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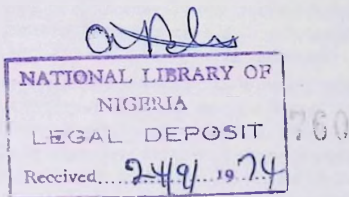
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HISTORY AND HISTORY-MAKERS
IN MODERN NIGERIA

An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan
on Thursday, 25 October 1973

by

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HISTORY AND HISTORY-MAKERS IN MODERN NIGERIA

VICE-CHANCELLOR, REGISTRAR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I feel greatly honoured in giving this Inaugural Lecture for a number of reasons. Coming first in the session which marks the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of this University, my lecture provides a unique opportunity to relate my theme, in some respects, to the early development of this institution. Besides, my Inaugural Lecture is the first to be given by a professorial Head of a Department which was one of the foundation departments of this University. Historical circumstances prevented my distinguished predecessors—the professorial Heads of Department—from giving an Inaugural Lecture. There is, however, no doubt that Professors Eveline C. Martin, Kenneth O. Dike, J. C. Anene, J. F. Ade. Ajayi and A. F. C. Ryder, in that order, contributed their utmost in keeping ablaze the flame of History at Ibadan. We can agree therefore that my lecture today does not claim to inaugurate a new Department.

The choice of a suitable theme on an occasion such as this was not easy. On the scope of an Inaugural Lecture, the last expatriate Principal of this institution, himself a historian, made some useful suggestions worth recalling. In June 1959 he observed :

One of the performances expected of a newly appointed Professor is an Inaugural Lecture. As you know, the term "Inaugural" is not always literally accurate. There was one Professor at Cambridge, very famous in other respects, who devoted much of the twenty years of his tenure of the Chair to preparing material for his Inaugural ; and there is something to be said for the view that an Inaugural should sum up a man's best thought on his subject. However, in general, it is a good thing for an Inaugural Lecture to inaugurate a tenure.

I do not intend today to follow too strictly the guidelines then suggested by that Principal. This lecture will mainly serve the purpose of inaugurating a relatively new Professor in the Department of History here.

I have, for some reasons, sought to relate my theme to Nigeria. First, by far the greatest contribution made by members of my Department, over the years, has been in the field of Nigerian history and the Ibadan School of History can proudly co-operate with others in this and other aspects of African history. Second, there is the consideration of relevance. Our survey of the human past is wide but we still believe that in both our researches and teaching, our work should be of relevance and service to Nigerians. Our published works in the *Ibadan History Series*, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* and elsewhere attest to our awareness of the need to explore in greater depth Nigeria's fascinating history over several centuries. Besides, modern, I almost said contemporary, Nigerian history is what I like best, particularly where it touches upon administrative and institutional developments. I have a soft spot for problems of power and stability in the evolution of the Nigerian State. You will pardon me, I hope, if I choose my illustrations from those areas of Nigerian history in the course of this lecture.

There is, however, a wider horizon for us in the Department of History. We are interested in various aspects of the human past in other parts of the world, more so in Africa. It was from 1948 that African history was taken more seriously at the University level all over the world, and this Department has since then played an important part in those crucial pioneering efforts. Progress since 1948 is so great that advanced work in African regional, territorial and local histories, as distinct from the continental approach, has surpassed early expectations. Although there are still important fields to explore, work on Nigerian history, in particular, has now come of age.

My Department has steadily responded to a challenge whose impact was more increasingly felt from the early years of this institution. In a discussion of the lines of future academic development of the various departments at the University College, Ibadan, the members of the Inter-University Council Visitation in 1952 saw the special role of History. The crucial debate then was the relative encouragement to give General Degree courses on one

hand and Honours or Special Degree courses on the other in Nigeria's development. It is necessary to quote this section of the Inter-University Council Visitation report of 1952 in full :

While the College cannot afford the funds necessary to provide extra staff and facilities for several Special Honours schools, we feel that as a matter of policy there may be subjects in which the establishment of an Honours school would be desirable not only from the point of view of serving the needs of Nigeria but also in the hope of making a distinctive contribution to scholarship. On both grounds we feel that careful attention should be paid to the possibility of developing an Honours school in History.

An Honours course in History would be a good preparation not only for students who become specialist teachers in training colleges and schools, but also for students who will later enter political life, the administrative and other government services, the churches, journalism and broadcasting, commercial and industrial work, and many other fields of public life. The course would require teaching in political theory and in constitutional history and would therefore prepare the way for later developments of work in a department of Government or Political Science, a department of Philosophy, and a department of Law. A strong department of History would directly assist the work of the departments of English, Geography, Religious Studies and Agriculture and indirectly could assist the Faculties of Science and Medicine. It could strengthen the interest in the humanities and social studies throughout the College, and powerfully assist the work of the Extra-Mural Department. In History there is an established corpus of knowledge and no lack of scholarly literature for teaching purposes, so that an Honours course does not have to wait on prior research or the production of new teaching material ; at the same time there is wide scope for experimentation in shaping a suitable syllabus for the time when the College grants its own degree.

As a centre of learning the College has an obligation to play a leading part in preserving the documentary, oral and material evidence of the history of Africa. It will also have opportunities

of making distinctive contributions to scholarship. It is a field in which collaboration could fruitfully be developed with scholars in the United Kingdom, Europe and America. A strong History department could greatly assist in the political self-education of Nigeria both through its own teaching and research and through its influence on the teaching of history in the schools. As members of a young nation, Nigerians are naturally much interested in the story of the development of other nations and in the lessons of their experience, as well as in knowing all that can be known about the past of Africa and especially their own part of Africa. In both these matters History has much to give them, both of established knowledge and of techniques and disciplines. It seems clear to us that young Nigeria will be strongly conscious of disappointment, and of disappointment with its first national home of learning, [if] the College does not include a lively school of History.

A lively History School at Ibadan, as I said, has developed under the careful direction of my devoted predecessors and present colleagues. Our Combined Schools, teaching arrangements for undergraduates, and research methodology reflect the need for an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of History. We are also constantly mindful of the relevance of our discipline to others. We are, above all, eagerly seeking new vistas in Nigerian History.

Our search for relevance in Nigerian history has limitations. It is true that researches into early Nigerian history have gained from the combined efforts of historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, linguists and others. Wider and more competent use of oral tradition, in particular, has enriched our understanding of the Nigerian past. It is also true that further researches into recent Nigerian history have benefited from the ending, in the mid-1960s, of the fifty-year rule in regard to confidential state documents in favour of the present thirty-year rule. Yet, our understanding of Nigeria's recent past is not as full as we desire. Not all the traces we require of the past are recorded nor are we given free access to some classified documents in public archives and other repositories. Besides, in war as in peace, some important policy-matters in recent times have been decided by telephone or through personal

discussions without keeping records. There is, in addition, the wilful destruction of valuable documents by interested parties. We are therefore not yet in a sufficiently strong position to attempt writing, for example, the history of electoral violence and its far-flung consequences in Nigeria. Nor can we now attempt the more formidable task of producing an authoritative history of the recent Nigerian civil war. The reluctance of Nigerian historians to wade into the thorny field of the Nigerian civil war is not based on cowardice but on academic restraint, particularly in this era of post-war reconciliation and reconstruction.

Our reluctance to rush into writing the history of the Nigerian civil war rests on another ground. In my view, there is a mature period for writing a national history which will rise above the level of patriotic propaganda. There is need both for distance from the events under study and for sober reflection without emotional overtones. We must also attempt to combine a clear understanding of the complex causes, course and consequences of the civil war with an honest interpretation. No matter how courageous we are as individuals and historians, we cannot ignore the continued existence of the national emergency in Nigeria. The Nigerian past, as I see it, contains a lot of unpleasant things which need frank analysis if we do not subscribe too meekly to a Whig interpretation of History. I see no virtue in glorifying the past if the known record points in the opposite direction.

If we examine quickly topical events in our history in the past century or less, we shall see the roles of various individuals and groups of people who left behind imperishable marks. Not all of these history-makers could be called villains but heroes were few and far between. Since we have limited time in this lecture, I shall not comb the field of history-makers, village by village. Our assessment will reveal, among others, the necessity for understanding the political, economic and social backgrounds of the various people who eventually had a common political destiny. These people, it is true, had common interests and inter-relationships dating from pre-colonial times; they also possessed different cultural, political and administrative institutions for many centuries in an extensive area with considerable geographical and other

obstacles. The point is: wise statesmanship on the part of leaders would have emphasized the issues that unite without losing sight of the problem of how to resolve important differences.

Each of the four distinct stages in our study of recent Nigerian history throws some light on the roles of history-makers. The first stage covers the establishment and expansion, since the late nineteenth century, of British administrative control in several parts of Nigeria. The second deals with the consolidation of British rule after the 1914 amalgamation. The third is firmly rooted in the sustained efforts of Nigerians to end colonialism. The fourth began with the triumphal note of achieving independence but soon plunged into the anxious moments of a national crisis. With the exception of the fourth stage, there was no rigid line of demarcation. The *dramatis personae* at each of these stages left on Nigerian history an indelible mark deserving of serious consideration.

Concerning the first and second stages, it was clear that people in their various communities—north, south, east and west of the Niger—put up a stubborn resistance to colonialism. Even those who co-operated with the new British rulers did not abandon their natural wish to be free. While the relatively few loyalists had such short-term benefits as wealth, power and influence, the majority of the people opposed to colonialism resorted to any means at their disposal to regain freedom. The patterns of opposition to British colonial expansion in Nigeria showed no concerted efforts before the advent of formal political parties. Since each community organized its own resistance, it was convenient for British forces to deal with pockets of opposition as they arose. With the success of British forces, several groups of people lost control over their internal and external affairs. But in the process, there emerged a single paramount ruler over all these people—a position without parallel in pre-colonial times.

One of the momentous consequences of the establishment and expansion of British political control was the 1914 amalgamation which marked an important stage in the evolution of the Nigerian state. A fundamental question however remained to be solved: Did the people who opposed British colonialism accept the emergent Nigerian state? There was certainly a lot of village-centredness and provincial-thinking even before the 1914 amalgamation and

much of this persisted after the end of colonialism in Nigeria. British colonialism was not thorough enough to dismantle completely the sectional differences and particularism which preceded it. Thus, some people who opposed or distrusted the 1914 amalgamation called it 'a mistake'. Others came to accept it as a *fait accompli*. The Nigerian state which emerged in 1914 was not founded on a plebiscite. Few modern states are created through referenda. Federalism, after all, was a practical attempt to provide unity in diversity among those who looked to the centre and others who constantly urged the creation of autonomous Regions or states.

History-makers during the third important stage in the evolution of the Nigerian state—the struggle for and achievement of independence—also left their marks on national history. Nigeria spent a shorter period under British colonial rule than such other territories as the United States, India and Ireland. For such communities as the Tiv, the Hausa-Fulani Emirates, and much of Iboland, the period of effective British colonial rule lasted less than seven decades. The factor of time is important here: time to understand other groups of Nigerians under the same political framework. If the miracle of accomplishing lasting mutual understanding among the various communities was expected in a few decades, it did not materialize in Nigeria. It is also true, that unlike experience in other former British dependencies, Nigeria had few clearly discernible counterparts of such national rallying-points as the American Revolutionary War of Independence (1776–1783), Indian Mutiny (1857), Irish Easter Rising (1916) and Kenyan *Mau Mau* (1952–55). For a while, the less bloody struggle for de-colonization and independence provided Nigerians with a common issue of major importance but from the early 1950s in particular, centrifugal forces clashed openly and violently with the centripetal factors.

Nevertheless, the acts of commission and omission of British colonial officials in the political, economic and social fields produced easy targets for criticism and opposition by the literate and illiterate in Nigeria. The main problem was how best to give the grievances of the masses the most desirable focus and secure the most effective redress. That in turn raised questions of leadership, strategy and tactics. Men and women, in their respective

communities, took up the struggle and adopted means they considered most convenient for ending Nigeria's colonial status. The men and resources changed but the goal was always freedom.

It is a puerile exercise to seek in Nigeria's political history, since the late nineteenth century, a short list of founding fathers and heroes. Nor is it justified to seek and adulate a single political party that can be credited with the achievement of independence. The careful observer sees a long list of valiant efforts by several Nigerians acting alone or in groups. Not all of these attained immediate success. But the initial steps of the frustrated pioneer freedom-fighters inspired the efforts of their more successful successors. The early standard-bearers of the sustained crusade against British colonialism in Nigeria did not belong to formal political parties. The fight for de-colonization and independence was such that it called for the support of the masses whatever the nature of leadership. Hence, the traditional elite, the educated elite and party political leaders engaged in fighting against colonialism in Nigeria worked hard to enlist wide public support. Until British officials were convinced that Nigeria's leading freedom-fighters had mass support, they were unwilling to share or surrender political power. The role of the masses was expected to increase with the advent of party politics but the escalation of electoral violence and the rigging of parliamentary elections eventually caused widespread disenchantment. In time, Britain was willing to grant Nigeria independence which marked an end as well as a beginning. Did the independence, granted on 1 October 1960, end decades of frustration under colonial rule and inspire hopes of a new era in an independent Nigeria?

The Nigerians who fought for and won independence wanted the new rulers to undertake economic development and social welfare programmes more vigorously than their British counterparts. These Nigerians regarded independence not as an end in itself but as a means to an end: the improvement of the quality of life. Besides, other Nigerians expected victory not only against poverty and its roots but also against the forces of sectionalism and political disintegration. Yet another set of Nigerians called for the solution of an inherited problem—the determination of a more

acceptable basis of the Nigerian federal state, a problem which involved the question whether or not to create more autonomous states within the federation.

Among the Nigerians who entertained hopes of the welfare state, there was palpable impatience when the goal of economic development proved harder to attain than that of the crusade for political independence. Equally disappointing were the efforts made in nation-building. Some Nigerians, who at independence had inherited a colonial state, gave only slight attention to the problem of national integration. Those who in parliamentary and other debates opposed any British reference to Nigeria as a mere geographical expression later saw nothing absurd in behaving as if they were only *in* Nigeria and not *of* Nigeria. Moreover, the Nigerian leaders who had blamed such colonial Governors as Sir Bernard Bourdillon and Sir Arthur Richards (later Lord Milverton) in the 1930s and 1940s for erecting artificial regional boundaries were themselves unwilling, for nearly two decades, to dismantle them when they became rulers. I need not recount here the fortunes and misfortunes of the advocates and opponents of the sustained demands for creating more autonomous regions or states within the Nigerian federation. Have we learnt significant lessons since May 1967 in the long-standing demands for the creation of states? I see a lot of political wisdom in that old Roman saying: *Bis dat qui cito dat* (He gives twice who gives quickly).

Without alerting you, I have already begun discussing problems relating to the roles of history-makers during the fourth stage in the evolution of the Nigerian state. That fourth stage, you may recall, deals with the problems of post-independence Nigeria. Going into a long discussion here will be tedious, and I shall refrain from that. But we can preface our brief analysis by posing the question: Were the Nigerians who fought for and won independence from Britain prepared to compromise their freedom under new rulers?

Enlightened leadership could have minimized the force of the centrifugal factors in Nigeria's development as a modern state. But in practice, Nigeria's political leaders, before and immediately after independence, were so eager to control and monopolise the machinery of government that they encouraged rivalries which

resulted in playing off one ethnic group against another. Moreover, in their bid to assume or retain power, these same leaders winked at corruption, recklessness, victimization, and other mal-practices which embittered their opponents to the extent of threatening revenge or secession. In post-independence Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa the charismatic leadership of the advocates of decolonization failed to ensure the stability of the newly-emergent state. Developments in West Africa since the 1960s suggest that the cultivation of a personality-cult for the stability of a newly-independent state does not deserve serious consideration.

In a country emerging from colonialism to independence, the factor of leadership in nation-building cannot be over-emphasised. Where the source of the newly-emergent state's leadership in government, as in Nigeria, was tainted because of the inadequacies of the electoral process, the problems of consolidating independence and encouraging nation-building encountered formidable obstacles. That was Nigeria's experience till 1965. In my view, Nigeria's serious national crisis between January 1966 and January 1970 had an important (but not necessarily the only) background in the remarkable escalation of electoral violence since the 1950s. The principal sources of public frustration in the post-1951 regional and federal elections had a major impact on Nigerian history generally, more so as they took place at a time when the amount of power at stake at the regional and federal levels steadily increased. Hence, regional and federal elections became fierce struggles for power. Elections, if responsibly conducted by the constitutionally recognized umpires and participants, could provide a means of securing and maintaining the legitimacy of governments. Through participation in these seasonal parliamentary exercises, the people, as in Nigeria, expected a chance to select and change, where necessary, the leaders without resorting to violence. Intimidation and election-rigging tended however to prevent the free expression of the electorate in the choice of their leaders.

It can be conceded that participation is not the only, or by far the most important, factor in determining the level of legitimacy enjoyed by any government such as emerged in Nigeria till 1965. The other, and perhaps more decisive, factor of performance,

which lies in the satisfaction of such ascertainable needs as security, stability and welfare, deserves closer examination. Eligible voters as well as those without the franchise in Nigeria realized how insecure their lives and property were before, during and after the parliamentary elections of the 1950s and 1960s. Between 1951 and 1965—the period spanning dyarchy and independence—the welfare needs of the masses also suffered. The slogan of 'life more abundant' promised the ordinary people at election time seemed more and more illusory except for the lucky few in privileged official and private circles. Because of the obvious abuses in the electoral system, the aggrieved masses who possessed the franchise in theory failed to register votes that counted.

By the end of 1965, if not much earlier, the regional Houses of Assembly and the federal House of Representatives had clearly outlived their usefulness as bodies which truly represented the people's choice. Since from these same sources the personnel of the regional and federal cabinets were chosen, the legitimacy of the governments, so selected, was very much in doubt. There was certainly a serious crisis in public confidence in Nigeria's parliamentary elections between 1951 and 1965, a crisis which resulted in the subsequent use of other—that is, violent—means of changing Nigeria's political leaders. Seen through Maoist spectacles, the military *coups d'état* in 1966 and the subsequent civil war in Nigeria marked a continuation of politics by other means. Nigerians continued to behave as political animals even after the banning of political parties.

The civil war occupies a central place in Nigerian history. Its severity and trauma are still fresh in our minds and need no re-telling. Both sides fought bravely for principles they cherished. In the process, the durability of the Nigerian state was seriously threatened. In that war, federal leaders (military and civilian), with the remarkable cooperation of the masses, showed how, given sufficient power, will and ability, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a newly-independent state, such as Nigeria, could be successfully defended against powerful odds.

An important aspect of the recent civil war in Nigeria lay in our seeking to fight for the preservation of a nation which relatively few people then understood. History, if properly taught or studied,

should promote understanding of the human past. There was also some significance in the timing of the Nigerian Civil War in relation to the increasing emphasis on industrialization to the neglect of comparable emphasis on the Humanities and Social Sciences. The military *coups d'état* of January and July 1966, secession and the outbreak of civil war, took place before the end of the 1962-68 Development Plan period. Grievances arising from political and social ills then clearly out-weighed the attractions of the expected industrial growth.

Nigerians paid a heavy price to save their federal state. Experience during and after the Nigerian Civil War reminds one of the relevance of an East African saying: 'When elephants fight it is the country that suffers'. Again, experience after the same war suggests the applicability to Nigeria of a German proverb: 'A great war leaves a country with three armies—an army of cripples, an army of mourners, and an army of thieves.' This last quotation, you will agree, easily lends itself to flexible interpretations.

As in many a national crisis, the role of enlightened leadership will be decisive. Yet, in contemporary Nigeria, where the new laws of the new lords are followed by new tricks, the careful observer is bound to ascertain how far the leaders are trying to prevent a repetition of the loss of public confidence which touched off the momentous events that resulted in the civil war. Events in Nigerian history in the past few decades indicate that the acts of omission and commission which substantially reduce the level of public confidence in the legitimacy of a government deserve to be treated by leaders as matters of grave concern.

People, here in Nigeria and elsewhere, often regard themselves as making history but seldom ascertain what sort of history they have made. Pham Van Dong, Premier of North Vietnam, made a useful comment in October 1972 when he said: 'In any event, it is better to make history than to write it.' Those who have made recent Nigerian history do not always appreciate the problems of professional historians. Of Nigerians, as well as of others, we can safely say: by their history we shall know them. Theologians may split hairs over justification by faith and justification by work. I am firmly convinced that there is yet another angle to that ancient debate: we can now interpose justification by History. A man

with courage and vision may wish to attempt forecasting the future of a nation, such as ours, from the behaviour of its present leaders. He may, of course, be wrong in some or all of his predictions but his effort will be noteworthy. When we look at the performance of contemporary Nigerian leaders are we not entitled to ask the question: How will historians regard Nigeria a century or more from 1973? We can put the same question differently: What historical footprints are we leaving for future generations? We are justified in raising these issues for some observers tend to regard historians as people who look into the past which, in their view, is safely buried. It is true that historians tend to emphasize the bridge between the past and present and engage themselves in the perennial question: How did we reach this point in our development? Historians also interest themselves in the link between the present and the future without attempting to be prophets.

Do I have to say more on the value of History to any nation such as Nigeria? This is not the best moment to give a full-scale treatment of what History stands for nor am I going to discuss the views of all those who regard the study of History as wasted effort. It is sufficient to emphasize at once that the true goals of History are understanding and interpreting the past. Historians leave to others what they intend to make of their knowledge of the past. Contrary to the views of Max Nordau (*The Interpretation of History* 1910, p. 20), historians are not 'prophets of the past'. Nor are they Cassandras whose predictions are never believed. Despite the magisterial stance of Lord Acton, historians need not adopt the role of moral judges of past conduct, a duty which rightly belongs to jurists, philosophers, theologians, psychologists, politicians and like-minded people. I am satisfied with upholding the view that morality is relative to time and place.

In a changing world, it will be unrealistic to affirm that History repeats itself exactly. Most professional historians believe in unique events and treat them as such. Any suggestion of historical inevitability leaves me cold. I am prepared to see in a chain of complicated events the element of chance or accident. I avoid adopting a mono-causal interpretation of events when a multi-causal approach seems more convincing. I see no straight lines in History. My studies have also convinced me that historians tend

to impose an artificial order on events which were untidy when they happened. I am also of the view that epoch-making events, such as world wars, civil wars and others, are not necessarily the handiwork of majorities. These views, I admit, condition my understanding and interpretation of the past in Nigeria and elsewhere; I disclose them at this stage of the present lecture to enable you see my approach to History generally and to my discussion of topical issues involving history-makers in modern Nigeria. I again believe most fervently that a study of History is valuable not merely for the job-opportunities it offers specialists and general practitioners in that discipline but for weightier reasons.

I was at first surprised in February 1973 when the Students' Historical Society at this University asked me to give them a lecture not on the academic aspects of History but on job-opportunities for historians in Nigeria. After my initial disappointment, I came round to share their anxieties and gave a lecture on the topic of interest to them. They complained most bitterly that under present conditions in Nigeria, the prospects of their having high-level employment had diminished. In certain respects they were right. In the 1950s, when this institution (then a University College) produced its first set of graduates in History and other disciplines, the Humanities were held in high regard by policy-makers and employers in Nigeria. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, attention in Nigeria has steadily moved to disciplines related to science and technology. This University has responded to that changing emphasis by providing services not only in research and teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences but also in vocational training—the turning-out of professionals. The establishment here in 1970 of the Institute of Applied Science and Technology has shown this University's awareness of, and response to, increasing public needs. Besides, in a world which extols computerization and automation what contribution can the Humanities and the Social Sciences continue to make? In Nigeria, the 1960s and 1970s have, as the U.N. itself desired, been decades of economic development with emphasis on industrialization. Although these developments have encouraged the training of skilled manpower and provided employment opportunities, the immediate beneficiaries have not always been graduates in the Humanities. It is

true that progress in any sector of human activity is often accompanied by some sacrifice, necessary or not, in other fields. Historians and others in the Humanities and Social Sciences need not complain unnecessarily in a society or world with changing priorities. In fact, as students of change, though not always its advocates, historians are quite aware of the differences between the needs of one generation and those of another.

Yet, until machines, and not men, rule the world, the importance or relevance of the Humanities and Social Sciences cannot be easily ignored, in Nigeria and elsewhere. Human resources constitute an important national asset and their development is a matter of great significance. Recall for one moment the causes and consequences of social unrest here and abroad. Consider the remote and proximate causes of strikes, disturbances, revolutions, counter-revolutions, civil wars and world wars and the enormous loss of lives and property these entail. The political, economic and social consequences of such events have markedly changed human lives in several parts of the world.

Sometimes, the impact of History is felt in another way. In August 1957, Professor Richard Pares (*The Historian's business and other essays*, 1961, p. 82), correctly emphasised the role of historians in his comments on the revolt against colonialism. He then said:

Good history cannot do so much service as money or science; but bad history can do almost as much harm as the most disastrous scientific discovery in the world. It will be the historians of Asia and Africa who will have the power to prejudice the next generations for or against us.

The line between Pares' 'good' and 'bad' History is thin and subjective but nevertheless necessary in this case. The use of 'bad' History, or the abuse of History, can help to injure relations between individuals, institutions, societies and nations.

Nearer home, and in more recent times, the Nigerian combatants in the civil war appealed to History in defence of their respective attitudes to the issue of Nigeria's survival or durability as a federal state. In particular, both sides looked for guidance in American

history. As in the American Civil War, both sides to the conflict invoked the same God for victory. Comparisons in history show both similarities and differences.

In several ways, the Nigerian Civil War ran its distinctive course. Though there were remarkable similarities in the civil war experiences of Nigerians and the Americans, the differences were no less outstanding. The political, social, economic, diplomatic and military circumstances of the United States in the 1860s and those of Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 had important differences which need no elaboration here. President Abraham Lincoln, the lawyer and leader of the Republican Party, and General Yakubu Gowon, the soldier-statesman, were not carbon copies. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the soldier-political opportunist, was also not the exact counterpart of Jefferson Davis, the plantation-owner, former U.S. Senator, and U.S. Secretary of War. The problems raised by slavery in the United States on one hand and ethnic minorities in Nigeria on the other affected the issues of war and peace in either country in complex, different ways. The relative impacts of cotton and petroleum on diplomacy in either conflict were also different. No overzealous International Committee of the Red Cross, no Cold-War politics, no foreign Observer Teams, no meddling inter-continental sectarian interests complicated matters for the combatants in the United States. Of course, the United States of the 1860s had no thermo-nuclear weapons and sophisticated delivery systems, no fighter planes, no bombers, no spy-satellites, no mass-produced radios, television sets and newspapers, nor global interests. Yet, both the United States in the 1860s and Nigeria in the 1960s faced a similar problem: how best to ensure the continued existence of a federal state when faced with a serious secessionist movement. In either case, a bloody conflict ensued but without some of the excesses of the English Civil War of the seventeenth century, and without the witch-hunting characteristic of the French and Russian Revolutions of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Civil War experiences in England, U.S.A., France, Russia and elsewhere demonstrated the existence and role of individuals and groups who neither forgot nor forgave people for their misfortunes

in such bitter and prolonged struggles. Despite the current emphasis in Nigeria on post-war reconciliation, the trauma of the civil war will take considerable time and much conscious effort to obliterate.

Vice-Chancellor, I shall make my conclusion very brief since the time allowed me has almost run out. If the past in Nigeria has any abiding lesson, it is that leaders come and go, their ideas and achievements last as long as they enjoy general acceptability, but the people remain. The durability of the Nigerian state has depended less on the excellence of its formal institutions than on the faith of the majority of citizens in the value of its continued existence.

I shall end this lecture with a few positive suggestions on how to increase national understanding through a wider and deeper study of History. The teaching and study of Nigerian History deserves to be taken seriously at all levels of the educational institutions in the country. It is a misdirected effort to entrust the responsibility of teaching History in the schools and colleges to people other than those most qualified by training to do so. At the university level, the study of History needs further encouragement through undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships, through vigorous staff development and the provision of research facilities. The establishment, here in Ibadan and elsewhere, of distinct Institutes of Historical Research, employing full-time research scholars, will materially assist work on Nigerian History in particular and African History in general at a time when the need for national and international understanding is increasingly felt. A nation which neglects its history has not made serious efforts to benefit from its past experience. Nigerians, I am convinced, can learn valuable lessons from their eventful history.

