in no time and with little resources. "The result has always been hyper-inflation of such contracts and the NRC is often fleeced of a lot of moneys," an official says.

Activities like this are by no means limited to the contracts. Like any other public company, the NRC is said to

have become a gold mine for some of the top staff and junior ones as well. There is currently the story of one of the directors of the corporation who, sources say, sold some vehicles belonging to the company under the pretext that they were absolutely unserviceable. He prepared the papers to support this and sold the vehicles at paltry sums to none other than himself.

The ticketing system too is fraught with irregularities and officials at the station are said to be feeding fat on the pocketing a lot of money that should have gone to NRC's coffers. "The Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company is carrying out a comprehensive review of our existing ticketing system with a view to evolving a new one that will reduce fraud to the minimum", says Tarfa.

Even with all its shortcomings, experts say the Nigerian Railway Corporation would record the highest bid if it were to be sold. "The NRC among all public corporations in Nigeria, has the best potential for spinning profits," says an assistant director in the company. In fact it is believed that the corporation will do extremely well if the government

## "Bureaucracy is a problem"

*Tarfa agrees that the railway deserves greater autonomy*

*Major-General Paul Tarfa (rtd), Managing Director of Nigerian Railway Corporation spoke with The African Guardian's Assistant Editor, Nanny Baghere on the problems of the Railway and his expectations. Excerpt:*

I HAD thought I was coming to an organised place when I assigned here but discovered it has been badly neglected by previous administrations. For instance, there are records to show that there were suggestions made in the past by my predecessors to previous administrations. These were never implemented.

The consequence is that the place is highly infested with problems, of lack of tools for skilled workers, of irregular salaries, of inability to honour obligations and to some extent the problems of bureaucracy. My biggest disappointment, therefore, is that I have not had the opportunity to do things I ought to do.

### On Autonomy of the Railway Corporation:

I strongly agree with the demands of the Nigerian Union of Railway Workers when they say that the corporation deserves greater autonomy. So many interests dominate the overall interest of the Corporation at the Ministry. It is the

problem of bureaucracy. So, if the Corporation is given the opportunity to exist on its own, it would be able to take decisions and implement them faster and better.

### The basic problem of the Railway:

Although abundant traffic offering is available yet the corporation is incapable of making the necessary impact because of lack of locomotives. This deficiency has adversely affected the revenue earning capability of the NRC to the extent that the income it generates is only about 20-30 per cent of its expenditure.

### On tackling the problem:

For 100 per cent schedule performance for the Railways it is desirable to acquire 138-147 locomotives. However, over the years, due to non-maintenance, we have run down to as low as 34 and this is the core of the problem. We need something above 140 serviceable locomotives working daily for an efficient and productive performance. Unfortunately, we have the best workshops here and very skilled workers whose side only because of lack of machinery to work with.

In tackling these problems a number of steps have to be taken, including staff rationalisation. It is not going to be an indiscriminate retrenchment but a turning down of the work-force to a number commensurate with the Corporation's level of operations without impinging on efficiency.

### On boosting revenue-earning capacity:

The following measures are currently actively pursued by the Federal Government. Financial arrangements in respect of the purchase of 30 new locomotives from Bombardier of Canada are to be concluded before the end of the year. Delivery of these locomotives thereafter may be expected within the next 12 to 18 months.

could evolve an integrated transport policy. The transportation system now, they say, is obviously planless with the loads that are best conveyed by rail being carried by road traffic.

Corporation officials say fertilisers that were carried by rail at about N17,000 per ton to Kaduna from Lagos in 1985, for example, were carried by road at about N70,000 per ton. Billets and other heavy steel products were also given to road haulage at expensive rates and at the risk of road users. This trend, it is said, still continues. "And the government loses a lot of money to private pockets when it could have lost much less to its own corporation which even needs it more than anybody else," says another Railway official. "If the corporation is patronised even now that it seems to be at its worst, it will make profit and improve on its services."

Whether NRC's management and indeed, the government have realised the prospects of the railway system is debatable but efforts are being made, though with little success, to keep the system on track. A preliminary report on the problems of the corporation is expected to



Dejected passengers: Any hopes from NRC?

come in next month from Kennedy Henderson, a British firm of railways and mass transit consultants. The firm had been commissioned to study all aspects of NRC's problems including equipment shortages, engineering and investment requirements, and all economic and financial matters.

Acting on a World Bank projection that the Railway Corporation will collapse by 1989 if no drastic improvements in its structures and facilities are recorded, Nigeria struck a deal last December with Bombardier, a Canadian company for the supply of reconditioned locomotive engines. All these

are yet to materialise while other arrangements like the N40 million deal for producing spare parts between NRC and Daewoo of South Korea have been grounded. But Tarfa, is optimistic and says that the corporation would survive its problems.

Observers, however, say that the question is not so much of survival as it is that of getting a good railway system for Nigeria. The cost of putting the Nigerian railways to good operational capacity is estimated at between 300 million and 400 million dollars (N1.5 billion and N2 billion). This certainly appears a huge price (which Nigeria can hardly afford) to pay for placing the rail system at par with time.

When considered, however, that Nigerians suffer excruciating pains from transportation problems experts say no cost is too high. In essence, putting money on the tracks would not only prevent Nigeria railways from being another waste, the proper nucleus of the mass transit programme would also have been identified and invested on.

By Debo Adesina with Sunny Biaghere and Abdul Orah

Refurbishment of 65 GEC Main Line and Brush Shunting locomotives is under serious discussion and it is expected that this will be concluded before the end of the year. Six months after agreement has been signed about 50 of these will be ready for use.

Contracts have also been awarded for the supply of spare parts for the refurbishment of 30 North American locomotives under the World Bank Transport Parastatals Project and these spare parts are scheduled to be received within the next four to six months when these locomotives



Tarfa: Railway is for the masses and should be given priority

will start rolling on to the track.

Multi-purpose wagons for conveyance of billets and other specialised goods as well as brakevans have been received from Romania under the debt servicing agreement and with the availability of locomotives under the other stated measures, there will be a tremendous boost in NRC's revenue.

Financial arrangements are also being finalized for the purchase of over 500 coaches and specialized wagons under the same contract for the purchase of 50 new locomotives. It is expected that these arrangements will also be finalized before the end of this year. Perhaps, I should also add that with the addition of more locomotives to the existing fleet, those staff who are being retrenched, under redundancy, would surely be recalled.

**On place of railway in the Mass Transit Programme:** More emphasis ought to have been given to the railway than it has been so far. It is the railway that is for the masses because it is cheaper and more economical than travelling by air or by road.

**Extension of Rail Services:** You will recall that the Minister of Transport once said that if it were possible, it is the intention of the Federal Government to link all the state capitals and key ports with railway line. But for now, we cannot effectively talk of doing it until we have the means to do that.

**On Fraud:** In order to curb incidence of fraud in our ticketing system, the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company is carrying out a comprehensive review of our existing system with a view to evolving a new one which will reduce fraud to the barest minimum.

# Journey in snail land

Travelling by Nigerian railway taxes one's patience beyond limit

**H**OW long would it take a snail to crawl from Iddo (Lagos) to Kafanchan in Kaduna State, a distance of 1,082 kilometers? This is a tough, mathematical puzzle for an ordinary mortal. But at a snap of fingers, egg-heads at the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) would easily provide an answer.

But do not be in a hurry to get one. For in snail land nobody is in a hurry. At snail speed and with a little luck, the distance can be grossed in three days or more, but certainly not less. In snail land where boredom is not important, where time, precious time, is not reckoned with, where citizens still look up to good old Lord Lugard and his fellow colonial adventurers for direction, this could be a record. But then nobody, it would seem, is willing to break any record in snail land, not even in the year of the 24th Olympiad.

Now back to Nigeria. In an NRC train, a traveller is sure to take a trip to snail land for a change. The sojourn is not only guaranteed a life which passes in vivid green and glowing colours unadulterated, he is sure to witness a rare experience to live with. For a trip in an NRC train affords a traveller the opportunity to glide through an endurance test, a test of resilience, of will power capped with a trip into history: all these served in a serene atmosphere fouled by human wastes and decaying goods but soothed by the rhythmic chuffs of the diesel engine, the clackety-clack of rail wheels, the clapping and jerking of a chain of wagons.

Although travelling by rail may have retained its romance, drama and sheer pleasure in other lands, in Nigeria it is a study in backwardness. Forget the rare view of the alluring landscape, the unpolluted air sweeping into the cabin, the encouraging beauty of sprouting vegetation stunted by many years of drought and the rain-swept plains. Forget the singing birds, the chirping crickets, the blooming flowers and bright stars (or satellites) beckoning the traveller to dare. The Nigerian railway, for all it is worth, is still gliding through the clogged landscapes of history, expecting a Lugard to flush its toilets, to provide drinking water, clean the cabins, and rid them of beggars, flies and rotten vegetables and fruits.

The particular journey was billed to begin by 4.30 p.m. Tuesday, September 6. The traveller had been warned by a polite porter to be prepared to fend for himself. He, therefore, had to stack his bag with loaves of bread, cans of sardine, spring water bottles, toiletries and a bottle of disinfectant. But the train, true to expectation never took off on schedule: not until 6.10 p.m. when it grudgingly creaked into life, snailing along on a promising note.

Twenty five minutes after it left the Iddo Terminus, the train was hooting its horn through Oshodi. Dave-devils who had perched on every available space, were jumping off while others going to Agege were filling up the vacated spaces. The train continued its crawl, blasting its air horn away. Virtually at every stop, women with babies tied to their backs and children, pestered the passengers with wares from amala wrapped in papers to boiled eggs, bread, canned coke and what may pass for cold water. Before the train crawled to the Abokuta station four hours and 64 kilometers later, it had stopped on the way seven times.

Dusk had set in and some of the passengers who would have preferred to read were forced to sleep because there were no electric bulbs in the cabins. The pitch darkness might have been tolerable to this reporter except for the stretch of faces, the regular farting (and particularly noisy ones too) by his compartment colleagues and the loud snoring of a police sergeant who had earlier forced his way into the 'First Class' compartment without paying a kobo. To take his mind off the discomfort, "the traveller" kept staring into the dark night. Even this pleasure was soon denied him as the swelling cloud crystallized into the ferocious torrential downpour which forced him to shut the windows of the compartment, to prevent rain from flooding the cabin. Soon, rivulets of sweat began to cascade down his forehead in the stuffy atmosphere.

Unable to cope, the passenger wound down the windows slightly, but the other travellers, obviously used to the



• Dotted station. Rush to board but no comfort ahead

unfavourable condition in the trains, protested loudly. Fortunately, the rain soon stopped and the windows were once more opened. A wind of cool breeze wafting in to carry away the foul stretch. By 2.30 a.m. the passenger just managed to have a wink. Barely 30 minutes later, he was jerked awake by a zap on the door. Is it a thief? Who is the bastard that will allow a passenger to relax? he cursed. Well, it was the ticket man, accompanied by a police constable.

Tickets were punched amid protest by the passenger for the interstations. It is 3 a.m. The passenger woke up with a start. Where are we? Kaduna or Kofa (Kafanchan is called by railmen)? No. The women and children are here again. *Mourning Breadphonore*, they announced in Yoruba. The passenger peeped through the window. This, unmistakably is Ibadan. Still at Ibadan? It had taken nine hours to arrive Ibadan from Lagos, just some 100 kilometers by road. Well relax, the passenger was advised.

The journey had just begun. Two hours at the Ibadan station, — long enough for a cab driver to cruise to Lagos and back, the train hooted its horn again, to continue the crawl. A cleaner came in to sweep the cabin. He is told to

bring some water to flush the toilet. *You no dey this country? Who go bring the money to buy the bucket? You go bring the money to buy the bucket? You no know say IMF and World Bank don advise government make dem no care about the railway? The passenger protested. "After paying N63 for a first class ticket, am I not entitled to at least some water to flush the toilet?"* The rude cleaner, a mischievous scowl on his face closed the cabin furiously and snapped: *Go and tell government. If toilet dey smell no be me go buy you bucket and Izal. (a disinfectant).* At least na me buy this broom with my money. May be you should wait till the next station, you can buy bucket and water there to flush your toilet.

Resigned to fate, the passenger opened a bottle of spring water to wash his mouth and face. At least he could still endure till the next station before visiting the toilet. The snoring sergeant, now awake had little room for patience. He entered the toilet, emptied his bowl with a loud flourish without caring for a flush. The entire cabin was engulfed in a foul odour. The windows were opened, including the door which had been shut to keep away pestering beggars and flies. The train, cruising at an average of 10 kilometres an hour arrived the hilly Origo outpost at 10.55 a.m. and screeched to a halt. Try as he would, the locomotive could not get the "old lady" to scale the hill. The engine failed.

After a 30-minute repair, the locomotive coughed back to life. Shortly, a steward announced breakfast of rice and eba. A passenger who asked for tea or coffee was told there was no sugar for such niceties. "You will have to wait till we get to Oshogbo", he was told. "Forget it", he replied in anger, "at least why should I pay N2 for just a cup of tea?" *No be my fault Oga*, the elderly steward pleaded. With the toning of the engines by the rail engineers, it picked up a little speed to about 15 kilometres an hour.

At Oshogbo, a former staff of the Nigerian Cocoa Board, disembarked with his few belongings and final bye-bye to Lagos. He had lost his job following the scrapping of the marketing boards. Would he come back to Lagos? he was asked. "No way, I will farm first, may be I will try Abuja but certainly not Lagos again."

As the train trudged on, a man who claimed to be an ex-soldier, tried to sell his wrist-watch. The policeman was alerted. The man complained of hunger, saying he had gone to Lagos to inquire about his retirement benefit but no word yet from the Ministry of Defence.

He had hopped into the train without a ticket. The police constable asked for his identity card, he had none. The constable, drilled him to test his skill at parades. The

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constable let him off after satisfying himself that he man had been a soldier.

The journey continued. Offa: 2p.m., Ilorin: 3.30p.m., Jebba: 6.09; Mokwa: 8.34p.m.; all in Kwara state. Along the way, women and children even at such late hours, defied the ram to hawk wares. The train arrived Kaduna at 11.15a.m. It departed Kaduna at 12.30 p.m. to arrive Kafanchan at 6.15p.m.

The Kafanchan station is a beehive of activities. The station. *The African Guardian* learnt, is second only to the Ebute-Metta Station in Lagos. Its control system is computerised. The station is

complete with staff quarters, an administrative staff college, an engineering workshop, a clinic and a railway recreation club. Before the downturn in rail travels, caused by spare parts problems, the station with about 3,500 workers, handled about 15 express trains daily with a weekly passenger average of 9,000. That has shrunk to 1,800. The station now receives only six trains weekly.

Railway Divisional Manager in Kafanchan, Mr. Godwin Onyehialam told *The African Guardian* that his station, like others, is beset with shortage of spare parts, coaches, and archaic engines. "As long as we still operate with old facilities, we cannot make a headway," he says, bleakly adding that "if we are provided with spare parts, we have enough trained manpower and a well equipped workshop to carry out maintenance."

The station itself says a lot not only about the problems of the railway, but the accompanying suffering of passengers. Several policemen, including the sergeant, who were returning from Lagos on "special duty," slept at the station for three days to catch a train to Maiduguri. "We were not given a kobo either in Lagos, or Maiduguri," a

frustrated corporal told *The African Guardian*. "But now we are stranded, we don't have money to eat, we don't have money to go by road and when we get to Maiduguri, we would wait for God knows when before we can collect our transport claims." The corporal and his colleagues went to wait for another two days before a Maiduguri train arrived at the Kafanchan station. The train, which was scheduled to depart by 7.30 a.m., did not leave until 7 p.m. and it took more than 24 hours before it arrived at the Maiduguri station at 12.15 a.m. on Monday morning.

Zakari Ahmed, traffic and commercial inspector at the Maiduguri station says a nation can only have the type of railway system it deserves, stressing that "its either you have one or you don't."

For the Nigerian train travellers, here is a tip: When you are booked for a train trip, don't be in a hurry, don't carry perishable goods, get enough food and water. Forget about sanitation, get enough books to read, get a few candles or a flashlight and bon voyage—until Lord Lugard comes back.

By Abdul Orah in Kafanchan

## 'Railway is Kafanchan'

*A strong bond of affection exists between the town and dwellers*

**K**AFANCHAN (or Kaf to railmen) is a typical railway town. A first time visitor to the town, either by road or rail, is struck by the cosmopolitan nature of the town which may pass as one of the nation's earliest working class settlement. Like other railway towns in Nigeria—Makurdi and Minna, for example,—life revolves around the railway. "If you observe very well, you'd find that the majority of the people here belong to the railway family," says Maidamma Ahmed, the North Central Divisional Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC).

Ahmed says the "railway is Kafanchan and Kafanchan is the railway," adding "if you remove the railway from the town, you would have removed the soul from the town."

Kafanchan whose indigenes migrated from Jema'a village, a few kilometres away, is situated in the Middle Belt, south of Zaria. Its population is predominantly christian with a large chunk of "non-believers" and moslems. The town, *The African Guardian* learnt, was founded around 1936 after the North-South rail line was linked at Gati, a sub-station near Kafanchan in 1927.

A visitor from the southern part of the country would feel at home in Kafanchan. And it's no surprise that streets like Warri Street and Ogbomoso Street are found in the town. Yoruba and Igbo are widely spoken but virtually everybody speaks Hausa and pidgin En-

glish.

The town shot to national prominence last year when an explosive and destructive religious dispute between Christian and Moslem students at the College of Education in the town sent waves of religious conflagration throughout Kaduna State and some northern ones. About 70 per cent of the population work with the railway and in some cases, an entire family is either employed by the railway or linked to the railway through ancillary industries.

Says Ahmed: "Former rail workers from all parts of the country who have retired, have decided to make Kafanchan their home. Their children were born here, their grandchildren were born here and most of them are working with the railway or would eventually work with the railway."

The railway, according to Ahmed, has been responsible for the town's social and economic development and of course its political vibrancy.

"Moreso, it attracts workers from all parts of the country. It is essentially a working class town," Ahmed adds. "The railway has been part of our lives, it is our only industry apart from the local government, the NEPA stores and the educational institutions. It has attracted small businesses to this town," says Yohannah Ahmed a staff of the railway who hails from the town.

Agreed Adisa Moses Ishola, a clerk with the railway: "This is our town. My father hails from Oyo State, he worked



• Alaminu, Ibo and Nigerian brotherhood Kafanchan is a meeting pit.

at the railway and he is now retired. He has a house here, so we live here. This town is vibrant socially. We are all products of the railway, I have been to Ibadan only once and it was because I was sent there on course by the railway. This is my town that is all."

It is widely feared that the planned removal of the NRC North-Central Headquarters from Kafanchan to Bauchi, may rob the town of its much needed development. Says a railway official: "I fear some religious and political motives for this move. Kaf is more central than Bauchi and the station here has one of the biggest workshops in the country, the only Administrative Staff School and good connection of roads from Abuja, Kaduna, Jos and other parts of the Middlebelt."

Ahmed says the railway has been providing the town with a water supply system, a general hospital and employment to indigenes, adding "it is practically difficult to divorce the railway from the people here. It is impossible because it is their life."

## PEOPLE

ment installed for the trials was perfectly okay.

Flo-Jo has always been a sports achiever. At high school, she set records in sprint events as well as long jump. She won silver medals at the Los Angeles Olympics and at the 1987 World Championships in Rome at which she studiously avoided the loo. Spectators at the championships saw her contribute the fastest split (9.97) to the US 4x100 meters winning relay team.

The millions of spectators in Seoul as well as those whose eyes are glued to TV sets relaying satellite coverage of the events are likely to be exposed to three simultaneous thrills from the *enfant terrible* of sports — her good looks, swiftness of foot and usually provocative wears.

Born Florence Delorez Griffith, she is one of 11 children of an electronics technician and a seamstress. She married last year in Las Vegas to Alfredrick Alphonso Joyner, 28, a 1984 Olympic triple jump medalist. Her husband missed a place in the current US Olympics team.

## Dazzler in Seoul

THE 28-year-old American female speedster who loves to shock and talks poetically about marrying function and form is in more ways than one a central attraction in Seoul. The first outing at the current Olympics of California-born Florence Griffith-Joyner, shortened to Flo-Jo, is scheduled for September 24.

On that day, the model/fashion designer whose beauty has been much commented upon, and who used to beat the boys at high school sports is being challenged to confirm her legendary run of 10.49 seconds in the 100 metres at the US Olympic trials last July. The speed has been contested, some claiming that it was wind-aided. Critics are prepared to accept her other speeds of 10.60, 10.91 and 10.70 at the Indianapolis trials but not the 10.49 secs.

Says Canada's Ben Johnson, men's 100 metres world record holder: "The 10.61 I can believe. There's no way she can run 10.49."



• Griffith-Joyner: Top's thriller in confirmation test

Britain's top sprinter, Linford Christie, who placed 4th at a world championship, concurs: "I know how hard it is for me to run 10.49. Believe me, there is no way she can run a 10.49 legit (legitimate-

ly)." Omega, the Swiss manufacturers of the wind-reading equipment, after repeated tests, confirmed last Tuesday in Nagara, Japan, through technical director Francois Jean Drening that the equip-

## Olympic tit-bits

- The American, Carl Lewis loves the 100 metres best in all his events because it is the one his late father, Williams Lewis, loved the most. Says Carl: "I saw the joy on my father's face after I won the 100m. I knew it was the win he treasured most. He believes the ultimate Olympic victory is that in the

100m."

Carl who seldom talks about his father without tears running down his cheeks, remembers the elder Lewis' funeral ceremony. "He, (Williams Lewis) was lying there in the coffin with his right hand open. I went and placed my 100m gold medal (from L.A. '84) in his palm. It was as if he had been waiting for that all the while."

- Ian McDonald Smith of Great Britain won a Yachting gold medal at the 1963 games, but lost the same within months. A replacement was offered, just as the old medal which had been damaged, was discovered.

Now what would he do? Keep the original or take the replacement? McDonald Smith kept the damaged original — there never seems to be a replacement for that first time joy.

- Valerie Brisco-Hooks, who won three gold medals from the tracks of the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1984 at the 200 and 400 metres individual races and 1600 metres relay, had no doubt that she would do with her medals — she dedicated all to brother Bobby, who had been shot dead on a track while training with her.

- Mohammed Ali, then Cassius Clay, liked to wear

the gold medal he won at the 1960 Olympics wherever he went. He stopped when that identity could not get him past the colour line. He threw the medal into the river after a restaurant refused to serve him because he is Black.

- Though he broke many records as a middle-distance runner in the 50s, Ron Clarke of Australia never made the Olympic gold. On a visit to Prague in 1966, he was met at the airport by Emil Zatopek, Czechoslovakia's sports hero, with several gold in his credit. Zatopek had a small wrapped gift for Clarke! It turned out to be one of Zatopek's gold.

- Lewis: For papa's sake



## PEOPLE

## AGIP's okay

**I**F you feel that Any Government In Power is an unfair rendering of AGIP, the petroleum marketers, be rest assured that it isn't. No less than the firm's Managing Director, Mr.



• Pesenti: An aggressive stay

Gioiio Pesenti, has confirmed the openness of the label. In Italy, Agip's home country, known for its unstable political climate, the rapid turnover of governments has a toll on most companies. Agip has stood through successive political changes because of its relatively efficient organization, says Pesenti.

He is leaving Nigeria for the US after a four-year tenure as Agip's top steersman in the country.

During his stay, Pesenti travelled to many parts of Nigeria, savoured some delicacies and tasted a bit of local gin (Oqogoro), a bottle of which he sent to Italy.

Pesenti got a carved elephant tusk as a parting gift from Petroleum Resources Minister, Rilwanu Lukman who hosted a buffet dinner for him last Tuesday.

By Paul Nwabuloku, Isi Omololu and Kale Ade-Odulata

longer make promises," he says.

Chief Adebo is 75.

### Sunmi's decade

**SUNMI SMART-COLE** is the ace art photographer whose preferred medium is black and white, might regard it as a betrayal to be caught in the colour portrait below.

Smart-Cole, 44, who edits the weekly Lagos *Life*, a member of the Guardian stable, began a 10-year retrospective of his works on Saturday at the

achievement at the UN which stems from the firm commitment of successive Nigerian governments to the world body and its purposes. To buttress he cites Nigeria's regular payment of dues, active involvement in peace-keeping operation like the current one



• Smart-Cole: The world is already in colour

chaired the launching ceremony, Adebo says he might do so depending on his health. "I have reached in the Gulf conflict zone, and consistently chairing the anti-apartheid committee.

His aim in writing *Our International Years*, a Spectrum Book publication, is towards the ideal that Nigeria's loyalty to the UN may be based on adequate knowledge of its objectives, achievement and limitations. On whether he would do another book of memoirs since his return to the country, as suggested by ex-head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo, who an age when one should no

Goethe Institute, Lagos.

His gentle nature, social concern and love of beauty, especially the beauty of nature, shine through his works. *Baltuda* (1976) is considered one of his best. It is a shot of a seagull, standing still on a beach as the tide ebbs away.

Of his photographs, Sunmi says, "I'm attached to every one of them. I derive a lot of joy from photography... I take photographs of all types of people, the rich and famous, the poor, the infamous."

On his preference for black-and-white pictures, Sunmi has a ready response: "The world is already in colour, why repeat it?"

• Adebo: No more promises

### When health permits

**W**HEN launching last Tuesday of Chief **Blaise Comorou Adebo's** *Our International Year at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs*, Lagos was a fulfilment of a promise he made five years ago at the launching of an earlier work, *Our Unforgettable Years*. On that occasion, the quintessential civil servant as Adebo has been referred to, had pledged to publish a follow-up on his stint at the United Nations (UN) as Nigeria's permanent representative, "if health permits."

*Our Unforgettable Years* contains his memoirs as a pioneer civil servant in the transition period from colonial administration. Adebo was "our man at the UN" between 1962 and 1967, a period which includes the first turbulent year of the Nigerian civil war. He recalls that when he got to New York "I was a chicken; not only that, an untutored chicken." It was left to aides like Philip Asiodu to show him the ropes which later saw him rise in stature as an international civil servant.

Adebo tries to show in the book that the current Nigerian posture of non-alignment at the UN did not start just recently. "We were the most ardent spokesmen for the cause in our own time," he says. He states that Nigeria has a commendable record of

# Homage to the past

Artist projects himself from the past

**B**ISI Fakeye's 11-day exhibition at the Franco-German Auditorium, Victoria Island, Lagos, ended on Tuesday with themes revolving on the traditional. The exhibition of wood sculptures, — 31 pieces altogether, — had notable representations in the music and dancing genre and other works tending towards romanticism of the past.

These included *Talking Drummer*, *Drummer Boy*, *Dancer*, *Flutist*, *Obitun Dancer*, and *Bember Drummer*. Others, which mostly pay their debt to nostalgia, include *Farmer*, *Woman pounding yam*, *Homage*, *Arugba* (Treasure Bowl).

In "God Will Provide", the artist shows a supplicant, sitting on his torso, his body enshrouded; and stares into an empty bowl. "Life of a Prodigal" is a three-deck art-work showing the three stages in the life of an imprudent fellow. In stage one, in the blossom of life, he is ably supported by two male aids. Stage two depicts him with flowing robes while the aids have been replaced by two buxom women. At the third stage, he is reduced to a decrepit old man, almost naked, with hardly a half-length girdle of a trouser to cover him in the manner of a beggar. Here, he is ignored by the women who now have their backs turned to him.

Complementing the theme of wasteful life in "Malowuro sera" (Do not play away your youth), a carving which portrays a tired and wizened old man, supported by a walking stick and carrying a bundle obviously containing all his worldly belongings.

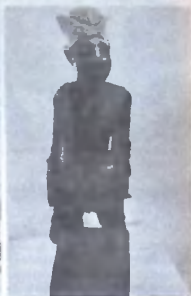
Born into a family of wood carvers at Ita-Orangun in Oyo State in 1942, Fakeye, current Vice-President of the Nigerian Society of Artists, learnt the trade through apprenticeship alongside his formal education. By 1960, he was already in Ondo town with his uncle, the famous artist, Lamidi Fakeye, to carve for the Catholic Mission.

He had his debut exhibition in 1963 under the auspices of the American

PHOTO: IYOLE AGO-ORINOLA



• Supplication for Peace



• Talking drummer



• Aiyegbega (life is Fragile)

Society for African Culture (AMSAC). Upon resigning from a teaching profession that spanned 1963 to 1966, Fakeye began the life of a full-time artist. Apart from numerous exhibitions and commissions in Nigeria and overseas, Fakeye visited six cities in West Germany as a guest artist in 1976.

Since 1981, Fakeye, who carved the Logos for The African Peace House in Havana, Cuba, and the Nigerian Peace Commit-

tee, Lagos and also did the door carving for the Nigerian Embassy in Rome, Italy, among other major works, has been a full-time guest artist at the National Studio of Modern Arts, National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.

The Exhibition which lasted from September 3 to September 13 1988 was hosted by Goethe-Institut and the French Cultural Centre, Lagos.

By Humphrey Bekaren

## Overheard

► I will crave your indulgence to permit me not to permit you to say something.

— Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo to well-wishers anxious to give their own quota of praises to Simeon Adebó, at the launching of Adebó's latest book. —

► In ... (Nigeria), everybody is too big for his shoes.

— Simeon Adebó, quoting a colonial District Officer (D.O)

► As an Italian, my heart does not have a soft spot; my whole heart is soft.

— Giorgio Pesenti, outgoing Agip Managing Director at a dinner party in his honour.



• Obasanjo



• Msgr. Ekene Dii Chukwu and Okeke. Eyes and ears of rural women

## Dazzling the countryside

### Better Life Fair raises hopes and questions

ALL the trappings of a fair were present: music, dance and colour. There was room for small talk and side jokes as President Ibrahim Babangida and other dignitaries visited the gaily decorated pavilions. His wife, Maryam, clad in a designer white chiffon top and wrapper, played chief hostess.

One speaker after another emphasized the need for a new orientation of the rural populace, of the need to foster better understanding through exhibitions and trade. The speeches were in standard English, though the microphone was faulty. Efforts by officials of the Tafawa Balewa Complex, the venue of the four-day fair which began Wednesday, did not readily pay off. Never to be daunted, the President proceeded to welcome the participants, particularly the rural women whose presence he declared was a testimony of their commitment to the programme of rural transformation. He told the women in the 10-minute speech that "you have the creative potential that no nation can ignore."

However, there was underlying disquiet whether rural women were truly represented by the many gorgeously clad

ladies present, or if they could be identified, whether they understood the high tone of the speeches.

In a tone that betrayed her bitterness, a female unemployed graduate, who was visiting the fair said: "The expensive wrapper and hand-bag one sees here leaves no one in doubt that these are women who have travelled far and wide and have seen the light. It is only the urban visiting the urban."

Taking a swift look around, she added: "The real rural woman tills the soil all day long with a child strapped on her back. She is the wife, mother and confidant who is always bothered by her husband. I don't see any of these here."

However, at the pavilions, some of the women tried to explain the manner of dressing. Imo State Governor's wife, Mrs. Frances Ikwechegh said: This is

their day, don't expect them to come in rags." In the Ondo State pavilion, Dr. Modupe affirmed that the women were from the rural areas. To prove her point, she related how some of the participants got trapped in an elevator at the hotel where they were lodged, because they did not know which buttons to push. An official from Ogun State explained that the rural women were represented by those who were more enlightened to be their eyes and ears.

The state pavilions displayed a variety of wares: hand-woven wrappers, ceramics, crafts, art works, textiles, finished garments, leather works, foodstuffs etc. From the northern states, emphasis was on leather works, carvings, pottery and cereals. The middle-belt states came with a sampling of leather works, potatoes, and yam tubers. The south and lower delta offered sculpture, carvings, raffia works, craft, plantains and sea-food.

The fair was also anchored on technological

**LIVING**  
products. A team from Sokoto State Polytechnic displayed a range of products from Solar dryers to water air-conditioners. The Director of Environmental Studies, Yusuf Wunduh offered a specially built toilet, *Pol*, as an alternative to the water closet in the rural areas. Mel Igbowke of Eudo Mel Industries, Imo State, had a candle processing machine while Sogabon Limited from Benin, Bendel State came with Cassava Peeler and Slicer, a multi-purpose mill machine and garn shifter.

Through it all, one message that rang out was the cry for funds. Adequately funded, the participants believe they could help push Nigeria out of economic depression. Said Mrs. Apolonia, a textile weaver from Ubuluku in Aniocha Local Government Area of Bendel State: "If government can help us, we can develop centres where others can be trained." Mrs. Margaret Ekong, another weaver, from Eket, Akwa Ibom State, said it was an uphill task to get loans.

Unlike her counterparts, Mrs. Virginia Odiagwu of Anambra State, had been lucky. She was able to secure a loan of N4,500 through her local government. She expressed the hope that at the end of the fair, many wasted talents could be developed.

The fair could be a step towards a sustained programme to bring rural women into contact with the world outside their small environment and stimulate their development potentials. As Mrs. Bimpe Abovade, a university don, observed at the first workshop for rural women held at Abuja, last year: "Rural life is one long, uninterupted life of toil and sweat. What is needed now is to open up new avenues of hope that would lead rural women out of this tedious life."

By Josephine Akarus

• Mrs. Akhoma at the calabash stand. Rural women can do better if properly funded.



# The AFRICAN Guardian

## Let there be food



• New yam tubers: better planning leads to better yield

**A**GRICULTURE is the world's most important industry, for it is this industry that provides the human race with food which is a basic necessity of life. Also most of the other industries are either directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture.

Agriculture which started by gathering plants and fruits of different kinds as food has witnessed tremendous improvement over the centuries. Since the early 50s the demand for food throughout the world has increased tremendously and the largest increase in food demand has occurred in the developing countries.

In Nigeria, like other countries, agriculture is the backbone of the economy. The agricultural produce include palm oil, groundnuts, cocoa, rubber, yam, cassava, beans, peanuts etc. From the colonial era through the early years of independence, agriculture was both the largest employer of labour and the main foreign exchange earner in the country.

But from the late 60s when petroleum emerged as the major foreign exchange earner, agriculture was relegated to the background. The industry could no longer feed Nigeria's population, let alone earn any foreign exchange. Thus the country embarked on mass importation of food, thanks to petro-naira. Then came the mid 80s and the euphoria of petro-naira suddenly ended. The revenue from petroleum decreased so much that the nation could no longer foot her import bills. The government was forced to embark on measures to revamp agriculture.

Thus led to the formulation of many agricultural policies. Programmes launched include "Operation Feed the Nation" (OFN) "Seed Multiplication and Distribution Pro-

ject" and "Green Revolution". A lot of capital has been put into these projects, yet agriculture has remained under developed. Also, government agricultural research projects were initiated. These include the Agricultural Development Projects (ADP). Various River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) were also established.

But in spite of all these lofty projects aimed at boosting agriculture, the food situation in the country has remained bad, if not worse. All the same, agriculture has continued to receive priority attention in the allocation of funds from the various governments, especially under the third and fourth National Development plans.

The government has not been the only source of funds for agriculture. The banks too have played an important role in promoting agricultural development in Nigeria. Union Bank and Savannah Bank are still playing active role in promoting agriculture. So also are companies like Chemical & Allied Products Limited (CAPL), United Africa Company (UAC-Agric) and a host of others.

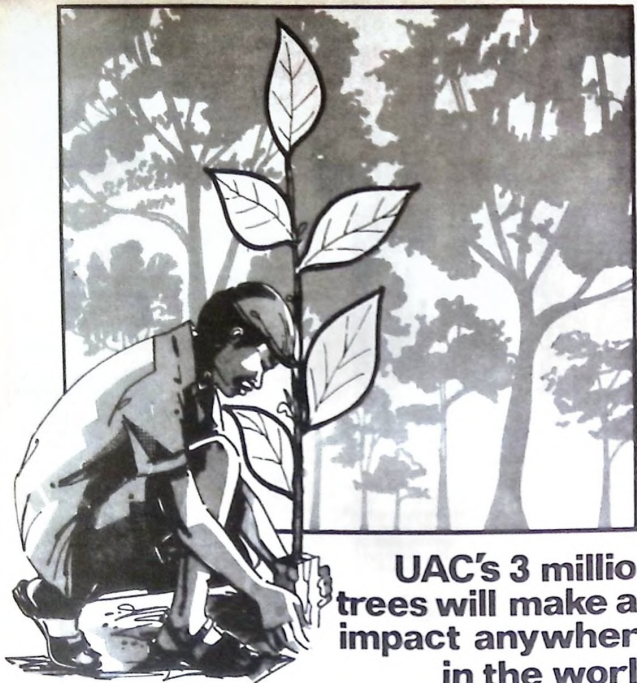
Crop farming exists side by side with animal husbandry, mainly used to supplement food crops farming. Livestocks reared include chicken, cattle, sheep, pigs and fish. The importance of high quality animal protein in human diet cannot be over-emphasised. Unfortunately the rate of animal protein deficiency in Africa has remained high. Even with their vast investments in animal protein, most African countries have been unable to provide the safe level of 25 gms of protein per head per day. For instance, the average Nigerian protein intake per day is less than 15 gms. In countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, and Chad it is even lower.

However, efforts to increase the output of animal protein in Africa in the past decade have seen some measure of success. One of the burgeoning areas in animal protein is poultry farming. Cattle rearing is another livestock farming commonly practised in Nigeria. Cattle, apart from providing a source of food (beef and milk) also serve as means of transport and draught power for ploughing.

The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI) has mapped out strategies for the production of arable crops in a bid to help solve the country's food crisis. Detailed planning has commenced to bring more land under cultivation for this year and subsequent years. The guidelines state that the community-based implementation strategy with the peasant farmer as the central figure has been adopted for nation-wide application.

To ensure a systematic, orderly and co-ordinated development of the agricultural sector, the directorate suggests that states find practical and feasible solutions to the problems of the peasant farmer.

Five communities from each local government area of



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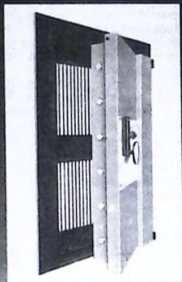
nation's self-sufficiency programmes and also to the economic life of the people wherever they are sited.

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the federation have been selected by the commissioners for direct assistance to ensure improved yields of these staple foods. The assistance will involve the provision of effective extension service, agricultural credit, biological inputs, agro-chemicals and infrastructure.

Each state is expected to provide one extension agent for every participating community. The community is expected to be a known producer of at least one staple food with the required edaphic conditions, and must be willing to allocate land to its sons and daughters that wish to go into farming. It is also expected to have formed and registered its development association and have a good record of group efforts as well as harmonious intra and inter community interaction. The directorate will renew its dialogue with banks and financial houses in order to make more credit facilities available to farmers and participating communities.

On agro-chemicals and biological inputs the directorate has asked states to, in addition to seeds produced under their 1987 improved seed programme, buy improved inputs from the relevant institutions for sale to farmers. Agro service centres are also expected to be adequately stocked with agro-chemicals for sale to farmers.

DFPRI considers it a great irony to regard its efforts as a DFFRI programme rather than as the nation's spontaneous reaction to solving its food crisis as well as ensuring the systematic, orderly and co-ordinated growth of the agricultural sector. The idea of the community implementation strategy is not to create government farms but for government to help each selected community to operate viable, efficient and profitable farms as outlined in the directorate's blueprint on food and agriculture.

### National Agricultural Insurance

The introduction of the National Agricultural Insurance in December 1987 by the present administration could not have come at a more appropriate time. The objective of this policy, said Gado Nasko, Minister of Agriculture, is to lessen the effects of risks by farmers and breathe more life into this vital sector which used to be the mainstay of the Nigerian economy.

In order to facilitate the smooth operation of this project, the Minister during the last ministerial press briefing held in Abuja in June 1988, revealed that a total sum of ₦41.5 million has been released for this scheme. The Federal Military Government (FMG) is to bear 50 per cent of the premium while farmers are expected to foot the cost of the remaining 50 per cent in collaboration with the National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON).

The premium is expected to cover such crops as maize, corn rice and cattle and poultry while farm machines, buildings and other farm equipment would be covered under normal commercial policy. Furthermore, the responsibility of bearing farm loss due to fire, pests, droughts, heavy rainfall, erosion, theft, etc has now been transferred from farmers (insured) to the risk bearer (Insurer).

Policies include Specific Risk Policy which is directed primarily against a single specified natural hazard such as fire, drought or flood. Combined Risk Policy, as the name implies, covers two or more specified hazards, while All Risks Policy covers all risks. Other policies include Single Crop or Animal Insurance Policy, Multiple Crop or Animal Insurance Policy and



• Agriculture Minister Gado Nasko vaccinates a cow in Benue.

### All Risks Livestock Insurance Policy.

Though the National Agricultural Insurance is becoming more popular with farmers, problems still remain. Such problems include illiteracy and conservative attitudes of some farmers, limited means (poverty) of the peasants (who constitute the majority) and lack of reliable data and statistics which make any meaningful planning of such scheme unrealistic. Other problems include poor implementation and ineffective monitoring machinery.

### Storage and marketing of agricultural products

Agricultural production without efficient storage facilities and effective marketing strategy will lead to insufficient food production. According to Professor O.B. Antonio of the University of Ibadan during a seminar organized last year by International Merchant Bank in Lagos, annual grain losses due to absence of good storage system stand at 3 million tonnes, representing about ₦600 million in monetary value. He asserted that if storage losses could be reduced by half of its current level, Nigeria's food production would increase by not less than 10 per cent immediately, which means 10 million more mouths fed in Nigeria.

The Professor regretted that inadequate storage system has continued to lead to unnecessary wastage of perishable crops such as vegetables, spices and fruits, when on season only to become scarce and expensive when out of season. There is an urgent need for government apart from setting up the National Grain Storage System — a grain reserve scheme — to intensify storage and marketing of agricultural products in the country.

Furthermore, in order to guarantee food sufficiency for Nigerians, the government must provide a solution to the supply and demand pattern of agricultural products such that storage and marketing exigencies can be tackled in a more coherent and consistent manner. Government cannot do it alone; the financial institutions would have to come out with positive financial response to the issue of developing a national culture for storage and the provision of basic agricultural infrastructure.

### Financial assistance

One can rightly argue that for government efforts at

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food sufficiency for Nigerians by the year 2000 to become a reality attention must be directed to the peasant farmers who represent over 80 per cent of the total farming population in the country. Before now, this group has been neglected in favour of the multinationals and big farm owners who are able to find themselves in the corridors of power to negotiate bank loans and government assistance for their projects.

However, the present administration has begun to reverse these trends. In his 1986 budget speech, President Babangida, as a demonstration of his determination for food production, directed that commercial and merchant banks should respectively allocate at least 15 per cent and 8 per cent of their loans to agriculture. The banks are further directed to reserve 50 per cent of their total lendings for grains production and distribution.

Majority of the banks have complied with this directive. The Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) was established as early as 1973 to provide credit for agricultural production and enhance the availability of storage facilities and promote the marketing of agricultural products.

Financial institutions such as banks, notably First Bank, Union Bank, IBWA/AFRIBANK have been granting loan facilities to farmers for agricultural production as well as livestock, while Savannah Bank, International Bank, Nigerian Merchant Bank have opened more branches in the rural areas in addition to a general improvement in their credit facilities to farmers, and supporting more Nigerians to invest in crop farming, fishing and animal husbandry. Moreover, household names such as May and Baker, CAPL, Ibru Organisation, UAC Agric, have continued to invest substantially in both crop and animal farming. Some small scale farmers have benefited from government's direct Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme established in 1978. There have also been credit facilities for farmers from the African Development Bank while the impact of the World Bank in assisting agricultural production in Nigeria is encouraging.

### Problems of Agriculture

Problems facing agriculture in Nigeria are numerous. They include immigration of rural dwellers to the city centres in

search of jobs and better social amenities. This has resulted in the neglect of agriculture leading to the substitution of food production with food importation. There is also the issue of natural and other hazards such as pests invasion, erosion, desertification, bush fire etc.

While absence of consistent and coherent agricultural policy has added another dimension to the problems of agriculture, corruption and official mismanagement also pose great danger to agricultural production in the country. The opening up of rural areas to development by the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) it is hoped, will take care of the problem of transporting products from the rural areas to the urban centres.

The most serious problem of agricultural production in Nigeria is the threat of population explosion. With an estimated annual growth of 3.3 per cent, the present Nigerian population of some 100 million people will double itself by the year 2035. The population policy of the present government is, therefore welcome, but the problem of compliance and monitoring is still there to contend with.

Other issues that have bearing on agriculture include devaluation of the naira which has led to low purchasing power of Nigerians, local food shortage, adulteration of some manufactured goods and smuggling of food stuff out of the Nigerian borders.

By Taiwo Tayin Rotimi and Tunde Akintola



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## Maryam's leadership

**J**UDGING from her activities in recent times, Mrs. Maryam Babangida has definitely become Nigeria's most visible First Lady. Just last week, the nation witnessed the first *Better Life Fair For Rural Women* organised under her auspices; an event that is unarguably unprecedented in relation to how the role of First Ladies is viewed by the Nigerian public.

Mrs. Babangida it seems, has conspicuously shed the traditional functions of First Ladyship which before now has been limited to the non-contentious social activities of hosting children's end-of-year parties, occasional visits to hospitals and motherless babies homes, receptions for social clubs and other charity functions.

In identifying with the "no to drugs" campaign and, lately, programmes for the betterment of Nigeria's womenfolk, the First Lady has shown herself to be an effective mobiliser and, in essence, an asset to the President by, on the one hand, providing a catalyst for government's corner-stone policy of rural development, and on the other, diverting attention and energies of citizens from problems of a depressed economy to the positive aspect of involving rural women in their own welfare. It is against this background that we view her role as a welcome departure from the traditional ceremonial and informal office of the First Lady.

But at the risk of assuming a kill-joy position, we foresee some danger in this new and unusual role of the First Lady. For one, Mrs. Babangida should recognise the enabling circumstance that has made it possible for her to achieve a measure of success in her programmes. Though she was quoted in a press interview to have said

that she wants the better life programme to thrive better "whether I am here or not," we believe that in a different political arrangement, like the civilian regime we witnessed during the last Republic and the civil government we are about to experience in the Third Republic, it just might be possible that wives of civilian governors may not be too enthusiastic in following whatever precepts that the wife of a civilian President would want to lay down. Our fear is that the better life programme for rural women is an idea that has begun and might end with Mrs. Babangida's tenure in office.

Yet another aspect brings to fore the opposition of persons or groups that may feel that the First Lady is usurping their traditional functions. Though, what Mrs. Babangida is doing right now is not founded on any existing structure, we realise that her effort is to complement that of institutions charged with the formal role of rural integration. Our fear is that in later years, these institutions may not be supportive of this new structure laid down by Mrs. Babangida. We suggest that the First Lady should work within existing state structures to make the programme endure.

Again we wonder why the Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association (NAOWA) has not been very visible in the Better Life Programme of the First Lady. We feel that Mrs. Babangida should gain the confidence of this group which she once led; and make its impact more profound on the Better Life for Rural Women programme.

The task Mrs. Babangida has set for herself and in effect for womenfolk in the country is a laudable one. There must, therefore, be a more comprehensive approach to make the structure succeed and endure.



# The price of negligence



*"Indeed, if we were to sit in judgement over the Big Man, we would pronounce him guilty without batting an eyelid. For his crime, we would record in our judgement register, wilful negligence"*

BY EMENIKE OKORIE

**T**HERE'S a clear, unmistakable gulf between unknowingness and sheer negligence. The one, for the most part, is unintentional and, therefore, excusable. The other is self-inflicted, a mortal sin. Let us illustrate.

For years, centuries in fact, Nigerians (that is, the peoples called Nigerians today) unwittingly sat on gold-mine: the black gold. Of course, they had their groundnut, rubber, cocoa, and palm oil and kernel. There was even iron with which they fashioned their spears, hoes and so on. But nobody — not until just a few decades back — had heard of the *oba* of them all, the almighty petroleum. The ignorance was pardonable.

But, it becomes quite a different ball-game for instance, when a dysentery patient dies because the physician diagnosed and treated migraine. Or a *megida* falls prey to night marauders just because his *megadi*, whom he pays with his hard-earned cash, failed to alert him of the lurking danger. Haba! Or still, when an impressionable, unsuspecting pupil fails his external examinations because his teacher who ought to have known better taught him nonsense, as Fela Amikulapo-Kuti would put it. For all we care, the doctor, night guard and teacher could be locked away to eat beans in Kiri-kiri Prisons for the rest of their lives. They were slack in their lawful duties. In short, negligent.

In many respects, the Nigerian people are the unfortunate dysentery patient, the unlucky house owner and the gullible student, all rolled in one. Conversely, the Big Man who presided over the nation's rural and urban transportation scheme these past decades, on a closer attention, appears like the inattentive doctor, the illiterate teacher or even the wicked *megadi*.

Indeed, if we were to sit in judgement over the Big Man, we would pronounce him guilty without batting an eyelid. For his crime, we would record in

our judgement register, wilful negligence. For his punishment, just because we are lenient souls, we would put him away for life, with hard labour. We would recommend to the authorities, modernisation and expansion of the nation's rail transit system with immediate effect. Away with the archaic coaches and obsolete rail lines, we would say. Our proposed scheme will cover from Badagry to Ikom, through Birnin Gwari to Monguno and Argungu; between Epe and Ajegunle, Yola and Wukari, Ilorin and Kappa...

Our programme, we realise, may sound rather too grandiose and perhaps even unrealistic. There's also the nation's wobbly economy which, some may say, would not be able to sustain such big dreams. Still, we are convinced that only such revolution, and effective integration of modernised rail system into the nation's mass transit scheme can bail out Nigeria's present transportation crisis. For most people today, getting home, to the office and so on, has become a matter of *guerre a mort*. A sheer survival of the fittest. Only that our Big Man, representative of the monied class and the nouveaux riches, is exempted.

Most surprising, however, is that despite the Big Man's well known penchant for imbibing, indeed, falling head over heels for everything foreign — from dresses down to the food he eats — he had failed, these past years, to borrow a leaf from the advanced inter-city rail services in Britain, the United States, West Germany, France, Japan and so on. Or better still, from nearer home, India. Instead, even the much-talked-about Lagos metro-line project, something near the ideal, has been put in the cooler.

Indeed, our sense of the possible derailed long ago. Only a few years back, for instance, Nigeria could easily have afforded to do exactly what the Manchester passenger transport corporation did in Britain a fortnight ago: prepare a £50 million contract for the design, building and operation of the nation's first high technology, light transit system to link the south with the north. Perhaps, we could even have surpassed the British, thanks to petro-naira.

**B**UT, instead, the policy makers, in what appeared like open collaboration with European, American and Japanese businessmen, were busy in Lagos and elsewhere, creating a car craze. As Britain, four years ago, was launching its internationally-acclaimed Tyne-side Metro network, our good old government officials, along with their monied friends, were busy clogging the streets with awe-inspiring custom-designed cars.

Now, the vehicles have since begun to disappear from the streets. Nigerians battle themselves, most times drawing blood, all in an attempt to squeeze into the few available buses. But in London, the British ride in comfort in their specially designed rolling stock. All on account of our Mr. Big Man.

# Wonder in the works

## Egbin gas station promises constant power supply

**T**HE Egbin thermal station gas project is perhaps the best thing to happen to the country's power supply in NEPA's distinctly uninspiring history. Conceived in 1976, Egbin is a 1320-mega watt (mw) wonder in the works with the potential to — literally — turn night into day for many a Nigerian home or business concern. In energy circles, the project is being touted as the ultimate solution to the incalculable number of man hours and great resources that are wasted daily as a result of power cuts. Says a NEPA staff: "With Egbin, we have the potentials of making black-outs a thing of the past."

The process is simple, almost childishly so. Nigeria has proven gas reserves of about 53 million standard cubic feet, most of it associated gas, that is, gas "mixed" with crude oil. Only 10 per cent is being used, the rest is flared. Four hundred and thirty one million cubic feet of this will be flushed daily through the length of the 500 km NSPC Escravos — Lagos pipeline. Destination: Egbin; where it will power six units of the thermal station, each of which has a capacity of 220 mega watts. Together, at full blast, the six will add a whopping 44 per cent to NEPA's total installed capacity which currently stands at 3,000 m w.

Considering that the nation's total electricity consumption hovers around 2,000 mw, life without black-outs is, at least on paper, not so far-fetched. Before now, the station was using costly High-Pour-Fuel-Oil (HPFO). Because it is neck-deep in debt (consumers owe it an estimated N500 million, it owes others N3 billion), NEPA could only afford to keep two of the Egbin units active. Test runs to determine the pressure resistance of the 36-inch pipes being used for the gas project, already on, will be completed at month end.

However, in spite of the potential implications of the Egbin project for power supply, it is not going to be light, light for evermore. NEPA officials would not be drawn into making a categorical statements on the specific implications of the current effort to improve power supply. Volunteered a staff of NEPA's research unit: "All things being equal, power supply will remain stable." NEPA's chief spokesman, Adejumo Adesola — Macauley adds: "There is nothing like

uninterrupted power supply anywhere in the world, not even in Britain and other advanced countries. All we can say is that outages (blackouts) will be minimised."

The NEPA officials refuse to stick out their necks for several reasons. Says the research unit staff: "Even if you just serviced your car now, you cannot be sure it will get you home." Theft, he says, is a problem. Earlier this year in Lagos, some people attempting to steal NEPA-20 kilo watt ampere transformer were arrested. The transformer has the capacity of supplying power to an area as large as Isiko in Lagos. Last month, three men were apprehended at Akure, Ondo State for stealing cables worth N40,000.

Illegal connections pose a problem too. NEPA, according to Cornelius Ogunrinde, distribution director



• Egbin gas plant, and (inset) Mines and Power Minister Sheriff Musa. Uninterrupted power supply?

(Lagos North), lost N2.8 million within the last five years through unapproved connection by military men at Ipa Housing Estate, Lagos. Most of these crimes are committed with the complicity of NEPA officials.

As a result of these problems and others, NEPA officials, in spite of their enthusiasm, are loath to raise public expectation unduly. Offers Macauley: "All we can say is that we will do our best."

More worrying to the organisation was the Federal Government's rejection of NEPA's request that it charges be increased by 600 per cent. According to an official, "we spend 36 kobo to generate a unit of electricity. Yet, we cannot charge more than six kobo." The official estimates that NEPA loses an average of three naira everyday on one Nigerian home alone that makes use of 10 units daily.

The reason for this government — approved 500 per cent loss on each unit can be found in politics. Explains a government source: "The go-ahead for NEPA to increase its tariff had almost been given when the protests over the part removal of the fuel subsidy took place." Because of the fear of repercussions, continues the source, government backed out, pledging instead that it would support NEPA's efforts to get loans from the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other agencies.

In spite of its problems, NEPA's publicity blitz on the Egbin gas project has effectively ensured one thing: the public would be less willing now to swallow excuses about pythons being responsible for power cuts.

By Paul Nwabulwu

# Eyes in the sky

## Government considers request for satellite surveillance

**N**IGERIA may be on the way to enjoying the benefits of space-age technology. Two weeks ago, the ministers of Aviation Air Vice-Marshal Anthony Okpeter, Science and Technology, Professor Emmanuel Emovon and Communications, Colonel David Mark jointly submitted a memorandum to the Federal Government on the need for the application of space science and technology to development in Nigeria. The focus of the three ministers, according to informed sources, was on "remote sensing."

Remote sensing, a term now synonymous with space surveillance technology is accomplished by the use of cameras, scanners or radar systems mounted on manned and unmanned space satellites. The relatively new technology is basically used to obtain information, photographically or electronically on the earth's natural resources and forewarn on possible natural disasters. According to sources, this aspect seems to be the particular concern of the ministers.

It is said that the ministers have drawn the attention of government to the potential areas of application of remote sensing in Nigeria to include the monitoring and evaluation of natural resources in relation to agriculture and annual crop yield estimation, mapping; petroleum and mineral exploration, human and animal population estimation; monitoring of coastal erosion, desertification, floods and pollution.

Accordingly, the ministry of science and technology has already made provisions for the National Remote Sensing Centre, in the fifth national development plan. However, it was learnt that earlier this year government had approved the site formerly proposed for the abandoned multi-million naira aerostat balloon project at Panyam, near Jos to be used as the permanent site for the National Remote Sensing Centre. The Ministry of Communications is already concluding arrangements to transfer the site of the discontinued balloon project to the Science and Technology Ministry in accordance with the directives of the Federal government.

The *African Guardian* learnt that the choice of the site was based on technological reasons which include maximum land coverage of antenna and low ambient temperature. But the joint

memorandum of the ministers of Aviation, Communications and Science and Technology has as its pivot the request from Government of N350 million (\$70 million) which is considered the realistic estimate for the project when it takes off in the fifth development plan.

Last year only, N5 million had been approved for the remote sensing centre by the former Ministry of National Plan-



Emovon and (left) Mark: Manpower exists for remote sensing centre



Okpeter: Taking Nigeria into space technology

memorandum of the ministers of Aviation, Communications and Science and Technology has as its pivot the request from Government of N350 million (\$70 million) which is considered the realistic estimate for the project when it takes off in the fifth development plan. Last year only, N5 million had been approved for the remote sensing centre by the former Ministry of National Plan-

Out of this, only N250,000 was spent largely on feasibility studies. Although subsequent studies followed, the project could not take off because of short-fall in government finance.

Sources say that the three federal cabinet members in requesting for this amount pointed to the fact that in 1976, the cost of the remote sensing project including ground receiving station operation was estimated at \$22 million (N110 million). This excluded the operational cost for the execution of the project which was then to take five years.

It was learnt that 169 organisations and institutions use remote sensing

technology in just six states, with the largest concentration of users in Lagos state, followed by Kaduna and Oyo states respectively. Of institutions that already use remote sensing, sources close to the department of Federal Office of Statistics reveal that 53.8 per cent made up of all companies, research institutes and the Nigeria Armed Forces.

A survey of the six states also show that there are 122 professionally qualified Nigerians in the area of remote sensing in the six states. Of this number 17 hold diploma certificates, 27 hold Bachelor of Science degrees, 21 hold Masters degrees and 42 are Ph.D holders. It is said that the ministers believe that with these figures, there exists adequate manpower in the country for the proposed remote sensing centre.

If the request for the N350 million is granted by the Federal Government, Nigeria is likely to join the league of third world countries, including Brazil and India currently applying space technology for development purposes.

By Wale Akin Aina and Abdul Orob.

# Feud in the kingdom

*Modebe's deposition raises fear of disintegration*

**T**HE Obi of Onitsha, Ofala Okechukwu Okagbue II, is averse to disobedience, and as such does not spare recalcitrants. Typically, on September 6, he deposed one of his red cap chiefs, Professor Anthony Modebe, the Ogene Onira of Onitsha, for insubordination. But as Modebe stoutly resists his removal, there are strong indications that the ancient kingdom of Onitsha is heading for disintegration.

A man of vast riches whose family owns choice areas in Onitsha, Modebe the former administrator of Onitsha province in the defunct Republic of Biafra, is expected to use his enormous wealth and influence to challenge the action of the Obi. But traditionalists in Onitsha say the office of the revered monarch is sacrosanct, and his decision to strip Modebe of his title irreversible.

Modebe's ouster, *The African Guardian* gathered, is a spill over from an intractable land dispute between the Obikporo family (Modebe's kindred) and the Oreze family of Onitsha and his defiance of Obi's order for an amicable settlement of issues arising from the dispute between the two prominent families. At the Onitsha High Court on October 24, 1980, the Oreze family instituted a court action against Obikporo clan claiming the exclusive ownership of Amezala land in Onitsha. But Obikporo people claimed joint ownership of the land with the Oreze family. An impasse then ensued.

But Modebe, then Oghuoba (Political head) of Onitsha asked the permission of Justice Nnaemeka Onwueaegbu, to settle the case out of court. That permission was gleefully granted. At his official residence on 47, Tavia Street, on October 28 that year, Modebe, a professor of agriculture, was alleged to have "surprisingly" asked his kindred to agree that the land belonged to Oreze family, and that if that was accepted, he would "persuade the Oreze family to give Obikporo one third of the land... and withdraw the land suit". There was said to be a pin drop silence. Modebe was accused of pettily and a wide chasm between him and his kinsmen was created. The court case was re-opened and in May, 1986, judgement was given in favour of Obikporo village. "All through the celebrations marking the victory of this case, Chief

A.N. Modebe deliberately absented himself", sources say.

However, his people were unperturbed. As they erroneously reasoned that like the Biblical prodigal son, Modebe would ultimately trace back his roots. They misjudged. Instead of soliciting the support of his people when he was vying for the highly coveted office of the Ogene of Onitsha, (senior member of Obi's cabinet) Modebe allegedly consorted with the villages of Ogbosha, Mgbelikeke and Umuikem.

"This is against our tradition and a se-



• Obi Okagbue. Against the odds

rious violation of our custom", lamented his kindred. But seriously enough, and despite of the fact that Modebe's kinsmen and women boycotted his coronation, Ofala Okagbue bestowed him with the title of the Ogene of Onitsha at a colourful ceremony.

"As soon as he got power", said one of the leading members of Obikporo clan, "Modebe unleashed a reign of terror against us". He was alleged to have ostracised his kindred from attending meetings and other social cum traditional functions organised by Onitsha people.

Apparently afraid of a possible breakdown of law and order in Obikporo the Obi asked Modebe to make peace with his kindred. Modebe remained adamant. Then the Onitsha monarch, in a letter of July 18 this year suspended the Ogene Onira of Onitsha, and his young

brother, Chief Charles Modebe, a legal luminary as the Ojiba-Inwagwa of Onitsha, from his cabinet. Among other injunctions, the Obi's letter said that "pending the restoration of peace in Obikporo, all families shall bury their dead quietly and this is without exception. First and second burial ceremonies including attendance by the public, are prohibited".

But the Ogene seemed not to have complete faith in the Obi. Last August 27 and 28, he organised an elaborate and boisterous burial ceremony for the late Ezeckel Ezeogu, a former official of Public Works Department, Lagos, who had died in July. He was not done yet. A writ of summons was filed at the Onitsha High Court in which the Ogene queried the right of the Obi to ban the Obikporo village from giving their dead elaborate burial. Palace workers say the Obi was highly irritated on being served with a copy of the summons.

But he had a solution to this festering sore. After due consultation with members on his cabinet, the Obi rebuffed the Ogene out of office, saying that it has become clear that "his dialogue of disloyalty and irregular behaviour are all well thought out and if anything, serves to hold my office and person in constant contempt and ridicule". Declaring Modebe unworthy of that high office, the Obi who is also chairman of the Anambra State Council of Traditional Rulers, ordered the deposed Ogene to return all the paraphernalia and insignia of office to his palace.

By last Friday Modebe was yet to comply with the order. When *The African Guardian* sought his reaction to his deposition, the aved Ogene retorted rather angrily, "I don't want to talk to the press now. I will call you when I am ready". But a minority group, from Obikporo, had met last week at 47 Tavia Road, Onitsha and voted for the deposed Ogene. The group declared the Obi's action as "unconstitutional, unfair, biased and against natural justice".

Yet the other members of Obikporo clan who appear to constitute the majority of an emergency meeting last Tuesday supported the action of Obi Okagbue. They resolved that the Obi has exclusive right to remove from his cabinet any member of the cabinet who in his opinion exhibits any act of disloyalty to his person or the throne. The Obi's decision appears final. One palace worker said last week that the traditional ruler "has closed Modebe's case file".

By Mike Ubani in Onitsha

## Cheerless guardsmen

Army takes charge as confidence in police recedes

**F**.N.E. Vesse never thought he would see his car again. On Thursday, May 19, this year, the car, a Peugeot 505 saloon-make, was stolen at gun-point from Vesse's driver, Samuel Edosa. Edosa and Vesse's 65-year-old wife, Hannah, on their way back from Warri where they had gone to buy food items, were forcibly stopped by two gun-toting men. Pointing the pistol at the windscreen, one of the robbers ordered the old woman out. She hastily obeyed. The robbers then coolly pumped bullets into Edosa because he disobeyed their instruction to let go of the keys. They then drove off, after dumping him in a swamp.

After hours of wracking anxiety, Vesse, a reverend, was told of the fate of his wife and long-serving, faithful driver. Miraculously, Edosa survived the many bullets that entered his body at point-blank range. Hannah, after she had trekked about a kilometre to the Oleh police station to complain, was asked to make a statement.

But almost three months later, on August 1, when Vesse had given up hope, the impossible happened. The car surfaced. The police had nothing to do with it. The army, precisely the 20 Air Mobile Battalion, Effurun, near Warri, was responsible for the miracle.

Vesse is just one of many indigenes and residents of Warri and its environs that have come to depend more and more on this army unit in the area when confronted by armed robberies and other instances of man's inhumanity to man. John Ede, a school teacher at Effurun explains why. "If you go to a police station, they will not satisfy you. It is 'come today, come tomorrow'."

Other cases abound. Okpesa Egukhaeri was employed as a security guard by a community in the riverine area of Bendel State. But for six long months he did not receive his pay. A report to the police only elicited an unsatisfactory response: contact a lawyer. But Egukhaeri had a better idea. He took his case to the same army unit. Fortified by two armed soldiers, he made a trip to the village. Within ten minutes of their arrival, the backlog of his salaries was



■ Vesse (right) gets his car from Anchie Army to the rescue

nestling cosily in his pocket.

Predictably, neither the lawyers nor the police are amused. Broderick Bozimo, chairman of the Warri branch of the Nigerian Bar Association was scathing in his condemnation of the usurpation by soldiers of "a role which is constitutionally reserved for the Nigeria Police Force exclusively". On the charge that many hardened criminals are freed because of technicalities and other legal sleights of hand, Bozimo puts the blame on the limitations of prosecutors: "A prosecutor who has no knowledge of the law cannot compete with a lawyer who can cite a section that the prosecutor cannot reply to."

Esharedede Obukohwoatwodua, an Ughelli teacher is not impressed by this argument. In his view, the lawyers are unhappy because the money they get when cases drag on indefinitely has been severely depleted by the Robin Hood activities of the soldiers.

Whatever the truth is, the merits of the lawyer police case are not likely to be appreciated by C.I. Chileka and others who have benefitted from the extra-legal activities of soldiers. When his house was burgled last July, Chileka turned to soldiers when his report to the police did not yield any fruits. The soldiers went into action and within two weeks three suspects were arrested. The suspects took the soldiers to the man who bought the colour television and video machine, from whom the items were retrieved.

Inevitably, there have been clashes between the police and soldiers. In Vesse's case, for example, there was some jostling over who should take the credit

After the finding of the car became known, the Divisional Police Officer in Oleh, on August 4, wrote to the Commanding Officer of the 20 Airmobile Battalion, Lt. Colonel Ishaya Anchie, asking that the vehicles be released to him for onward delivery to Vesse. The Commanding Officer, instead, requested that the police appraise him of all the efforts made to get back the car since its loss was reported. The D.P.O. instead contacted his boss, David Oladipo, Assistant Police Commissioner, Delta Zone Command. Oladipo's subsequent letter echoing his subordinate's request received the same fate: Anchie turned it down.

Instead, on Monday August 15, Anchie personally handed the car keys to a relieved Vesse. Anchie explained the rationale for the soldiers' activities. Civilians, he said, bring their problems to the soldiers. "The soldiers do not leave their barracks to meet the civilians", the army officer declared. He concluded that soldiers cannot fold their arms when a man in trouble pleads for help from them.

The soldiers are not the outlaws that their actions might imply they are. They receive some tacit official support. After their recent raids on markets in Warri and environs men of the 20 Airmobile battalion asked the public to come and identify the recovered items through announcements over the Bendel Broadcasting Service, Warri.

In spite of its adverse implications for the role of law, it is not likely that this unique approach to crime prevention and justice will end anytime soon.

By Paul Nwabukwu with Mike Oghende in Warri.

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# Different strokes

Howe tours Africa as Thatcher hammers the Commonwealth

**E**VEN as the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, returns to London, September 19, after a week-long trip to Africa, political observers are still split over the possible political motive behind the diplomatic shuttle. Official explanations are that Howe's visit to Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique, with brief stop-overs in Sudan and Ethiopia, was to enable him to assess, among other

and Ethiopia were apparently made to express British sympathies over the catastrophic floods in Khartoum, and the drought and famine in northern Ethiopia, it is not clear why Mozambique was included in his itinerary. Analysts suspect that it may not have been mere coincidence that Howe's trip wound up in Maputo (Mozambican capital) only a few days after the racist chief, P. W. Botha, also paid a state visit

(his first ever to an African country) to Mozambique.

Perhaps, Howe's presence in Maputo shortly after Botha's, was meant as Britain's tacit endorsement of Mozambique's bold, albeit controversial talks with Pretoria. Which, to some extent, goes to support Prime Minister Thatcher's insistence (to the annoyance of most of the Commonwealth nations), that racism in South Africa cannot be erased through such

arm-twisting methods as comprehensive economic sanctions, but rather through round-table negotiations.

The surprise, however, is that while blocking the use of economic measures against Pretoria, Thatcher is today reportedly adopting the same method in London against the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Shridath Ramphal, who is said to have fallen out of favour with Thatcher because of his tough stance against the apartheid regime in South Africa. In an attempt to clip the wings of the institution (if not to cripple it entirely) and reduce the influence of its members, the British authorities are said to have put the secretariat under severe financial squeeze.

The rent paid by the secretariat for its premises in the West End of London and elsewhere is said to have been sharply raised, sometimes by several hundred percentage points. In fact, the secretariat is expected this year alone to see its rent bill rise from about £32,000 to £1 million. And this, it has to pay out of an annual budget of £6.8 million. In one of the instances, the British government reportedly hiked the rent in one of the buildings occupied by the secretariat, from £12,000 to £230,000 — something akin to giving the secretariat a quit notice. There are also reports of plans by the authorities to withdraw one of the houses given to the secretariat rent-free by the Queen. It is to be handed over to the Prince of Wales who intends to leave Kensington Palace, his present home.



• Moi and Howe: Violation of Human rights on their agenda

things, a variety of aid projects in which Britain plays a part. He was also to raise human rights issues with Kenya's President, Daniel arap Moi, discuss Tanzania's economic problems with Ali Hassan Mwinyi, as well as hold talks with Yoweri Museveni over Uganda's programme of post-war reconstruction and reconciliation.

Beyond this, watchers of the British political scene have sought to link Howe's trip to recent efforts (beginning with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's African tour early this year) to mend the cracks in the British-African friendship, particularly within the Commonwealth. This appears correct, in view of the fact that all the countries visited by the foreign minister (except Mozambique, and his unscheduled stop-over in Addis Ababa) were formerly British colonies.

While Howe's brief visits to Sudan



• Thatcher: Subtle sanctions against the Commonwealth

**A**S secretariat officials in the rent-free apartment get set to pack out, the Commonwealth Institute in Kensington is also bracing up for the expected 12 per cent cut in its government grant. It would be the second successive cut in its annual grant of £2.5 million. To be able to survive, the institute is reportedly planning substantial staff reductions.

In all, these harsh economic measures, according to diplomatic sources, are only part of larger, concerted plan by the authorities (the Foreign and Commonwealth offices inclusive) to thin down the British-Commonwealth links. Thus, analysts are not sure of what Sir Geoffrey Howe — at a time London clearly wants to reduce British-Commonwealth connection — hoped to gain from his extensive African tour.

By Emenike Okorie

## DIPLOMACY

## Set for challenges

## Non-Aligned mantle of leadership falls on Yugoslavia

It was perhaps not just a stroke of chance that when it came to choosing between Cyprus, Yugoslavia and Malta (the three European members) as the next leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) last week in Nicosia, Cyprus, the mantle easily went to Yugoslavia. The choice was symbolic. It came as a reflection of the desire by most of the member-nations to resurrect the organisation's original principles, and set it on a new footing.

The four-day conference of Non-aligned foreign ministers had opened September 8, with calls for far-reaching changes, indeed general overhaul, to enable the movement meet new challenges in the international system. At the fore-front in the clamour for revisions, were the Nigerian and Yugoslav foreign ministers, Major-General Ike Nwachukwu and Bulimir Loncar. Gen Nwachukwu had specifically demanded a "critical re-evaluation" of the movement with special emphasis on "the conceptual framework". According to him, NAM was in desperate need of a "new invigorating spirit, new dynamic programmes and new policy objectives".

According to NAM's tradition, however, the chairmanship ought to have gone to a Latin American nation (it rotates among the various regions making up the organisation). But, when neither Nicaragua nor Indonesia (the two nations vying for the post) were able to garner enough support even from their own regions, a compromise candidate had to be sought. Yugoslavia was selected as new leader of the movement for the next three years, perhaps in deference to Josip Broz Tito, the late Yugoslav leader who played a leading role in the formation of the movement in 1961. Other founding fathers of the organisation were Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) and Sukarno (Indonesia).

But as membership of the movement rose to 101, there have been a gradual erosion of some of the ideals set by the founding fathers. The principle of non-commitment to either of the super-power blocs, for instance, has frequently been violated by a good number of the member-nations, on the basis of economic pragmatism. The movement itself

has not been able to rise beyond mere rhetoric in its attempts to play a dominant role in world politics. In fact, just before last week's Cyprus conference, there were even suggestions in some quarters that NAM may well have become antiquated, and should be



• Mugabe

• Nwachukwu

scrapped.

The outgoing chairman, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's tenure seemed to have been the turning point, giving way to the clamour for a "new Non-Alignment." Mugabe, as chairman since 1986, was especially faced with new challenges, arising on the one hand, from the sudden thaw in the super-power relations, and on the other, from the setting up in Lagos early last year, of the Concert of Medium Powers. The new organisation was variously seen by many as being either complementary, or contradictory to NAM.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that Zimbabwe, one of the original 16 members of the Lagos Forum should pull out, claiming that it was not yet a medium power.

Thus, the problem of NAM, for the most part, appears to be how to gear up for the challenges of a changing international environment.

By Emenike Okoro

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Game of the foxes

## Black activists flee, Pretoria hoes embarrassment

APARTHEID chief, P.W. Botha, has a penchant for wriggling out of very tight political corners. Mid last week, he was his usual self at the height of the international diplomatic furore generated by the escape of three Black activists into the U.S. Consulate in Johannesburg. In a deft move to remove the bite from the ensuing embarrassment, Pretoria quickly announced general amnesty for the prominent anti-apartheid activists — Murphy Morobe, 32, Mohammed Valli Moosa, 34, and Vusi Khanyile, 37. Foreign Minister "Pik" Botha had assured Wednesday that they were free to go home and would not be arrested if they left the American Consulate.

As would be expected, however, neither their lawyer, Krish Naidoo, nor the activists themselves believed the authorities. For good reasons. First, Pretoria does not have a good record for keeping its words. Besides, Morobe, Moosa and Khanyile, in a joint statement read by Naidoo, said they wanted much more than just being allowed to walk out of the consulate. They asked to be free "of any restrictions, or threat of re-detention." They then demanded the lifting of the current state-of-emergency in the country, and uncon-

ditional release of all detainees.

The three activists were detained under the state-of-emergency regulations in a Johannesburg prison where they shared a cell since last year. Somehow, they managed to escape from a hospital where they had been taken for medical check-up. Murphy Morobe and Mohammed Valli, detained July last year after several months of evading arrest, were both executive members of the United Democratic Front (UDF), a coalition of anti-apartheid organisations. Vusi Khanyile himself was President of the UDF-affiliated National Education Crisis Committee.

As it is, analysts believe that no matter what Pretoria says, the freedom of the detainees cannot be guaranteed — not until the several other political prisoners held under the state-of-emergency regulations are set free. The problem is that Botha is hardly likely now to do this; meaning, of course, that Morobe, Moosa and Khanyile may be in for a long stay at the American consulate. Its Ambassador to South Africa, Edward Perkins has promptly informed the racists that he will not do anything that will force them to leave against their will.

By Emenike Okoro

# New game plans

## Dukakis unfolds new campaign strategies

IT could have been inspired by the urgency of the deadline his staff anxiously set for themselves. Or it could have come from his own guts. But all through last week, Michael Dukakis spoke and worked as if the final riot act has been read to him. Gone was the campaign-killing, above-the-affray stance. Gone was the irritating, racy speech style. And almost going was his standard serious mien. It was quite a transformation.

His speech at Georgetown University, Washington DC drew rounds of unprecedented ovation from thousands of his student listeners. He has apparently been asked to speak a little more studiously than he used to, while allowing his cadences to help set up the moods he prefers. Luckily the Georgetown outing showed that he is trying to master this new rope, just as well. Aides also appear to have got him to agree to seize with both hands any reasonable chance he gets to get even with George Bush.

For now, they will like to have him spend some time responding—point by point, charge for charge—to the damaging criticisms from Bush. The Georgetown speech, for instance, was used to address charges that he is weak on foreign policy and defence. The counter-offensive began with the position that the issue remains one of having stamina for standing up to American adversaries. Then, he turned the heat on his opponent, faulting him for what he described as failure to resist pressure from the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini over the Iranian arms sales, and failure to face the moral crisis of Iran-gate.

It was the first time Dukakis would touch comprehensively on his defence policy. He said he will maintain a strong nuclear defence force, beef up the conventional forces (carriers, tanks, etc.),

clear up the "mess" at the Defence Department, and use force to protect US interests abroad, and to fight terrorism. The Intermediate Nuclear Treaty (INF) was praised. But he charged that US diplomacy toward the Soviet Union remains one of reacting to moves by Mikhail Gorbachev. The US has to begin to take the initiative, he said, rather than leave itself in the position of having to always respond to Soviet agendas.



• Dukakis and Bush (right). Now for the real stuff

With the enthusiastic response from the students urging him on, Dukakis explained that what he is against, is the Reagan administration's penchant for literally throwing money at defence projects and procurements. Aides later emphasised that his focus will be to take a look at the overall problem of American political and economic power, together with new challenges like drug trafficking and political brutalities of dictatorships in Latin America. Democratic leaders said they were generally impressed with the speech because, according to them, their candidate had all along been criticising the Reagan defence policy without specifying details of his own policy.

Back on the West Coast, Bush continued to press his case that the Democratic candidate cannot be trusted to pursue strong foreign and defence policies. "He is too negative about America," Bush said of his opponent. "He does not see America as the leader

of the West," he went on, adding that if "America does not lead the free world, the free world cannot have a leader."

President Reagan, on the hustings for Bush in Missouri, promptly chipped in to say that he was "surprised" about what he called Dukakis' "transformation" on the defence issue. Bush's defence and foreign policy position was also enhanced earlier in the week when former President Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski agreed to join an elite group of pros and egg-heads he (Bush) set up to advise him on security matters. Besides, polls continued to favour him (giving him an eight percentage point lead in

some cases); although other polls are now showing that both men are dead even. Worse still for Dukakis, government figures released September 14 revealed that this year's US trade deficit has been around 19 per cent below the rate for last year, meaning, of course, the nation's trade and overall economic performance is somewhat positive.

The problem Bush has now is how to fight the widespread belief that eight years of Re-

publican control are enough reason for the country to head in a new direction. In fact, even Republican economic policies have not been all that popular. Bush probably got a chance to feel public pulse on the matter when over 500 demonstrators, protesting a number of Republican policies, blocked the entrance of a San Francisco, California hotel where he was addressing Republican leaders September 15.

The Democrats are counting on their new campaign and hoping that it is now his own turn to tumble in the ratings. Dukakis' aides themselves are expecting that in two weeks they would have managed to turn his recent misfortunes around. They believe he stands to gain eventually, from the stance of resisting pressure to get in on the mudslinging act, adding that he is better placed than Bush to take advantage of the current issue-oriented phase of the campaigns.

By Chukwemeka Gahla

## BURMA

## Rangoon in disarray

Opposition leaders snub government election plans

**N**EARLY all the demands of the anti-government demonstrators — abolition of one-party system, conduct of a multi-party general election and so on — have been conceded by the ruling government. Yet, Burmese protesters, out on the streets for many weeks now, are not satisfied. They are not just continuing their protests, they are, in fact, asking current leader, Dr. Maung Maung to relinquish power entirely.

In the past week, the protests shifted to demands for total political, social and economic reforms. A new opposition party called League for Democracy and Peace has also been formed and it is jointly headed by U Nu, the first prime minister in 1948; former retired General and Defence Minister Tin Oo, and Asung Sang Su Kyi, daughter of Burmese founding father Aung San.

Apart from the former ministers and retired military men who mostly make up the group, a number of splinter organisations are expected to join soon. These organisations are part of the groups that have been fighting Rangoon for over 25 years now.

Maung Maung, a British-trained lawyer, now chairman of the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) promised the dissidents that he would conduct a general election based on multi-party system by December this year. The dissidents are saying that they do not want the government to supervise the election. They want the formation of an interim government, composed of respected citizens and accepted by the people, to handle the conduct of the election.

Their fear is that if the present gov-

ernment handles the election, the exercise may not be free and fair. They have formed a provincial government headed by General Aung Gyi, once Gen. Ne Win's number two man. They have also suggested to President Maung that they should be allowed to supervise the general multi-party election, but he did not agree with them. In the past few months, over 3,000 people are estimated to have been killed during massive demonstrations against the ruling Socialist regime. Recent clashes are said to have claimed about 1,500 lives. At the Insein prison in Rangoon, there were widespread shooting by the army, following a jail-break attempt by over 2,000 inmates.

For now, leaders of the opposition groups have said that they will not cooperate with President Maung Maung, in respect of his offer to conduct multi-party elections in December this year. On the other hand, the opposition groups are said to have designated October 9 as the day they will conduct their own election.

By Augustine Anyanwu

## Papal misadventure

Pope's Southern African tour runs into embarrassment

**I**T was the last lap of a normal ecumenical trip. Pope John Paul was headed for another rousing reception. Then, all of a sudden, things began to fall apart or so it seemed. The Air Zimbabwean jet that was taking him to Maseru, Lesotho — the third country to be visited after Zimbabwe and Botswana on his ten-day African tour — ran into bad weather and made an unscheduled landing at the very place the Pope wanted to avoid — Pretoria, in the racist enclave.

As if that was not enough embarrassment, gunmen (September 13) hijacked a bus that was carrying more than 70 Catholic pilgrims (including nuns and school children) going to welcome the Pontiff in Maseru, some 20 minutes after his arrival to continue the trip. The hijackers were members of Lesotho Liberation Army (formed by elements from the proscribed Basuto Congress Party (BCP) opposed to overthrown former Prime Minister Chief Lebua Jonathan).

They (BCP) demanded to see the British High Commissioner and the Lesothoan King, Moshoeshe II. They

also wanted an audience with the Pope and two detained leaders of the BCP. The authorities did not yield to their demands. Instead, as darkness fell Tuesday night, a commando team of South African and Lesothoan security personnel pounced on them. In the ensuing shoot-out three out of the four gunmen were killed immediately, one was arrested and two of the hostages died from the injuries probably sustained when one of the grenades the hijackers were carrying exploded. The hijackers' reports said had boarded the bus at Quthusnek, 150 kilometres (95 miles) southeast of Maseru, apparently disguised as pilgrims.

Ironically, the first ever trip the 66-year old Pontiff was making to that region came against the background of increasing repression in South Africa together with Pretoria's destabilisation strategy against its neighbours. He had left Johannesburg's Jan Smuts Airport by car to Lesotho, escorted by South African security forces. South African Foreign Minister, Roelof "Pik" Botha was the only top government official that met the Pontiff in his short and



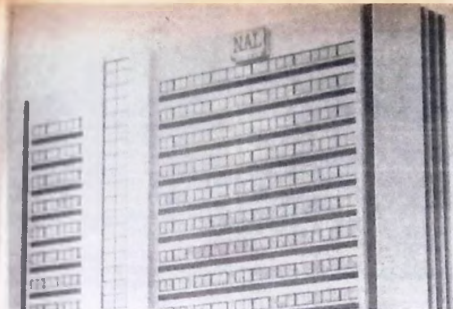
■ Pope Paul: Unexpected quest of Botha

unscheduled stay in the city.

Pope John Paul began his Lesotho tour after visiting Zimbabwe (September 10-15), where he said he is against the use of violence to achieve peace. This, in essence, sounded like his previous warnings that Catholic priests should steer clear from politics. Recently, when he received, in special audience, members of the joint delegation of the South African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) and the South African Council of Churches, he equally used the occasion to "pray that the Christian communities in South Africa will foster only peaceful means of responding to the difficulties of present situation."

Mozambique and Swaziland were the other countries he visited.

By Chukwuemeka Gahin with reports from Augustine Anyanwu.



• NAL Towers: Costly but still lures

## Sunset on serenity

Upper class tenants in Lagos now shift abode

**B**ATTERED by an economic downturn, the real estate market in Lagos is experiencing a new shift. In an effort to leave more money in their pockets, people in the upper income bracket are no longer ogling posh homes in serene Ikoyi and Victoria Island. Real estate agents say that even traditional residents of these areas now see to own homes in Ikeja, Yaba and Surulere all on mainland Lagos. The trend has affected office space and residential housing. Though real estate prices have gone up by over 1000 per cent in the last ten years, the impact is becoming more acutely felt in recent times.

The past five years have witnessed few new developments in the real estate industry than in the previous five. Though this has not affected the commercial properties as much as residential, it has reached a stage that developers tag "property crisis." Mr. Bode Adediji, managing director, Epega and Company, in Lagos says his company has not developed any property since 1983. Landlords too have not been able to put up buildings for as long. In the end, the real estate industry will be hard put to counter the fall in available lettable space.

However, it is not the fault of developers and landlords. Cost of building materials has risen astronomically over the last five years. Available data indicate that it costs about N40 per square foot to build a house in 1983. Today it



• Adediji: Situation not hopeless

has gone up 300 per cent to about N160 per square foot. When mirrored against a tonne of steel that sold for N250 five years ago and now selling for N2,500, the picture becomes clearer, says Adediji. Nor is that all. A 200-foot square piece of land where one could be found sells for up to N70,000 in Surulere. In Ikeja the same is between N150,000 and N300,000, while it could be anywhere between N500,000 and N1.5 million in the low density areas of Ikoyi and Victoria Island. These choice estates could be had for 30-50 per cent less five years ago. One reason given by sources at Jide Taiwo and Company, estate surveyors and valuers, is that except for

corporate bodies, there are so many cases of defaults in rent payments, so that increasing rent in these times of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) would be counter-productive. That is not to say that rents are getting cheaper. A tenant still has to dole out N70,000 a year for a minimum of two years to lease a 4-bedroom duplex or N140,000 for a 2-wing duplex in Victoria Island and Ikoyi up 10-20 per cent from two years ago. The same size of homes attract N30,000 to N40,000 in Apapa and N12-15,000 in Lagos mainland.

To wriggle out of such costs, corporate bodies are moving away from high-rent districts to medium rent districts in the mainland. While this shift tends to push up prices, in the mainland, a natural reaction has been for the traditional mainlanders to move to the suburbs in search of cheaper housing. Also there appears to be an upswing in people buying ready-made properties or uncompleted projects to old ones for completion or renovation.

Although, the cost of such houses easily dwarfs the rental picture in the short term, estate agents believe that the payback period would usually be less than it would, if a bank had financed a new home at this time. However, with the naira at a low ebb, Nigerians resident abroad are cashing in on the windfall. According to one agent, a prominent sportsman in America recently bought a bungalow in Suru-Lere for

N250,000. The original owner may have got a price, 400 per cent above cost but the buyer may have saved some N150,000 had he built a new home on a new piece of land.

The situation is a little different from what is happening in the business district of central Lagos. Rent for first class office space, down by up to 30 per cent before SAP is picking up. Depending on location, quality and type of services available, office rentals are between N30 - N40 per square foot. But more than the rent, developers worry more about occupancy rate.

As a rule, a skyscraper or a block of offices should have a 70 per cent occu-

pancy rate at all times in order to pay for itself in good time and keep up with necessary repairs and services. NAL Towers, the newest show-case on the Marina, Lagos, rents for about N38 per square foot and is fully occupied. Savannah building, on Broad Street costs the same; it is newer, and already 75 per cent filled. But for only N28 per square foot. Financial Trust House is only 40 per cent taken up. This level is considered depressing because the developer can not earn enough to service the building and maintain the facilities.

Even so, Adediji says that the situation is not hopeless. Even if Bologun and Nnamdi Azikiwe areas of central Lagos are tight, every developer of first class office space has a pre-conception of the type of tenants they want, and are ready to wait. But accessibility is a big plus for office accommodation. For example, after Kingsway Stores fell in the rationalisation effort of UACN, the store along Marina was carved up into small units for retailers. The shopping centre is renting for an unprecedented N55 per square foot. But small retailers cashing in on the Kingsway name and its easy-to-reach location believe they are getting their money's worth.

For the same reason of convenience, Ikoyi and Victoria Island areas appear to be flexing some competitive muscle with Lagos Island. In the past, these offices could be got for less than N30 per square foot. But as residents, especially expatriates, want to work closer to their homes, there is some demand pressure on the few available office blocks. To keep up, whole blocks of residential flats are more and more being converted into offices in the last five years.

Though rents in these class of business districts appear not to have been affected by the dearth in new development, the real estate valuer and architect's jobs have been dented. While marginal and small operators have either gone under or diversified into other areas, the big players like Knight, Frank and Rutley, Nigeria Limited, (KFRN) remain aloof with emphasis on maintenance, services and rent collection.

Indeed, the whole story of prime office and residential rent is not told until the estate agent adds cost for upkeep; and the additional charges can be substantial.

Estate fee, for instance, is statutorily pegged at five per cent of rent according to Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers. To this must be included maintenance and service

charge. KFRN maintains several blocks of offices and flats in the prime rent areas. Last year, some of their flats along Ikoyi Crescent are up some N17,000 each per year and is going up. In Victoria Island a block of flats owned by Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria, that doubles as both offices and residences rents for N50,000 per annum, up N5,000 from the years ago. In the same vein, the service charge has jumped 60 per cent to N8,000 each per year. However, KFRN for instance,

supplies everything from gatesmen, air-conditioners to power generating sets, and the tenants are the better for it.

It seems that although SAP has made it difficult for people to develop new properties, users are yet to feel the pinch. But with fewer new offices and residential units springing up, there will come a time in the long run when the market would have been stretched to breaking point.

Herbert Ojeh with reports from Lucky Flakpa

## Chicken in flight

Poultry products go beyond reach

LAST July, S.E. Nomaaja, proprietor of Inene Farms in Ogbia, Lagos State shut the door to chickens and customers. He had bowed to the stiff competition and the dry spell in the raw materials market for poultry production. Prices of old layers and broilers fell for N25 and N20 respectively compared to N15 and N10 only a year ago. Even as consumers' lunch tables are dented of chicken, their breakfast menu is seeing less and less, of the solitary boiled egg that was until recently a common source of animal protein. For 50 kobo an egg, consumers have all but given it up.

The exorbitant prices of these foods are attributable to the high cost of inputs, says Nomaaja. Layer and broiler feeds which account for about 80 per cent of poultry production now sell for between N31 and N42, up by about 100 per cent from last year's. Vaccines and other poultry drugs have equally gone up considerably. For instance, NDV Lasota, a drug produced by the National Veterinary Research Institute, Vom, near Jos has jumped nine fold to N20 per unit.

Poultry farming has now become an exclusive indulgence of the rich, in the words of Dr. Olayide Bamidele, veterinary surgeon and general manager of Animal Care Limited, Agege. But even the rich farmer is having a hard time coping with the needs of the

• Bamidele: Poultry farming now for the rich

poultry business: the ban on importation of barley, malt and wheat is taking its toll. The cost of local substitutes, when they are available, is prohibitive.

Officials of Livestock Feeds in Ikeja, Lagos State are hard put to wriggle out of the stalemate, because the devaluation of the naira and the export advantage it gives to farmers has become counter productive to the poultry industry. A tonne of maize now sells for N2,000 compared to N450 last year.

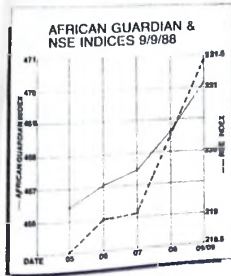
Short of funds, farmers had earlier cashed in on the Federal Government's agricultural loan policy of giving priority to their sector. But even that has become a dragnet. Central Bank sources indicate that while over N200 million was disbursed in loans between 1978 and 1984 to the poultry sector, the government has consistently de-emphasised such large-scale in recent years. By the last quarter of 1987, only N34 million had been allocated to poultry production. This year it is likely to trickle down to other sectors. And it is reflected in the statistics. Between 1981 and 1987, poultry production had only gone up by 3,000 tonnes.

What could have prompted the government to prune loan allocations to this sector? Mrs. M.A. Ikujanyo, acting general manager, Ashamu Group of Companies who is in charge of the group's Oke Afo Farms, Isolo, believes that much of the loans granted have been misdirected. However, officials of the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) insist that such allegation is unfounded.

As it is the farmer is stuck with producing a day-old chick to maturity at N18 each with marginal cushioning from the sale of eggs. The consumers must pay the difference between the producer's wholesale price of N16 and the middleman's "margin" which can be as much as eight naira.

By Lucky Flakpa and Herbert Ojeh



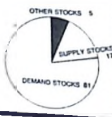


**LEADING CONTRIBUTORS  
GUARDIAN INDEX  
SEPTEMBER 9, 1988**



ENHANCEMENT	818
WEST BANK	800
USA	771
WINE BOTTLING	679
YOTEL	651
FOOD SPECIALTIES	615
WORLD CO.	602
OTHERS	4872

**Summary  
of Supply &  
Demand Stocks**



**Highest Traded Stocks  
Week Ended September 9,  
1988**

Stock	Shares Traded	Close Price (K)	Dividend (K)	Last Div. Date
Nig. Bottling	46444	228 +	10.0	24-09-87
Nig. Breweries Ltd	40254	197 +	17.0	26-05-86
R. T. Dinox	31801	63 -	6.5	22-11-81
AP	23390	160 +	16.7	08-06-86
John Holt	17711	216	19.0	23-04-87
Leventis Technical	17026	45 -	5.0	08-08-87
Lever Brothers	14332	175	29.8	26-04-86
UACN	12331	117 +	13.8	19-02-82
Leventis Motors	9622	50 -	3.0	15-09-87
Texas	9666	76 +	43.0	05-07-86
Guinness (Nig) Ltd	8149	135 +	8.0	24-05-86
UBA	8119	302 +	24.0	07-12-87
NTC	7739	166 +	27.0	27-11-87
Union Bank	6790	359 +	8.0	28-06-86
Total	5587	180 +	36.0	30-05-86
J. L. Morrison	5301	51 -	3.0	27-07-87
Costas	4223	26 -	1.0	07-12-84
App	4204	168 +	18.5	01-06-86
Roads (Nig)	3733	50 -	5.0	07-10-83
Voon Products	3700	50 -	3.4	04-09-87

**OPEC meets**

THIS week, as OPEC President, Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman meets with his colleagues to discuss the development in the oil market, the fledgling crude oil prices will give them cause for little sleep. Two weeks ago, October delivery of Brent crude was quoted at 13 dollars per barrel down by five dollars from OPEC reference price of 18 dollars per barrel. The oil ministers, it appears, have their problems within the organisation. In the recent past OPEC has been producing at about two million barrels above their quota levels above their requirements. It appears that stabilizing prices again would require OPEC looking inwards to mend the crack in

their marketing efforts from within.

**Up from bankruptcy**

Pan African Bank, the Rivers State-owned commercial bank, has broken out of the vicious cycle of losses spanning 17 years, thanks to foreign exchange transactions and substantial recovery of N103 million in stale loans and advances. Ending the 1987 financial year with about N6 million in profit, the bank reduced its pile of losses from N53.5 million in 1986 to N47.4 million last year.

**Credit for profits**

Even in the murky waters of a cash economy, the innovative skirmish into cashless transactions seems to be yielding some impressive gains for Cash Data Services Limited. For the year ended December 31, 1987 the young company raked in N1.4 million in revenue and 33 per cent or N468,000 in profit. The Chairman of the board, Mr. Oludayo Sonuga predicts a brighter future for the company as the market embraces the credit card culture.

**Job Guardian**

• Director and Assistant Directors: 35-45 years of age. Qualification: Graduates in Business Administration, Finance, Economics and Law. Also professional Accountants. Experience: 10-15 years. Apply: The Secretary,

Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation, P. O. Box 60238, Lagos.

• Paediatrician: MBBS or equivalent with 5 years post-internship experience. Post-graduate experience in Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, an advantage.

**Naira Forex**

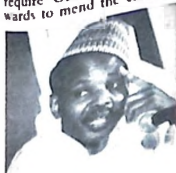
Cross rates vis a vis other currencies

Name of Currency	Buying	Central	Sterling	Previous	Percent
U.S. Dollar	4.6936	4.7172	4.7408	4.7506	0.7080
Pound Sterling	7.8829	7.9225	7.9621	8.0024	1.0085
Deutsche Mark	2.5019	2.5145	2.5271	2.5303	0.6284
Swiss Francs	2.9678	2.9827	2.9976	2.9972	0.4861
French Francs	0.7351	0.7388	0.7425	0.7454	0.8933
Dutch Guilder	2.2160	2.2272	2.2383	2.2409	0.6151
Japanese Yen	0.0350	0.0350	0.0353	0.0348	0.8547
CFA Francs	0.0141	0.0142	0.0143	0.0150	5.6338

Bi-monthly Foreign Exchange auction bid No. 82 of 15-Sep-88 amount put on sale (million) US \$120,0000

THE Naira gained marginally against major currencies except the Japanese Yen against which it lost 0.85 per cent at the 62nd auction session last week. For the next fortnight session last lar will sell for about N4.74, down 0.71 per cent from the central rate of N4.75. The CFA Francs depreciated by 5.63 per cent against the naira. At the autonomous market, the naira is taking yet another plunge, exchanging for between N6.9 and N7.2 for the dollar in most banks.

• CBN Governor Ahmed



• Lukman



## Aspirations sans bitterness

**T**HERE is an adage which states that one should give the monkey a long rope to hang itself by. This is what we suspect that authorities are doing with a one-time presidential aspirant in the last republic. The presidential aspirant who also rolls in millions has quite for some time now made no pretensions about contesting for the Presidency in the third republic, of course, without bitterness. We hear that on August 17 at the meeting of traditional rulers of the 11 Northern States, the millionaire — Presidential aspirant caused a stir when he announced that he has a better chance of winning the presidential election in 1992, now that former President Shehu Shagari is banned, Chief Obafemi Awolowo is dead and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe is infirm. A quick call to order, without bitterness, by a two-time military governor of Gongola State stopped the aspirant's crusade and calmed traditional rulers.



now he has been heard to say that there would be no more funds for mobilising the masses for now and accordingly, this is without bitterness.

If this is the stuff that 1992 will be made of, then there's hearty laughter for us all, devoid of bitterness.

## Playing the Ostrich game

**Y**OU will recall the ostrich and its pet game. It is usual for that bird to bury its head in the sand to escape being noticed. The problem is that while its head is securely hidden, the rest of its body is quite exposed.

It is surprising that a man of erudite learning and a fellow of one of the research institutes should engage in what might be regarded as the ostrich game. The other day, the fellow was heard telling a gathering of his peers that at the going rate he could not afford to build a modest "boys-quarters". To a standing ovation, the fellow said words to the effect that he would have to be a kind of methuselah to garner enough funds to build even a modest house. Could this be the same man, we understand, who "washed" his new house situated at Oke-Ibadan Crescent, off Paul Horrocks Avenue near Bodija in Ibadan on July 27? The house which we dare to describe as an architectural wonder has a bungalow in the front which surprisingly metamorphoses into a stony building behind and is complete with flowers and an Olympic size fish pond on the spacious grounds.

Now, we wonder how long it took our man who is in his mid 40s to save enough money to build the modest (?) edifice.

## Ruling by precepts

**E**XAMPLES, they say, are better than precepts. But you and I know that it's far easier to lead by precepts than by examples. We hope that is not what happened to one of the governors whose state hugs the River Niger. Well, you could say that the fellow was quite in order to sound the patriotic (?) alarm to the conference of doctors recently that government would find a way to provide basic social amenities for the people if the present rate of population increase was allowed to continue.

Population, explosion, he said, was the bane of progress. We hear that the governor received rounds of deafening applause after delivering this most profound (?) speech. We could have guessed too in the applause. But could it be this same governor that got married with a lavish bash only last month to his 16-year-old sweetheart, the fourth in his harem?

State commissioners and traditional rulers we understand were transported to the far Northern state to rejoice (?) with the governor and his bride. If our governor and his wives are patriotic enough to take the government's advice of one woman to four kids, then His Excellency might just end up having 16 kids, that is if he's done with marital blitz.

All of which reminds us of those cynic (they could be the radicals and extremists) again whom the government has been waging a winning war who would rather turn their noses up when some Excellencies give their golden precepts.



But the millionaire aspirant would not be done. Two weeks ago, he again showed up at the lawyers conference in Kaduna to continue where he left off. This time, he let it be known that he had just formed a "Brotherhood Club" devoid of bitterness which would transform into a political party by the third republic. Patrons of the Club according to him would include, President Ibrahim Bahaguda and members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council. Last week with the same message the millionaire was in Abuja to address the Constituent Assembly. Here the eagle-eyed security agents (we wonder where they had been all along) felt that the good joke had gone beyond the elbow. They picked up our President-to-be (?) presumably for a chat.

Meanwhile we hear that unnamed political wolves had been calling frequently on the millionaire-aspirant to collect funds under the pretext that they would help him mobilise the masses. These frequent calls, we learn, have made this aspirant known for his largesse, less financially bouyant. Right

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