

THE CRISIS AND THE  
PEOPLE

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# **The Crisis And The People**

(Being a Commentary on the Action Group Crisis  
of May 1962).

**Nigerian Youth Congress**

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## PREFACE

The Nigerian Youth Congress has done the Patrice Lumumba Institute of Political Science and Trade Unionism the honour of asking me, on behalf of the Institute, to write a brief preface to this important document: 'The Crisis and the People.' Ever since the beginning of the crisis, hundreds of thousands of people have been yearning for a fuller statement of its views on it by the NYC than has yet appeared. That fuller statement is now put before the reader.

One thing is remarkable about this pamphlet. Although it was written in July, 1962, everything that has happened since then has merely piled up one confirmation after another of its analysis and conclusions. This is very important, for the document is a marxian piece of analysis. It is the application to a concrete Nigerian situation of the analytical tools and concepts first clearly fashioned by Marx and Engles and later developed by Lenin and others.

At a time like this when neo-colonialists, reactionaries and confused self-styled nationalists seek to confound the masses, to hide the real nature of the situation in which they are immersed, to put a fanciful plaster over ruthless exploitation—at such a time, any system of thought, any analysis which helps to tear down the dark curtains, brush off the cobwebs of lies and enable the people to see things as they really are, is more precious to our country than all the dollars in the world.

I cannot resist the temptation to direct the attention of Nigerian intellectuals and students, wherever they may be, to this document. Why does one become a Marxist? To become a Marxist it is necessary that one's values should include love of truth and a highly sensitive and sympathetic social conscience. But this is not enough. To become a Marxist, one must be prepared, in social matters, to accept the sovereignty of facts. "My business," said Thomas Huxley, the great scientist, "is to teach my aspirations to conform themselves to fact, not to try to make facts harmonise with my aspirations". And the famous scientist, Charles Darwin, testifies: "Science consists in grouping facts so that general laws and conclusions may be drawn from them". The test of a true science, then, is the extent to which predictions and conclusions made with its aid correspond with real facts.

The reader has in this document to test the power of the Marxian system as a science of history and society. Marxian scientific method is the method used by Scientific Socialists all over the world to study the experience of man in society. Like all true sciences, the marxian scientific method bases itself uncompromisingly on facts; it insists on the ruthless analysis of facts as a way of showing the masses the road to socialism, democracy and freedom. Marxian social or historical science groups the facts of history around the central issue of class. It bases its analysis on the central hypothesis that if we are to arrive at the correct conclusions about what is happening or will happen to a country and its people we have

o examine the class positions and class aspirations of those individuals and groups that take part in the events which constitute the important facts. We have to uncover the contradictions, transformations and trends indicated by the play of class forces. And we must do this with brutal scientific honesty.

By this pamphlet the Nigerian Marxist issues a call and a challenge to every intelligent Nigerian. That of all methods the Marxian method yields the richest harvest of truth and light is evident from one page to another of this pamphlet.

Lastly, I must mention the fact that the crisis itself has become a chronic malady. The present pamphlet concentrates on analysing the root causes, the social forces that have given rise to the crisis and the basic conclusions that can be drawn from these developments: As the pamphlet itself promises, the Nigerian Youth Congress will develop the analysis here made by putting before the reader, at a future date, its comments on the Coker Inquiry and its outcome.

On behalf of myself, the Patrice Lumumba Institute and the Socialists of Nigeria, I recommend this study of one of the greatest crises in Nigerian history to the Nigerian people and the world.

**Eskor Toyo**

*Patrice Lumumba Institute of Political  
Science and Trade Unionism.*



## THE CRISIS AND THE PEOPLE

### INTRODUCTION.

The Western Region of Nigeria is still on fire. A State of Emergency was declared to be effective throughout the Region till December, 1962. Detention orders were served on several important personalities. Some of these orders are now being revoked. The N.P.C. is on the march to the coast. As part of the crisis the Federal Government instituted a Commission of Inquiry into six public Corporations in Western Nigeria and the conduct of individuals and groups connected with them. Some of the revelations of the Commission are now part of history. The public is well aware of these. What may happen next is anybody's guess. Here we shall not comment on the Commission of Inquiry or its findings. We shall address the public on that later.

The riots in the Western House of Assembly which served as occasion for a state of emergency, as well as the state of emergency itself and the powers assumed under it by the Federal Government, are a completely new experience in the political life of our country. Prior to these events the political situation in Nigeria had been one of deep-seated discontent and distrust on the part of the masses and fear on the part of the ruling classes. It was being freely suggested in all circles that a revolution in Nigeria was only a question of time. A revolution, of course, would be, as elsewhere, a rising of cheated and discontented citizens against the oppression of their rulers.

The events leading to the State of Emergency are well known. We can recount them here only briefly.

Weeks before the Jos Convention of the Action Group, it became known that there were two camps in the party: a camp headed by Chief Awolowo and Mr. Ikoku and wedded to the new party ideology of 'Democratic Socialism' and a camp headed by Chief S. L. Akintola and Chief Ayo Rosiji that did not take kindly to this ideology. The conflict was freely canvassed in the newspapers supporting the Action Group (A.G.).

At the Jos Convention decisions were taken to adopt 'Democratic Socialism' as the ideology of the Party, to undertake a wholesale re-organisation of the party in line with its 'Socialist' ideology and to elect as General Secretary, Mr. S. G. Ikoku, a well-known Marxian Socialist, suspected even of being a communist.

The camp headed by Chief Akintola would not accept the party decisions and walked out of the Convention and returned to Lagos. The rift was now open between Left and Right. Sensing danger, the A. G. 'Elders', although, as everyone knows, they had their sympathy for Chief Akintola, tried to patch up the quarrel. For a time there appeared to be peace. But everyone knew that the calm was like the usual one that precedes a violent storm. And so it proved.

in society Members of the same class possess the same economic interests and therefore react in the same general sort of way to political events that affect them. If they own property or enjoy a high status they are anxious to conserve what they have. If they are poor and have a low status they look forward to whatever will free them from poverty and a degrading status. Between the two groups and between various classes there exist suspicions and aspirations which lead to conflict.

In Nigeria today we have a number of significant classes. It is of importance to know their economic status and their economic and political aspirations.

**The Feudal Nobility.** This is the class of chiefs: Emirs, Obas, Obongs, Obis, etc. They are the ruling class in Northern Nigeria, that is, in more than half of Nigeria, and they hold a powerful position in Western Nigeria politically and socially. In the past, this class had lived on taxes and gifts extorted from the people. Today they live on local government revenues, allowances as members of the Houses of Chiefs, land rents, income from large farm estates appropriated from communal land and worked by poor labour, and bribes and perquisites of all types. Politically their power has been entrenched in our system through the Houses of Chiefs and the Local Councils.

Wherever it has existed in history the feudal nobility is a class that wields arbitrary power over the territory under its jurisdiction. It always seeks to extend its power over neighbouring territories. Where a feudal nobility is the governing class or is powerful the government is always autocratic, for the nobility have no temper for or understanding of democracy. The best they have ever done is to merely tolerate democracy where they cannot do otherwise. They will always resist any attempt to extend democracy. The feudal nobility and middle class democrats therefore can never co-exist in perpetual peace.

The N. P. C. is nothing but the political instrument of the Northern feudal nobility, headed by the Sardauna of Sokoto. The Federal Government therefore, cannot be expected to act in a crisis otherwise than as an instrument of Northern feudalism. For it is in a crisis that the characters and aspirations of parties and groups stand revealed. And it is in a crisis that the pretences of individuals stand uncovered and they reveal themselves in their real roles as representatives of one or other group. For a crisis is a situation that allows one no room for 'Splendid equivocation.' One must take one's stand on this or that side of the fence. Where one stands is a good index of the class one represents. In one crisis we knew where Okotie Eboh stood. In another crisis we have seen where Akintola stands.

**The Compradore bourgeoisie:** This is the class of native big business-men who are in business jointly with foreign capitalists. They serve as directors in imperialist firms. They act as landlords

for imperialist business houses. They are heavily indebted to imperialist banks for the finance of their business. Or they rely in one way or other on imperialist firms through contracts.

Since Nigerian capitalists have had little capital, the more successful ones go into partnership with foreigners. This is growing more and more so everyday, and the Federal Government is busy encouraging the growth of the compradore class in every way. The compradores are a bureaucratic class of capitalists. For the compradore class makes use of political power to finance itself. It also encourages the entrenchment of economic imperialism in a country. For these reasons it is anxious to retain firm control of political power. It makes use of all forms of corruption to remain in power. The compradore therefore is a reactionary, anti-national, pro-imperialist, corrupt bureaucratic class. Whether it is in Korea or in China, in Argentina or in Egypt, in Czarist Russia or in Nigeria, such is the character of the compradore capitalists. The role of this class, therefore, in Nigeria and in the present crisis is not surprising.

The compradore class are prominent only in the two regions where capitalism is relatively more developed that is, in the Western and Eastern Regions. The NCNC, formerly a mass movement of the people, has degenerated into an instrument of unbridled capitalism. Its compradore group in East and West smuggled itself into power by betraying the party and selling out to the N.P.C. The NCNC, lacking an effective party machine, and being riddled with opportunism, could do nothing but surrender to the leadership and control of the compradores.

The main bulk of compradore strength in Western Nigeria, however, was to be found in the Action Group. Having failed in their bid to conquer Eastern and Northern Nigeria this class in the West began to cast anxious glances at the Federal Government. Since to the capitalists a government is nothing but a 'Chop-chop' machinery, the Western A.G. compradore could not see why they should be excluded from the big 'Chop-chop' going on on the Federal level. The recent distribution of national land at Ikoyi will bear out the point. This land was reclaimed from the lagoon at the cost of £2½ million to the tax-payer but was distributed heavily in favour of the governing classes. The Federal Government has voted a whole £5 million to start a 'Development Bank' which will finance compradore enterprises. Big contracts are being awarded by the Federal Government. Owing to the intensive scale of 'Chop-chop' on the Regional level and the competition for social services between the Southern Regions, the Eastern and Western Regional Governments are faced with bankruptcy. There is no more money on the Regional level to feed the greatly enlarged throat and belly of the compradore. All eyes are now on the Federal Government. Hence the long-revealed anxiety of the Western compradore to compromise with the NPC and get the A.G. into the coalition government.

At the same time the Western compradore must retain its hold on the Western Region, the Action Group, the National Bank of Nigeria, and other finance institutions of the Region. If the Action Group intellectuals wish to go 'Democratic socialist', all well and good. No quarrel over ideologies, provided the compradore retain their control of the governmental machinery, the party machine and the machinery of finance. The National Bank Inquiry episode revealed to us the compradore struggle over the control of financial machinery in Western Nigeria. The Akintola crisis has now revealed the acute struggle by the Western compradore to retain firm control of A.G. government, financial and party machine.

Everyone knows that an earlier attempt by the Nigerian Socialist Group and by Mr. Mokwugo Okoye and his supporters to talk of nationalisation of industries and public ownership was daubed 'Communist' and smashed by the compradores of the NCNC who are in effective control of the Party, of the African Continental Bank and of the Eastern Regional Government, and who monopolise political thinking in Eastern Nigeria.

The ambition of the compradore is to remain in firm control of governmental machinery, ruling party machinery and financial machinery throughout the Federation. For this purpose they see the Federation as so many sphere of influence reserved for NCNC, NPC and A.G. landlords and compradores. Any attempt to challenge this set up, whether it is done in the name of democracy, of liberalism, or of socialism must bring down the full, unqualified ire of the compradore.

**The National Bourgeoisie:** This is the class of native capitalists whose business does not depend on the imperialists. In politics, unlike the compradore, they tend to oppose imperialism, but they are not economically strong. Along with this class can be mentioned the important class of **Professionals:** Doctors, Lawyers, Accountants, Chemists, Engineers, and so forth.

Like the compradore group this group is also growing rapidly. Their interest is to take over the country from the compradore and make themselves the rulers. But they cannot now assert their claim over the country because, as against the feudal-compradore alliance, they are weak.

The influence of this group in the NCNC was paramount, although today it is declining as compared with the influence of the compradore. In the N.P.C. the influence of this group is growing, but it is as nothing yet against the dead weight of the feudal nobility. In the Action Group the control of the Party was shared between the top section of this group, the compradore and the feudal nobility.

It was in the Action Group that the basis of alliance between the ruling classes worked themselves out to logical conclusions. The national bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois professionals and intellectuals provided the democratic slogans and the organi-

sational energy to win the urban and the conscious rural masses. The feudal nobility supplied the traditional influence they wield over the rural masses and the chauvinistic appeal needed to rally Yoruba nationalism around the Action Group. The compradore worked hard to supply the much needed finance and urban...social influence. The spoils of office were shared by a similar arrangement. The national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois intellectuals and professionals gained party and government patronage, the compradore and national bourgeoisie shared contracts and loans, with the compradore as major partners, the feudal nobility gained their undisturbed power in local government and the House of Chiefs.

**The poor classes consist of**

- (a) **the wage workers** in the towns, in mines and in plantations,
- (b) **the peasants** in their millions who possess some plots of land in the country on which they toil year in, year out with their families.
- (c) **the petty bourgeois handicraftsmen and petty traders.**

For a few rich cocoa, cotton, groundnut or rubber farmers, life may seem to hold a bright future; and self-government may make a meaning.

But to the vast majority of peasants, to the vast majority of struggling handicraftsmen and petty traders, to the bulk of ill-paid workers, life holds out a hard future in which their children are sure to occupy a position even worse than theirs today. For they lift up their eyes and they see nothing but fallingraw material prices, rising rents and rising prices of goods sold to them by the neo-colonialists and their agents. Everywhere misery stirs them on the face.

In the beginning the NCNC had seemed to offer hope to the working class and the urban handicraftsmen and petty traders. But the longer the NCNC enjoys power the more it becomes clear that that party is merely the instrument of the upper section of the national bourgeoisie and the compradores. For a time the toiling masses clung tenaciously to the NCNC. But the Mbadiwe episode within the Party, the Eastern tax riots and the partial success of Chike Obi's Dynamic Party have been based on the mass discontents. They reveal that the masses have realised with grave disappointment and resentment the illusion of their belief that the NCNC is their own party, whereas in reality that party is in fact a party of the bourgeoisies under the firm grip of the compradore and national bourgeoisie.

The scales are falling off the eyes of the people. Our business is to make them fall fast. We see then the positions of the classes and their connections with the ruling classes. The feudal nobility, the compradore, the national bourgeoisie and the professionals are the ruling classes. The governments are their governments and the political parties are their instruments for mobilising the masses in their support and protecting their own class interests.

Of the three ruling parties, the NPC is the party of the Northern Feudal aristocracy. The NCNC is the party of the compradore and national bourgeoisie and professionals particularly in Eastern Nigeria, with the compradore as the major partner. The Action Group is an uneasy alliance between the feudal aristocracy in the West, the bulk of the compradore in the West and a section of the national bourgeoisie in the West. It is not a surprise that the Action Group started as and remained the most disciplined party in Nigeria. An effective alliance between the feudal nobility and the bourgeoisie must need a lot of discipline to survive. On the other hand any move by any of the parties to the alliance to assert its control must result in a break up of the alliance and therefore of the party as people know it.

This crisis has raised in a very clear form and answered in an equally clear manner the important questions **what is a political party and what is the State.**

Some people define a political party as a group of citizens who agree on certain political principles and aims and who organise themselves towards the attainment of these aims. But this definition looks at the matter only on the surface. It is like asking what is a hoe and answering that a hoe is a stick and iron joined together and used for work. Surely this answer does not reveal the essential character of a hoe. A more scientific answer would be that a hoe is an instrument, a hand tool, used by a farmer to break the soil in order to make tillage easy.

A political party is not just a group of citizens organised for political ends. It is not simply a group of people who disagree on all sorts of political questions, important or insignificant. The Action Group, the NCNC and the NPC are not just groups of Nigerians who disagree on this or that question, such as whether Nigeria should become a 'Republic' or not, whether our constitution should be changed or not, whether states should be created or not, whether the Cassablanca powers should be invited or not to this or that Conference.

No. A political party is in reality the instrument of a class. It represents the interests of a class or group of classes in alliance. Its outlook and its character reflect on the most important questions the outlook and character of the class or alliance of classes which it represents.

The Liberals who believe in parliamentary politics always try to represent a political party as a group of individual citizens who feel that this or that policy is wrong or right. Chief Awolowo himself once believed, as a liberal, that a political party is something of this kind. He did his best to entrench in Nigeria this view of political party. We hope that the crisis in his party has opened his eyes. That crisis has confirmed quite clearly the view of socialists in general and scientific socialists in particular, that a political party is the instrument of a class or alliance of classes and that their disagreements represent the conflicting interests of the various classes amongst a people divided into classes.

The different ruling parties in Nigeria represent the wealthy and most powerful classes of the majority ethnic groups. The control of a political party is always in the hands of those whose interests it represents. Where the party is an alliance of class forces, there must be a struggle between the classes in alliance to control the party. The stronger a class is economically, the more efforts it will make to take control of the Party.

This brings us to the question of the State. As with parties, so with the State. Some people think the State is just a group of people occupying a definite territory and organised under a sovereign government. Again this is merely what the State is when looked at on the surface. In reality the State is a power in the hands of and representing the interests of the dominant classes in a country. It is not the peasants and workers who own the Nigerian State or the Regional States. It is not these classes that control the States of Nigeria. The States of Nigeria do not represent the interests of these classes. It is the feudal nobility, the compradore and the national bourgeois and professional classes that own and control the States of Nigeria. It is their interests that governments of Nigeria represent. The constitutional crisis which we have passed through and more of which we must expect are their various bids and manoeuvres to control the machinery of the State.

A political party is an instrument used by a class or classes to conduct this fight for the control of State power. The aim is to use state power to make laws favourable to the economic, political and social interests of the class or classes concerned. Parliament is not just an assembly of the people where right or wrong is thrashed out in friendly debates. Parliament is an arm of the State, an instrument of State power. It is the law making machinery of the ruling classes. For this reason, debates in parliament, parliamentary elections, and laws passed by parliament are important. For they often reveal the aims, interests, methods of the groups controlling and wanting to control the State.

The reason why classes struggle for the control of State power is obvious. State power represents the law making force in society. This law making force is used to maintain the economic relations which give superior rights and privileges to ruling classes and subject the mass of the people to poverty and economic inferiority. State power is the instrument to make and enforce the laws which maintain the rule of the upper class of parasites over the people. In our present society, the laws of property, the law of contract, the laws of tort and crime are all designed to promote the growth of capitalism, to protect private property and the private businessman, to aid and strengthen the exploitation of the worker and peasant by monopoly capital, to maintain the political rule of the feudal nobility, the compradore and the upper segment of the national bourgeoisie with a view to transferring to them a larger share of the national product won from nature by the sweat, brains

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and hands of the people. Such is the motive of the struggles by exploiting classes to control the State.

Why classes that struggle for the control of State power organise themselves in parties is equally clear. At no time can State power be won or maintained without the consent or acquiescence of the people. At least that cannot be so in an age where the masses are awake and some lip service at any rate has to be paid to democracy. The politics of the upper classes and of upper class parties therefore becomes nothing but a dirty game by which they hope to cajole, and intimidate the people into acquiescing in upper class rule and becoming misguided fellow travellers in their own exploitation by parasite classes.

The natural and clear conclusion from this is that the working class, the peasantry, the mass of petty trader, artisans and petty professionals, the toiling women and house wives of the land, the underprivileged youths, the progressive and cheated intellectuals of our country, in short, the toiling masses, the ordinary and progressive citizens of our country, the people, as distinct from the exploiters and hirelings of imperialism, can also change their condition. But in order to do so, they must struggle for and take over state power from the hands of exploiters. To accomplish this they must organise themselves into a people's movement or front whose aim is to win State power and use it to establish an economic system in which the economic relations will suit their interests. This struggle must be led by a party—the people's own party—a party of a new type representing the democratic will of the people, a party committed to building a socialist society for the people, disciplined and guided by the ideology and science of scientific socialism. No other course can lead to the victory of democracy over upper class tyranny. No other course can lead to the defeat of imperialism and reaction by the forces of progress.

#### **Force: An Instrument of Class Rule:**

The crisis has shown even more clearly that politics is a contest for power in which the reactionary classes will stop at nothing to achieve their purpose. In the contest for power tribalism, nepotism, national chauvinism, lying, bribery, corruption, stealing, graft, blackmail, illegality, detention, restriction, imprisonment, riots, armed conflict, force of all types— all these, so far as the ruling classes are concerned, are legitimate weapons. The crisis has shown that it is not revolutionaries that first resort to force in politics but those who have positions to preserve. Force is the ready argument of even those of them who profess faith in democracy. Although, when it suits its purpose, the state may use other methods such as deceit and persuasion, the state itself is nothing but an instrument and embodiment of force.

Hitherto the ruling class have exercised their political control over the country by exploiting four factors: the democratic aspiration of the people, anti-colonialism, chauvinism, and corruption.



The people of this country when they took upon themselves the challenge of self-rule desired to use self-rule as a means of gaining effective control over their governments, in order that their government might serve as instruments for improving the lives of ordinary citizens and the progress and security of all. Day by day it is becoming more and more evident that the present regimes have no wish to be guided by any such mass aspirations.

Once in a while the ruling parties and classes, through the various organs of publicity which they control, shout vague slogans against colonialism. But everyone can see that whilst shouting with the mouth against colonialism, the rulers of Nigeria are entrenching colonialism with the hands. They do not only make economic programmes which favour imperialism, they pursue a foreign policy that is pro-imperialist, they go into alliance with foreign businessmen and even finance their parties from foreign imperialist sources. So anti-colonialism too is wearing thin as a false instrument of popularity with the people.

Neither does the chauvinism of the ruling parties encourage the growth of democracy or the struggle against imperialism. In reality the N.P.C. is an instrument of the **Fulani** ruling feudal nobility in Northern Nigeria. In reality the N.C.N.C. is the instrument of the **Ibo** compradore and national bourgeoisie in Eastern Nigeria. In reality the Action Group is the party of the **Yoruba** compradore, national bourgeoisie and feudal nobility in Western Nigeria. This structure encourages tribal suspicions. It renders it easy for an Ibo man to tolerate anti-democratic and pro-imperialist steps taken by the NCNC which he would otherwise have resisted. It makes it easy for a Yoruba to shut his eyes to acts of autocracy and national betrayal when they are performed by the Action Group. It makes the average Hausa-Fulani commoner weak who might otherwise stand up against feudal oppression and the NPC sell out to imperialism.

Chauvism divides the nation and leads to the dissipation of enormous energy on internal conflicts that do not, in fact, concern the vital interests of the people. The readiness with which the ruling groups resort to chauvinism, to tribal appeal in times of election and crisis, has discredited their loud claim to patriotism. Here too, they have been exposed

To buy their entrenchment, the ruling groups, having nothing to offer the people, have had to resort to corruption. The compradore is buying itself in and buying a way for imperialism by all means of corruption known to man. And, since corruption can not be hidden from the people, and since its selfish motive and its function as an instrument of despotic rule are well-known, there is nothing left but to take the next logical step and resort to open force and violence. Hence, a fifth factor-force as an instrument of class conflict and class rule-is now assuming the prominence it has in all colonial, feudal or fascist, that is, reactionary regime

The misuse of constitutional powers, resort to unconstitutional, acts, the employment of thugs, reliance on the army and the police, riots, the use of threats such as that of denying amenities to constituencies, all these are acts of force and violence which have come to stay in our politics

It is against this background of classes and their connections with existing governments and parties; of various demagogic and corrupt instrument of power used by the ruling classes, the failure of all of these instruments and the need to resort to sheer arbitrary feudal-compradore class dictatorship and violence; it is against this back-ground that the A.G. crisis must be seen.

### THE ESSENCE OF THE CRISIS:

At a certain stage in the crisis the Akintola faction and its supporters began to put forward the theory that the crisis was a personal struggle between Chief Akintola and Chief Awolowo. We reject such an explanation as misleading. Everything that has happened shows that the crisis is far more than personal. We may draw attention to certain events which may help to illumine the nature of crisis.

**First** is the character of the Action Group Party. This party, as we have seen, was controlled by a bureaucratic group of the feudal aristocracy in Western Nigeria and the compradore. This constituted the high-finance group in the party, represented by the so-called 'Elders', who, hitherto have been responsible for financing the party. Moreover, the party has been an instrument of the Yoruba aristocracy.

**Secondly**, it has been noted by close political observers that as soon as the Action Group had effectively installed itself as the governing party in Western Nigeria, a conflict developed between the bureaucratic high-finance group and the national bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements in the party who wanted a more democratic control of the party and the adoption of a more democratic programme. The very existence of a recognised group known as 'Elders' testifies to the existence of this conflict. This internal conflict can be illustrated also by the Fani-Kayode episode.

It is well known also by those who have followed the internal workings of the Action Group for a long time that Chief Awolowo who had at the beginning pitched his tent firmly in the high finance camp, shifted to the centre and sat on a fence. But however long he sat on the fence he was bound to shift. For events were moving so fast that the A.G. could not confine itself to the Western Region and survive. And if it was to expand it must shake off a lot of its conservatism. If it was to fight the NCNC and the NPC it must in fact turn itself into a party not only as progressive as the NCNC but even more progressive. If the Action Group Programme had shown itself more progressive in action, it must be made more so in words. Hence the hunt for an ideology started.

One cannot sit on the fence for long in a party with such pushful, well educated, experienced and loyal radicals as S. G. Ikoku, Agunbiade Bamishe, Tony Enahoro and J. S. Tarka on the one hand, and such powerful and experienced conservative financiers as Chief Akanni Doherty, Chief Dr. Maja and so forth on the other. You either stand with conservatives to find the money to finance such a top-heavy party as the Action Group, or you climb down and join the radicals in order to expand the party.

Chief Awolowo started shifting at the constitutional Conference of 1957 when he was able to size up the N. P. C. He shifted further in and after the pre-independence Federal Elections in 1959. Probably what decided him finally to go with the left was the recent elections and other events which rendered his 'on the fence' position still more untenable.

The AG. crisis therefore is merely an open eruption of a long standing conflict between the conservatives and the rest. **Thirdly**, it has long been evident that there is widespread discontent in the country. This discontent affects the lower section of national bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeois professionals, and intellectuals and the poorer classes. The withdrawal of the British colonial government, the reactionary character of the national government and the existence of this widespread discontent created a situation in which either the comprador-feudal group must assume a ruthless control of the Federal and Regional governments and rule by force, or face the alternative of a left group bowling them out of power by exploiting mass discontent. The phenomenon of the Dynamic Party shows that such a situation exists. Liberal democracy is a shaky thing in Nigeria. The National bourgeoisie are not strong or united enough to make it effective. Either a fascist or philistine regime must establish a one-party arbitrary rule or the masses will turn to a socialist regime. Every keen political observer can see that something like a vacuum exists which can be filled by the Chiang Kai Shek type of feudal-compradore fascism, by a Nasserian type or Chike-Obi type of petty bourgeois rule or by socialism. For parliamentary democracy stands no chance in a regime of feudal-compradore corruption. The Western comprador and feudal nobility, like any other comprador or nobility in the world, sense this mass discontent instinctively and wish either to ignore it and rule arbitrarily or prevent any philistine or socialist regime from taking over.

**The fourth** phenomenon that must be taken into account in deciding on the nature of the crisis is the tribal character of the A.G. Once the Party decided to break out of its tribal shell and to adopt a universal progressive ideology and become really countrywide, there was bound to be violent conflict between the progressives in the party backed by the petty-bourgeoisie and the arch-tribalists backed by the feudal Omo Oduduwa aristocracy to whom the image of the A.G. as a non-Yoruba Party inconceivable.

rule the country by violence if need be. After all, there is a similarity between the role of Okotie Eboh in the NCNC and the role of Akintola in the Action Group. The NPC has its own programme either to swallow up or else destroy the other parties. Having tasted Federal power Northern Feudalism seeks to expand and trench it.

3. Parliamentary government has been discredited in Nigeria. It is one of the ironies of the situation that the party which shouted most loudly about the virtues of liberal Parliamentary democracy is the first to bring about its retreat. Force has been installed in Nigeria and the country is virtually a police State. **The lower classes when they become conscious of their power will fight with weapons of struggle already made available by the governing classes.** They are not likely to forget that riots in Parliament and unlimited emergency powers in addition to thugs and unconstitutional acts are all part of the rules of the game.

Nor are they likely to forget that the bourgeoisie when it suits them abandon the Parliamentary game to which they pay so much lip service.

4. Once having invoked the emergency powers even against such a strong party as the Action Group, the feudal nobility may clamp down on any party or group with the same weapon. The situation shows that Parliamentary democracy is so young and so discredited by corruption that the masses are not firmly committed to defending it as against the traditional powers of their rulers. The masses also are used to colonial methods of arbitrary rule and will hardly be unanimous in their protest against the use of such methods.

5. Another irony of the situation is that it was Chief Awolowo who helped instal the power of chiefs constitutionally and to sustain their power socially. The crisis has afforded the chiefs an opportunity to exercise their power against Chief Awolowo himself. By this crisis the compradores and chiefs in the West have moved nearer the feudal aristocracy in the North than ever before. The Right is coming together all over Nigeria. The masses are now face to face with reaction.

6. Democracy can no longer be taken for granted. It has to be fought for. The ease with which factions in the NCNC, the Action Group and the NPC, can agree or cause a crisis when it suits their interests shows that it is impossible in Nigeria for democracy to mean anything unless the masses, the poorer classes, take up the battle for it. Liberal democratic practice has been killed in its birth by the ruling classes. The democratic message, however, must not be abandoned but launched afresh under a new banner and with new fighters. What is wanted is a socialist message.

## LESSON FROM THE CRISIS

Certain lessons can be learnt from the present crisis to aid the struggle of the people.

1. The Chiefs are not just a decoration to the Nigerian society. They constitute a powerful ruling class opposed to democracy. They will fight socialism with all the weapons at their disposal. If any form of democracy is to work smoothly in Nigeria the Houses of Chiefs will have to be abolished and the traditional powers of Chiefs curbed. Any class which derives its power from tradition must be a dead weight against progress. Only those who are ready to pass through the process of popular election must be given the power to control affairs of State. There should be no 'Elders' recognised either by the country's constitution or by a Party that aspires to lead the masses.

2. The class of compradores is a class with far-reaching ambitions. As already illustrated by the circumstances leading to Zik's failure to become Prime Minister and by the present crisis, this class is a most irresponsible class. It is not even responsible to 'Tradition.' It is incapable of discipline of any type. It will resort to violence without the least scruple. The ease with which the Akintola camp linked up with the NPC and the stubbornness with which it is very class sought to retain the Military Agreement with Britain show that this class will not hesitate to invite foreign troops into the country should it be thrown out of power by the people. Their economic interests, anyway, are linked up with those of imperialism.

3. The crisis shows that to survive in the country today a party must be democratic. The cult of personality is dangerous, for personal friends are soon lost if one is not in a position to distribute patronage. And the distribution of patronage, of course, is wrong. The crisis also shows the virtues of collective leadership. For, although greatly shaken, the A.G. is intact, owing to the fact that the decisions of the Jos Conference were collective decisions of the Party and the decisions to remove Chief Akintola from the Premiership and Deputy leadership were collective decisions of higher party organs.

4. The crisis reveals the dangers of inflexible leadership. It is good, as Chief Awolowo says, to base one's action on principle. But in the interpretation of principle a leader should be flexible.

This is where socialist politics must be studied as a science. Such a science is Marxism which teaches that true democracy is impossible without true socialism, and that true socialism means relying on the masses not the middle class, to struggle for the public ownership of the means of production and distribution. If one is guided by such a science one knows how to rely on the democratic will of the masses. If the A.G. had been such a party as could go to the masses with confidence any day, they could have gone to the House of Assembly to defeat Akintola whether it meant a dissolution of the House or not. The struggle for socialism is a struggle between

classes and this means delays, compromises, alliances, etc., but always with a view to gathering the maximum striking power of the Party.

5. One of the big lessons of the crisis is that a Party founded on tribalism and controlled by a few bureaucrats on top must face grave dangers. In Nigeria it needs to be based on a majority tribe to gain any influence at all. Then in a crisis it can only rely on the support of the tribe on which it is based. Such a party will find it extremely difficult if not impossible to launch a country-wide appeal.

A socialist party must be based on the people-on the poorer classes, on the working class and peasantry-those to whom the capitalist system offers no hope. To preach a type of socialism which does not mean fighting against the bureaucratic capitalists but accommodating them is to teach the impossible. Socialism even where it is defined as 'Democratic Socialism' will violently refuse to be superimposed on a feudal and bureaucratic structure, or the structure will kill or kick out the socialism. As for tribalism, socialism is an international ideology. Socialism and tribalism are a contradiction in terms and any attempt to rivet one on the other must come to a violent end.

The crisis has afforded us an opportunity to see how imperialist policy is working out in Nigeria.

In the first place the power of the compradore and feudal nobility in the West was built up with the support of the British as a barrier to rapid progress and radical reform.

Secondly, the British have contrived to maintain and strengthen feudal rule in the North, and the foreign policy of the NPC shows that Northern feudalism has been installed in the Federation as the best friend of British imperialism.

In the third place, it is said that the state of Emergency was declared so as to achieve 'Stability' and prevent any jeopardy to the Six-Year Development plan which we all know is imperialist sponsored.

In other words, taking the three factors we see that even the Action Group has no right to go progressive lest the interests of imperialism and their compradore allies be jeopardised. It becomes clear then from this crisis that unless imperialism is swept away root and branch in Nigeria and its feudal and compradore collaborators are wiped out of our country the fundamental condition for progress will never be established.

6. The Action Group party has been brought to a stand-still. It must go Right and become, like the NCNC, virtually indistinguishable from the NPC; or it must go more to the Left and become even more democratic and progressive. Confronted as the party is by the combined might of the country's reactionaries, there is no doubt as to the choice. The party will go further Left, but how far, it is impossible to say.

## CONSTITUTION:

For a long time the N.Y.C. has been calling for a Constituent Assembly to review the constitution. We have now seen in display the power that has been given to Northern Feudalism by the constitution. Incidentally, it is again one of the ironies of the situation that the Action Group which helped more than any other single party to pioneer the present three-Regional structure is the first to suffer under it.

At the same time we see that the extensive powers given to the Regions by the constitution and the rigidity by which these powers are secured makes it necessary that there must be a crisis any time the Federal Government wishes to establish facts about administration in a Region. One would be correct to say that the Federal Government, in order to carry out some desirable policies in a Region may have to proceed by way of measures bordering on sheer unconstitutionality. Here is an explosive and unstable situation full of all dangers.

Equally, the masses cannot fail to notice the firmness and sweeping speed with which the Federal Government has acted in the crisis. How one wishes the Federal Government could act with equal force in other matters. Once it did act with comparative firmness and speed when it promptly broke off diplomatic relation with France on the occasion of the Second French Sahara atomic bomb test, since the atom bomb was dropped so near the gates of the Sardauna's empire of Northern Nigeria. This previous instance and that of the present crisis go to show that quite apart from the reactionary and clumsy outlook of the ruling N. P. C. Party, the thoroughly opportunist outlook of the ruling elements of the NCNC has done much to discredit parliamentary government in Nigeria. It is now clear that the NCNC and the NPC are not incapable of acting firmly. But they will do so only for chauvinistic reasons or to back reaction. We insist that the country wants a progressive party with a progressive policy and disciplined to carry out popular and progressive measures firmly. For this purpose Parliamentary methods can still be used.

It is not necessary to resort to illegality, to intimidate the judiciary, to stage riots in Parliament or intimidate or incapacitate Parliament with an army of thugs or with tear-gas throwing police. In order that reaction may not resort to these methods against a progressive government and in order that a progressive government, the peoples own choice, may be able to carry out measures firmly and swiftly without legalistic Parliament and other obstructions, the constitution must be revised to extend the powers of the Federal Government as against Regional parochialism and reaction.

Also any constitution that emphasises the power of the three major tribes in Nigeria is fraught with instability and breeds disunity and confusion, a state of things from which opportunist

and reactionaries profit since they can exploit it in their constant effort to deceive the masses. What the people need is a constitution which will allow us to hear less of Ibo-Yoruba-Hausa conflicts : a constitution that will create more States in the country out of the existing Regions, especially Northern Nigeria. Under such a constitution no one can present himself to the masses, and be acclaimed leader on the ticket of tribal heroism. Anyone aspiring to leadership of the masses will then have to look for the genuine interests of the people and champion them. Only then can unity and progress become possible.

### THE WAY FORWARD

In this study we have shown analytically the contradictions, that exist within the ruling cliques in our country. We have exposed the limitations of bourgeois nationalist parties. We have revealed how the crisis in the country has developed out of these contradictions. We have unfolded the plans and aims of foreign neo-colonialist and Imperialist powers headed by the U.S.A. and Britain to continue their plunder and exploitation, of our country. We have shown how the State as a machinery of coercive rule serves the interests of the ruling classes.

The traditional struggle of the people of Nigeria for freedom from colonial rule culminated in the wresting of political Independence from the British colonialists on October 1, 1960. This has weakened International Imperialism. But the people's aspirations for total emancipation from the exploitation of man by man, for the building of a society in which each will enjoy full equality of opportunities are to-day being hindered by an equally dangerous enemy, neo-colonialism and its agents, feudal autocracy and bureaucratic capitalism. The Nigerian Youth Congress believes that if the people of Nigeria take into their hands the struggle for their total freedom and defend it to the last they will not only defeat neo-colonialism and its agents but they will also establish a truly democratic society.

The poor classes—the workers, poor farmers, petty traders and all those who suffer from the oppression and exploitation of neo-colonialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism must form a party of their own which will be guided by the ideology of struggle of the working class and the peasantry. Such a Party alone can protect the true interests of the toiling masses and win for them political power.

In this study we have attempted to show that the main enemy of the Nigerian People is neo-colonialism which is aided and proped up in our society by feudal autocracy and bureaucratic capitalism. To defeat this common enemy the people must come together and form the People's Democratic United Front. The Nigerian Youth Congress has long realised the need for a United Front of the People and has been working towards it. We reproduce below the appeal of the Nigerian Youth Congress to the People of Nigeria to come together now and form the United Front, issued on May 18th, 1962.



## A UNITED FRONT NOW- THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Day by day since the attainment of Independence on October 1, 1960 events have proved to the people of this country that the most urgent task now is the struggle against neo-colonialism; to end feudal autocracy; to put an end to corrupt practices in high official circles and to ensure better life for the working people of this country.

The Nigerian Youth Congress believes that the working people of this country face a common enemy. The interests of the workers the farmers, the petty traders, the students, the progressive intellectuals and professionals are bound up by the common desire to achieve a life free from social inequality, poverty, unemployment, and the exploitation of man by man.

It is therefore imperative that all sections of the masses struggling for better life come together now and form a United Front of the People whose principal task will be to facilitate the political development and the political organisation of the masses for the total emancipation of the working people.

The Congress as a socialist movement is convinced that it is only the politically conscious organisation of the working people of this country that can achieve the full independence which is a prerequisite for the ending of all the sufferings of the common people.

We call on the militant and conscious workers who are organised in the Trade Union to respond to our call for a United Front.

We appeal to the Farmers who are daily impoverished by the regular fall in the prices of farm products, arbitrary taxation and oppression of feudal elements to join us in the United Front.

We call on the petty traders and the market women who suffer from the activities of foreign monopolists to decide now for a better tomorrow by joining us in the United Front.

We call on the progressive youth, the students, intellectuals and professionals to join us in building a United Front that will ensure the prosperity of our country.

We appeal to the youths of the NEPU who are facing great hardships from the feudal autocracy of the Emirs to come into the United Front.

We call on the youths of the United Middle Belt Congress who are leading the resistance of the people against the oppression of the Emirs to come into the United Front.

We call on the youths of the Action Group whose interests are linked with those of other youths in the country to join the United Front.

We call on the youths in the Zikist Movement to come forward with the militant spirit of the pre-Independence Zikist Movement, to forget personal prejudices and join other progressive youth of this country to form a United Front of the people.

We hail on the youths in the Northern Peoples Congress to come and work together with their young colleagues in the United Front in order to ensure a brighter future for all of us.

Workers of Nigeria, Farmers of Nigeria; Market Women of Nigeria; Petty Traders of Nigeria; Students of Nigeria, intellectuals and professionals of Nigeria, this is the hour for decision. This is the hour for Action. This is the hour for unity. We all are faced by common enemies-neo-Colonialism and Feudalism. In unity we can emancipate ourselves for ever from the exploitation and hardships imposed on us by the common enemies. Working people of Nigeria you are the only safeguard to the complete freedom of this country. You and you alone can free yourselves from your sufferings. Let us come together now and form a mighty United Front of the people, fight neo-colonialism, end feudalism abolish corruption. win true political power for the people. Let us tog ther march towards the realisation of a strong United Front now. This is the supreme need of the Hour.





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