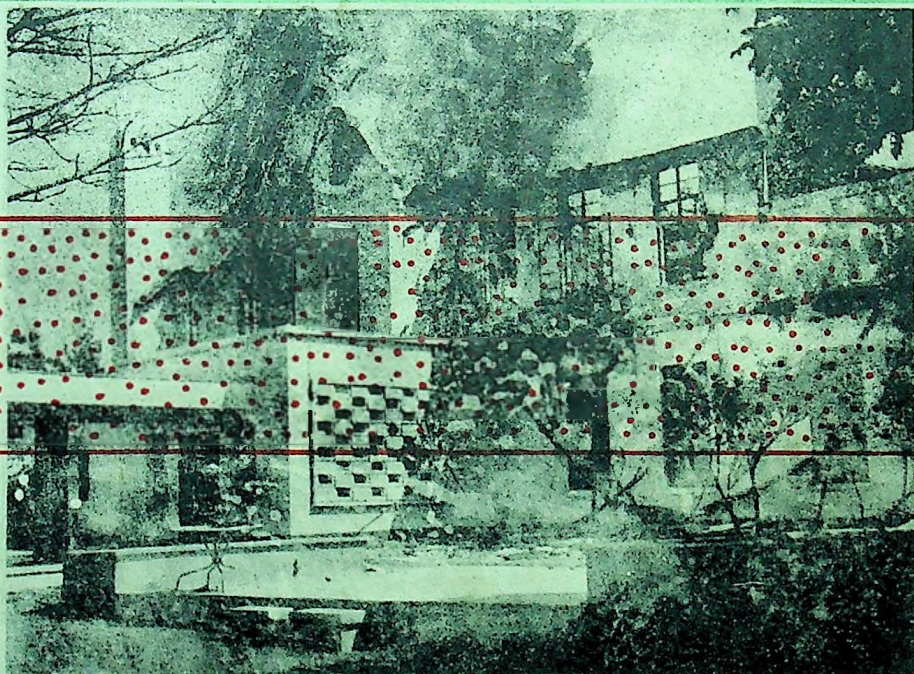


THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

Facts & Background



ACT OF VANDALISM

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THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

FACTS & BACKGROUND

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FOREWORD

An unfortunate series of tragic events has plagued our great and beloved country during the passing year, severely rocking the very foundations of our existence as one people with a common destiny in a strong and united Nigeria.

It would, of course, be futile and unrealistic at this point to claim that all was well with the country until the shattering eruption of January; at the same time it is nothing but a statement of fact that the January incident introduced a diabolical new element into the long struggle to build a free and fair society in which no one is oppressed. By the cold-blooded murders in January of political and army leaders of Northern, Western and Mid-Western Nigeria origins, a new and tragic chapter was opened in our history through the vicious machinations of the Ibos of Nigeria.

A large number of factors have been brought forward in various attempts by various interests to explain the tragic chain of events, to justify the actions and attitudes of certain people and to seek world understanding and sympathy for those who had foolishly played with fire and had been badly burnt. But no number of excuses and explanations and no amount of hysterical apologies can do away with the simple fact that political assassination is wrong, and that the single event which set off the regrettable chain of events was none other than the Ibo-engineered army 'mutiny' of 15th January.

Large quantities of literature have been churned out in recent months on the situation in Nigeria. Northern Nigeria makes no apologies for adding this little booklet to the interesting collection.

In its traditional way, the North has refrained from the precipitate action of rushing to print with trumped-up charges and unsupported facts. The North has waited until the troubled dust has settled down somewhat to present this calm and reasoned assessment of the whole situation.

This little booklet is not a collection of charges and counter-allegations against the Ibos. It would be a waste of time and effort if it were so. It is in fact a dispassionate and forthright account of how the Ibos, through their devilish determination to dominate or break up Nigeria, plunged the country into the present crisis. It tells the truth about the January 15 incident, gives the background against which the Ibos planned and plotted, recounts once again the North's long record of restraint and compromise and shows how a long series of unprecedented acts of provocation and suppression

did eventually succeed in momentarily stretching beyond breaking point the monumental imperturbability of Northern Nigerians.

Sensational booklets and elegant phrases will not solve Nigeria's problems; but explanations are required to clarify these problems, and courage and honesty are necessary for the guilty parties to accept responsibility for past errors and misdeeds and make sincere efforts towards a change of heart and attitude.

It is with the sincere hope that it will contribute towards a better understanding of Nigerians by Nigerians as well as a better understanding of Nigerians by the rest of the world that this Booklet is recommended for the widest possible reading at home and abroad.

Current Issues Society.

P.O. Box 502

Kaduna, Nigeria

1966.

THE MOCK TAKE OVER OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

"The National Military Government did not come to power by leave of anyone" Ironsi.

Indeed, it did not come to power by leave of anyone. It came to power as a result of organised murders followed by deceit and treachery that resulted in brow-beating the Federal Cabinet to hand over the reign of Government to Ironsi.

After the kidnapping of the Prime Minister by Ibo soldiers, the Cabinet met and recommended the appointment of an Acting Prime Minister in accordance with the constitution during which the General Officer Commanding the Nigeria Army, Aguiyi Ironsi, weeping and with tears in his eyes, led the Cabinet to believe he did not know the background of the Army revolt. He was taken for his words and was instructed to crush the revolt.

This recommendation was deliberately kept floating while private consultations went on between Ibo leaders including Ironsi himself, followed by telephone discussions between them and Dr. Azikiwe (Ibo) who had left the country holidaying in a London hotel.

For Dr. Azikiwe, time had come to use the Army to take over the Government. It was only a year earlier, in a bid to take over the Government he summoned Major-General Welby-Everard, Commodore Wey and Inspector-General Edet to State House and pointed out to them that they owed allegiance to him and for General Everard to note that he (Azikiwe) was the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and their allegiance was to him. They wouldn't have it. Ironsi was now to do what Everard would not do.

After two days of intrigues Ironsi met what remained of the Federal Cabinet, (the Ibo Federal Ministers having boycotted the Cabinet) only to tell them that the solution to the stalemate and in order to prevent civil revolt in the country, it was necessary for the Government to hand over to him to enable him crush the mutiny effectively and that "he and his men have agreed that the public will react favourably if it is known that the Government willingly invited the Army to take over." Thus, innocent Cabinet members bewildered and dissolutioned by the situation, taken unawares by the Ibo subterranean plans, in good faith agreed to hand over in the interest of peace, unity and good government. Aguiyi Ironsi pledged to return power to the civil authorities almost immediately the Army revolt was crushed. Dr. Orizu, in a broadcast to the nation told the world that the Council of Ministers unanimously and voluntarily (words passed to him from a London hotel) agreed to hand over the administration of the country to the Armed Forces.

Indeed, some sort of legitimacy was necessary to saddle the plotters on to power and to get international recognition. Ibos have by now got what they wanted and had only to unfold the master plan hence the series of decrees discussed later that plunged the country to the brink of disintegration and the turmoil.

JANUARY MUTINY AND THE AFTERMATH

In the early hours of 15th January, 1966 there was what was described as an 'Army mutiny' in Nigeria in which the casualties were all, with but a few exceptions, Northerners. North's popular and respected leaders, the Right Honourable Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of the Federation and Alhaji the Honourable Sir Ahmadu Bello, Premier of Northern Nigeria along with some high-ranking officers of Northern Nigeria origin in the Nigerian Army were mercilessly and brutally killed by the mutineers in Lagos and Kaduna. The Premier of Western Nigeria, Chief S. L. Akintola and the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief F. S. Okotie-Eboh along with some top-ranking Army officers of Yoruba origin were also cold-bloodedly murdered by the same mutineers.

In Kaduna, where the Northern Nigeria Premier was killed, people were deliberately prevented by the Army mutineers from mourning his death publicly. In spite of appeals by responsible people in the North the leader of the mutineers Major Chukuma Nzeogu, flatly refused to allow the body of the late Premier to be removed from where it was lying and flown to his home-town in Sokoto Province for burial. Early that morning while his body still lay exposed in the open (on the orders of the mutineers) where he was killed, and while his house was still on fire, large numbers of Ibos from the town came on foot, on bicycles, in taxis and in private cars to watch and to laugh. But while they watched and laughed the Army mutineers allowed his property to be looted.

Following these developments the then Ibo Acting President of the Federation, Dr. Orizu, (the substantive President Dr. Azikiwe was then on leave abroad!) and Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, another Ibo man, conspired together and, through blackmail, succeeded in brow-beating the Federal Cabinet to hand over power to Ironsi.

The role and the part played by the Ibos during and after that most shocking and tragic incident of 15th January, 1966 will be discussed. The disturbances which broke out in some parts of Northern Nigeria in May and subsequently thereafter were in fact precipitated by the January event. In order however to appreciate and understand the picture fully, the role, the attitude and the reaction of the people of the North as well as the sacrifices they have made during the same period will also be dealt with.

The fact that the killings were confined to Lagos, Kaduna and Ibadan and that no Ibos were killed helped to prove and expose the identity of those responsible. It was alleged that Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi only narrowly escaped death by the mutineers! The truth, of course, is that there was never any such intention to kill him. It soon became evidently clear that the event of 15th January, 1966 was not a mutiny as such, but a premeditated and carefully projected plan by the Ibos to impose themselves on the other tribes

of Nigeria. It was the culmination of an effort, the fulfilment of a dream and the realization of a hope long entertained by the Ibo tribe in Nigeria. For as long ago as 1949 Dr. Azikiwe then President of the Ibo State Union revealed the true feelings of the Ibos in an address delivered to the first conference of the Ibo State Union. He said,

“... THE GOD OF AFRICA HAS ESPECIALLY CREATED THE IBO NATION TO LEAD THE CHILDREN OF AFRICA FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE AGES... THE MARTIAL PROWESS OF THE IBO NATION AT ALL STAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY HAS ENABLED THEM NOT ONLY TO CONQUER OTHERS BUT ALSO TO ADAPT THEMSELVES TO THE ROLE OF PRESERVER... THE IBO NATION CANNOT SHIRK ITS RESPONSIBILITY....”

And so the Ibo state, in response to the above call would not shirk its responsibility! Indeed the plan which was brutally executed with the full backing and support of prominent Ibo civilians in January, 1966 was a testimony to this fact.

Naturally the situation in the North grew extremely tense, and the rest of the world waited anxiously to see what the re-action of the North would be to this affront. In response to the appeal of the Military Governor of the North and the assurances given by Ironsi, that the mutineers would be dealt with according to law, the people of the North inspite of the explosive situation remained calm and displayed exemplary behaviour and extraordinary sense of mature responsibility. Moreover, although retaliation would have been quite justified at the time, such an action would nevertheless have plunged the whole country into chaos and confusion, the consequences of which could have been disastrous.

But while the people of the North in response to the appeals by their Military Governor and traditional rulers continued to co-operate fully with the new Military Regime, the Ibos on the other hand continued deliberately to insult and provoke Northerners in various ways. These provocations occurred in market places, in the streets, in pubs and other public houses. In Kaduna and other urban cities in the North, the Ibos held numerous beer and palm-wine parties and killed hundreds of goats to celebrate their victory, as it were, over the rest of Nigeria. Northern Nigerians were labelled as cowards, while their Region itself was being referred to, even in official circles in Enugu and Lagos, as the “conquered North”.

However, inspite of the fact that Ironsi had already started muzzling the Press, and had banned political parties, as well as demonstrations in all forms, nevertheless the Ibos were allowed to publish provocative and insulting articles and broadcast malicious and derogatory remarks against the people of the North. Also despite

repeated protest from all quarters, Ironsi deliberately refused to stop the sale and playing in public of abusive and contemptuous gramophone records until the May disturbances were precipitated. The June issue of the 'Drum Magazine' came out with a most provocative and highly insulting photographs and article about the late Premier of Northern Nigeria. As if these were not enough, thousands of Nzeogu's photographs were being publicly displayed by the Ibos every where in Northern Nigeria, and he was being acclaimed as their hero because he murdered the Premier of the North.

The situation was further worsened by the attitude and action of Ironsi who as soon as he assumed office consciously and deliberately succumbed to the influence of men, in whom the vast majority of the people of Nigeria had no confidence. His first major blunder was the appointment as Sole Commissioner of Mr. F. C. Nwokedi, a corrupt civil servant and a die-hard Ibo tribalist, whose only qualification was his pathological hatred of and contempt for the North and Northerners. He alone was charged with the task of recommending the best organisation for the future machinery of Government for Nigeria—a premature exercise considering that the form of Government itself was then unknown. Later, however, after several protests from the Regions the task was broken and assigned to Study Groups under the chairmanship of individual Senior Administrative Officers. They were to make an objective study of their various subjects and make recommendations for the consideration of Ironsi. Mr. Nwokedi was assigned the most important task of recommending the best method of unifying the Public Services of Nigeria. Many Ibos were given other important assignments. Only one Northerner out of a group of twelve Commissioners was appointed to undertake the task. Even then, his assignment was the least important to the nation.

The futility of appointing Study Groups to make recommendations on the future machinery of Government ever before the type or form of that Government was known was pointed out to Ironsi; but as it would not suit their plan, he would not listen nor was he prepared to pay attention to realistic advice. Gradually it became crystal clear to the country that the programmes which Ironsi had promised to introduce in Nigeria were in fact only measures which the Ibo dominated N.C.N.C. had earlier advocated in their 'blue print' and which have always been the subject of national controversy. It also became clear that the real intention of Ironsi was to impose Unitary form of Government on Nigeria without the full consultation with and consent of the people as he had promised.

In his first public address to the nation which was published in an extraordinary Federation of Nigeria Gazette No. 6 of 26th January, 1966 as Government Notice No. 148 Ironsi said, among other things :

"That it is the intention of the Federal Military Government to maintain law and order in the Federation until such time as a new constitution for the Federation, prepared in accordance with the wishes of the people, is brought into being."

Moreover, it was also discovered that contrary to assurances by Ironsi that the so-called mutineers of January would be dealt with according to law, there was no intention whatsoever to take any action against them. In fact, they had every freedom other than that of movement, and were being paid their salaries, allowances and other entitlements. Some of them were even promoted while they were still in detention.

These manipulations generated genuine fears in the minds of other Nigerians that they would be dominated by the Ibos. But further shocks awaited the people. The final and fatal blow was struck on 24th May, 1966 when, eager to fulfil the domination plan of the Ibos, Ironsi, abandoned the path of democracy and chose that of dictatorship. On that day Ironsi, acting again without consultation with the people and against good and sincere advice by some of his colleagues in the Supreme Council, dramatically announced in an address to the nation that the former Regions had been abolished, and that the Public Services of Nigeria had been unified under one Central Public Service Commission. But the people of the North, who cherish freedom, democracy and justice were not prepared to allow this affront to go unchallenged. The intention was to show disapproval and opposition against this obnoxious measure by peaceful demonstrations and constructive comments. Unfortunately, difficulties were deliberately put in the way.

In the absence of any effective constitutional means of expressing their legitimate and genuine feelings, therefore, the people were forced to resort to violence in the form of widespread disturbances which broke out on the 29th of May, 1966. A few lives, both of Ibos and of Northerners were lost, and property belonging to both parties were also destroyed.

These disturbances were spontaneous and not organised as our critics would want the world to believe. The disturbances were quickly suppressed by the Military Governor of the North through appeal to the people in which he promised to convene a Conference of Chiefs. The Conference was held on the 1st June, 1966, at the end of which the Chiefs submitted their recommendations to Ironsi, through the Military Governor, suggesting positive methods by which the fears of the people could be allayed. To peoples' surprise and dismay, his reply was not only unfavourable but downright insulting. The whole country was then turned into a Police State and the next few weeks witnessed an authoritarian regime involving indiscriminate arrests and detention of many innocent citizens. Foreign correspondents who dared to tell the truth in their overseas papers were hounded out of the country. Fear and anxiety gripped the minds of the people. The Ibo watch-dogs of Ironsi were everywhere, and they could strike any day any time.

In short, life became impossible for everybody. As if all these were not enough, Ironsi went further to announce early in July that he would rotate the Military Governors, the intention being to put Ojukwu, an Ibo, in charge of the North, thus completing the 'conquest'. He also announced that Military Prefects would be placed in charge of the Provinces. In fact letters of appointment have been issued appointing Ibos for "Northern Group of Provinces". He said that the idea behind this measure was to establish a direct link between the common man and the Military Government—as if the Civilian Administration was not providing that link.

Ironsi and his Ibo clique had in fact planned to do more than just conquer the North. But unfortunately for them, "... THE GOD OF AFRICA..." did not permit the execution of the next part of the plan—"operation annihilation of Northern Nigerians". A plan designed to annihilate completely certain categories of Northern Nigerians including the Chiefs, Commissioned and Warrant Officers of the Nigerian Army, and Senior civil servants. This plan was spear-headed by over zealous and over confident Ibos who felt that Ironsi was not fast enough. Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu was to be the new leader.

To implement the plan a group of Ibo Army Officers in Abeokuta, in the early hours of July 29th, 1966, attempted to disarm the Northern soldiers of the same unit. But after a scuffle the tide turned against the plotters and the Northerners were in complete control. Similarly in every unit the tide turned against the Ibos and by the end of the second day the Army personnel of Northern Nigeria origin were in complete control all over the country.

It is significant to note here that the whole operation was confined to the Army and not a single civilian life was lost throughout. This was in sharp contrast to what took place in January, when civilians were murdered ruthlessly and their wives butchered in cold blood by Ibo soldiers.

After the turn of the tide Ojukwu requested Ibos from all parts of Nigeria to return to the Eastern Region. There were two reasons for the recall: Firstly, Ojukwu thought the mass exodus of the Ibos would paralyse the services in the North and secondly to give them a chance to carry out a full scale vicious acts of sabotage without any danger of killing their own tribesmen in the process.

The months of August and September witnessed a series of act of sabotage. In Lagos abortive attempts were made to blow up such important places as the National Hall, Ijora Power House, and several others, and, in fact, a time-bomb was planted which damaged part of the Federal Palace Hotel. Mr. Agu, who with the support of the Eastern Government was the master mind behind the sabotage, had according to expert opinion given before the Corona, enough explosives to sink the whole of Lagos Island. He died in his evil

attempt. A bridge connecting the West and the Mid-West was blown up. In the North a group of Ibos were actually caught attempting to carry out their assignments of blowing up the Ahmadu Bello Stadium, the Hamdala Hotel, the Kaduna Bridge, the Government House and the Government Lodge, the Bridges at Jebba and Makurdi. Ibos were actually caught carrying packets of poisonous substance to be poured into the public water tanks at Kaduna, Kano and other big towns. A number of explosive dumps were discovered in various places in Kano.

In conclusion it must be emphasized that the "Military Government" of Ironsi was doomed to fail because it was dictatorial, dishonest and deceitful. His Government failed because it deliberately chose to ignore the obvious lessons of history.

ATROCITIES AGAINST NORTHERNERS IN EASTERN NIGERIA

In keeping with our desire to maintain unity in Nigeria we have maintained golden silence about the atrocities committed against our people resident in Eastern Nigeria, but in view of the daily campaign of falsehood from the Eastern Nigeria Government it is necessary that the truth be told. The impression has been widely created by loud publicity from Eastern Nigeria that in September Northerners without any provocation and justification attacked Ibos resident in the North. The world has been told time and again that the lives and property of Northerners resident in the East were well protected throughout the disturbances in the country. The world is even being persuaded to believe that when Ojukwu ordered all Northerners to leave Eastern Nigeria, Ibos were sad to see them go! This is far from the truth.

After the turn of the tide in July the Ibos held a series of meetings in Eastern Nigeria at which they decided not to co-operate with the new regime headed by Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon; and to retaliate for the alleged loss sustained by Ibos during the May disturbances. They were to carry out subversive activities and to blow up important public buildings by means of explosives throughout the Federation, except in Eastern Nigeria. Northerners were to be killed and their property looted. In pursuance of this plot a well-organised onslaught was launched by Ibos in August against Northerners resident in Abakaliki, Enugu, Owerri and Aba. Before this attack, the Ibo Army and the Police conducted a thorough search of the houses of Northerners and collected all arms and weapons from them. It must be pointed out that non-Ibos in the East deprecated the attack on Northerners and did all they could to save their lives and property.

In Abakaliki Province, in the month of August, Northerners with their heard of cattle were attacked; their cattle were seized, slaughtered and distributed among the Ibos. The Ibos followed up by killing these Northerners and looting their property. Over 1,000 Northerners are known to have been killed, thirty-four badly injured, and thousands of cattle were taken away.

In Enugu, the attack on Northerners started on the 15th of August. Ibo soldiers led the attack. About 630 Northerners were killed in the province while twenty-seven were seriously wounded. A Northern boy, seven years old, was publicly slaughtered in the street by uniformed Ibo soldiers in the presence of another Northerner who was dressed like an Ibo and was thus able to escape detection.

In Onitsha Province, thirty Northerners were killed and six seriously injured.

In Owerri too, where Northerners had lived for long and inter-married with the Ibos, they were attacked and killed in cold blood despite assurances from the "Ibo Elders". One Northerner who escaped from Owerri was Alhaji Sabo who was born there, his father having settled there seventy years ago. His father, chief of the Hausa community in Owerri had been a customary court judge there for thirty-seven years. He was killed at the beginning of the organised attack on Northerners in the presence of the son who later managed to escape to Kaduna.

In September, a very large number of those Northerners who had managed to reach Obolo Afor on their way to the North were murdered. This atrocity was witnessed by some foreigners on the Oturkpo—Onitsha road on their way to Western Nigeria and these eye witnesses are believed to be one of the sources of information for the foreign broadcasts of the atrocities.

At Nsukka, two Northern warders were able to escape death by taking shelter in the prison yard. A staff of the veterinary department of the University of Nigeria hid himself in the ceiling of his house to escape death. All they had acquired were taken away. All Northerners living on the outskirts of Nsukka were killed.

In Aba township, Okigwe, Ahoada, Obubura and Elele, several Northerners were killed in cold blood. Those that got away did so with the help of non-Ibo elements.

In Port Harcourt, a house with a large number of Northern women in hiding was attacked. The women were raped and beaten to death. Ibos singing war songs slaughtered every Northerner they could find in the street, and a number of those who were in hiding were killed quietly by their neighbours.

During the evacuation, a train driven by an expatriate, carrying about 2,000 Northerners from Port Harcourt was stopped at Imo River by Ibo soldiers. Suddenly Ibos armed with deadly weapons rushed out from the bush and attacked the passengers. Every adult

male Northerner on the train was killed and the body thrown into the river, while children and the young women were captured and taken into slavery. The few survivors were eventually admitted into Oturkpo and Makurdi Hospitals.

In Calabar the attack on Northerners organized by Ibos was not successful because the people of Calabar refused to be a party to the plot. They gave advance warning to Northerners to escape to the Police Station for protection, but unfortunately before they were flown out of Calabar their luggage and money were seized from them at the airport by Ibo soldiers.

These killings of Northerners and atrocities against them in the East coupled with the uncovered plan to sabotage important installations in the North by the Ibos sparked off the 29th September incidents.

Even then the Northern Nigeria Government, which was certainly not a party to the incident, as the shameless lying propaganda of Eastern Nigeria would like the world to believe, did all that was humanly possible to bring the situation to normal. Curfews were imposed, and in some cases unruly elements had to be shot down, i.e. a Northern policeman killing a Northerner in order to protect an Ibo life. Tens of thousands of Ibos were given food, shelter and protection in Kaduna, Zaria, Jos, Kano and all other affected towns for several days by the Northern Nigeria Government and peoples, while the evacuation was carried on by air, rail and road. In Kaduna alone, the Regional Government has spent the sum of £19,000 to transport these people to Enugu by air. The hundreds of personal letters of thanks sent by the departing Easterners to the Officials of the Northern Nigerian Government is a testimony of the sincere efforts made by the Northern Government in this incident.

ROLE OF THE NORTH IN CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Before 1948 there were really no significant constitutional developments on pan-Nigerian scale in which Nigerians took part in their formulation. The amalgamation of the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria in 1914 was only a British arrangement, although the merger has influenced the North in two major respects.

The first is that the North was reorientated towards the Western Europe and Southern Nigeria as opposed to its Mid-Eastern and North African associations. The second is the redirection of economic activities towards Western Europe which accentuated the reality of the link with Southern Nigeria.

It was only in 1946 that the people of the North came into direct constitutional contact with the people of Southern Nigeria. This contact was introduced by the Richard's Constitution which for

the first time created a Legislative Council in which all parts of Nigeria sent in representatives. The various parts of the country were represented in the Central Legislative Council as follows: North 5; East 5; West 5; Lagos 3; Colony 1; Calabar 1 and Chiefs 6, thus in terms of population the North sent one representative for every 2,286,800 people, the East one for every 711,000. the West one for every 621,500 and Lagos one for every 42,000.

It was decided to review the Richard's Constitution in 1949, and as a result, discussions took place between the Colonial Government and the Nigerian leaders. This was when proposal for a quasi-federal association was approved. The then three regions (North, East and West) were to be represented in a House of Representatives at the Centre. At one of the Conferences at Ibadan the North demanded 50% of the seats in the projected House of Representatives to reflect its population. All the southern politicians vehemently opposed the idea although in actual fact more than half of the population of Nigeria lived in the North. Their ground for opposing this legitimate request was that the Northerners were uneducated; this attitude can only be likened to that of the rebel Ian Smith who has refused to accept the principle of African majority in Rhodesia on the same ground. The Colonial Secretary had to intervene in order to procure for the North what was in fact less than her fair share, when the Northern leaders threatened to send a delegation to London to protest against this undemocratic basis for the allocation of seats.

The opposition to the grant of this legitimate democratic right to the Northerner was conducted by the so-called nationalists of the South led by Dr. Azikiwe. These men were so vehemently opposed to the idea of having equal political rights with the Northerner that the Ibadan Conference broke down.

Throughout the periods of Constitution-making from 1949 to 1960 northern representation at the Centre was always less than what it ought to have been, population wise. Yet the Northern leaders accepted what they got in a spirit of give and take. The compromise was intended to avert crises and to ensure peaceful co-existence in the country.

From 1949-1965 there occurred a number of constitutional crises. None of them had their origins in the North. In 1953 the Ibo-dominated N.C.N.C. precipitated a crisis in the East until the non-Ibo led Government of Professor Eyo Ita (an Ibibio) was toppled and replaced by the Azikiwe (Ibo) government. The Azikiwe's government floundered on the rocks of scandalous corruption racket in which a public commission of enquiry headed by Sir Stafford Foster Sutton the then Chief Justice of Nigeria found Azikiwe's conduct to have "fallen short of the expectations of honest, reasonable people".

In the same year a motion asking for self government for Nigeria in 1956 was introduced into the House of Representatives at Lagos. Because the Northern leaders honestly felt that they could not support the motion, the Northern members of the House of Representatives were subjected to abuse and all sorts of indignities in Lagos. An attempt to widen the areas of insults into the North itself brought about the Kano riots of the same year. The Ministers of Western Nigeria origin in the Federal Cabinet resigned en masse and almost paralysed the working of the Federal Government.

Again it was the North that proved the solid rock on which the stability of the country rested. At the Constitutional Conference that followed the crisis of 1953, North did not insist on getting its rightful share of the number of seats in the Federal House so that peace might continue to prevail. But this conciliatory attitude was never appreciated and always taken for granted.

It was only in 1959 that the North obtained the number of seats in the Federal House commensurate with her population. During the life of that Parliament which lasted until 1964 the dominant northern party was able to master an overall majority. Nevertheless Northern leaders declared publicly that they did not intend to rule Nigeria alone. For the sake of justice and equity Northerners chose to form a coalition government in which the diverse peoples of this country were represented. This coalition government lasted up to December, 1964.

Co-operation with the dominating Southern parties in the interest of National Unity has always been the corner stone of Northern policy. In 1954 the same policy was adopted up to 1957 when Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, decided to form a National Government to usher in independence. All the major political parties took part in the National Government.

In the Federal General Elections of 1964 although again the dominant northern party won an absolute majority it decided to form the famous broad-based government which also included representatives of all the major Nigerian groups, even though during the 1964 elections the Southern political parties declared that they would either win the elections and form the Government alone or go into opposition if they lost. But when they lost, they used the then President (Dr. Azikiwe) to precipitate an unjustified crisis in which he openly took sides with the Ibo N.C.N.C. against the North. He even manoeuvred to stage a coup that did not succeed.

Even so, the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, again decided not to go it alone with his own party which had a majority in Parliament but to form a coalition Government, in which the Southern peoples were not only represented, but were numerically stronger than Northern Ministers in the Government.

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was a genuine Nigerian who believed in the policy of conciliation and compromise in order to further the goals of national unity. He won deep respect both at home and abroad for his honesty and fair play. Yet he was destined to die at the hands of Ibos who believed that **the Ibos must have all or destroy all**.

The Ibos have all the time been plotting on how to gain the control of the Federal Government. If they could not win elections they were prepared to use force. This is the rationale behind the coup of 15th January.

The following extracts taken from the minute of one of the meetings of the 'IBO NATIONAL CAUCUS'—a committee of the Ibo State Union and the Ibo Cult, signed jointly by Dr. Mbadiwe and Dr. Mbanugo in 1964 will bring into the open the real intention of the Ibos towards other groups in Nigeria :

"The Census misfortune and unavoidable circumstances now endanger our 20 years' struggle for the achievement of our objective. Enemies of our fatherland have alerted the decadent Yorubas and the reactionary Northerners. The indiscreet utterances of many of our men have contributed largely to the dangers which now beset us when we have almost reached the goal, the promised land . . . you must no doubt remember that a similar indiscreet utterance by C. D. Onyeama . . . gave us no end of opposition by the Yorubas when he . . . publicly stated 'that the domination of Nigeria by the Ibos is a question of time.'

"Outwardly all our official and unofficial utterances must adopt an opposite procedure and we must always do our best to appear 'honourable and co-operative. Remember a statesman's words do not have to agree with his acts . . . You must intensify the 'One Nigeria Slogan' at all times.

"In the East . . . The Efiks, the Ibibios and the rivers tribes are still under complete control even though their dreams for their own state have been completely shattered. Despite the intrigues of Okotie-Eboh and Omo Osagie we have succeeded in clamping Osadebay firmly on the Mid-West saddle thus taking care of the Urhobos, Edos, and the Itshekiris.

" . . . Okpara . . . showed his hands too quickly last year when he was over-confident that the Census figures will be to our advantage and that the struggle was almost won . . . he should have pampered him (Fani-Kayode) till an N.C.N.C. victory in the Regional West Election, when he could have been ruthlessly dispensed with and a more amenable person like Akinfosile placed in the saddle.

“Play up Awolowo at all times this will keep up the resistance of Action Group members and stop them from uniting with the N.N.D.P. to form a solid Yoruba Front. This is vital and there is no harm in this pro-Awolowo propaganda for he is no “longer a headache or danger to us.

“We are happy that our protocol on cessation of Newspaper attacks on Sardauna and other Northern leaders have ceased. Amechi and Okafor are to be complimented so far. Everything must be done to appear to ‘Appease’ the Sardauna and Ribadu, but Balewa we can always deal with.

“ . . . If we can then win the West at the next Regional Election by keeping the Yorubas apart and divided we shall secure control of the Federal Cabinet and the country not in 1964 as we envisage but in 1969, 5 years may be a long time in our personal lives but to a people such as ours it is further time for preparation for our perpetual rule in the Federation”

It is this basic disbelief in democratic principles that made the Ibos precipitate Crisis ‘66 in which they overthrew the Government of the Federation and replaced it with their own. Since their undemocratic and criminal deed was effectively challenged, they have persisted in attempting to commit a treason by seceding from the Federation.

THE ROLE OF IBOS IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF NORTHERN NIGERIA

Three factors mainly interreacted to determine the role played by Ibos in Northern Nigeria. These factors are the nature of the Northerner, the nature of the Ibo and the historical developments in Nigeria especially in the field of Western Education. All of these factors are dealt with in detail elsewhere in this booklet; suffice it therefore to mention here the interreaction of these factors, and their resultant products.

The head start which the Ibo like the Yoruba before him had over the Northerner in Western education, placed him in strategic and influential positions in the employment of Government, Commercial houses, Statutory Corporations and even certain Native Authority departments. Their influence in Government and Native Authority employment was only broken with the introduction of Northernisation policy, but their hold in the other spheres of employment mentioned above continued and even got strengthened up to the time of their recall to their home region by the Eastern Nigeria Military Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu last August.

Ibos also used the influential positions they held in firms and commercial houses to their own advantage and those of their tribesmen traders and to the detriment of the Northerner, in that, they determined the pace of the market in popular and fast moving articles. They did this by buying up from the commercial houses those popular items of trade or importing and smuggling them into the country and selling them to the Northerner. Thus, the Ibo was creating a monopoly of the market for himself. It is necessary here to explain for the sake of completeness, that the Northern trader never went into the import business, due largely to shortage of capital, as the Ibo did, and of course, organized smuggling by the Northerner was out of the question, due to his geographical location and his lack of articulation in these matters of "civilised and developed societies."

Having covered most of the strategic places commercially, the Ibo trader indulged in what was the most perverted form of monopoly in petty trade. He gave money to northern farmers in villages and towns in advance for their unripe produce, and even unlaidd eggs. When harvesting time came, he went round and collected the produce—be it yams, rice, timber, maize, eggs or pepper—leaving the farmer with no money and little produce. This might be at a time when the poor simple farmer driven by his conscience to accept the obligation of a contract he had entered into, needed the money most. The Northerner might at this stage be offered money to pay back later with interest. This was the way the commercial undertakings of many a Northerner were ruined. The Ibo man might

come round later to demand a "favour" be it a piece of land for farming or support to purchase a house in settlement for the money he lent to the Northerner.

From buying fish from the fisherman of rivers Niger and Benue, Lake Chad and the swamps of Ibaji districts of Igala division, the Ibo man became the fisherman in these waters. This action denied the people of their only livelihood. He caught the fish in the North and sold it to the Ibo traders who carried it south for consumption. The design was perfect. Any Northerner who continued to fish would not get the Ibo customers. They wrested trade in other food stuffs as well, with the result that trade either in food stuffs or manufactured goods between North and the East became an Ibo monopoly.

Not only that, all trade between North and East was carried on in Ibo lorries. The lorries carried food stuffs almost straight from the farm in the North to the market in the East and returned to the North with manufactured articles—corrugated iron sheets, textiles, nails, plastic material etcetera—with prices fixed by the Ibo Union Retail Prices Committee to sell to the Northerner. They made no attempt to boost Northern economy by using transport lorries owned by Northerners. Not even the lorry "apprentice" was a Northerner, in spite of the fact that most of the lorry owners lived, some of them for decades, in the North. Though, the lorry owners lived in the North, they bought, registered and licenced all their lorries in the East.

It might be asked, did Ibos ask for Northern participation in their business? The answer would be an unequivocal no. There never was any genuine attempt either in good faith or arising from guilty conscience to invite Northerners to join hands in their closed shop business. It was all Ibo business.

Although the North was their biggest market, there is no evidence of participation or contribution to the progress of the North at local level. Instead, they expanded their business by possessing landed property in towns where Ibos and Northerners alike—or even foreign firms—paid rent which money was either paid into banks in the East or into African Continental Bank in the North. It has not gone unnoticed that foreign business organisations advanced money and credit to Ibos in preference to Northerners to build up their trade in the North. An interesting point to note here is that many of the big and beautiful houses built by Ibos in Kano, Kaduna, Jos etcetera, might in the end be handed over to banks which had advanced the money to build them because the "owners had returned to Ibo East.

The role and operations of Ibos in the border divisions of Tiv, Idoma and Igala are unique. The Ibo had penetrated these places and established farms and shops. He virtually belonged to the North but like the rest of his tribesmen, he considered himself and acted like an Easterner.

In the Census counts of past years, Ibos deserted Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country to return to the East to be included in the counts there. A fine ranging from £20—£50 was levied by Ibo State Union elders against any Ibo who was foolish enough to let himself be counted in the North. Development projects, they had been told, would be based on population basis and they must have considered it no part of their business to contribute to the development of the places where they lived and earned their livelihood. Ironical. Isn't it!!

Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu, one of the 15th January mutineers has stated in one of his recent utterances that over two million Ibos lived in the North. He might be granted the point he was trying to make by exaggerating the number that a large number of Ibos lived in the North. This is a tribute to the tolerance of the Northerner, his hospitality and his acceptance of spirit of live and let live.

For their part, the Ibo lived like an island in the sea of others not allowing themselves to be influenced by the cultures of those around them and lived a life directed by the caucus of Ibo State Union. Their materialistic outlook beclouded their vision and motivated them into actions that are anathema to a cultured society. In the North, they refused to identify themselves with members of the society in which they lived. A research carried out last year in the North showed that less than two percent of Ibos that had lived in the North for twenty years and over could tell how a Hausa marriage or Igala naming ceremony was conducted.

Within the last few years, Ibos have imported a new role into the orderly life of the North. They brought in the gun, robbery with violence and thuggery to achieve political ends. Unfortunate and deplorable acts.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE NORTHERNISATION POLICY

It was suggested in some quarters that the January incident took place because of the Northernisation Policy of the Northern Nigerian Government, a policy which checked effectively the evil and selfish intention of the Ibos of blocking all possible avenues so that the Northerner could not get employment even in his own Region. But

- (i) the policy is a natural extension of the Nigerianisation Policy which had been publicly declared and vigorously pursued by all the Governments of the Federation on the dawn of independence;
- (ii) the other Regional Governments spear-headed the policy in respect of their Regions, and in the case of the Ibo East the Policy was so perfected that all employees of the Regional Government are Easterners and all but a few are Ibos; the North on the other hand started late and merely borrowed a leaf from the Ibo-East, but even then the North did not

pursue the policy as a matter of course, but was forced by circumstances such as the greed, selfishness and nepotism of the Ibo as will soon be portrayed in the following paragraphs.

It will be recalled that from the time the British amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria and established their unified rule over the whole country, the Ibos in particular had virtually the complete monopoly of manning the junior posts in Government and Commercial services all over the country including the North. The Northerner was not offended by the presence of nor was he jealous of the Ibo working in the North, because he had realised that he did not possess the western education to enable him do the job and he would not want to be a dog in the manger. He even respected the Ibo worker.

A few years later, Northerners started to acquire sufficient qualifications to enable them seek employment in Government and other services; they obviously expected the Ibo, who was already in the field, to receive them with pleasure as fellow Nigerians. But the Northerners were wrong; the Ibo worker did not want him in the service because he wanted his tribesmen alone to monopolise the service perpetually. As a result, whenever a Northerner applied for a job he would receive a letter of regret from the Ibo Chief Clerk; but a few days later an Ibo man from the East, who might not be better qualified than the Northerner, would be seen to be doing the same job. This state of affairs continued unchecked up to the end of 1950.

With the introduction of politics in 1951, however, the Northern politicians, particularly the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, discovered that Northerners were deliberately refused jobs even in offices situated in the North, so it was only natural that they fought for the emancipation of the Northerner and gave him every encouragement to join the Government Service. At that time no body, not even Sir Ahmadu, was opposed to the idea of the Ibos working in the North, but they wanted to see more and more Northerners be given the chance to compete with the Southerners. The Ibos refused to co-operate.

About the same time as this was happening in the North, the Yorubas in the West demanded the regionalisation of the then Nigerian Civil Service for fear of Ibo domination, and the move was supported whole heartedly by Northern leaders because they saw in it the chance to have and direct control over the affairs of the North. Qualified Northerners could now secure jobs without difficulties. Even at that time it was never the intention of the Northern leaders to keep Ibos out of the Northern Public Service let alone out of the Federal Public Service. But the Ibo continued to invite more of his own tribesmen from the East to fill posts in the North even though there were qualified Northerners. As for the Eastern and Federal Public Services they considered both as their exclusive domain.

In short, the Ibo already in the Service continued to practise 'parkinsonisation' by keeping non-Ibos out of Government employment. The Yorubas could not tolerate this attitude of the Ibo and so in 1952 the newly formed Action Group Government ordered that all Ibo employees (other than Western Ibos) in the Western Nigeria Government Service be replaced by Westerners. This measure by the Western Nigeria Government encouraged the Northern leaders, and the continued stubborn monopolistic activities of the Ibos in the Northern Nigeria Government Service, forced them to publicly announce the Northernisation Policy whereby Northerners would be given first priority in the Northern Nigeria Government Service. This policy was not intended to exclude Ibos at all costs from the Regional Civil Service. Table No. IV Page 22 shows that there are still substantial numbers of Ibos in the Service. It is simply a policy designed to protect the Regional Government from being held at ransom by the evil designs of the Ibos. In fact had it not been for the Northernisation Policy the North could have been held to ransom during crises, because the Ibo in complete control of all services in the North, would have used his Trade Union strength to paralyse the essential services of the North and thereby destroy the Region.

**FIGURES IN THE FOLLOWING TABLES
ARE AS AT DECEMBER, 1965 OR
FOR THE YEAR 1965**

**TABLE I
POPULATION AND AREA OF NIGERIA
BY REGIONS (1963 CENSUS)**

Region	Population	Area in Sq. Mls.
NORTH	29,809	281,782
EAST	12,395	29,484
WEST	10,266	30,454
MID-WEST ..	2,536	14,922
LAGOS	665	27
Totals	55,671	356,669

N.B.

In terms of population the North
is 53.5% of the total population
of the country.

TABLE II

**NUMBER OF SENIOR OFFICERS EMPLOYED BY ALL
GOVERNMENTS AND NUMBER OF NORTHERNERS**

Government	Total	Norther- ners	Percentage of Northerners
Federal	6,768	242	3·6
North	3,185	1,427	44·8
East	2,624	0	0
West	2,178	0	0
Mid-West	698	0	0
Nigerian Railway Corporation	602	11	1·8
Electricity Corporation of Nigeria	352	6	1·9
Nigerian Coal Corporation ..	1,491	1	0·07
Totals	16,898	1,687	9·98

N.B.

It is interesting to break down the figures for the East further in the table below.

TABLE III

**NUMBER OF SENIOR OFFICERS EMPLOYED BY EASTERN
GOVERNMENT CLASSIFIED BY TRIBAL GROUPS
COMPARED TO THE POPULATION OF EACH
TRIBE AS POPULATION OF THE EAST**

Tribal Group	Number of Each Group In the Service	Number of each Group As % of Total Officers Employed	The Population of each group as % of total Population of the East (1963 census)
Ibos	2,100	80·0	60
Effiks, Ibibios, Ogojas	315	12·0	26
Rivers	209	8·0	14
Totals	2,624	100·0	100

N.B.

This Table speaks for itself but it shows clearly the greed of the Ibo even in the treatment of minority tribes in the East.

TABLE IV
NUMBER OF AFRICAN SENIOR SERVICE OFFICERS
IN NORTHERN NIGERIA PUBLIC SERVICE

Grade	Northerners	Other Nigerians	Other Nigerians As % of Northerners
Super Scale ..	298	2	6.9
Scale A	57	7	12.3
Scale C	477	172	36.1
Nursing	44	56	127.3
Totals	876	237	27.05

It would be of interest to note that in 1951 there were a total of 418 Nigerians holding senior posts in Government service including the Public Corporations out of whom eight were Northerners. This figure represented 1.9% of the total and 0.0005% of the total population of the North at that time.

Thus in the Federal Public Service the relative number of Northerners in the service has increased only slightly over a period of fifteen years.

TABLE V

**NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
IN DECEMBER, 1965**

Rank	Total Number of Nigerians Employed	Total No. of Northerners Employed	% of Northerners Employed
1. Engineers	35	1	3
2. Technologists	460	3	0.65
3. Telecom. Controllers (all grades)	42	0	0
4. Technicians	1,814	67*	3.4
5. Supervisors, (Senior and Chief Supervisors (all sections)	503	13	2.6
6. Postal Officers and Postal Officers and Telegraphists	1,552	79*	5.1
7. Telephone Operators	1,239	28	2.2
8. Messengers, Postmen and Porters	869	71	8.1
Totals	6,525	262	4.00

* There was a special training programme, but which have now been stopped at the insistence of P & T, for these categories of employees at the Federal Training Centre, Kaduna. Over 200 Postal Officers and 100 Technicians were trained before the P & T stopped training at the end of 1964 but for one reason or another there were only 79 Postal Officers and 67 Technicians respectively as at December, 1965.

TABLE VI

**NUMBER OF STAFF OF THE MINISTRY OF AVIATION
STATIONED AT KANO AS AT DECEMBER, 1965**

Technical Section	Expatriates	Ibos	Northerners	Wester- ners	Mid- Wester- ners	Total
Air Traffic Control ..	7	21	1	8	5	42
Fire Fighting Service ..	0	66	1	25	18	110
Telecommuni- cations ..	0	85	5	20	8	118
Signals ..	8	46	11	7	3	75
Electrical ..	0	15	2	2	2	21
Totals	15	233	20	62	36	366

The following figures show the percentages of the various ethnic groups employed at KANO Aviation Station :

Ibos	63.7
Yorubas	16.9
Mid-Westerners	9.8
Northerners	5.5
Expatriates	4.1

**THE ROLE OF IBOS IN FEDERAL PUBLIC
SERVICE**

It is only in the last few years that the North has woken up to the need to have a foot hold in the Federal Public Service and the Services of the Statutory Corporations; and to demand its rightful share of the posts in these services. In so doing, it has met with untold resistance and opposition from Ibos who already constitute the biggest single ethnic group in these services. (See comparative figures of employees in the Federal Aviation Service on Table VI for example). Indeed, Ibos were not even prepared to accept that other ethnic groups in the country have a right to partake in the services. To do so would have meant failure on their part to maintain their domination plan already referred to on Page 5.

The control of the public services is an essential cog in the wheel of their plan to dominate the country and therefore all means including a faked army coup must be employed to maintain their control of the services.

They put forward the bogey that they were regarded as second class citizens and that the North wanted to dominate. In the meantime they continued to carry out their plan, master minded by the Ibo State Union Caucus. For how could the North dominate with only 10% of the man-power employed in these services? The comparable figure for Ibos on the other hand is 45% and it is threatening to reach 60% by 1968.

Moreover, regrettably though, North's future contribution to the supply of high level man-power needs of the country will be small as the following tables indicate :

The distribution by regions of origin of 4,532 Nigerian students expected to graduate from Nigerian and other Universities in the 1965/66 academic year is as follows :

Region	No. of Students
Eastern	2,031
Western	1,728
Mid-Western	380
Northern	369
Federal Capital	24
Total	4,532

A break down by Regions of origin the 1,828 students in Nsukka University for the 1963/64 session shows that there were only fourteen Northerners. Thus :

Faculty	East	West	Mid-West	Lagos	North
Faculty of Arts	181	38	39	5	1
Faculty of Social Studies	567	65	84	2	3
Faculty of Science and Technology	634	104	65	3	10
Totals	1,384	207	188	10	14

Essential services of the country have been under the domination of Ibos, and this was made use of by their politicians during the time of Federal elections in December, 1964, when they connived with Ibo workers to paralyse the services and cripple the country by calling a nation-wide strike to embarrass the Government of late Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The plan was only foiled by the vigilance and co-operation of the non-Ibo elements in these services.

It was not due to lack of qualified personnel that the Northern participation in the public services was small. It was because those dominating the services would not let Northerners in or let them hold their jobs. The following example illustrates the point. The Northern Nigeria Government at its own expense sent a number of Northerners overseas for five years' training with British Railways with a view to their taking up appointments with the Nigerian Railway Corporation at the end of their training. On successful completion of the course they came back only to be superseded by Ibos who neither had such training nor possessed any visible qualifications. They left the service of the Corporation in frustration. The Corporation was under an Ibo Federal Minister, an Ibo Chairman, and an Ibo General Manager. Small wonder therefore that Ibos were thick in the scandal exposed at the Adefarasin Tribunal of Enquiry into the affairs of the Corporation. The Bello Tribunal that enquired into the affairs of the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria was equally revealing. There was little to 'choose' between the scandals in the two Ibo-controlled Corporations.

Just note this. An Ibo Vice-Chancellor in charge of one of the country's Universities would not work with a Yoruba Registrar. So he created the post of an 'Academic Registrar' and gave it to an Ibo man, and then syphoned the work of the Registrar through the 'Academic Registrar'. The affairs of the University in question have never run straight ever since.

For the record. Ironsi owed his promotion to General Officer Commanding Nigeria Army to the North's civilized and mature outlook. He was found least fitting of the four officers (two Yorubas, one Northerner and he, an Ibo) then in line of promotion to succeed the then retiring British General Officer Commanding Nigeria Army. But the late Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, decided that he be given the post "in the interest of national unity," and because of his being longest in the service.

The North and its leaders have always stood for fair play, justice and equal opportunity for all. To run the affairs of the country correctly and free from suspicion, they recognise, "the hands of all sections must be on deck." But within his short term of office Ironsi showed his determination to pack the cards. Promotions in the Senior rank in the Nigeria Army in May showed that 21 Ibos were promoted to the rank of Lt. Col. as against 3 Northerners, 1 Yoruba and no Mid-Westerner.

THE ALL-NIGERIA CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

One of the most praiseworthy aspects of the new military regime headed by Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was its determined effort to get Nigerians to come together and thrash out their differences and problems at the conference table.

When Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon assumed office as Head of the Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces after the Ironsi regime was overthrown on 29th July, he assured the nation and the world that his regime would be one of close and constant consultation with the people in his efforts to find an acceptable lasting solution to the country's problems.

As a first step in his efforts to get Nigerians to start talking and stop fighting, the new Supreme Commander at the beginning of August called a meeting of Representatives of the Regional Military Governors to advise him on ways of easing tension and restoring mutual confidence among all Nigerians. This meeting recommended, among other things, that all the Regions of the Federation should send delegates to an enlarged meeting in Lagos to find out and advise the Supreme Commander on the form of political association best suited to Nigeria.

The composition of the various delegations was decided at meetings of prominent and acceptable citizens in each Region, and the All-Nigeria Constitutional Conference of all the Regional delegations was scheduled to open at 10. a.m. on 12th September.

Because of the attitude of the Eastern Nigeria delegation, this all important conference failed to open on time; it was unable to really get to grips with the important issues it had been convened to discuss because of the filibustering tactics of the Eastern delegation, and it had to adjourn prematurely because of the difficult and uncompromising attitude of the Eastern delegation.

The Eastern delegation set the pattern for their performance by arriving one and a half hours late on the opening date with the ostensible excuse of engine trouble! The real reason was because they had been waiting at Enugu for the result of an operation which, if it had succeeded, would have put an end to the whole exercise. In a sinister plot which had the full backing of the Government of Eastern Nigeria, one Mr. Agu, a Senior Lecturer in Mining, had travelled all the way from Enugu to Lagos in a Mercedes car belonging to the Eastern Nigeria Government. While the delegations already in Lagos were busy putting the final touches to their preparations for the conference, Mr. Agu locked himself in a room at 6 A Okotie Eboh Street in Lagos, busy perfecting the plastic bombs with which he had intended to cause destruction and create panic and dismay. As it turned out, Mr. Agu only succeeded in blowing himself up and disappointing his principals.

When the conference finally got going, the calculated attitude of the Eastern delegation prevented the conference from getting far. First, the East objected to the Conference accepting memoranda from the Rivers, Calabar and Ogoja communities. Obviously, there would have been no need for these minority people in Eastern Nigeria to submit separate memoranda to the conference if the Eastern delegation had come with the clear mandate of all the people in Eastern Nigeria, but in order to avoid getting the Conference hope-

lessly bogged down at the very beginning, a concession was made to the Eastern delegation viewpoint, and it was decided to accept only memoranda submitted by the official delegations.

With this obstacle out of the way, the Conference again attempted to settle down to serious business, but the Eastern delegation raised another obstacle by insisting that the complicated issues at stake be disposed of in a day or two because it wanted to return to Eastern Nigeria.

In spite of their repeated assurances that they had gone to Lagos in no spirit of controversy and that their main aim was to eliminate all areas of friction and causes of conflict, the delegation from the East created a strong impression that their main purpose was to ensure that the conference achieved nothing. The delegation was so bent on eliminating what they called "all possible causes of friction" but what finally emerged was that they were only interested in loosening the ties that kept Nigeria together and eventually taking the East out of the Federation.

The Supreme Commander had earlier charged the conference to rule out both a unitary form of government and a total break up of the Federation, but instead to consider :

- (a) A Federal system with a strong centre;
- (b) A Federal system with a weak centre;
- (c) A confederation; and
- (d) An entirely new arrangement yet unknown and peculiar to Nigeria.

Thanks to the difficulties deliberately created by the Eastern Nigeria delegation, the Conference could not arrive at a clear decision on this crucial issue. It did, however, make some remarkable achievements, and the most significant of these was the unanimous agreement that Nigeria should continue as a single political entity.

The second Constitutional Conference opened in Lagos on 24th October—without the Eastern Nigeria delegation. They stayed away because Ojukwu gave three impossible and childish conditions for their attendance, and in spite of every conceivable effort made by all well-meaning Nigerians to convince them to attend.

This second meeting was adjourned to allow more time for further efforts to be made to prevail on the Ibo East to change its attitude, but right up to 17th November when the conference was to have met for the third time, the Ibos had not changed their attitude. In the face of this obvious determination to sabotage this all-important exercise, the Head of the Federal Military Government and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon had to post-pone the Conference indefinitely.

These sincere efforts to obtain a speedy and constitutional solution to the nation's problems were thus deliberately thwarted by the very people who are so fond of telling the world that they had contributed more than any other section of the community to the cause of Nigerian unity.

ROLE OF FOREIGN POWERS

On the whole, though the Nigerian crisis has attracted much world interest, apparently it has only drawn moderate world involvement, judging by the Congo yardstick. There has been some covert moves here and there, the illicit arms deal involving Christopher Okigbo for example. But on the surface there would seem to be nothing to talk about. Nevertheless, it will be unwise and even dangerous to dismiss the effects that outside influences did have on the course of events in the country. The Ibos are certainly not losing any opportunities. The Ibo leaders have gone out of their way to court world opinion. They are aware like most of us, that if you raised your voice high enough, you are bound to get some listeners, and you can fool some of those listeners some of the time. Since the intention is to save the country from disintegration, and if their leaders are as deeply committed to the fate of this country as a whole as they profess to be, they should be the least inclined to fool anyone.

Nobody seems to have any illusions as to the gravity of the situation facing the country. Our problems have all been brought to a sharp focus and there have been attempts all round to demonstrate realism in our approach. One can't help feeling however that from sections of this country this realism is more ostentatious than real. The Ibos are falling back to their former practice of paying lip service to Nigerian Unity. This makes us especially vulnerable to outside interference.

This is a time to get our perspective right with respect to outside countries. Whatever solution we finally work out for the present crisis, it must be a purely Nigerian effort. It must be a solution arrived at through the honest exertions of Nigerians, uninspired by any outside agencies which have not got the benefit of our bitter experiences. This is why we view with concern the role of Eastern Nigeria leaders who have consistently pre-occupied themselves with playing up to the international gallery. They have taken every opportunity to make propaganda capital out of recent events. They have deliberately over-simplified the issues and stripped the situation bare of this complications in order to dramatise and build a "case", in the eyes of the world, for the East as a separate offended entity. It is not the East that is the offended entity but as shown in earlier sections of this booklet it is the Ibos that actively precipitated the events that have so much marred the prospects of unity. There is obvious dishonesty in this. You cannot champion unity on the one hand and then put up this propaganda side show which is clearly inimical to the unity you want to achieve.

It will be naive and unrealistic to expect that our foreign friends big and small can truly identify themselves with the deep aspiration of Nigeria. We must face the realities and dynamics of international

relations. National interest is the supreme consideration. It might well be to the interest of most countries we have dealings with that we remain as one, but if sections of this country persist in focusing their attention on the foreign audience, we cannot rule out the possibility of this "audience" putting a wedge between us. International relations have a curious habit of fragmenting and hardening into support for individuals. We find in Congo, we all started with general support and sympathy for Congolese independence from Belgium, but we were soon confronted with a choice between Adoula and Tshombe. Outside support was promptly lined up on both sides and the initiative (and of course, peace) passed out of the hands of the Congolese. If we Nigerians provide the opportunity, the fate of the Congo might well befall us.

It is important also that foreign powers get their perspectives right. The Nigerian crisis has not got any religious ideological conflict or cold war undertones, as some of the less informed foreign papers seem to think. No doubt diplomatic circles in the country are better informed. It is not a simple case of Eastern Nigeria and Western Nigeria wanting progress along western lines and the conservative and reactionary North dragging them behind. It is an intricate case of peoples with varying cultural backgrounds brought together by only fifty years of history. Our problems are straight social and political engineering problems. They are not new to us. They have been identified long ago and have been with us unchanged for decades. The British carved out what Awolowo termed a "geographical expression called Nigeria" and then proceeded to construct a government superstructure over this territory. Therein lies the source of both the uniting and dividing factors which affect Nigeria. Nigerian leaders had faith and indeed did aspire that out of the "geographical expression" would emerge a united country if not a nation. Few of them however showed any deep appreciation of what the problems are. Balewa was undoubtedly an exception. He alone showed a deep commitment to Nigerian unity. Others were busy outwitting each other. During the struggle for independence it was relatively easy to focus and absorb all manner of loyalties into the struggle. This created false images and myths about unity. The loyalties and methods of the pre-independence era are irrelevant and immaterial to the task of nation building which is infinitely more intricate and more delicate than the struggle for independence.

Now, more than ever, the Nigerian situation needs to be insulated from outside influences which might divert our attention from the problems facing us. It is not clever political manoeuvres and this game of brinkmanship which Ibo leaders especially indulge in that will get us to the promised goal.

Only Nigerians can find the answer and nobody else can. We should be left alone to do it.

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