

Insider Outsider's Account:

Compilation of Nina Mba's column articles
for Vanguard Newspaper



Going Back in History

Welcome to my inaugural column. The Monday issue of the *Vanguard* has long been my favorite because of the *Treena Kwenta* page of which I am a devoted fan. In my opinion, it is the finest popular literature in the Nigerian print media. Its appeal is heightened by the mystery over the identity of the author of *Treena Kwenta*... one of the few real secrets in the media/literary world in Nigeria.

Monday may not be the most popular day of the week because it marks a return to work after the weekend break, but it is probably the most challenging day for that same reason. I hope to challenge you, the reader, on Mondays:

“On Monday when the sun is hot

I wonder to myself a lot

Now is it true or is it not

That what is which and
which is what”

(Winnie the Pooh by A.A. Milne, 1926).

On Mondays, I too shall wonder at the complexities, contradictions, and paradoxes of life in Nigeria from the perspective of an outsider (from down under) who has lived and worked inside Nigeria for 35 years—thus the title of the column.

This inaugural Monday is a special one. At the Jewish Passover celebration, a child asks: “Why is this day different from all other days?” Why this Monday is different from all other Mondays is that it is the 15th of January. This is a very important date in Nigerian history. This year, it marks the 35th anniversary of the first military coup, which toppled the First Republic, and the 31st anniversary of the end of the Nigerian Civil War which was the fallout from the coup: More of that anon.

To complete my self-introduction to you, dear readers, albeit unnecessarily, I am of the female gender. This fact influences my thinking and worldview just as much as nationality, culture, and class. Gender is a universal differentiation, which affects all spheres of life: personal, domestic, political, economic, and corporate. It was a major issue in colonialism which was recognized indirectly by the West African Students Union in the UK in 1945 which resolved: “On independence, there should be erected two monuments in gold raised to the eternal honor and memory of (a) the white women of Europe for making our stay in Europe possible, (b) the Almighty mosquitoes for saving our lands from the settlement of colonial usurpers.”

Actually, Nigeria as a nation-state has far too few historical monuments honoring its founders. Apart from statues of Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Awolowo, Tai Solarin, and Okpara, there are no fitting physical monuments to honor Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (the grandiose, ugly square in Lagos which bears his name is not an appropriate memorial). Nor to Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto; Festus Okotie-Eboh, and S.L. Akintola, the victims of January 15, 1966. There is still no national monument to honor the dead of the civil war, on both sides, civilian and military. Other nations have recently experimented with new, bold, war memorials which convey stark messages about the horror of war. Within Nigeria, some cultures pay great attention to the death of individuals through elaborate and expensive funeral rites, yet the nation disregards its collective dead.

Many of those who died in the civil war have not even been identified. Since there has not been an accurate and acceptable census of the living since 1951, it is not surprising that there are no accurate rec-

ords of deaths during the war.

The respected journalist, John de St. Jorre, estimated between half and one million dead but noted “there are no official figures” and since accurate records are not kept by either side, a reliable estimate of casualties may never emerge. My figure is a consensus of informed opinion and I feel that something around 600,000 - for total deaths- may be nearer the mark.” (St. Jorre. *The Nigerian Civil War 1972*). The Ohaneze petition to the Oputa panel estimates that over one million people died during the war.

Now that it is thirty-one years since the end of the war, the embargo on federal and state governments’ records of the war must have been lifted. This should expand the data already held at the National Archives, Enugu, and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In the meantime, our knowledge of the civil war has been greatly enriched by the inspiring, heroic investigation of Emma Okocha into the Mid-West sector. His important book, *Blood on the Niger (1994)*, documents the atrocities committed by the Federal troops against the Mid-West Igbos and identifies the hundreds of individuals who were killed in Asaba.

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It is such data that has led the Ohaneze to claim in its petitions that “Nigeria’s prosecution of the war violated all aspects of the Geneva Convention.” The petition reads further: “It interprets the massacres of Igbos (overlooking that many non-Igbo Easterners were also victimized) in 1966 and the marginalization of the Igbos after the war up to date, as evidence of political, social, and economic disempowerment of the Igbo. For this, the



National heroes

Ohaneze petition demands “reparations and appropriate restitution.”

So, the civil war of 31 years ago will be reinterpreted in 2001 at the Oputa panel. The issue of reparations and restitution has already been raised in respect of all the victims (and their families) and the atrocities committed by the Abacha regime. I agree with all the commentators who lament the incapacity of the Oputa panel to provide justice by prosecuting those guilty of torture (physical and psychological), murder, assassinations, and innumerable other abuses of human rights. I also fully identify with Soyinka’s lament about the inappropriate responses of some members of the

audience and media to Mustapha’s vainglorious obscene posturing.

My response to the proceedings of the panel is to see it from a historical and comparative perspective. The German philosopher, Hannah Arendt, analyzed totalitarianism and its leaders. In all cases, the leaders succeeded because of the willing cooperation and support of a significant part of the population.

The leaders may be psychopaths (Hitler, Goebbels, and Stalin) but the disciples and administrators of the totalitarian system of mass extermination were normal, so ‘normal’ as to merit the description ‘banal.’ Hence Arendt coined the term, “the banality of evil.” Abacha was a psychopath, but he was able to exercise his evil authoritarianism because of the complicity of some banal civil servants, academics, security operatives, police officers, politicians, and armed forces officers. Their testimony at the panel and in publications reveals their variety of self-serving motives. The way Abacha made a fool of all of them and encouraged the security forces to run wild, sometimes fighting each other, reminds me of Stalin.

Stalin was the totalitarian ruler of the USSR from 1927 to 1953. In that time, millions of Russians were killed by the secret police, NKVD, including many of Stalin’s close colleagues and members of his family. Stalin confided in one of his colleagues who survived to tell that “to choose one’s victims, to prepare one’s plans minutely, to stake an implacable vengeance and then to go to bed.... there is nothing sweeter in the world.” Like Abacha, Stalin died in his bedroom at night under mysterious circumstances. The head of the NKVD discovered the body but pretended Stalin was sleeping off a drunken binge for two days while he ran around and informed some of his colleagues. The soldiers on duty at Stalin’s residence at the time were either transferred to Siberia or just disappeared. Eventually, Khrushchev emerged as the new ruler and immediately executed Beria, the head of the NKVD.

All nations have suffered under brutal leaders and experienced terrible violence and bloodshed. In many, the past is not safely dead, it carries knives. It is imperative to learn from past disasters and not continue to repeat them. Next Monday, I shall have more to say on Babatope’s interpretation of the Abacha era.

To end on a lighter note, since we are still close to the Christmas period, I was quite taken by an advertisement which you must have noticed in the papers a couple of weeks before Christmas. It describes the three ages of man (sic): First, you believe in Father Christmas, second, you do not believe in Father Christmas, third you are a Father Christmas. Disregarding the inherent gender and religious discrimination, I enjoyed the wry humor and feel how appropriate its wider message is for many Nigerians who, if they have been reasonably successful, have to play Father Christmas to their extended families, villages, and towns. The burden can be very onerous, especially in these straightened times. When it is no longer possible to satisfy the expectations of those who look to you for largesse, you have entered the fourth age of man: You hand the job over to your grown-up children.

Now, is that true or is it not? That what is which and which is what.

Remembering Humpty Dumpty

WELCOME to my second column. If you read my first, you may recall that I promised to comment on Ebenezer Babatope's interpretation of the Abacha era as expressed in his book *The Abacha Years: What Went Wrong*, and in his comments at the launch of the book. Babatope, a self-styled radical A woist and political theorist, is the author of several books about politics in Nigeria since independence. This book is as much about himself as politics: That is, it is a political memoir. Memoirs are one of the great interests if the memoirist is extremely unusual or brilliant. They are customarily written towards the end of a long life of achievements. Whether Babatope's life fulfils those criteria or whether the memoir is premature is for the reader to decide. It seems to have been written to satisfy a confessional urge and is very self-defensive.

In his review of the book at the launch, Odia Ofiemun (as quoted in the Vanguard, December 21, 2000) described Babatope as 'a man of instant history'. The context was not given so it was not clear whether the reference was to Babatope's acts in making history or to his work in recording history. The latter is more meaningful since Babatope's writing is journalistic and, in many cases, journalism is the first rough draft of history.

Perhaps because of Chief Ebenezer Babatope's pseudonym/nickname, Ebino Topsy (his book was self-published by his company of the same name), I cannot help being reminded of the nursery hymn about Humpty Dumpty toppling from a wall "... all the kinsmen couldn't put Humpty together again." Nor am I alone in this perception. The Guardian political editor, Yinka Aderibigbe, described Babatope (Dec 28, 2000) as "A troubled and frustrated politician finding it difficult to find his rhythm after a political somersault." (emphasis mine).

The aura of nonsense and magic is intensified by Babatope's comments at the launch of his book when he refers to himself as being "safe from the witches and wizards of the Yoruba land." But this is a

Ebeneza Babatope



world of evil, not magic.

At the launch, Babatope was as brazenly defiant and unrepentant as Mustapha at the Oputa panel (which I discussed last Monday).

"I do not have any regrets of any kind for serving as a minister under late General Sani Abacha for it was not Abacha I had offered my service to but Nigeria... I have eaten the forbidden apple by serving a military government that I have spent the greater part of my life condemning (This day 21 Dec. 2000).

This "affirmation", as he puts it, is contradicted by the subsequent lament that if he had heeded the call to quit, he would

have been dead by now. Babatope pleads for understanding based on the data he provides in his book. Certainly, all his anecdotes about the intrigues, double-dealing, treachery, looting, and brutality constitute useful materials for future historians. They may then point out that the Nuremberg trials did not accept a defence of "following orders." Any person who served in the Nazi government or was a member of the Nazi party was considered guilty of crimes against humanity. Nor did the Nuremberg judges accept a defence of ignorance, of not knowing what was happening.

There were so many of us—eyewitnesses— when Abacha seized power, who were able to recognize the terrible dangers he represented. We may

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Memoirs are ...

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not have resisted but we didn't collaborate. It is difficult to credit the willful,

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gullibility or gluttony of otherwise clever, decent citizens like Babatope who did zealous collaborators. It is even more difficult to credit their non-repentance, their lack of guilt when confronted with all the evidence of the repercussions of their collaboration.

One such piece of evidence was graphically provided by Chris Anyanwu at the Oputa panel. Already the winner of international prizes for outstanding, heroic journalism in my mind, she deserves another accolade for her article "Saying Sorry Takes Guts" in *This day* Dec. 22, 2000. In a powerful, poignant essay, Anyanwu explains why at the Oputa panel she embraced Zachary Bui who had tortured her when she was arrested for publishing information about the 1995 phantom coup and "very nearly plucked out my eye." Bui was one of Abacha's hand-picked men, "the best in the area of physical and mechanical torture." However,

after giving evidence, Bui apologized to Anyanwu, unsolicited, and impressed her with the "spontaneity and genuineness of his apology." As Anyanwu rightly points out, "the concept of apology seems to be anathema to Nigeria public life" and it is the first to be heard from the Abacha cabal.

Babatope had fled the government and the country by the time Chris Anyanwu was unjustly imprisoned but there were plenty of



Ebeneza Babatope

other victims of Abacha's system of terror while he was inside. When Anyanwu observes that the Abacha inner circle say time and time again, "I will do it again, they have chosen the easier part. It is easier to hold on to a wrong," it is as though she is referring to Babatope.

On a deeper and global level, Chris Anyanwu's article raises a profoundly troubling question on whether the victims of torture and abuse should forgive and forget. As she

admits, some of her fellow victims condemned her. This is an issue around which many literature-creative, scientific, sociological analyses have been written. As Anyanwu also notes, her response was predicated on her psych and her cultural and religious background. Forgiveness is a Christian virtue, but not so valued by other religions. Forgetting, however, seems to be universally devalued... hence war memorials and museums to honor the civilians as well as the soldiers all over the world, as I discussed last Monday. Justice Oputa was very wise when he advised that the places of torture and execution be preserved as monuments to the victims of tyranny and as reminders to us and the future generations of the need to prevent such horrors from happening again.

In five days, a young woman who has just given birth is scheduled to be flogged in Zamfara State for engaging in pre-marital sex. Protests against this act of "justice" are being mounted overseas: Here at the time of writing in Nigeria, the silence is resounding apart from a couple of vigilant human rights organizations. And this is a **human** rights issue not a "women's issue" for the man concerned was also flogged. I hope the volume of protest swells across the land.

I regret to inform our readers that there will be no column for the next few Mondays. My father, Joseph Gantman, died in Sydney on January 12, aged 86. As you read this, I am in Sydney for the funeral.

Flying Far, Flying Fear

Dear readers,

Welcome back to my Monday column which went “to bed” while I went down under. Though a sad journey, I have come back with ideas and information, which I’ll share with you in the next couple of columns.

While I was away, there was another very sad event, the death of Professor Saburi Biobaku, the eminent historian. My tribute to him will appear in another column. My heartfelt sympathy to his widow and family.

In the last few months, an increasing alarm is being voiced about another life-threatening condition— D.V.T Deep Vein Thrombosis which afflicts passengers in aeroplanes that fly over nine hours non-stop. The state of forced immobilization of the lower limbs especially can cause DVT, which has been proven to have killed several passengers. Most of such passengers travelled in economy class, so the DVT is also known as the economy-class syndrome illness. Though renamed “world travelers cabins” by some airlines, the fact remains

‘The result of the DVT scare is that passenger behavior in the economy sections seems bizarre. Throughout the flight, passengers walk up and down the aisles and then assemble outside the toilet and small spaces around the exit doors, kicking, wriggling, squirming, levitating...’

that the cabins for economy class ticket holders are the 20/21st centuries equivalent of the steerage quarters in the trans-Atlantic/Pacific ocean ships of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Given the appallingly cramped seating in the economy class part of the plane, it is no wonder that DVT is a serious threat. The international airlines have responded by treating the symptoms, not the cause. You will now find in the seat pockets well-illustrated advice to passengers on how to combat DVT by ankle and shoulder exercises to be done while seated; passengers are further advised to walk up



Sydney airport

the aisles as much as possible but not during meals; snacks are handed out of form or turbulence. The airlines have also begun a disinformation campaign in the media claiming that only (sic) those who are elderly, pregnant, obese, suffering from hypertension or heart problems are at risk. After all, that is still a significant number of people, but this argument was undermined in January when three British Olympic cyclists returning from Australia were hospitalized on arrival in the UK with DVT. This seat shudders among healthy, slim, non-pregnant, air travelling passengers.



Lagos airport

What the aeroplanes have been silent about is what they are going to do to provide more legroom in the economy section. The easy answer is to remove one line of seats lengthwise and one row. i.e. 9 instead of 10 seat rows and remove two rows of 20 seats. Though still tight, that will allow more human and healthy space. But of course, it will rob the airlines of profit from about 100 passengers.

From the airlines’ perspective, the best solution is for vulnerable passengers to pay double or triple money for a club of a first-class ticket.

Most Nigerian travellers are not likely to face the trait of DVT since they travel to Europe or within Africa, but they may on trans-Atlantic and Asia/Australian flights. Worldwide, it is the most potentially dangerous because the greatest distances are flights to and from Australasia.

Therefore, the DVT problem is of special concern to those countries. There was a conference on the DVT in Sydney airport of the relevant medical specialist this month.

The result of the DVT scare is that passenger behavior in the economy section seems bizarre. Throughout the flight, the passengers walk up and down the aisles and then assemble outside the toilet and small space around the exit doors. Kicking, wriggling, squirming, levitating.....all looking in desperate need to go to the toilet or like the members of the Folangong cult in China but actually, they are just exercising to avoid the dreaded DVT.

Flying into Murtala Mohammed Airport, Lagos sets up another awful syndrome for passengers from ALL cabins of ALL airlines which fly into Lagos.



People offboarding the airplane

Passengers experience sweating, palpitations, acute anxiety, and claustrophobia. The cause? The woefully cramped arrival hall, inadequate air conditioning, only one functioning baggage carousel, insufficient trolleys, a resultant stampede as hundreds of passengers from two airlines which arrive at the same time claw each other to get their luggage. There is an obvious solution to this syndrome which I will name the Lagos Airport Syndrome – L. A. S.

Biobaku, Adieu

In last week's column, I expressed sadness over the death of Professor Saburi Biobaku. Much has been written and said in the eulogies about Biobaku's constructive roles in public life and the universities of Ibadan, Ife, and Lagos: I wish to focus on Biobaku as a historian.

Biobaku's classic work, *The Egba and their Neighbors 1842-1872*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1957 (Based on his University of London PhD Thesis 1951), ranks with Dike's *Classic Trade and Politics on the Niger* (1956) as the first scholarly publications in Nigerian history by Nigerian academics. Biobaku's work was based on written and oral sources and did a great deal to prove the acceptability of oral traditions as a valid source for the writing of the history of pre-colonial, pre-literate societies. In recognition of their pioneering roles in Nigerian historiography, the Historical Society of Nigeria in 1980 honored Professor Dike, Biobaku, and Smith with fellowships of the society. Biobaku's next major publication, *Sources of Yoruba History* (1973), which he edited, arose in part from the finding of the Yoruba historical research scheme, of which Biobaku was the founding director in 1965.

Biobaku inspired the generation of younger scholars and students to explore pre-colonial Nigerian history using archaeology, cultural history, oral traditions, and Arabic written sources as a part of their methodology. Beyond the academic study of history, Professor Biobaku devoted himself to bringing history to the general public. He popularized history and Nigerian traditional culture in radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, in talks to schools, businesses, clubs, and book launches.

On a personal note, I wish to acknowledge my debt to Professor Biobaku. In 1973 when I began my research on the history of Nigerian women, I discovered that the earliest scholarly publication on the subject was Biobaku's article, "Madam Tinubu" in "Eminent Nigerians of the 19th Century (Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation 1960)". Professor Biobaku was very helpful when I consulted him on my research, and he remained unfailingly supportive when later I consulted him on my biographies of Ayo Rosiji and Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. I quoted Biobaku's "oral testimony" in the Rosiji biography and acknowledged his contributions to the book. At the launch, he graciously agreed to review Ayo Rosiji: *Man With Vision*. In his last few years, the professor undertook to edit the *New History of Abeokuta* and insisted that there should be a chapter in *Egba Women*.

Nigerian historiography has lost one of its great pioneers and I shall miss Professor Biobaku's understanding and support of my work. Fortunately, Biobaku has left us his elegantly written, insightful, and highly informative autobiography, in two wonderful, titled volumes—*When We Were Young and When We Were No Longer Young*.

As a professional historian and a cultured man of leaders, Professor Biobaku knew the profound importance of autobiographies and memories by those who play a role in public

life. These writings, in turn, became historical sources to be studied in the future.

Yoruba, Igbo, and Judaism

Early in his career, Biobaku explored the view that the Yoruba were not autochthonous to their present habitation. There already existed a belief that the Yoruba had migrated from the Middle East.

Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther concluded from his translation of the Bible that the Yoruba were a Jewish people. Initially, Biobaku toyed with the theory adhered to by Diop, that the Yoruba had been part of the ancient all-black Meroe dynasty of Egypt/Sudan who had begun a very gradual migration southwards in the 17th century B.C. A second wave migration in the 10th century AD had led to the establishment of Ile Ife. Biobaku rejected the idea that Yoruba was an Egyptian word: it was the word the people of OYO used to identify themselves.

Later in his career, Biobaku was more skeptical about this hypothesis and appreciated the weight of archaeological, linguistic, ethnobotanical, anthropological, and historical evidence uncovered by his younger colleagues, which point to the dispersal of peoples from within Africa.

Recently, the discredited hypothesis of the Middle East origin of various nationalities in Nigeria has been revisited with the propagation by a group of Israelis and Igbos of the bizarre theory that the Igbos around Aguleri in Anambra State belong to the "lost tribe" of Judah of biblical times. As such, so the fantasy goes, they are entitled

Israelis.

More of this in the next column but related to its religious, not the historical plane, is the emergence of religious organizations in Nigeria, which claim to be partly Jewish. So, I learnt from the **Sunday Guardian**, February 25 in the Ibru Centre Supplement on Ecumenism, Charities, and Ethics(which featured "variants of Judaism in Nigeria"-- The House of Yahweh, Ogudu, the Christ Foundation Sabbath Mission, Ogudu, and Sabbath Day Church of God) all have incorporated elements of ancient Judaism in their philosophies and practices. I stress ancient because they also practice polyga-

How odd
Of God
To choose
The Jews

But not so odd
As those who choose
A Jewish God
But spurn the Jews

Oh no
It's not
He knows
What's what

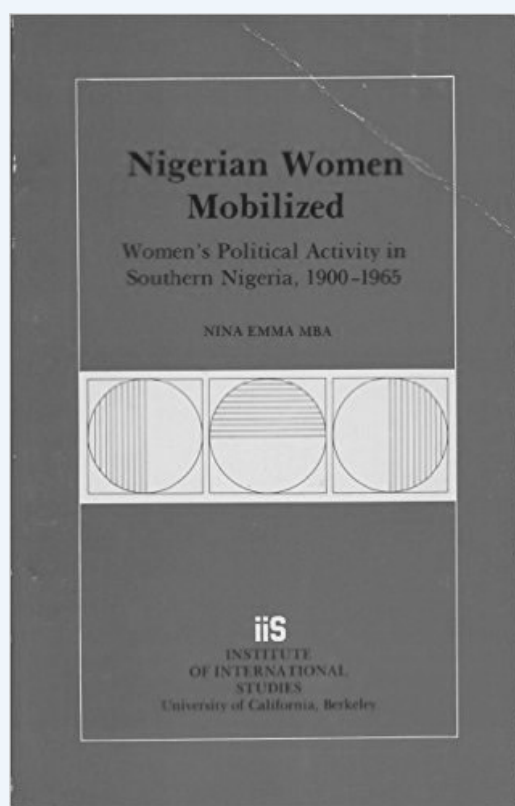
It isn't
Odd
The Jews
Chose God.

my, which has been banned by Judaism for millennia.

There is a fundamental misunderstanding in the thinking of these organizations. The difference between Judaism and Christianity is that Christians believe in the divinity of Jesus and the religion is based on that concept. Jews believe that Jesus was a Jewish prophet who broke away to form his cult, as had other Jewish reformers, before and after Jesus. While the two religions share many moral tenets and ethical values, the basic difference is irreconcilable.

However, one positive spin-off from this appropriation of Jewish customs into Christian churches is that it promotes religious tolerance and works against religious anti-Semitism. Judaism, however, does not appropriate Christian elements into its faith: Judaism, unlike Christianity and Islam, is a non-proselytizing religion.

The uneasy relationship between Judaism and other religions, and the burdensome "special relationship" between Jews and their God is well conveyed by this pithy verse and riposte: How odd of God to choose the Jews; But not so odd as those who choose a Jewish God but spurn the Jews; Oh no, It's not, He knows what's what; It isn't odd the Jews chose God.



to migrate to Israel based on Israeli law of automatic entry to any person who can prove a Jewish identity.

There is confusion among Nigerians over Jews and Israelis, so clarification of terms may be helpful. Jewishness is not a nationality: there are Jews in the U.S. Russian, South Africa, Ethiopia, who are citizens of those countries. There are few Jews who are Nigerian citizens by naturalization (e.g., Lebanese Jews) or by birth (children of Nigerian fathers and foreign Jewish mothers: Jewish identity is inherited from the mother). Israel is a nation whose citizens are predominantly but not exclusively Jewish: there is a minority of Muslim and Christian

The New Global Enemy

During the cold war, the enemy was either the USA or USSR depending on where one lived. Since its end in 1989, there has been a multiplicity of enemies again depending on where one lives. To the Kurds, the enemies are Turkey and Iraq; to the Chechens, the enemy is Russia; to the Timorese, the enemy is Indonesia, to the Bosnians the enemy is Serbia and so on.

Beyond national and ethnic enemies, there are global fears that the real enemies of humanity are poverty, AIDS, and global warming. However, these 'faceless threats' are not as easy to hate as the old communist or capitalist boogymen.

One of the greatest dramatists of the espionage of the cold war is the British novelist, John Le Carre, whose Smiley series, televised and filmed throughout many parts of the world, has been on the bestseller list for three decades. Many fans, myself included, wondered what Le Carre would write about next. (In the same way, fans have speculated on what Eddie Iroh will write about if he has finished his novels about the Nigerian Civil War. With the very recent publication of Le Carre's latest novel, *The Constant Gardener*, London, Hodder and Staughton, 2001, we have the answer.

The new enemy is the multinational pharmaceutical industry, which exploits people in advanced and less developed countries but is most dangerously exploitative in Africa.

The plot is based on the Three Bees conglomerate pharmaceutical company based in the US but with global links, which in response to the alarming spread of Tuberculosis worldwide, develops a new vaccine. Despite many problems uncovered during the trials, Three Bees proceeds to donate the vaccine to hospitals and clinics in Kenya and sends researchers to monitor the effects of the vaccine in Kenyan patients. Not only does it not cure tuberculosis, but it also causes very severe side effects, including blindness.

An aid worker, Tessa, the wife of Justin, a diplomat in the British High Commission, Nairobi, and her colleague a Kenyan doctor, Arnold uncovered the conspiracy. Tessa and Arnold were brutally murdered by agents of Three Bees. Justin, who has a passion for gardening and who is "constant" in his integrity, love for and faith in Tessa, under-takes a dangerous quest to uncover the murderers. Justin is the constant gardener of the title. He succeeds in unravelling the tentacles of the Three Bees conspiracy, but at the cost of his own life.

Le Carre explains in the preface that his book is not based on real persons or corporations... "But I can tell you this, as my journey through the pharmaceutical jungle progressed, I came to realize that by comparison with reality, my story was the same as a holiday postcard". It is clear that Le Carre spent time in East Africa and did his homework thoroughly. In the novel, Le Carre voices savage criticisms of "aid" by some pharmaceutical corporations, which donated "30-year-old drugs for malaria... getting million-dollar tax breaks for their generosity, plus saving a few millions of warehousing costs and the cost of destroying old

drugs they can't tell" (475).

He lambasts the aid world for its 3Rs; replication rivalry, and rationalization.

"Aid in the Third World is exploitation under another name. The beneficiaries are the countries that supply the money on interest, the local politicians and officials, who pocket huge bribes, and the western contractors and arms suppliers who walk away with big profits. The victims are the man in the street, the uprooted, the poor, and the very poor. (167)".

As an aid worker explains, "A big part of the grain we drop is grown in Northern Su-

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dan. The aid agencies buy Khartoum grain. Khartoum uses the money to buy arms for the war against the south. The planes that bring the grain to Loki (refugee camp in Southern Sudan) use the same

Southern Sudan. "Broken or hole, these white synthetic fibre bags, stamped with the initials of the World Food Programmes, are as much a staple commodity of South Sudan as the food they bring (472). This brings back memories for me of the Nigerian Civil War relief programmes in Biafra.

Le Carre expresses bitter criticisms of Kenya's government under Arap Moi

"...Moi who cannot manage a flea circus with the assistance of his entire cabinet even if there was money in it for him (306). Kibera, a slum in Nairobi of 4 million people, is described graphically '...the

valley is rich in deposits of sewage, plastic bags, colorful stands of old clothing, banana and orange peels, cobs."

Nigeria's recent experiences in Borno State with Pfizer's anti-meningitis vaccine and Procter and Gamble's Always



airport that Khartoum's bombers use to bomb the Southern Sudanese villages. Why is the UN financing the bombing of Southern Sudan and feeding the victims at the same time?"

Le Carre notes bitterly the culture of the food bag in

"Nigeria's recent experiences in Borno state with Pfizer's anti-meningitis vaccine and Procter and Gamble's "Always" sanitary pads show how relevant concerns about the international pharmaceutical industry are. The allegations of malpractice in both instances were unfounded but the fact that they were raised and the hysteria that resulted in showing how afraid people are of being exploited by the big drug companies and how vulnerable we all are'

sanitary pads show how the international pharmaceutical industry is. The allegations of malpractice in both instances were unfounded but the fact that they were raised, and the hysteria that resulted, show how afraid people are of being exploited by the big drug companies and how vulnerable we all are.

Despite the radical changes in settings, action, and theme, Le Carre is still able to tease out the material in his stock themes of betrayal, complexity and perfidy, especially in the British establishment. The *Constant Gardener* is evidence of Le Carre's versatility and the range of his imaginations and his passionate concern for freedom and justice.

Should Le Carre be wondering about what next to write

on, I wish he or John Grisham or Frederic Forsyth or best of all, a Nigerian writer, will look at the recent judgment given in the Commercial Court in London in the case concerning the government of Russia and Nigeria, the Noga company, the ANZ bank, and the Abacha family. Even a cursory reading of the judgment (courtesy: This ay, March 3) reveals a rich treasure trove for any writer of political, legal, and criminal thrillers, blockbusters, soap operas, and Hollywood/Bollywood film scripts.

An earlier novel of Le Carre is entitled, *The Looking Glass War*, which would be an apt description of this case which is like the sending into Alice's Wonderland. The judge himself seems to perceive the narrative potential of the case, "Even if the complex issues concerning the events of 17 and 24 September are not amenable to the language of inherent probability... so that in essence the whole narrative, Abuja and London, has to be seen as a whole." On Kanu Agabi, a former Nigeria attorney general, the puzzled judge asks, "What am I to make of this?" and concludes, "the attorney general's mind did not go with his pen."

The scam/stingy/scandal involved an international cast of Russians, Nigerians, Swiss, Lebanese, British, Israelis, and Americans. Two family dynasties confronted each other: Abacha, his wife, uncle, and son, Nessim Gaon, his wife, son, daughter, and son-in-law. Private eyes taped telephone calls and conversations, a video film of evidence given by Mohammed Abacha in prison in Lagos, Baguda's secret notebook, betrayals, murders, blackmail, inordinate greed and theft on a monstrous scale...all grist to the writer's mill.

The problem, however, is trying to find the hero and the "goodies" in the cast of rogues. The role probably goes to Obasanjo as the anti-corruption crusader, to the Swiss magistrate who pursued his investigations against all odds, and the lawyer for the Nigerian government, Chief Akin Delano. The victims? The people of Nigeria, trapped in the web of corruption spun by Abacha and his collaborators, exploited by political machinery as dangerous to the welfare and health of the masses as any international pharmaceutical conglomerate.

Case for Nigerians Down Under

Readers may recall my column of 22 February 2001 "Flying Far, Flying Fear" which highlighted the danger of DVT – Deep Vein Thrombosis. I was pleased to read about the formation last week of the Nigerian Society for the Prevention of Thrombosis. Society's main concern is thrombosis on the ground, not from long hauls in the air, but it may be interesting to learn that currently, 2,300 lawsuits are being collated in Australia against airlines held responsible for victims of DVT, including families of 166 allegedly dead. At a symposium of thrombosis in Lagos organized by May & Baker Nigeria Plc, the participants concluded that DVT was a reality in Nigeria. (**This Day 09 March 2001**).

Leading the discussion on the subject was Dr J. Ajuluchukwu, a consultant cardiologist at LUTH, who did her specialist training at the University of Melbourne, Australia, and is therefore well experienced in the long-haul hell. Dr



The first Nigerian to study in Australia was Obi Nwanna who did an M. Ed at Sydney University 1961-1963.

Ajuluchukwu is just one of the scores of Nigerians who studied at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional levels in Australian universities. The first Nigerian to study in Australia was Obi Nwanna who did an M. Ed at Sydney University 1961-1963. Obi ended up as an Emeritus Professor of Education.

During my recent visit to Australia, I met the Nigerian High Commissioner in Canberra, Dr Rufai A.O. Soule, who informed me that there are over three thousand Nigerians registered with the Nigerian High Commission but there are many additional Nigerians resident in Australia who have not registered. Quite some long-term Nigerian residents have become Australian citizens and hold high positions in their various professions.

One of the most remarkable Nigerian-Australians is Jumoke Adebayo Doherty who has lived in Sydney for the last nineteen years. From the late 1960s to the early '80s, Jumoke was very well known in the U.K as a professional broadcast journalist and actor. Her voice was a household one in Nigeria to listeners of the BBC Africa Service and her writing was very familiar to readers of African culture which appeared in the U.K, newspapers and journals. Jumoke Adebayo-Doherty appeared in West End theatre productions in London and on BBC television dramas and comedies.

Then suddenly - silence! What happened was that she was invited to the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, Australia in 1982 as a consultant to organize an exhibition of Commonwealth costume and jewelry as part of a parallel "cultural games". Jumoke travelled all over the Commonwealth selecting the best samples of costume and jewelry. She organized and compared a dramatic fashion show and exhibition, which won accolades from the tens of thousands of visitors to the Games. Jumoke met many people in the antiques, jewelry, and cultural worlds in Australia and she fell in love with the climate (compared to England): the beautiful scenery, the outdoor living, and the open warm hospitality of Australians. So Jumoke Doherty took the radical decision to relocate to Sydney, Australia.

She first went into the antique

'The Nigerian in Australia as in other countries in the world should have the right to vote in Nigerian elections. Australians, Americans, Britons, etc. residents in Nigeria can vote at their diplomatic missions in Nigeria. We all saw how important the overseas postal votes were in the U.S. presidential election last year.'

business and had a stall in the high-class antique fair in Sydney. Then she decided that was too cramped, so she rented much more spacious accommodation in the up-market Crown Street Surry Hills (on that street there used to be the Crown Street Women's Hospital where I was born some years back). There she opened Jumoke's Art Gallery and a shop containing an extraordinary mix of exciting objects, *dart*, antiques, Persian carpets (on which Jumoke is an authority) pieces of sculpture cloth, gift items, and an African display of masks, adire and woven cloth, beads, and paintings. It is a real Aladdin's cave treasure.

From time to time, however, Jumoke re-organizes her gallery to create space for exhibitions. Last year, she organized one on Yoruba Culture which Dr Rufai A.O. Soule, the High Commissioner

'The Nigerian in Australia as in other countries in the world should have the right to vote in Nigerian elections. Australians, Americans, Britons, etc. residents in Nigeria can vote at their diplomatic missions in

Nigeria. We all saw how important the overseas postal votes were in the U.S. presidential election last year.'

declared open. It displayed some rare exhibits of traditional Yoruba cloth, caps, jewelry, and chieftaincy regalia which Jumoke has collected over many years. Photographs, paintings, books, sculptures, carvings all combined to produce in Sydney, a most authentic and rich exhibition of Yoruba culture. Dr Soule sent a video of the opening of the exhibition to the Nigerian Television Authority, which showed it in December 2000. Dr Soule and Jumoke Doherty told me they had received many calls from Nigeria in praise of the exhibition and their presentations. African studies academics and students and collectors of African art in Australia often consult Jumoke. Jumoke has not abandoned her gift for acting and love of the theatre. She has

appeared in plays in Sydney, and she produced and directed Wole Soyinka's play, *Kongi's Harvest* in a theatre near the famous Bondi Beach. The production received positive reviews.

One of Jumoke's sons is practicing as a solicitor in Sydney and he also has Australian citizenship. Jumoke maintains constant contact with all her huge extended family in Lagos and visits Nigeria regularly.

So also does another well-known Nigerian-Australian, Professor Bertha Aderinola Johnson, a psychiatrist. She is based in Ballarat, in Victoria, and has been practicing as a psychiatrist for the last thirteen years. One of Professor Johnson's children, Oladipo Lawrence Johnson, also holds Australian as well as Nigerian citizenship.

The Nigerians in Australia, as in other countries in the world, should have the right to vote during Nigerian elections. Australians, Americans, Britons, etc. residents in Nigeria can vote at their diplomatic missions in Nigeria. We all saw how important the over-

seas postal votes were in the U.S presidential elections last year. While the Nigerians in Australia may not make a great difference numerically, those in the U.S and Europe definitely could. All overseas resident Nigerians should be allowed to exercise their democratic right to vote.

I am not being chauvinistic when I assert that the standard of universities in Australia is uniformly high and recognized as such worldwide. All those Nigerians who studied or worked in Australia whom I have met speak very positively of their education and experiences in Australia. From that attachment to their associations with Australia has arisen the Nigeria – Australia and New Zealand Association NANZA. Its patron is the *Olowu of Owu*, Abeokuta, Dr O. A. Adeleye, who obtained his PhD in Architecture from the University of Sydney. Nigerian alumni of Australian universities who would like to join NANZA should either write to this column of c/o P. O. box or 54664 Ikoyi. Young Nigerians who are desirous of Australian university education will be interested to learn about one of Australia's top universities, the University of Wollongong, N.S.W. It has a campus in Dubai, much closer and cheaper for Nigerians. For details, you may also contact me at the Vanguard.

Dear Readers,

I would be delighted to receive mail from you in response to my column. No writer or journalist wishes to write in a vacuum, feedback is most welcome.

Since nursery rhymes and verses have been featured in my column, may I end with this nursery rhyme which cautions readers to be careful of the promises of writers and information propagandists!

A Song

I'll sing you a song

Nine verses long

For a pin

Three and three are six

And three are nine

You are a fool

And the pin is mine.

The Many What ifs of Nigerian History

PRESIDENT Obasanjo is quoted as saying during his recent official visit to Bayelsa State

...If Biafra had won, I would have been dead, your governor would not have been in the position he is today.....” (Guardian March 17, 2001.)

I am intrigued by this speculation for two reasons; it reveals the President’s awareness of the value of asking **what if** of the past. In an article under that title (in the *Sunday Vanguard*, October 31, 1999), I wrote about

Counterfactual history – they might have been and what-ifs-- predicated on the assumption that the understanding of history can be greatly enhanced by changing a significant fact and examining other outcomes. This can lead historians to question long-held assumptions and show that there are no certain outcomes.

For instance - what if the American-Indians had defeated the white Americans in the Indian wars?

I went on to relate **what-ifs** to Nigeria’s history and asked a question very similar to President Obasanjo’s. “What if the Banjo-led Biafran army had exploited the unpreparedness of the Nigerian army and moved to Lagos and Ibadan from Ore in September 1967? Would the North then have seceded as it had wanted to do in July 1966 and Southern Nigeria become Biafra, led by Ojukwu? How would the North have developed without oil and access to the sea? Would it not have become more like Niger? For how long would Biafra have tolerated military rule? On the other hand, **what if**, during the civil war, certain Nigerian junior army officers such as Idiagbon, Babangida, Buhari, and Abacha had been killed in battle? Would there still have been the 1985 coup?

The second reason I find the President’s speculation intriguing has to do with the nature of the Nigerian civil war. There are three ways in which a commanding officer on either side of the civil war could have died. First, by accident/natural causes aggravated by the harsh environment; second, in actual combat, thirdly by execution, with or without a court-martial. There were examples of such deaths of top officers in the war, but as in many wars, the mortality rate of commanders was much lower than that of the other ranks. At the end of the war, most of the commanding officers on both sides survived and the Nigerian armed force did not execute any of the former Biafran military leaders. Some were detained for up to five years but I am not aware that any died in deten-

‘What if, during the civil war, certain Nigerian junior army officers such as Idiagbon, Babangida, Buhari, and Abacha had been killed in battle? Would there still have been the 1983 and 1985 coups?’

tion.

So, how might Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo as G.O.C. 3, Marine Commando Division have died if Biafra won the war? He might have died in combat, heroically, refusing to escape when the Biafran forces overran his troops. Obasanjo’s immense courage in the Congo and civil war is legendary. If he had retreated into the creeks of the Niger Delta to lead guerrilla resistance, he might have died from exposure to the unhealthy swamp conditions. Or, is Obasanjo implying that the victorious Biafrans would have executed the Nigerian commanding officer? In his memoirs of the war *‘My Command’* (Ibadan Heinemann 1980), Obasanjo describes poignantly the way the Biafran commanders, his former military colleagues and subordinates, received him.

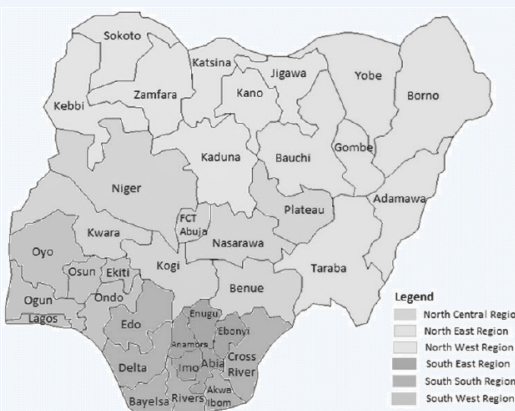
For Ojukwu, the one Biafran General whom the Nigerians might have considered for execution, Obasanjo was determined to protect him.

“I had given serious thought to how to handle him, (Ojukwu) if he was captured alive – to prevent any mishap caused by our soldiers. I had no fear of Ojukwu committing suicide. I knew only too well he was not such a man. (118)”

Nor can one conceive of Obasanjo ever contemplating suicide under even the most grueling conditions.

All in all, I consider it unlikely that the defeated Nigerian commanding officers would have been executed. So, one may question whether it was inevitable that Colonel Obasanjo would have died if Biafra had won the war. I speculate that once the territory of Biafra had been secured and Nigeria recognized its sovereignty, all the detained Nigerian officers and Nigerian prisoners of war would have been returned to Nigeria, which in turn would have been peacefully split into two separate nations. Obasanjo might have ended up as the president and commander-in-chief of the Oduduwa Republic! After serving one term establishing the new nation, Obasanjo might have become the first African Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Recollections of the Nigerian civil war and the role played by the top military players have been stimulated by the just-published *The Hurricane: General Murtala*



Map of Nigeria

Mohammed, written by Taiwo Ogundipe and published by Top Seal Communications (no location given), in 2001. The foreword is by President Obasanjo who welcomes a book about his friend and a close colleague and praises it as “a good research work.” There is no doubt that a well-researched, critical and analytical biography of Murtala Mohammed is most necessary and indeed overdue, but this book is far from being that.

Just as Obasanjo toys with counterfactual history, Ogundipe, a journalist, experiments with another historical methodology of trying to enter the consciousness of the history maker to comprehend the motivation, thinking, and behavior of the individual. However, the individual’s role is then situated in the context of the prevailing impersonal historical conditions. Ogundipe’s attempts at capturing the stream of consciousness of Mohammed, Gowon, Bisalla, and Dimka are laudable but not backed by any analysis of the historical context or any solid research.

Ogundipe is not a historian, but journalists and historians have methodologies in common. Sources are just as important for journalists as they are for historians. Except where the safety of the source may be at stake, the acknowledgement and identification of the sources used in constructing a story, an article or a book are essential. That is the only way the reader can determine the integrity and accuracy of the information. The author’s credibility is predicated on the responsible use of well-researched sources in the written work.

Ogundipe neither acknowledges nor identifies any of his sources or references. There is no proper table of contents, no bibliography. Ogundipe is presumably familiar with the literature of the civil war/coups but no citation is given even where he quotes verbatim from published works.

The dedication of the book, “to the

memory of General Murtala Mohammed and all those who lost their lives in the service of the nation” immediately proclaims the author’s bias. Less than half of the book of 267 pages is about the coup in which he and Colonel Taiwo and their staff were assassinated and attempts made to assassinate Obasanjo and Danjuma. The author lavishes a lot of space on Dimka, the executor of the coup, focusing on his affairs, his steady girlfriend, his drinking, and partying. The cover blurb informs us that the author has scripted several soap operas and that’s exactly what the coverage of Dimka read like!

The assessment of Mohammed is very positive: the only criticisms are those made by General Bisalla when Ogundipe reconstructs Bisalla’s thinking about Mohammed thus “..... headstrong ... extremely reckless ... the miscalculation at the war front the many lives that were lost as a result of what he considered Mohammed’s reckless moves.” (81)

In discussing the Onitsha campaign, Ogundipe baldly states, “His troops suffered heavy casualties in the process, and he was roundly criticized ... This it was believed in some quarters saved Nigeria three or more extra years of war.” (36) There is no reference at all to the atrocities committed in Igbo-speaking areas of the Mid-West during Mohammed’s advance to Onitsha, despite their documentation in ‘Blood on the Niger’ by Emma Okocha with which Ogundipe ought to be familiar.

Certainly, there is evidence of Ogundipe’s familiarity with some of the literature on the civil war because he quotes almost verbatim, but without acknowledgement, for instance, some paragraphs from Obasanjo’s books *‘My Command’* and *‘Not My Will’* (University Press Limited Ibadan 1990). For example, Ogundipe refers to him accepting the position of the head of state after Mohammed was assassinated. “He finally had to succumb when he was pointedly told that his unyielding atti-



Olusegun Obasanjo

tude was going to create confusion and instability which could be exploited by Dimka and his cohorts to see their dream through to reality (221).

Ogundipe alleges that “to prevent Gowon ruining everything they had fought for, Mohammed suggested to some of his colleagues at the battlefield to slow down the pace of ending the war to force Gowon to mend his ways. Obasanjo argues that too much effort, men and materials had been put into the war for anyone to start calling for a delay in ending it.” (51)

What if Mohammed had succeeded in slowing down the pace and the war had dragged on? France would likely have recognized Biafra and sent in enough men and arms to turn the tide of the war. Then Obasanjo might well have been caught inside a victorious Biafra!

100 Years of Federation Blues

In the context of the current impassioned discourse over the nature of the federal system in Nigeria – revenue allocation, control of resources, the call for a sovereign national conference etc. – it may be consoling to be reminded that other federal systems have also experienced deep divisions and turmoil. A federation is defined as “the act of uniting with a league for common purposes, especially in forming a sovereign power with control of foreign affairs and defence while each member state retains control of internal matters.

Federations are popular globally: USA, Canada, Malaysia, Switzerland, the West Indies, Belgium, Australia etc. have all adopted one or the other type of federal systems. These range from co-ordinate, co-operative, coercive, co-coordinative to organic, according to the degree of accession of central power and the sharing of responsibilities and policy coordination between the center and the regions/states.

Throughout history, every federation has undergone crises, some so severe that the federation disintegrated – e.g. Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Singapore and Malaya state or others have been altered. I shall focus on the federal system in Australia because it has just celebrated its 100th anniversary. On the first day of the twentieth century, the six separate Australian colonies (N.S.W., Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia federated to become the Commonwealth of Australia, the only nation in the world to govern an entire continent and its outlying Islands. (There is even the talk of expanding the federation to include New Zealand).

The founders of the commonwealth of Australia created a co-ordinate federal system in which the central and regional authorities would act independently of each other about topics so defined as to reduce to a minimum the possibility of overlap of confusion.

However, the depression and the Second World War necessitated increasing the powers of the federal government and led to the situation, unusual among federations, of the great concentration of revenue resources in the Australian federal government’s hands and of law-making competence in state parliaments.

Unable to counter the commonwealth’s superior financial strength, the states increasingly resorted to political weapons, using as their battle cries centralism and state might. Income tax is levied federally, and debate between the levels of government about access to revenue and duplication of expenditure functions is a perennial feature of Australian politics.

The Australian federation served as a model of federalism, which inspired the makers of the Nigerian Federal Constitution in the 1950s. The Australian legal system strongly influenced the evolution of the Nigerian legal system. The conceivers and designers of Abuja looked to Canberra as a model of a federal capital territory.

Like Nigeria, the creation of Australia’s federal system preceded total independence from Britain but followed responsible self-government under their constitutions for the six colonies. The Australian Federal Constitution, like the US and unlike Britain, is a written one.

The Australian Constitution defines the responsibilities of the federal government, which include foreign relations and trade, defence and immigration. Governments of states and territories are responsible for the matters not assigned to the Commonwealth. A referendum is required to change the Australian Constitution.

Like the federal constitution, state constitutions originate from laws enacted by the British parliament. The power to change state constitutions, however, is by referendum. State parliaments and territory assemblies also follow the principles of responsible government and have governors appointed by the Queen, who is the Head of State.

Australia pioneered reforms, such as the secret ballot, underpin the electoral practices of modern democracies. Voting is compulsory for all citizens over 18. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been able to vote since 1967 when Australians voted to change their constitution to give the federal government greater power to address the problems of indigenous people.

When Australians vote for the House of Representatives, which has 148 single-member constituencies, they must indicate a numbered order of preference for all candidates on the ballot. If one candidate does not have an absolute majority; the successful

candidate is determined by the distribution of preferences. This full preferential system is regarded as fairer than the ‘first past the post system, which can elect a candidate that a majority of voters in an electorate do not want.

Twelve senators are elected from each of the six states and two from each territory. Voter preferences are allocated under a system of proportional representation, with each state/territory considered as a single electorate. This gives independent candidates and minority parties a chance of being elected. Independents and small parties sometimes hold the balance of power in the Australian senate.

The Australian system tends to emphasize policy stances rather than the character of individual politicians. Political parties involve their members in developing policies and elected politicians rarely vote against their parties in parliament. Since 1984, a system of public funding administered by the Australian Electoral Commission and disclosure for election campaigns has been introduced.

Australia has an interest in supporting democratic processes throughout the world. Officers of the Australian Electoral Commission have assisted with elections in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Namibia, Mozambique, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Liberia, Zanzibar, Tanzania and South Africa. They have acted as consultants to the United Nations, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Foundation for Election Systems, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

The Australian Federal Constitution drew on elements from the U.K. USA, Canada and Switzerland. This led to certain contradictions. According to the British parliamentary system, governments are made and unmade by the lower house, i.e., the House of Commons, while in the US presidential system, the up-

In March 1975, the federal minister for minerals and energy was involved in a scandal over raising a loan of four billion dollars from the Middle East, without proper approval. The opposition accused the government of corruption and incompetence.

Through some dubious political bargaining, the opposition gained control of the Senate. It delayed passage of the government’s financial bills through the Senate to force the government “to go to the people” i.e., call an election.

With no supply of money to the government, a minor constitutional crisis loomed. The government refused to bow to the pressure. Whitlam declared: “Governments are made and unmade in the House of Representatives, not the Senate.”

The opposition argued that the representative of the Head of State, the Governor-General should dismiss the Prime Minister and commission another Prime Minister who would dissolve parliament and call an election. The Chief Justice advised the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, and in an unprecedented intensely controversial

‘Every federal country has found that a fairly high degree of control over public finance and the general lines of national economic policy has become essential in the contemporary world but in no case has this need caused the abandonment of federalism.’

act, Kerr dismissed Prime Minister Whitlam on November 11, 1975.

In the general election which followed on December 13, there was a massive landslide in favor



per house, i.e., the Senate, representing the states as units of the federation, is the most powerful legislature.

In Australia, the election to the senate is by popular vote. This inherent contradiction produced a political and constitutional crisis in Australia in 1975. Then the federal government was controlled by the Labour Party, whose leader and the prime minister was Gough Whitlam.

The opposition Labour Party was led by Malcolm Fraser (soon thereafter to become General Obasanjo’s close friend and colleague in the Commonwealth’s eminent person group).

of the Liberal-Country Party Coalition and Malcolm Fraser became the new Prime Minister. He held office until 1983, thereafter he contested the office of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth but lost to Chief Emeka Anyaoku. Fraser actively campaigned for Obasanjo’s release from prison and was present at his friend’s inauguration in Abuja as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The dismissal of the Whitlam government by Governor-General Kerr was perhaps the most dramatic and controversial event in Australia’s constitutional and political history. Memo-

ries of it contributed to the debate regarding the future of the Australian system of government. Should the office of the Governor-General be retained? Should there be an Australian Head of State? Should an Australian Head of State possess the same powers as the Governor-General? In 1999, Australians voted in a referendum on whether to alter the constitution to establish the Commonwealth of Australia as a republic and replace the Queen and Governor-General with a President appointed by a two-thirds majority of parliament. This was the most significant attempt to change the Australian constitution since its enactment 100 years ago.

Publicly supporting the calls for the Australian Republic were both Whitlam and Fraser. The proposal did not succeed for some reasons but the issue will remain on the political agenda. In the meantime, bitter conflicts between the federal government and state governments, especially those led by the party of the federal opposition, continue over financial and economic allocations and policies.

From all the above, a lesson might be learnt for the Nigerian debate on federalism. Every federal country has found that a fairly high degree of control over public finance and the general lines of national economic policy has become essential in the contemporary world but in no case has this need caused the abandonment of federalism: instead, there have occurred fairly considerable re-allocation of functions, frequently by informal process of cooperative federalism rather than by formal constitutional changes in the legal competence of the federal units.

Both co-operative federalism, with its implied acceptance of the inviolability of state rights and coercive federalism based on notions of centralism or federal domination, must give way to a system of coordinative federalism in which decision-making responsibility is shared and the policies of different governments are coordinated.

Each federation has to work out its *modus vivendi* from its perspective. That depends of course from where the perspective is based. In Australia, there is a popular credo about perspective: “I believe the world is round and down under is on top.”

From Australia, we can move up or down to Japan, for a joke in lieu of a numeracy rhyme this week. It is a joke which makes a very important point: one little word makes all the difference.

The Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori, speaks no English and is normally happy to work through interpreters. But on his way to meet Bill Clinton, a travelling Japanese sports reporter told him he should try five small words of English as a courtesy before reverting to the comfort of interpreters.

“Just say, “How are you?” the reporter told Mori, “he’ll respond with “I’m fine.” Then you can say “Me too,” before going back to Japanese.”

The first three words proved one too many for Mori. On being presented to Clinton in Washington, Mori firmly shook hands. “Who are you?” He enquired. The US President was reportedly taken somewhat by surprise but, in typical Clinton style, he laughed it off, replying: “I’m Hillary’s husband.”

Women and Tradition

In most societies in pre-colonial Nigeria, the world of women was separate from that of men. The women's world was not subordinate to that of the men but rather was complementary. The political system recognized this separateness by providing that women be represented in the government of the whole society in an institutionalized manner as well as granting women autonomy in their sphere. In this system, women possessed a collective duty enhanced by the commonality of their interests: most women participated in the same type of economic system and in childbearing/rearing for which they developed a mutual support system. Colonialism undermined the solidarity of the women by introducing new divisions based on education, religion, wealth, and occupation. It deprived women of their pre-colonial authority in their sphere: to the British administration, the women chiefs were invisible. However, women maintained the forms of their old associations' even though the original functions were changed. These associations provided the primary base for mobilizing women for political action. The tradition of women protecting their interests by their actions continued.

In some Nigerian societies, there were high-status chieftaincy titles for women, generally acquired, not inherited. Although women chiefs lost their substantial political authority under colonialism, the titles regained some of their significance after independence. Just as nowadays, male politicians seek to validate their political status and influence by taking chieftaincy titles. So do women politicians take traditional titles.

Today's column provides a case study of Nigerian women and traditions in the town of Onitsha on the bank of the River Niger. In pre-colonial times, Onitsha was a very important center of trade: It was the meeting point for traders from the Niger Delta, and Igala and traders from the North. In the mid-19th century, European traders entered the scene and set up factories in Onitsha. The local markets and trade in Onitsha were completely controlled by women and they also participated actively in the long-distance trade.

Onitsha operated a constitutional monarchical system. The Obi (King) appointed a limited number of powerful chiefs, and the powers of the Obi were checked and limited by these chiefs. Wealth rather than age was the basic criterion for chieftaincy. A pre-condition for ascension to Obishop and the chieftaincy was possession of the **Ozo** title which empowered the holders to sacrifice at ancestral shrines and endowed him with spiritual authority. Ozo title holders constituted the **Agbalanze** society.

This world of the men was paralleled by that of the women. There was an **Omu** (queen) who was not the wife of the Obi, but she was handed her staff of office by the **Obi**. Once installed, the **Omu** possessed all the insignia of royalty such as the sword, fan and drum held by the **Obi**, and she could not be deposed by the **Obi**. She had her palace and throne. The **Omu** was head of the **Omu** society whose members held titles that paralleled those of the male chiefs. A precondition for ascension into the omuship and omu society was possession of the **Odu** (ivory) title, which paralleled the men's **Ozo** title. **Odu** title holders constituted the **Otu Odu** Ivory (society). Odu means ivory. The soon-to-be title holder had to purchase anklets and bracelets for late initiation, which symbol-

ized their possession of great wealth (acquired through trade). Generally, the women find themselves financing the ivory-taking and often in turn financed the same for their daughters.

Colonialism adversely affected the power of women in Onitsha. As trade with the Europeans became more and more lucrative, Onitsha men, who had regarded trade as women's work, moved into the trade and displaced many women. The colonial marketing system and local councils took over the women's authority in the markets. While the colonial administration recognized the **Obi of Onitsha**, it did not recognize the **Omu**. The last **Omu**, Nwagboka, reigned from 1884 to 1886. She was one of the signatories to the treaty of 1884 between Queen Victoria and Onitsha. After her death, the Omuship lapsed and has never been restored.

However, women in Onitsha formed a new association of women **Ikporo** Onitsha, which has played an important role in politics within

‘Since I am married to an Onitsha indigene and I am of “certain age,” I am eligible and indeed shall be initiated into the Otu Odu on April 16th’.

and without Onitsha (i.e. the Eastern Region, in Biafra, in East Central State and now Anambra State). At the same time, women have maintained the **Otu Odu** society and even though there is no longer the Omuship to aspire to, the Otu Odu is deeply involved in all issues which affect Onitsha and are always consulted by the Obi, the red cap chiefs, the Agbalanze, and the important age grades. The **Otu Odu** respect the shrines to two of their foremothers **Atagbusi** (who tried to stop strangers coming into Onitsha in the 1860s to take over their trade) and to Omu Nwagboku. Prominent Onitsha women who have been active in state and national public life such as Florence Emodi, Chinyere Asika and Justina Anazonwu – are all members of **Otu Odu**.

In response to social and economic change, the society has set up a domestic science training programme, which organized social services for elderly women, and has been involved in all state women and development programmes.

The Otu Odu is open to all female indigenes of Onitsha and wives of Onitsha indigenes who are 40 years of age and above. Since I am married to an Onitsha indigene and am of a “certain age” I am eligible and indeed shall be initiated into the Otu Odu on April 16th.

On that day, which marks the final ceremonies (**Mmacha** after an earlier **Ibu Ego** ceremony) at 6 a.m. I shall be ready in the house of my husband, richly dressed, (but not in the Otu Odu uniform of all white). The ivory bracelets and anklets will be looked after by my helpers until after the first ceremony. I shall dance around selected places in the village of my husband, my mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law (accompanied by a flutist and immediate female family and close friends) after which I return at 9 a.m. to prepare for the actual initiation.

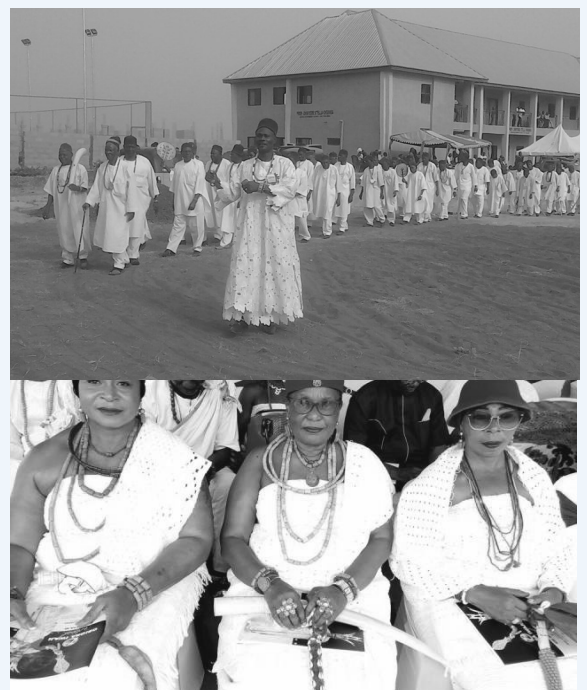
By 10a.m. I will be dressed all in white and wearing ivory anklets and bracelets. My helpers will escort me to my seat on a white-covered cloth, behind a white tablecloth where the leaders of the Otu Odu are seated. Fellow

members will welcome me by donating money to me, after which we shall dance the stately regal Odu dance. I shall pay various fees, for softening the ground, for seeing off the members and for inspection of specified drinks and kola nuts. This will be followed by traditional symbolic washing off poverty and all its traces from my hands.

I dip my hands into a basin of water containing money. I will vow to be of good behavior and to defend the precepts of the society as long as I remain a member and swear I will not wear the uniform outside Onitsha unless with the permission of the society. I shall then take my title name, which I will continue to answer until death.

The title name will have been kept secret until then, so I cannot tell it to you now. At this point, I will become a full-fledged member of the **Otu Odu**. Whenever I die, all members shall attend my funeral, which will be marked by the firing of gunshots and the slaughtering of cows.

Postscripts 1: In last week's column, the punch line of the joke about the Japanese Prime Minister who tried to speak to President Clinton in the few words of English he learnt was inadvertently omitted. When Mori asked Clinton, “Who are you? Instead of “How are you?” Clin-



ton laughingly replied, “I am Hilary's husband.” The Japanese Prime Minister's reply was “**Me too.**” (missing line).

Postscript II: I hope I am not in breach of columnists' protocol but I'd like to comment on my fellow *Vanguard* columnist, Morenike Taire's column “Speaking out” on Friday, March 30. It is titled “Kafaru, the revolutionary” and provides an interesting tribute to Elizabeth Kafaru. Taire views Kafaru's revitalization of the use and understanding of traditional African herbal remedies as “revolutionary Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, who she describes as “might be remembered for a long time to come but not with ----- a lot of national pride”. More caustically ----- “will be remembered for being a father who did nothing to shield his children from ----- his lifestyle -----.”

These gratuitous insults to the memory of Fela, which detract from the tribute to Kafaru, are unwarranted and wrong. Fela's music made Nigeria famous and won awards globally and shall be recorded, reviewed and remembered for as long as there is music. Fela was a loving, responsible father, adored by his children. For the record, my information is based on close contact with Fela's family as a result of years of research for my biography of Fela's mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti.

The Three Rs and Religious Harmony

SINCE today is Easter Monday, the end of the Christian celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus, the founder of Christianity, it is appropriate for this column to reflect on religions. Christianity is one of the three monotheistic scriptural religions: in chronological order – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They share a common historical and geographical background as well as belief in one God.

Each of the three religions has a variety of names to denote God and his attributes such as: “The Most High One,” “Infinite One,” “The Creator Of The Universe”.

Why do monotheists have such elaborate nomenclature? Perhaps, it is the psychological need to extend, prolong and embellish veneration by citing holy attributes with fervor and attenuating the time used therein.

However, despite these profound commonalities, the theological, political, territorial, and cultural conflicts between these three religions have been deep, destructive and deadly throughout history and show little sign of abatement in the foreseeable future.

This time last year though, there was a positive move made by the Pope, from the altar of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, when, on behalf of the Catholic Church, he sought forgiveness for sins committed against Jews, heretics, women, gypsies, and native peoples. The Pope elaborated on the persecution of the Jews. “We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and asking for your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood.” (Guardian March 19, 2000).

Five Vatican cardinals confessed sins on behalf of the church—Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze confessed the sins, which had broken Christian unity. Another Cardinal recalled the sufferings of the people of Israel and asked divine pardon for the sins committed against the people of the covenant.

Only a small step because the Pope failed to include Muslims by name and omitted reference to the Crusades, the Inquisition (both of which involved terrible suffering for Muslims and Jews at the hands of Catholics) and the Catholic Church’s silence and passivity during the holocaust. Moreover, it may be argued that the Pope should have asked forgiveness of the people victimized as well as of God.

The earliest conflict between Judaism and Christianity was over the death of the Jewish founder of the new religion. For almost two millennia, the Christian church and its adherents held the Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus.

The practice of crucifixion has been traced back to the Phoenicians and was commonly used by the Roman to punish slaves, criminals, foreigners - but not Roman citizens. That was why Paul was beheaded, not crucified by the Romans.

The Jews in ancient Palestine were most severely treated by the Romans - thousands were crucified. The Jews never crucified anyone nor ever demanded it of the political authorities; in all the Old Testament there is no case of a living person being crucified. The four forms of sanctioned execution did not include crucifixion.

Along with that historically unfounded accusation was the even more primitive charge that during the Jewish festival, Pesach, (Passover) when the Jews drank wine, they were drinking the blood of Christians. This led to Jews being slaughtered, so in many places, during the night of Pesach, Jews left open the doors of their houses to allay suspicion that anything surreptitious was happening. The Pesach festival celebrates the Jews’ dramatic deliverance from enslavement in Egypt over 3200 years ago, that is, God passed over or spared the houses of the Jews throughout the ten plagues (as recounted in Exodus).

The food eaten at Pesach dinner is symbolic: the *matzo* (unleavened bread) to remind the Jews of the haste with which they left Egypt without waiting for the bread, to rise the charoseth, (mixture of nuts, apples and cinnamon) to recall the clay bricks made by the Jewish slaves and the bitterness of slavery. According to the words of the ancient litany: “Now we are in Israel. Now we are slaves: in the years ahead may we be free men.” It took hundreds of years, but these hopes have been

realized.

Historically, the three religions also shared a common political ideology of identification of religion and state. In ancient Judea, the Jewish religion was that of the state and the law of Judaism. In the state of Israel, there is theoretically a separation of Judaism from the state but the power of the religious political parties has resulted in the imposition of strict Jewish laws and customs on a population of which only a minority of the Jews adhere to orthodox Judaism, let alone those Israelis who are Christians and Muslims.

In many countries in Europe, Christianity was the state religion until the end of the 19th century. It was over the vexed issue of state control of the church that the reformation in Europe led to the division between Catholicism and Protestantism.

In the 21st century, there are no countries except the Vatican in which Christianity is the state religion. Constitutionally, there is a separation of church and state. On the other hand, there are some nations, which have Islam as the religion of the state such as Afghanistan, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Algeria (but in a state of near civil war over that), Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq.

In Nigeria, the Secretary-General, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Dr. Lateef Adegbite’s comments that “Christianity has accepted the separation of state and religion. Islam rejects that dichotomy.” (Comet March 28, 2001: cited by Professor Nwabueze)

However, there are countries with an enormous majority of Muslim populations which are not Islamic states. For instance, Indonesia is the world’s largest Muslim nation with ninety per cent of its 210 million people following the



Religious leaders

Islamic state, nor is Egypt both of which are secular countries that guarantee religious freedom. Their argument against involving the state in religion is that such involvement would distort religious practices and politicize religion. This is the view also of Professor Nwabueze in his brilliant lecture on Sharia and Religious Neutrality of Nigeria (Comet March 28, 2001): “The lesson of 1 ½ millennia of world history--that freedom of religion for the individuals loses much of its meaning and value unless the state can be kept away from involvement in religion.”

Currently, Nigeria has introduced a new dimension to the issue of religion and state. The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a secular state which guarantees religious

freedom and fundamental human rights.

The Nigerian constitution prohibits the adoption by government, federal or state of any religion as a state religion. However, five states in the Federal Republic of Nigeria have adopted Islam as the state religion: Zamfara, Kano, Sokoto, Niger and Katsina thus challenging the national constitution.

“...in a multi-religious country (like Nigeria) the maintenance of equality between the different religions and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion is of greater practical importance than the religious form of the state.”

In Nigeria, religious conflicts are, generally, between Christians and animists: Muslims and animists and between Christians and Mus-

‘ Attempts to politicize religion and the manipulation of religious fervor for political ends can only lead to increased fragmentation of the state and society. Nigeria should be allowed to remain a model of inter-religious cooperation between its three Rs ’

lims. Recently, a conflict involving all the three Rs flared up in Gombe State. Based on my careful reading of the media coverage, the facts

cluding six policemen, were injured and two Baptist churches burnt and vandalized. At a press conference convened on 26th February, the governor defended his right to receive anyone from anywhere.

He related that the riot was purely political and not religious as it was a fall-out of the protest against the visit of the Israeli Ambassador. A Muslim religious leader also declared it had nothing to do with religion as none of the religious leaders was aware of the riots. However, the secretary of the Gombe State branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria objected that the incident cannot be explained from a political angle since it involved the vandalization of churches. The police blamed the disturbance on Shiite Muslims who protested after they were refused police permission to hold a demonstration against the visit of the Israeli ambassador.

Given these facts, what interpretations may be inferred?

The *Post Express* speculates that the disturbances might be linked to frustration by various Muslim groups over the delay in the implementation. On the other hand, it provides additional information that last year, Christians in Bamba town in Gombe state violently protested against the planned introduction of Sharia.

Chidi Uzor, of *THIS DAY* Business world, favors a more international interpretation and speculated that the rioters were expressing solidarity with their “Palestinian brothers.” Uzor criticizes this approach to the conflict in the Middle East as inimical to the interests of Nigeria which stands to benefit from Israeli expertise in agriculture

irrigation etc. But then he focuses on the religious dimension. He is the only journalist I read to pick up the inherent contradictions of the incident.

Which one concerns the churches? To put the experts straight, Israel is not a Christian nation. Yes, Jesus is their brother. Yes, Jesus is the founder of the Christian church, but Israel is not a Christian state in the sense of Palestine being a Muslim state. So why burn the churches and send wrong signals to the international community.

In my column of February 26, I had, *interalia* criticized Christian churches claiming to incorporate elements of Judaism. Ironically, two days earlier (but unknown to me at the time of writing), the Gombe rioters, by their actions, yoked Christianity and Judaism together in a fiery embrace.

However, this is not the kind of religious brotherhood the Pope called for. Yet in Nigeria, since the end of the Jihad, there has been peaceful co-existence between the three Nigerian Rs: Muslims, Animists and Christians living side-by-side within family units and communities. The overarching state was religiously neutral in the plural society. Attempts to political ends can only lead to increased fragmentation of the state and society. Nigeria should be allowed to remain a model of interreligious cooperation between its three RS.

The following day, riots broke out in Gombe in which four or more persons were killed (press reports vary). Some persons, in-

Readers' Responses

READERS, I was very pleased to read from several of you and I have responded to each individually. I am delighted that letters came from a variety of places and made cogent points. Permit me to quote briefly two examples: Chukwuemeka Onyekwere from Amarata-Yenagoa, Bayelsa State comments on the right of expatriate Nigerians to vote in Nigerian elections: '.... they would vote according to the dictates of their conscience and would not easily be swayed by material gifts or fake electoral promises.

Most important is that these are people who have seen democracy work and have reaped the fruits.' Sergeant Abiodun Harold Akinyele, Okpoko police station, Ogbaru, Anambra State complained to the editor of *Vanguard* that articles he wrote criticizing the media attacks on the police force have either not been published or else edited and asks if feedbacks are not published or impetuously edited. Can this be regarded as 'feedback' in journalism?

I am sure many of us share Akinyele's frustration of having views to express but no access to or control over an available medium. With the best of intentions, no editor can publish all the correspondence received. In Nigeria, the great majority of readers have to rely on the postal service, which means their letters usually arrive late before the newspaper publishes. A minority have access to facsimile communication and for a tiny technologically privileged elite, the Internet offers an international audience and electronic mail, instant communication. Ultimately, in the long-term future, Nigeria will, at last, reach India's current level of mass usage of electronic mail even in the rural areas, (by which time India of course will have attained or surpassed the USA level). Then, all communications between readers and editors of newspapers (in print and online), will be e-mail.

The advantages are obvious: it arrives quickly but sits quietly on the electric mat until you wish to read it and can reply. It is kind on the most drastic difference of time zones. You do not need stamps or envelopes to rush for the last collection of mail or wait anxiously for the postman to arrive before you leave home. For the huge number of Nigerian families who have young members living abroad and are frustrated by insecure and irregular postal services, e-mail provides a way to keep in close, constant touch.

There are also disadvantages. Email is not secure or private. Monica Lewinsky was wrong to assume that 'trashing' her emails annihilated them, as they survived long enough on the server to be retrieved. Many faxes and emails must be floating around in cyberspace, lost forever, like Peter Pan. Even when emails do "land" at their destination, unless the sender or the addressee makes a conscious choice to preserve it by printing it out, there is no permanent preservation. Most servers clear out trashed emails within weeks without keeping a control record of messages they handle. If stored on the computer hard disk, after five years it is

liable to crash. If saved electronically on floppy disk or CD-ROM, in about 20 years the software may not be supported i.e., readable.

Electronic mail is a temporary medium that encourages chatty or business-like exchanges that usually no one keeps. Our basic comprehension of text on screen is markedly inferior to our reading of print on paper; which is why, if you send someone an email with three or four points in it, the reply will fail to address at least one.

Sender and recipient can print "it" out but "it" remains elusive, there is no physical object.

Etiquette, smiley-faces, lower-case codes and net language make it difficult to communicate full adult feelings. Faxes are

'With the best of intentions, no editor can publish all the correspondence received. In Nigeria, the great majority of readers have to rely on the postal service, which means their letters usually arrive long after the publication to which they wish to respond.'

more secure in that as facsimiles, the original stays with the sender who writes with pen on paper and then feeds the letter into the machine. Seconds later, someone streets or seas away is reading it. However, the received fax will probably be printed on heat-sensitive paper and will fade to illegibility unless photocopied. Even then, the fax is vulnerable to the same old dangers as any paper: fire, food, rats, vandalism, carelessness etc.

You may have noticed a few unusual usages in the above paragraphs. In fact, in the last few years, many new words associated with computerization have entered the gen-

The Internet is pouring out a wave of few words, idioms and acronyms that amounts to an entirely new language. In the US hacker's dictionaries, cyber speak lexicon is now in the bookshops.

In the past, revolutionary new technologies also shaped language. In the days of sail, you got 'scuppered' or 'spliced' if someone liked the 'cut of your jib'. The railway age allowed us to 'pick up steam' or 'go off the rails'. When automobiles arrived, we could 'rev up' and 'blow a gasket'. Nuclear technology offered 'going ballistic', 'nuking someone', 'the balance of terror'. Space technology is about to 'jet propel a new word into orbit'.

All the above words entered the general language and attained wider meanings but cyberspeak so far is only for the Internet

The euthanasia campaigner, Jack Kevorkian, has become a verb in the new parlance: to 'kevork' is to kill off something, usually prematurely. A 'thinko' is the mental counterpart of a 'typo,' a minor and momentary lapse in cerebral processing. The new lingo and acronyms: WOMBAT, a Waste of Money, Brains and Time; OTOH, on the other hand. Acronyms are also terms of abuse for those out of touch with the new technology: a PONA is a person of NO account; a PE-BACK, Problem Exists between Chair and Keyboard and KISS, Keep It Simple, Stupid.

There is another revolution in technology that is also impacting our language: the transformation of human reproduction. Banks are no longer repositories for cash and valuables only but also for sperm. Eggs are no longer just for eating and cooking but for freezing for future fertilization. A surrogate is no longer a substitute or a deputy but a woman who bears a child born by artificial insemination for another woman (or for man). Cloning is no longer restricted to animals and plants but extends to human beings.

So, readers, in future if you wish to respond to my column, please feel free to do so by snail mail, fax or email (ninamba@usa.net or *Vanguard's* email on its back page). As a historian who has derived great excitement and knowledge from reading archival records, private papers and correspondence, I must confess I find words on paper that I can read and keep the most comfortable and informative medium.

In my column of two weeks ago 'Taking Ivories: Women and Tradition' I explained that I could not reveal my new Odu title name until after my initiation. I can now inform you, in words, in print, that my title is ***Omeluorafu*** which means 'somebody who has achieved something of value, attested to by the people (society)'. I hope my readers will attest that my column is of value by responding through their preferred medium of communication.



Internet slangs and emojis

eral language while many old words have been given different meanings. When is a mouse not a mouse? When it is the master key to a computer. How can a surfer not get wet when surfing the net? In what café can you not drink coffee? In a cybercafé. Point made?

Ohaneze and Calls for Reparations

The Ohaneze Ndigbo has presented to the Oputa Panel (Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission) its case for the payment of reparations of N8.6 trillion to the Ndigbo (Igbo people) as financial compensations for the injustices suffered by the Igbos within Nigeria from 1966 to date.

The actual amount is irrelevant and the extension of time after the civil war is problematic but the heart of the matter is the issue of reparations for the pogroms of 1966 and the civil war. This request for reparations from the defeated side of a civil war is unprecedented and the way it will be handled will have implications and repercussions far beyond Nigeria.

Reparation is dictionary-defined as "the money paid to a victorious enemy by a defeated country" and "money or service paid by a defeated nation as compensation for the destruction and loss it has inflicted".

As can be seen, the emphasis is on a demand made by the victorious country(ies) on the defeated country(ies). Such has been the case in the last 150 years.

At the end of the war between France and Prussia in 1871, Victorious Prussia (which then became Germany) demanded enormous reparations from France. This was one of the reasons that at the end of the First World War, the victorious allies (France, the U.K, U.S etc.) imposed very heavy reparations on Germany and her allies (Turkey, Romania, Albania). To justify the reparations (20 billion marks in gold), the Versailles Treaty included Article 231, the war-guilt clause, which identified Germany and its allies as the aggressors and held them responsible for all the losses and damages suffered by the victorious nations.

These reparations, in turn, were one of the



Map of Southeast causes of the second world war because they genera

ted intense resentment within Germany which Hitler was to exploit and were also criticized by the US senate which rejected the treaty. This influenced US isolationism in the inter-war period.

After the Second World War, Germany was again made to pay reparations to those countries that had borne the main burden of the war and suffered the heaviest losses but at the same time, Germany was given assistance to rebuild its economy. Germany's allies (Italy, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria) also paid reparations, but no reparations were imposed on Japan.

There have also been some civil wars in the last 150 years, the most historic being the one in America in the 1860s and Spain in the 1930s. In neither case did either the victorious or defeated side demand financial reparations despite enormous losses and sufferings on both sides in both wars? In Spain, the victorious Franco-led government continued to slaughter its Republican opponents, or force them into exile, in tens of thousands for years afterwards.

Before and during the Second World War, the Hitler-led Nazi (National Socialist) government embarked on genocide, that is the deliberate extermination of the Jews in Germany and the Germany-conquered areas of Europe. In the holocaust, six million Jewish men, women and children were killed. After the war, Germany was divided into the Russian and Allied controlled sectors, eventually leading to the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Government (East Germany). When the Allies withdrew, the new government of West Germany decided to try to make restitution to the Jews and offered reparations.

On 27 September 1951 at a session of the Bundestag, Chancellor Adenauer made a statement relating to the promulgation of legislation to compensate for the crimes perpetrated against

the Jews in the period of the national socialist regime.

The following are the extracts from the chancellor's declaration:

"The federal government, and with it the great majority of the German people, are aware of the immeasurable suffering caused during the period of national socialism to the Jews in Germany and the occupied territories.

".....unmentionable crimes were committed in the name of the German people which call for moral and material compensation regarding damage to individual Jews as well as to property, the ownership which can be traced no more.

"The federal government is prepared to solve, in cooperation with the Jewish representatives and representatives of the state of Israel which has given a home to so many homeless fugitives, the problem of material compensation, and thus to ease the path of an emotional purification of limitless sufferings."

A sharp conflict of opinion subsequently arose within World Jewry as to the moral propriety of accepting restitution from Germany.

It was contended by many that the wrong caused to the Jewish people by the Nazis were of such a nature and magnitude that it was irreparable and to exchange this wrong for monetary compensation was morally and historically repugnant.

Those who favored negotiations did not dispute the basic assumption of the irreparability of the wrong but emphasized the difference between material claims and moral-historical claims which later would remain unaffected by the former.

In 1951, a body known as the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany ("the claim conference") comprising 23 Jewish organizations, was established with two major objectives;

(i) To obtain funds for the relief,



Ohaneze Chiefs rehabilitation and resettlement of

Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and to aid in rebuilding Jewish communities and institutions that Nazi persecution had devastated.

(ii) To gain indemnification for injuries inflicted upon individual victims of Nazi persecution and restitution for properties confiscated by the Nazis.

It was only after a heated three-day debate in January 1952 that the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), by a small majority, passed a resolu-

tion to enter into direct negotiations with the Federal German government. In March 1952, the government of Israel and the claims conference opened formal negotiations with the German federal government at The Hague.

Ultimately, on 19 September 1952, two sets of agreements were signed at Luxembourg between the government of the German Federal Republic, on the one hand, and the government of Israel and the claims conference respectively, on the other.

The funds allocated to the claims conference were applied to three major programmes:

(i) Relief and rehabilitation to Nazi victims;

(ii) Jewish cultural and educational

“Herein lies another parallel for Ohaneze: the current civil government can well argue that it is not a successor to the military government under which the pogroms and civil war were washed and therefore has no moral or material responsibility.”

reconstruction;

“(iii) the rebuilding of Jewish communities and institutions devastated by the Nazis.

The uniqueness of the agreement was that it was signed by the two

at DM3 billion (Three billion Deutsche marks). Nevertheless, the Bundestag ratified the agreement on May 4, 1953.

The agreement was of vital importance to both sides. For Germany, willingness to repent was an important step towards its integration in the Western Alliance. In this way, Adenauer hoped to further the reunification of Germany which would be placed at the center of East-West relations. For Israel, the agreement was a mini-Marshall plan of the greatest economic importance. Nevertheless, it was received in Israel with mixed feelings, since many felt that mixing reparations and Germany's moral obligation was objectionable.

The Ohaneze petition to the Oputa Panel refers to the Holocaust but in a gratuitous and insensitive manner which does no justice to its case. It refers to three waves of pogroms in most sadistic and inhuman methods that made the Jewish Holocaust appear like mercy killings, 50,000 Igbo were slaughtered (Vanguard April 26, 2001, emphasis mine). Fifty thousand compared to six million? Nazi torture, Nazi medical experiments on Jews without anesthesia, mass graves dug by those to be killed, gas chambers in which Jews choked, and burned to death... is that mercy killing?

The appropriate and useful point of comparison with the Holocaust reparations is the fact that half was paid not to a country but to an international non-governmental organization (the World Jewish Congress which took over from the claims conference) representing Jewish communities and individuals all over the world. Ohaneze is a non-governmental organization with an international dimension (the world Igbo congress based in the USA). Should the demand for reparations for the African Atlantic slave trade ever be accepted, the payment might well be handled by a similar international organization. Another useful lesson of the Holocaust is that there was a moral as well as a material dimension to the reparations. The Germans sought restitution, the righting or unspeakable wrongs, a collective absolution. The Jews knew the wrongs were irreparable and must never be forgiven or forgotten. Besides, Germany which offered the reparations was only half of the country which carried out the holocaust: East Germany the GDR, refused to acknowledge that it was a successor state to Nazi Germany before its partition into East and West. It was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany a decade ago that reparations were paid to the Jews by the former communist East Germany.

Herein lies another parallel for Ohaneze: the current civil government can well argue that it is not a successor to the military government under which the programs and civil war were waged and therefore has no moral or material responsibility.

countries which did not maintain diplomatic or any other relations and that one of the parties to the agreement, the Jewish Claims Conference, had no international legal status.

From the beginning, the Arabs pressured Germany not to reach an agreement with Israel. They argued that reparations in the form of goods would increase Israel's military capability and pose a threat to them. In October 1952, the Arab League informed the Federal Republic of Germany that ratification of the agreement would harm Germany's economic interests in the Arab states which at this time stood

A Peoples' Constitution Again?

LAST week, precisely on May 9, 2001, Australia celebrated the 100th anniversary of the opening in Melbourne of the first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. Australia has managed to retain its democratic system of government for a century, despite wars, depressions, crises between the federal and state governments, and transformation into a multi-cultural plural society. Australia's stability and prosperity are proof that while democracy may not be a perfect form of government, it is better than any alternative. But then, of course "every nation has the government it deserves".

Nigeria's history of democratic form began centuries before Australia. Most of the pre-colonial societies operated some form of a "People Constitution" i.e., participation and representation in the running of the society. Under colonialism, their democracies lost sovereignty and authority and were incorporated into a larger state structure. Decolonization was the process of transferring power back to the Nigerian state under a democratic parliamentary system of government. One of the most important stages in that process was the 1952 McPherson constitution.

Ironically, current events in Nigeria are reminiscent of the period from 1949-1952 when that constitution evolved. What triggered that perception of historical parallels is the "doublespeak" of the federal government.

"Doublespeak" is the term created by George Orwell in his classic novel

"conference of stakeholders, governors, legislators, local government chairman, traditional rulers." Yet he tells us "the word conference is carefully avoided because it is loaded with interpretations which could send wrong signals to people".

Explained by the government and "stakeholder's" does not quite synchronize with the production of a true people's constitution. But this is very similar to what happened in Nigeria half a century ago.

The 1047 Richard's Constitution was attacked for failing to consult the people, especially since

'With the creation of more states, the tensions between North and South and the role of traditional rulers remain fundamental, divisive issues. They will only be finally resolved by a constitution for the people of Nigeria.'

Government Richard's predecessor, Bourdillion, had promised Nigerians that they would have a full opportunity to discuss a new constitution

cuss constitution change.

In October 1959, the government set up a drafting committee under Chief Secretary Float, with three representatives from each region and Lagos to offer a constitutional framework to a national conference in Ibadan the same month. The conference recommended a strong central executive and a new federal legislature, comprising thirty members from the North and twenty-two each from the West and East. The North and West would each have an upper house of the chief.

Four distinct minority reports denounced regionalism in favor of a large number of ethnic states; opposed upper houses anywhere and the indirect electoral college in favor of universal adult suffrage and criticized the status of Lagos.

At the national conference, there was just one female representative, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti who campaigned for direct universal suffrage. Please note that the Reverend Ransome-Kuti was also a delegate to the conference: How's that for successful husband and wife teamwork? (The First Bank is opposed to couples working in its banks).

The conference's recommendations were referred to the legislative council which decided that the North should have equal representation with the South but made no concessions on the major issues raised by the minority reports. In January 1952, the new constitution came into effect. Revenues were distributed to the regions based on a need, not derivation. Elections were held in 1951 for the regional and colonial government, which by definition is authoritarian and coercive, which is why it is often compared to the military government. As may be seen from the above, in 1951 there was overarching government control of the constitution-making but there was extensive consultation with the representatives of the people whose ideas were seriously considered. It may be argued that the constitution-making of 1951 was more democratic than that of 2001.

There is a French saying that the more things change; the more they stay the same. The basic issues raised in the minority reports in 1950 are either still unresolved or took years to solve. The constitutional status of Lagos was only settled in 1967 with the creation of Lagos State: Universal adult suffrage was achieved in 1976 by General Obasanjo. With the creation of more states, the tensions between North and South and the role of traditional rulers remain fundamental, divisive issues. They will only be finally resolved by a constitution for the *people of Nigeria*.

Since I have been discussing events 50 years ago, I would like to end today's column not with a nursery rhyme but with a jingle coined by the British administration in Nigeria during the Second World War and made popular in Abeokuta province by Alake Ademola who in a public address on May 22, 1948, declaimed "as you pour out of this hall today, I want the homes and countryside in Egba land to reverberate and ring with the repetition of this message: more and yet more palm kernels to sound Hitler's death knell."

Postscript

The column two weeks ago discussed cyber language and new meanings for words like a mouse. The generation gap also leads to changes in the meaning of words as the following illustrates:

For those born before 1940, studs were something that fastened a collar to a shirt: Coke was kept in the cola house: a joint was a piece of meat you ate on Sundays, Pot was something you cooked in: and a Gay Person was the life and soul of the party.

Portrait	Name	Took office	Left office	Sovereign
	Sir Frederick Lugard (1858-1945)	1 January 1914	8 August 1919	George V
	Sir Hugh Clifford (1866-1941)	8 August 1919	13 November 1925	George V
	Sir Graeme Thomson (1877-1933)	13 November 1925	17 June 1931	George V
	Sir Donald Cameron (1872-1948)	17 June 1931	1 November 1935	George V
	Sir Bernard Bourdillion (1883-1948)	1 November 1935	1 July 1940	George V Edward VIII George VI
	Sir John Evelyn Shuckburgh (1877-1953)	1 July 1940	1942	George VI
	Sir Alan Burns (1887-1980)	1942	18 Dec 1943	George VI
	Sir Arthur Richards (1885-1978)	18 Dec 1943	5 February 1948	George VI
	Sir John Macpherson (1898-1971)	5 February 1948	1 October 1954	George VI Elizabeth II
	Sir John Macpherson (1898-1971)	1 October 1954	15 June 1955	Elizabeth II
	Sir James Wilson Robertson (1899-1983)	15 June 1955	16 November 1960	Elizabeth II
	Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904-1996)	16 November 1960	1 October 1963	Elizabeth II

Collage of colonial governors in Nigeria

"1984" to describe the manipulation of language by an authoritarian government. The recent confused and contradictory statements credited to the Minister

of Information about the constitutional non-conference/zonal presentation/open house are resonant of doublespeak. For instance, "it is not a constitutional conference where we debate the issues involved". Later on "Nigerians are enjoined to discuss it, debate it so that together we can produce a truly "people's constitution". Again, Ghana States that it is "not a delegates conference" but,

expected to last for nine years but the new governor appointed in 1948, Sir John Mcpherson said the progress was so good it was time to review it. Mcpherson went to the opposite extreme to Richard's. Because of riots in Accra in February 1948, he insisted he would not be forced to amend the constitution because "I am being besieged; I am going to have my amendments before that happens. Not that I would mind being besieged by anybody except the Lagos mob. (Clark T. "A Right Honorable Gentleman" P117).

From March to September 1949, all Nigeria's public life was sidetracked into conferences, areas, divisions, provinces and regions to dis-

Youth, State and Society

Many Nigerians have such a strong attachment to their self-image as youths; they are reluctant to ever let it go. There are many 'youth' organizations comprising members over forty years of age. It would seem they reject the adage that youth is wasted on youth. When they are patently too old to be classified by even the most elastic definition of "youth", they move into the "senior boys" and "senior girls" categories. However, the U.N. definition of youth is between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five.

This is the period of tutelage or apprenticeship for mature adulthood. It is a valuable period for it is a time of great vigor but also dependency on parents, institutional authorities and employers. Youths have physical and intellectual power but lack economic and political power. This disjunction may cause a profound frustration which is easily exploitable.

The last decade has witnessed youth-led political, religious and economic violence in Nigeria directed against multinational companies, different religions and ethnic communities, traditional rulers and rival political groups. The objectives are the reallocation of resources, land, oil, timber, political and religious power for the benefits of the youths and their communities.

The persistent underdevelopment of Nigeria has spun a vast army of unemployed and under-employed young men and women between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five. One way to break the vicious circle of poverty and marginalization is to make some of these young people stakeholders in the economy and society.

This is the solution which other countries, faced with the same problem, have experimented with and, on a micro-level, found successful.

Youth unemployment is not peculiar to Nigeria, Africa or even the third world. There are over 300 million unemployed young people in the world today. Traditional sources of unemployment are reducing the number of people employed due to the changes created by technology and globalization and exacerbated by the current down climate.

In the U.K for instance, His Royal Highness (HRH), the Prince of Wales set up the Prince's Trust in the early 1980s designed to help disadvantaged young people to start their own business. The concept is to mobilize local business communities, who, working in partnership with local and national organizations, would provide access to finance through business mentoring and the provision of seed money.

The trust was so successful it generated unprecedented global interest which led to the formation of the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders' Forum in 1990. The two organizations recently set up a joint venture-- Youth business international (YBI). The YBI helps business people and partner organizations around the world to start up youth business initiatives based on the Prince's Trust model. It has succeeded in Ghana, the Gambia and South Africa in 2000. The Youth Business Initiatives was set up in Nigeria by its founder, Mrs. Alero Okotie-Eboh Jadesimi.

On the 8th of May 2001, YBI Nigeria held its "outing ceremony" with a fund-raising dinner in Abuja. Then its rationale and programmes were presented to the Nigerian public by the chairperson of the board of trustees, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, by a representative of the Prince's trust and youth business international in the U.K and by the patron of YBI Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The position of the patron is personal to President Obasanjo as the president explained in his address; it was his contact with HRH, the Prince of Wales last year which alerted him to the work of Youth Business International. He immediately recognized its potential for Nigeria

and was pleased to learn it already existed in Nigeria.

The president acknowledged that "youth unemployment is one of the most pressing problems that our country has to tackle, ...but it is a problem which needs a dual approach from government and community... we need the support of the private sector.... A sustainable flow of funding from the Nigerian business community."

The president recognized that one solution to youth unemployment, as many economists and policymakers believe, is that small businesses are now the main generators of new jobs, either as employers or as individual entrepreneurs. The future of our nation depends on our young people being able to fund and create employment opportunities for themselves and hopefully others"

'I was struck by the unanimity of sentiment expressed in the speeches by the governors, whether from Zamfara, Borno, Ekiti or Akwa-Ibom, among others. All donated generously and invited YBI to partner with existing projects in their states and to set up new ones. All showed deep concern for the plight of their unemployed youths. At a time of deep division between geographical and political units within Nigeria, it is salutary to be reminded how many problems are shared by all the states of the federation.'

The personal understanding between President Obasanjo and H.R.H, the Prince of Wales was demonstrated by the handing over to the president of a personal letter from the Prince by the U.K

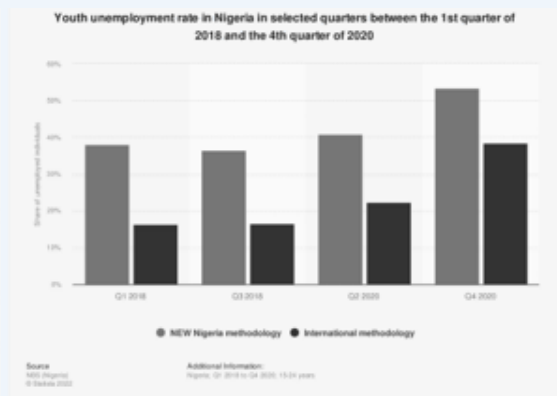
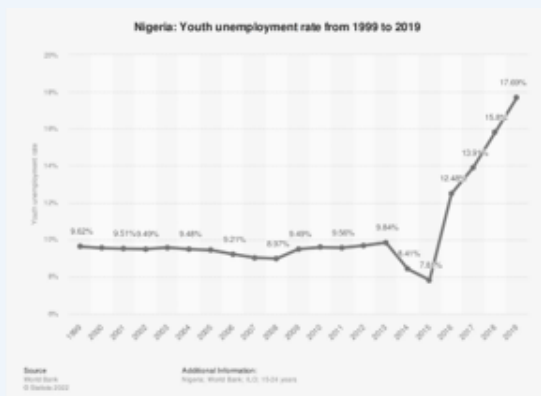
Obasanjo and Chief Anyaoku, the Youth Business Initiatives in Nigeria will not only be a great success but a real source of inspiration and employment for young people all over the country.

I know that Youth Business International is ready to help in whatever way you think useful, and I am confident that, with your help and support, the new initiative will flourish and grow from strength to strength."

The results to date of the work of the Prince's Trust and YBI international are impressive. Over 50,000 young people have been helped by the YBI programmes already up and running in over 15 countries around the world. Survival of the new business is high. 60% of those helped are still trading in their third year. The young people became more employable, more confident and learnt how to create and sustain the business. YBI programmes mobilize the local business community to provide this support. The two main innovations are the provision of volunteer business mentors to help the young person through the first three years of trading and the creation of a local business support network that helps those young entrepreneurs with a visible idea, to ensure it gets realized.

YBI Nigeria, as explained at the dinner, plans to start with a pilot project of thirty young people in Lagos. From that experience, YBI will be able to create a robust schedule to roll the program out across the rest of the country from 2002. Atiku Abubakar was present at the dinner and some state governors were represented.

I was present at the dinner as well and I was struck by the unanimity of sentiments expressed by the governors: Zamfara, Borno, Ekiti and Akwa Ibom, among others. All donated generously and invited YBI to partner with existing projects in their states and to set up new ones. All showed deep concern for the plight of their unemployed youth. At a time of deep division between geographical and political units within Nigeria, it is salutary to be reminded of how many prob-



representative of the Prince's Trusts at the dinner. A message to the dinner guests from HRH was also read: " I have been delighted to hear of the excellent progress that has been made by Chief Anyaoku and his team in adapting the ideas of my Prince's trust for helping disadvantaged young people to achieve self-employment. It is a tremendous challenge and will require all the support and wisdom that the Nigerian business community can give.

I am sure that, under the leadership of President

lems are shared by the states of the federation.

I was also impressed by the sincerity of the president's address and by the fact that he was there. That morning, the president had flown to Zaire and Rwanda on what must have been a harrowing and strenuous attempt at conflict mediation. Yet he came from the airport to the dinner, eloquent testimony to his commitment to solving the crises within Nigeria of disadvantaged and unemployed youth.

***Oriki* on the occasion of the second birthday of *Democracia Nigeriana,* 29th May, 2001**

Proud scion of noble forebears.

Constitutional monarchs, republican elders,

Resisters of the colonial invasion,

Creators of an independent nation.

A child can only be sure of its mother. Yours, Vox Populi, suffered to give you succour while your paternity was battled over by Uncles Sege, Alex, Umaru and NADECO.

Midwife Abubakar delivered you gingerly for all feared you would be an Ogbanje like your siblings, Balewa and Shagari who came to lead but did not tarry.

When your emaciated mother's milk dried up, you were fed on gari and pap which gave you a big belle but no power. Today your food grows scarce and sour.

Your uncles/aunts in the houses are too self-absorbed to arouse themselves from their trips abroad for an ailing and abused ward.



Traffic in old Lagos

You inherited ebony and many oily toys sorely sought by the upcountry boys who made them but never got their pay and now demand their sovereign say.



Nigerian currency

At your birth, fervent prayers in unison are said by Muslims, Christians, Animists all galore. Now, by Sharia, they must be separated by the fall of the curtain, prayer mat.

Emissaries from abroad hailed your arrival with baskets of loans, alleviations and grants. But few of their people, nor even your own, have returned to invest or work at home.

Little Democracia, you may be frail, yet you are the one we all hail. We implore you to grow strong and STAY with us for all our hope on you we lay.

Official Highway Extortion

RECENTLY I, unaccompanied, was driven in a private company vehicle (but with no name or logo on it) to Onitsha on a weekday.

Normally, I do that trip on a weekend or holiday and indeed I did return on Sunday. Thus, I was exposed to the regular weekday, during office hour's harassment by local government employees or agents on the highways and urban streets in Edo and Anambra states.

Between Okada and Benin, we were accosted three times by groups of men armed with standard spikes embedded in wood slabs used for stopping vehicles from parking, to ward off diversion and of road works. As the highway was free and as we had no idea what these men were up to, the driver was able to maneuver the car past them. However, inside Benin City with the usual Friday afternoon traffic, we had no such option when about ten men jumped out in front of the car and placed the spiked barriers in front of us. All of them remained attached in my car while ten other cars passed by us unmolested for the next two hours.

They introduced themselves as officials of Ikpoba-Okha local government. I demanded identification and saw their ID cards. Their mission? To collect tariffs from vehicles passing through their local government areas regardless of whether that vehicle's owner/ user is based in Benin, Lagos or Sokoto.

When I demanded that they take us to the nearest police station, they said that the police are fully aware of their activities, and we could go to the station but if my driver would not drive, one of them would. I refused to hand over the keys and suggested instead that one of them enter the vehicle. I was informed that they were not allowed to leave their post until 4:30 pm at which time they would accompany me to their headquarters where the vehicle would be impounded. I refused to negotiate with them, threatened to abandon the car and the driver and transfer to a taxi but I knew I couldn't abandon the driver to an uncertain fate, and I had too much luggage in the car to transfer. As time passed and I was faced with a hazardous nighttime journey, I finally agreed to look at the papers the local government officials were holding.

Are readers aware that there is a list of 123 approved tariffs for vehicles by local government councils? It includes the following for which I plead with enlightened readers to provide me with elucidation:

- 6 Capitation
- 10 Survival
- 11 Hawarding
- 16 Willers
- 35 Audeteral Sales

- 39 KANKAS
- 40 CUAN Stip
- 89 Salcostic
- 90 Desolution
- 93 Sanctuary
- 116 Jomper
- 120 Motional Registration

The Joint Revenue Association also issues a sticker "For Sanity on our roads". Well titled, for sanity is much needed on Nigeria roads but this method of collection on the payment for the sticker is inherently insane and calculated to induce temporary loss of sanity among victimized vehicle owners/ passengers.

What is the Joint Revenue Association (Incorporated) of National Coverage? The

Are these actions authorized by the local government councils and if so are they provided for in the local government legislation?

office of the Secretary-General is 13 Commercial Road, Apapa, Lagos. The Edo State President Liaison Office is in Ughelli. The JRA issued a document printed (by Nigerian Security and Minting Company, Lagos) "vehicle clearance certificate given to vehicles which have paid to local government councils an unspecified amount of money for local government sticker(s).

The total cost came to eleven thousand naira (N11,000) which was far more than what I had with me, and I still had to buy petrol. The usual bargaining ensued, and I ended up paying three thousand naira (N3,000).

This purchased the following:

Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Clearance Certificate, The Joint Revenue Association Vehicle Clearance Certificate, The Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Vehicle Outdoor Mobile Display Sticker, The Ikpoba-Okha Mobile Sanitation Fee Sticker and Ikpoba-Okha Vehicle Classification Sticker.

We proceeded to Onitsha, crossed the Niger bridge. I was enjoying the view of the river when suddenly, as we descended, another group of men jumped out and surrounded the car. I showed them our stickers and certificates, but no, the car did not have the Anambra State Board of Internal Revenue Road Tax and the Onitsha Local Government commercial and industrial development emblem for company cars. The cost? Five thousand naira (N5, 000) or the car will be impounded etc. I categorically refused to pay and prepared to offload into a taxi to go to my residence in Onitsha. I was not concerned about

leaving the driver in Onitsha because I planned to send people back to the bridgehead from my house. At that point, a relative of my husband, who was driving past came to my assistance. However, he still ended up paying five thousand naira (N5, 000) for those tariffs/taxes before we could leave.

So, altogether I paid eight thousand to travel from Lagos to Onitsha within the same country. I paid taxes/tariffs of which I knew nothing beforehand to local governments in which I am not resident. The payment was enacted by force and harassment



by persons whose identities were highly suspicious and non-verifiable. How much, if any, of my payment went to the local government treasuries? Are these actions authorized by the local government councils and if so, are they provided for by the local government legislation? Under which ministry, federal or state, is the Joint Revenue Association?

Has Nigeria regressed to the ancient practice of payment of tolls from one commu-



nity to another, albeit then in goods? The price of fuel at petrol stations (let alone black-market sites) varies from state to state already. Does all this mean that part of Nigeria has begun to practice fiscal confederalism?

At this rate, no vehicle windscreen will be wide enough to display all the required certificates, stickers, and emblems without which you cannot travel safely within Nigeria.

Zion(ists) in Africa

READERS, you may recall that my column of March 26th was titled “The many what-ifs of history.” Recently, the gift of a book, “Why there were Jews in Nakuru” by Tommy Joseph has reminded me of another dramatic example. The Jewish homeland Zion, that is, the modern state of Israel might have been created not in Palestine but East Africa. If that had happened, the whole course of 20th-century history in the Middle East and Africa would have been different.

To understand how this might have happened, readers need to know what Zionism and Zionist are. From the second century AD, when the Jews were finally driven out of Palestine by the Romans, they always prayed that the Messiah would deliver them and lead them back to Zion, the land of Israel. Wherever they lived, religious Jews turned in the direction of Zion when they prayed. Zion became synonymous with the idea of reuniting Jewish people in their own, original homeland.

Seventh centuries of persecution, of fleeing from one country to another passed by with the Jews in the Diaspora (in Hebrew *galus*) no closer to Zion. At the end of the nineteenth century, several European Jewish philosophers approached the intractable problem of the Jews searches for Zion from a revolutionary new perspective. They shifted responsibility from the Messiah to the Jews themselves. They could not continue being bound from nation to nation, they must establish their nation. Theodore Herzl’s famous book “The Jewish State”, published in 1896, became the “bible” of the philosophy of Zionism. The believers in this philosophy called themselves Zionists and they implement their cause; they convened the Zionist Jewish Congress in Basle, Switzerland in 1897.

Congress resolved that the Jewish state must be found in Palestine, then a province in the Turkish Empire. There were then twenty thousand Jews in Palestine, the majority of the inhabitants were Arabs and a small minority of Turkish administrators and landowners. The Zionist Congress set up the Zionist Jewish National Fund to buy land from Arab and Turkish landowners. The purchased land was the least fertile, often desert and a small group of Jews who began to migrate to Palestine from 1897 had to work very hard to make a living from the land. By 1903, a Jewish state in Palestine remained a distant dream.

At this time, in Russia, the usual brutal persecution of Jews carried out by the church, army and administration (pogroms) escalated. The government of the U.K and other European nations protested to the czar and the government of Russia, to no avail. Hoping to capitalize on the British sympathy for the Jewish fleeing Russia, Herzl approached the British colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, in 1903 for his support in obtaining a colonization charter for the Sinai Peninsula for the Zionist congress. Unable to persuade the British authorities in Egypt, Chamberlain who saw Jews as enterprising agents of colonization, offered them instead territory in British East Africa, which he had visited in December 1902. The proposal envisaged a Jewish colony, in what became Uganda, in control of religious, domestic and municipal matters under overall British control, but with no British financial investment. All costs were to be borne by the Jews.

The Zionist Congress set up the Jewish colonial trust to examine the prospect of a

Jewish colony in British East Africa. A three-man commission sent to enquire into the feasibility in 1903 expected that the land available was not suitable “for purely Jewish settlement”.

The congress thanked the British government for its offer and desire to help the Jews. It reiterated that it, too, buys the principle of the establishment of a legally secured publicly recognized home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

One of the members of the Congress, Dr Chaim Weizmann, a lecturer in chemistry at Manchester University managed to get an appointment with Prime Minister Balfour to explain what the Zionists wanted.

‘The Jewish homeland, Zion, that is, the modern State of Israel might have been created not in Palestine but East Africa. If that had happened, the whole course of 20th-century history in the Middle East of Africa would have been different’

Palestine, not East Africa. As Weizmann later recalled, “I plunged into a long harangue on the meaning of the Zionist movement... that nothing but a deep religious conviction expressed in modern political terms could keep the movement alive and that this conviction had to be based on Palestine and Palestine alone. Any defection from Palestine was well, a form of idolatry ... I



Palestine

was sweating blood and trying to find a less ponderous way of expressing myself... suddenly I said, “Mr. Balfour, supposing I was to offer you Paris instead of London would you take it?”

“He sat up, looked at me and answered: But Dr Weimann, we have London.”

“That is true,” I said, “but we had Jerusalem when London was a marsh.” He leaned back and continued to stare at me.

Ironically, just fifteen years later, the British found itself for the Mandated Authority controlling Palestine. The peace treaty after the First World War dismembered the Turkish Empire (Turkey had allied with Germany). Under British control, Jewish settlement in Palestine expanded dramatically. The Arab population in Palestine protested against the increase. The British response was to strict quotas on immigration. At the same time, while Hitler was in control in Germany, the number of Jewish refugees seeking entry into Palestine, the U.S, the UK etc. also increased. Britain set a limit on entry into the

UK as well as Palestine but was prepared to give visas to Jewish refugees who would go to British colonies and East Africa as agriculturists.

In that way, a thousand Jewish refugees settled in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Malawi. Some of them, after the war and after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, moved to Israel, including the author of the book I mentioned above— Tommy Joseph—he was born and brought up in Nakuru in Kenya and wrote a book about the Jewish community. It is, thanks to the book, that I can tell you about the last link of Zionist to East Africa before Palestine became the state of Israel, there were bitter conflicts between the British and the Zionist Nationalist Organization, whom the British called “terrorists” to detention camps in Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. The one in Kenya was at gil-gil, a small town 109km north of Nairobi near Nakuru. In 1947 there were 272 Zionist freedom fighters in the gil-gil camp, including a Yaakov Meridor who had previously escaped from the camp in Somalia but was recaptured in Ethiopia.

In 1947, Meridor organized a brilliant escape with the help of local Jewish residents. He and six others were safely back to Palestine before their escape was discovered.

Palestine finished in 1948, the detainees were repatriated. Their Zion, the new nation-state of Israel. Thus ended the East African connection with Zion(ists).

May I conclude with a story about Weizmann from a different source.

Chaim Weizmann, who later became the first president of Israel, was an ardent Zionist. As an illustrious scientist, he had access to many important European personages.

Ugandan jews

One day, he visited Paul Ehrlich, the discoverer of ‘606’, a drug used in the treatment of syphilis. Weizmann sought to convince Ehrlich of the importance of the Zionist cause and to enlist his support. He spoke earnestly and at great length until Ehrlich broke in. “You know, Dr Weizmann, hundreds of people come to see me each week, I never give them more than five minutes each. You have already taken up to forty-five minutes of my time!”

“The difference, Dr Ehrlich,” replied Weizmann, is that they come to get an injection – and I, to give you one.”

Women and War

'Women and War' is the title of an art exhibition at the Goethe Institute (the German Cultural Centre) in Ozumba Mbadiwe Street, Victoria Island. It was organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in collaboration with the Nigerian Red Cross Society. The exhibition was the result of a competition launched in Lagos on the 8th of March, International Women's Day when young amateur painters were invited to participate.

The competition specifically invited women and girls to take part. Ironically, because of the subject, only a handful of females were among the exhibitors.

There were 62 entries, of which about ten were by female artists.

There were nine prize-winning entries, one of which came third (untitled) by Chinwe Felicia Anulude who also won a special prize for female artists. There was also a special prize, founder-16, won by Kingsley Uzom Opara Jnr. From St. Gregory's College, for his painting "Misery." Well done Kingsley and the art teacher at St. Gregs.

The majority of entries are oils and watercolors with several collages of different materials. An untitled work of Hodanu Whesu is unusual. It is presented on skin nailed to a frame, suggesting a crucified corpse.

The winning painting "No Bread for the Widow" by Silas Adelanke Adeoye depicts an emaciated, exhausted woman holding two crying children, one of whom clings to an empty bowl. All around the woman, dwarfing her are pages from newspapers with boldly headlined reports of mass graves, rapes, atrocities in wars.

I found several paintings more subtle than a few of the prize winners. One by Folami Rzaf, "Death of a mother" is particularly interesting: a blood-spattered shroud with vultures hovering. Another simply shows a red rose, caught in barbed wire.

Another painting presents the dramatic and unusual scene of a tank bursting through the walls of a hut in which a horror-struck woman and child sit up in bed.

A specific Nigerian situation: Ayaoge Christopher Ebiokubo's "in the heat of the crisis" is set in Odi town, Bayelsa State. A simple church in the background untouched by the fires further back. In front, a row of raiders marched through a group of fleeing women.

A painting titled, Protector/Oppressor, makes an ironic statement about the dual role played by many soldiers. In a field, a huge soldier in a camouflage uniform rapes a woman while a crying child watches.

Many paintings focus on paper by soldiers. One, "De-filed" by Sarah Oboh Amiegbe has a caption. "The ground which suffers the fight of elephants, in this case, is a woman."

Many of the paintings capture the agonized faces of women: one, by Tabiti Adeniyi, is simply titled: "Face of War." Interspersed with the paintings are framed black and white photos from ICRC, with detailed captions, highlighting wars and uprisings from all over the world: Bosnia, Lebanon, Cambodia.

One photo of a sad-looking woman pressed against the window bars of an office, holding a photo is captioned, "Missing persons" and reads: "Women usually carry the burdens of searching for missing relatives. It affects not only their emotional well-being but seriously undermines their value and opportunity in society. The biggest soldier in my opinion; while real soldiers fought at the front lines, we the wives fought our war." Another: "There were girls who were raped and now they have kids who did not

The ICRC explains that an estimated 80 percent of all displaced people or refugees in the world are women and children.

That is, women as members of civilian populations in areas of the war suffer the most along with children for whom they are the primary protectors. However, it is also important to realize that women are also increasingly involved directly in warfare as combatants and as non-combatant assistants.

have fathers." This is a crime that will never be resolved.

The hopelessness and ineffectiveness of the UN and ICRC are dramatized in several of the paintings, with images of people fleeing past UN flags and checkpoints.

The message of the ICRC is projected very clearly in



this caption; "Violations of International Humanitarian Law are carried out with impunity in armed conflict, but violations are not inevitable." The ICRC tries to spread knowledge about and encourage respect for International Humanitarian Law, the Geneva Convention. Unfortunately, as the ICRC handout at the exhibition states, "The rules are there but the will and ability to enforce them is, sadly too often

neglected by the parties to a conflict.

Why focus on women in particular? In the Second World War, women served as reservists or support units as drivers, maintenance officers, ADCs as well as their traditional role in the medical corps. In the 1948 war of independence in Israel, women served as combatant soldiers and officers. In the 1990 Gulf War, 14% of active personnel were women (40,000).

Women have been closely involved in independence. Women in Algeria, in Palestine, Mozambique and Angola, in Eritrea (one-fifth of the armed forces) and in the civil war in Sri Lanka where some women in the Tamil Tigers forces have served as suicide bombers. By now, it should be universally recognized that gender is no barrier to courage or violence. The current trial in Belgium of two Rwanda nuns accused of war crimes is an awful example.

In non-combatant operations, women provide arms supplies and serve as drivers, instructors, and intelligence agents. When captured in war, women combatants and civilians face extra hardships of lack of sanitary, health services and sexual violence, leading to the risk of pregnancy and gynecological problems.

While men and women in the civilian populations are equally vulnerable to air raids, bombardments and forced evictions; women have been systematically targeted for sexual violence—sometimes with the broader political objective of ethnically cleaning an area or destroying a people. From Bangladesh to former Yugoslavia, from Berlin in World War II to Nanking (China) under Japanese occupation (1930's), from Vietnam to Mozambique, from Afghanistan to Somalia, women and girls have been victims of sexual violence (International Review of the Red Cross 2000).

It is only recently that sexual violence has been recognized as a war crime and a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have prosecuted and convicted perpetrators of sexual violence against women. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court explicitly mentioned sexual violence as a war crime.

In Nigeria recently, there has been a discussion of reparations and war crimes arising from the Nigerian civil war. There is no doubt that many women in Biafra were raped by Nigerian soldiers. Women bear the brunt of the suffering caused by hunger and flee from one area to another as the war front expands.

However, women in Biafra also played important roles in the war, apart from serving as nurses, doctors and paramedics.

In the Nigerian civil war, women were more directly involved in wartime Biafra than Nigerians. They were recruited into responsible positions in the intelligence and propaganda directorates. When food supplies were desperately short and where all able-bodied men were liable to random conscription, women were forced to obtain foodstuffs from their families or watch them starve. They took over trade with non-occupied food-producing areas and even undertook "attack trade" that is crossing enemy lines into Nigerians-occupied territories to purchase food. Such trade was very dangerous and demanded courage and cunning.

Anyone—man, woman or child—who has experienced war always prays that, as Flora Nwapa titled her novel about the civil war, "Never Again" should there be war. That message comes through loud and clear in the art exhibition.

What's in a name?

That which we call a rose

By any other name

Would smell as sweet.

(**Shakespeare:** Romeo and Juliet)

So declaims Juliet to Romeo but this is Shakespeare at his most ironic, for it is precisely because of his surname (Montague) that Romeo's love for Juliet (Capulet) is doomed. Even though the name is "hateful to me" it is because of it that he is killed by the Capulets. Love across the divides of clan, culture, religion, ethnicity and nationality remains problematical.

At this time in Nigeria, there is a conflict between the Edet and Kam Salem families, from two different areas, religions and cultures, over the name of the new Police Force Headquarters in Abuja. Because of the current political situation, the conflict has spread to embrace eminent persons on each side of the divide and is the subject of press comments and editorials.

As Chief of F.R.A. Williams puts it, "In my humble opinion, I do not consider it appropriate either for the family of the late Louis Orok Edet or the family of late Alhaji Kam Salem to find themselves involved in any controversy over the matter.

"Each of the families has produced distinguished Nigerians who had served their nation as Inspector General of Police. Nigeria is proud of them.

"This question of naming the Police Force Headquarters after the late Louis Orok Edet ought never to have caused any controversy whatsoever." (Guardian, May 27, 2001).

Nonetheless, what this unnecessary dispute has revealed is the great importance people attach to the historical preservation of the names/life stories of history makers.

It is a shame that neither in their lifetimes nor posthumously have biographies been written about them. At least not to my knowledge: readers, please correct me. Then the public and posterity would have the records of their life stories at hand. Both names are fast receding from their memory.

It is also regrettable that neither man left behind an autobiography or memoir which would have been an enduring legacy and record. As Rudyard Kipling puts it:

"If I have given you delight by aught that I have done.

Let me lie quiet in that night which shall be yours anon.

And for the little, little span the dead are borne in mind.

Seek not to question other than the book I leave behind."

To obtain information about the two Inspectors-General, I had to consult an African who's who and books "left behind" by other makers of history. It is revealing that most of the data thus obtained was on Edet.

Louis Orok Edet, born in 1913, in Calabar, joined the police force as a clerk in 1931. He transferred to general duties as a sub-inspector in 1945. Edet was involved in the spate of killings in Calabar province, known as "Leopard Men" murder, one of the most dramatic police investigations and court cases in Nigerian history. In 1948, he was transferred to the western provinces and promoted the next year to Assistant superintendent. Over the next ten years, Edet was sent to the U.K. for various special-

What's in a Name

ized training courses.

At independence, Edet was the most senior Nigerian police officer as Deputy Police Commissioner. He was appointed commander of the first contingent of the Nigerian Police Force to serve under the United Nations in Congo. Edet was much commended for his service in the Congo and was awarded the Queen's Police Medal.

On his return to Nigeria, Edet was appointed commissioner in charge of police in the federal capital territory of Lagos. He was promoted to Deputy Inspector General in 1962 under John Hodge, the last expatriate Inspector General. The significance of Edet's high position is better appreciated when it is realized that

"Those who are making the issues of the matter should remember that as chance would have it, one of the distinguished former inspectors-general hailed from the North while the other hail from the south. Any attempt to whittle down or demean the recognition and national gratitude due to any of these eminent sons of Nigeria will be misunderstood and will create unnecessary ill-feeling among the populace".

in 1963, four out of the six commissioners, four out of the six deputy commissioners, twelve out of the seventeen assistant commissioners, and seventeen out of forty superintendents were expatriates.

In March 1964, Louis Orok Edet was appointed to succeed Hodge as the first indigenous Inspector General of the Nigeria Police Force. Just months later came a controversial federal election that severely taxed the peace-keeping skills of the police and its head. Edet made a dramatic and unprecedented broadcast on the national radio services appealing, in the interest of security, for all political appointees and candidates to observe a list of Eight Don'ts which the ministry of information and the police had compiled. Although the election was marred by abuses and the result caused a political crisis, the police maintained overall law and order.

At the time of the coup, the police could muster far more able-bodied men than the army which had less than ten thousand men. The police, counting local government and native authority forces, had had a force of thirty thousand.

The massacres in the Northern region in 1966 showed the limit of the police to maintain law and order but the Nigerian police force did not break up as the army

did.

Because Edet was on leave from Lagos on January 15, 1966, it was Kam Salem who acted as Inspector-General. He displayed commendable organizing ability and initiative. The police headquarters in Lagos in Lion House became the operations center for the 48 hours of confusion and uncertainty which followed the coup. There, Kam Salem Leslie Marsden; the expatriate acting deputy Inspector-General of police; Ahmed Kurfi, the Deputy Permanent Secretary Ministry of Defence; and Hamman Maiduguri, and others, established what really had happened and finally Ironsi. It was Kam Salem who took the initiative of approaching the defence attaché in the British High Commission for possible military assistance (turned down by the British government when contacted).

Chief Awolowo refers to Edet in his book, "My March Through Prison". He believed that Edet considered that he (Awolowo) was party to the January 15 coups of 1966. During the first coup, Edet was on leave in Calabar where Awolowo was imprisoned. It was announced that the coup leader had planned to release Awolowo and install him as the head of state. Edet sent a superintendent of police to the prison to confirm that Awolowo was still in his cell. When the superintendent confirmed he was there, Edet was still not convinced and demanded he return to double-check.

A few days after the second coup, when Gowon emerged as head of state, Awolowo was released from prison and invited to join the government. At the same time, Louis Edet was retired by Gowon as inspector-General, although it was publicly announced that Edet had resigned.

Louis Orok Edet was awarded the Nigerian honor, OFR and the British CBE. He was awarded a medal by Pope Paul VI. It is only fitting that the new headquarters of the institution he helped to build and served so well for forty years should be named after him.

Chief Rotimi Williams signposts the political dangers of the dispute:

"Those who are making the issues of the matter should remember that as chance would have it, one of the distinguished former inspectors-general hailed from the North while the other hail from the south. Any attempt to whittle down or demean the recognition and national gratitude due to any of these eminent sons of Nigeria will be misunderstood and will create unnecessary ill-feeling among the populace".

This time around, the names are Edet/Kam Salem, it could be that next time the names might be Margaret Ekpo/Gambo Sawaba, which proves the time-

Lagos Hustlers

Many of us grew up playing educational board games like scrabble and monopoly. The first is supposed to improve spelling and vocabulary, the second to teach the basics of real estate and financial wheeling and dealing. In addition, monopoly teaches players the geography of the City of London. So popular has “monopoly” been that it has established a virtual monopoly in the board games business all over the world.

Now that monopoly may be challenged, in Nigeria at least, by a Nigerian version of the game, set in Lagos and titled, “The Lagos Hustler”. The instruction leaflet introduces the game. The Lagos Hustler has especially been designed for the enjoyment of anyone living in our great city of Lagos whatever be his state or country of origin. Lagos is a melting pot of Lagosian from all over Nigeria, Africa and the world.”

However, the Yoruba culture and ethos of Lagos is maintained in the game: on the board, some squares read “Adaba” and “Akoba”. The player then chooses an Adaba or Akoba card from a pile on the center of the board. The leaflet explains that Adaba means “self-inflicted misfortune or fortune brought on directly by one’s actions---such as ‘Chieftaincy title as the Onigbadun of Lagos. Pay N1,500,000’.” and “Your son is about to marry a beautiful Igbo girl. Pay a dowry of N2 million.”

Akoba means “fortune or misfortune brought about by the action of other people” such as: “Your container has been seized. Settle N200,000 or go to jail (Kirikiri)” or “Alaye boys are in your way .. settle them N200,000 to pass.” Another is “Fuel scarcity. Collect N100,000 from each petrol station you own.” (There are petrol and NITEL and NEPA stations on the board).

There are title deeds for properties valued according to the real estate ratings of the eighteen suburbs, ranging from two million naira for the mortuary value of a house in Ikoyi, one and half million for Ikeja, a million for Satellite, half a million for Mushin to three hundred thousand for Ajegunle. The currency notes are in denominations of ten, five and one million, and five, two and one hundred thousand, the lowest—ten thousand naira. They may seem very large, compared to amounts of money pillaged by the Abachas, Babangidas etc. They have conditioned us already to view the naira as fool’s gold, monopoly type money. The decimal point can be very slippery.

The object of the game is to acquire and develop property either houses or hotels, subject to certain rules. Then, a player who lands on your property must pay rent to you. On the other hand, if you sell a house or hotel to the bank, you will be paid half of the purchase price. A player may only collect a loan from the bank at the mortgage value of a property. When a property is on the mortgage, the player cannot collect rent on that property. The game ends either when all players withdraw due to bankruptcy or when all players agree to end it. Then the assets of each player are calculated and the person with the highest value wins.

“Players are advised to enjoy themselves; everything is allowed: being a multi-millionaire, buy, sell, cheat, do 419, play politics ... even be a banker. It’s just a game.” Such instructions may not be found in a monopoly, but after all, fraud, fast dealing, tax evasion, gazumping etc. are found in the property business everywhere.

Unfortunately, in Lagos (and in all parts of Nigeria) hustling is not limited to real estate but intrudes into the real life of all Lagosians from wherever they originate. May I share with you a few vignettes of life in Lagos as experienced recently by

visiting foreigners, Nigerians from outside Lagos and resident expatriates.

A young man on his first trip outside of his own country (in Asia) was picked up by the driver of his host. En route to Victoria Island, the car was held up by armed robbers. The driver was able to escape. One of the robbers took the wheel, three others joined the terrified young man and they drove off to the site of their next operations. They parked the car under a bridge and led their unwilling company into a strategic position to observe the passing traffic. The robbers chatted with their ‘guest’ and explained to him which kinds of cars-and passengers – they were after. In one fell swoop, they hijacked three cars, ejected the drivers and passengers and, one robber to each car, zoomed away but not before telling the

stupefied boy that since he had been well behaved, they would let him go and then the keys of his host’s car was given to him

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A young man on his first trip outside of his own country (in Asia) was picked up at the international airport by the driver of his host. Enroute to Victoria Island, their car was held up by armed robbers. The driver was able to escape. One of the robbers took over the wheel, three others joined the terrified young man and they drove off to the site of their next operation.

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It was pitch dark, the young man had no idea of his bearings and was utterly helpless. The usual Lagos crowd gathered and sympathized, but the victim was now deeply suspicious of everyone. He spied a young woman of his age group standing to the side and instinctively felt he could trust her. So, he approached her and explained his predicament. Kami suggested that she could arrange for someone to drive him to Victoria Island, but the young foreigner was too afraid to be driven by anyone. So Kemi took pity on him and offered to take him to her home and pass the night, then in the



Third mainland bridge

morning, contact his hosts. Kemi and her sister lived in one room nearby. They shared their frugal meal with him and insisted that he slept on the floor. In the morning, Kemi took him to a business center where they telephoned his distraught hosts who immediately set off in two vehicles with an extra driver, guards and plenty of cash. The grateful hosts offered Kemi and her sister a generous amount of money to thank them, which

Kemi and sister adamantly refused to accept, insisting that they only did what any decent Nigerian would do for a visitor.

So, misfortune is countered by good fortune in the game of life.

The second vignette concerns a female expatriate’s experience not with hustlers as such, but with a typical Lagos hustling lady, with siren blasting pilot vehicles of two convoys, on either side of a dual carriageway. Caught in the middle of one convoy, in a typical Lagos *go slow*, she was bombarded by the sirens to her left and her right. The noise so deafened and bamboozled her that she could not drive, so she just stopped and covered her ears. This action blocked the convoy behind her. An irate whip-yielding policeman ran up to her, ordering her to move. However, when he saw her, he realized what had happened and asked: “Is the siren disturbing you?” “Yes,” she shrieked. Lo and behold, the policeman turned off his siren and ran to the pilot vehicle on the other side of the carriageway who turned his siren off. Sudden deafening silence. The lady could think again, she waved her thanks and drove off. Again, misfortune is balanced by a good deed.

The third incident concerns a Nigerian doctor who met two foreign colleagues and his family at the international airport. No problems with immigration or customs so they made it to the car park. As they reached the doctor’s car, they were surrounded by six men, four in some kind of uniform. They identified themselves as Nigerian Airport Authority security service, then demanded the passports of the white foreigners and the identification of the doctor. The doctor replied that they had no right to demand the passports, showed them his identity card and said he invited his colleagues and was taking them to his home. The guards demanded to see his letter of invitation to the foreigners. The doctor explained that the letter had been sent to the Nigerian Embassy, which issued the visas, etc. The guards then shouted that he was trying to kidnap the white men and must follow them to their commandant.



Lagos Lagoon

The doctor told his colleagues and family to get into his vehicle, lock it and hold the keys while he argued and argued with the guards.

The doctor offered N5,000.00 he had on him—they laughed. Hours passed, night fell, the doctor’s fury turned into fear for the safety of his family and friends. Then he remembered that his wife had a mobile phone and on the pretext of seeing how his children were, whispered to his wife to ring his brother. Six hours later, a top police officer contacted by the doctor’s brother appeared and arrested the guards for extortion and harassment.

The doctor was deeply distressed and ashamed that his visitors should have to undergo such an ordeal on their arrival in Lagos. Such is life in the city on the lagoon, which is not its real name anyway but was used by the Portuguese. Nothing is what it seems in Lagos/EKO. The Gambian poet, Lenrie Peters, has a stanza in an untitled poem which is appropriate in this column on games and hustling:

“The seats of government levelled at the dice, they get the most who tell the biggest lies.”

Federal Radio: The Next Fifty Years

Kudos to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and its enterprising Director-General, Eddie Iroh, for the grand celebration of 50 years of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Historically, public radio services began before 1951, in 1935, when a wired broadcasting station was opened in Lagos. Other such stations were at the interval until in 1948, the department of post and telegraphs and the public relations department operated stations in Lagos Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Ibadan, Kano, Jos, Zaria, Kaduna, Enugu, Calabar and Port-Harcourt.

But the war in 1935-1946 made people aware, like never before, of the good uses to which radio could be put. The undoubted progress of Nigeria towards political self-realization led the government to decide to introduce a proper broadcasting system in place of the separate, uncoordinated wired broadcasting stations.

In 1949, therefore, at the request of all the West African governments, the BBC and Crown Agents for the colonies surveyed the scene in the four countries and issued a comprehensive report. Nigeria alone adopted the recommendations, and as result, in 1951, the Nigerian broadcasting service was created. It then integrated the wired broadcasting stations, or, as they are commonly called, radio distribution service stations. This included the 71/2-kilowatt R. C. A. transmitter housed in a caravan near Lagos. It originally ran services in the Normandy invasion of 1944 when it was used by the BBC to send back nightly programmes for war reports. It transmitted to the North.

The first director of NBC was Tom Chalmers, an engineer, who in 1953 assessed NBC: "The present NBS programmer schedule of news, talks, music both grave and gay, outside broadcasts and religious services (both Christian and Moslem) is one that no broadcasting organization need be ashamed of; and it is only the beginning. We believe firmly that the NBS can do more than any other agency to bring enlightenment and entertainment to the 30 million people in Nigeria. That is the reason for the choice of title: the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. It is for the service of Nigeria that the 250 men and women of the NBS are dedicated." The importance of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service/ Corporation in the 1950s went beyond the development of electronic media. Its staff and programmes were the vanguard of the cultural and intellectual flowering of the decolonizing Nigeria. The music department under Nigeria's greatest world-class composer, Fela Sowande, collected, recorded and preserved the traditional music of many communities. Assuming subsequent managements have maintained this collection properly, the FRCN should possess the richest musical archives in West Africa. Other great Nigerian musicians, who also began their careers with NBS/NBC, were Ayo Bankole, Wole Bucknor, Olaola Omideyi.

The drama department started by Yemi Lijade first produced electronic media plays by Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, and Aig Imoukhuede and discovered the scriptwriting and acting talents of Ralph Opara, Peter Chigbo, Bob Nwangoro, notably in the famous programme, Alao the Master Driver, which may be re-

garded as Nigeria's first successful soap opera (before the term was invented). As Lijadu recalls: "one of the most unifying aspects of Nigeria was something that went all over the country, the *bolekaja*, - we could follow it reflecting the creative aspirations, habits etc. of the people: - this was indeed the best vehicle (excuse the pun) to cover all of that. We were able to unite the entire country in one massive audience. It became a focal point for dispassion." (Sunday Vanguard Dec. 19, 1999. Conversation of Yemi Lijada with Bisi Lawrence)

The news department was set as a BBC standard which has never been equaled since, such as Abba Zoru, Michael Olu-mide, Sam Nwaneri, Emmanuel Omatsola Sam Akpaobot, Eno Etuk (Irukwu),

Stella Udofia (Bassey), Bisi Lawrence,

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Radio, which was mocked and derided when TV arrived, has turned out to be the Cinderella of the media. As long as the federal godfather provides adequate support, FRCN can look forward to a 'charmed' future.

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Sam Iyamu, Ishola Folorunsho, Kunle Alakija and Emmanuel Enidin (Nigeria language). Many of the above went on to become broadcasting administrators.

The religious department, headed by Archdeacon Michael Olamide, gave equal attention to Islam, covered by Alhaji Etamode while Christianity was covered by the then Reverend Father Pedro Martins. Some of the brilliant talks by Monsignor Martins, who turned 90 this year, have been collected and edited in a book which will be presented on the 9th of August— *The 50th Anniversary of Monsignor's Ordination*.

The NBC itself acted as a publisher: some of its excellent talks given by eminent authorities were published by the NBC. Just one example: The then Dr S.O. Biobaku gave a series of talks on famous personalities in Nigerian history which was published in 1960 as "Eminent Nigerians of the nineteenth century."

The NBS/NBC had mobile recording units in each region; for instance, in 1952, it recorded 150 complete programmes from sources outside the studio, including the most isolated areas.

The FRCN of 2001 can profit from a re-

examination of the achievements of its predecessors. A case in point: the excellent use of mobile recording studios for grassroots interaction with listeners outside the transmission centers. Moreover, this aligns with the contemporary global orientation towards community radio, that is, greater emphasis on regional/local sources which initiate programmes.

Another lesson: FRCN could reach out to and even discover the young Soyinkas, Sowandes, Oparas, Aig Imoukhuedes etc. so that the FRCN can not only project but cultivate and enrich Nigerians. At the same time, the FRCN, broadcasting in Nigeria since 1935, has been advocating social change, safer health practices and mass literacy.

For in 2001, as in 1935, there remain millions of Nigerians who live without electricity: millions who see newspapers but who cannot afford to buy any newspapers. Millions more who cannot read newspapers— the only medium which is available to these people is the battery-operated radio, which does not cost more than a week's salary, is cheap to maintain and requires no skills to interpret the music and words provided therein. Radio is a very powerful medium that



People listening to radio

impacts deeply on the listeners. One radio can be enjoyed comfortably by household, kindred, village meetings, lorry and busload of passengers.

Finally, the FRCN should have retail to sell cassette tapes and compact discs of its music and drama. Programmes and publication of his talks and lectures. In the UK, the BBC has a chain of shops.

Since the 1950s, the main threat to radio's popularity and effectiveness has been television; however, in the last few years, public and commercial radio services all over the whole have staged a come-back.

In the western world, radio has transformed itself into a lucrative playground for a new breed of a media mogul.

New FM radio stations are auctioned to the highest bidder. Radio stations from networks are syndicated over half the country to secure networks and semblance and advertisers. Radio presenters are earning salaries that belittle their TV counterparts. Radio assets are worth millions of dollars. Radio which was mocked and derided when the TV arrived has turned out to be the Cinderella of the media. As long as the federal godfather provides adequate support, FRCN can look forward to a 'charmed' future.

The 'magic' of radio is well captured by this poem by the famous English poet W. H. Auden.

In an upper room at midnight, see us gathered on behalf of love according to the gospel of the radio-phonograph.

How to Survive Victoria Island

Survival is the name of a very popular television docudrama shown in Europe, the USA, Australia, South Africa and maybe elsewhere. A varied group of people are placed in a real potentially life-threatening situation such as being cast away on a deserted island in the Pacific. The ensuing real-life drama is filmed by an accompanying TV crew. It is a struggle for survival of the fittest: one by one, members of the group drop out until only one person remains as the survivor and winner of the prize money. In Nigeria, there is no need to fabricate life-threatening situations since we are all confronted with them from morning to night, seven days a week. Armed robbers, dangling live electric wires, leaking gas cylinders, contaminated kerosene, adulterated diesel in generator tanks, kamikaze Okada cyclists, homicidal maniac molue/danfo/bus drivers, faulty brakes, no car lights, poor steering in speeding, overtaking vehicles, treacherous potholes/gullies in the roads, faulty rifles issued to the police by the Defence corporation which discharged accidentally, shoddily built buildings which collapse on their inmates, planes trying to land at night or in a storm without lights on the runway let alone radar; instruments used in female genital mutilations and abortions, contaminated foodstuffs and water.... These are only the manmade dangers to life. Then there are the natural (and unnatural) diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid, meningitis, guinea worm infestation and AIDS.

There are also dangerous situations that are less immediately life-threatening but more life-limiting. One such thing is the traffic logjam, go-slow to no-go which paralyses and pollutes Victoria Island and Lekki.

Lagos has been infamous, globally, for its traffic snarls since the early 1970s. Just as a century earlier, Lagos harbor had been notorious for its perilous access. Up till 1908 when the Lagos bar was dredged, the only way in was a surf boat. Mary Kingsley in her *Travels in West Africa* (1895) famously describes the hazards.

“Lagos is a marvelous manifestation of the perversity of man coupled with the perversity of nature, being at the same time one of the most important exporting ports on the West Africa seaboard and one of the most difficult to get at. The town of Lagos is situated on the Island River, a river which is much given to going into lagoons and mud, and which has a bar about two miles out. The entire breadth of the channel through this bar is half a mile, at least on paper. On each side of this channel is the worst set of breakers in West Africa, and its resident population con-



Crowded areas of Victoria Island

sists of sharks whose annual toll of human life is said, by some authorities to be fourteen, by others forty, but like everything else connected with Lagos Bar, it is uncertain but bad. This entrance channel, however, at the best of times has not more than thirteen feet of water in it.... (and) instead of sticking to its governmentally reported thirteen feet it is prone to be nine feet, and exceedingly prone also to change its position....”

This was a real threat to survival. As for the letter hazards of land traffic, a brilliant professional analysis of the traffic problem in Lagos is given by P.O. Sada and A. A. Adefolalu in *Lagos: The development of an African city* (A. B. Aderibigbe 1975).

In Lagos, traffic congestion and hazards also owe their causes to physical and human factors. The physical factors include narrow roads made still narrower by indiscriminate parking and all sorts of obstruction; the paucity of public parking spaces; the absence of sidewalk on virtually all roads, absence of official stops for sub-urban vehicles operating into the city; lack of traffic separation between the heavy slow-moving and lighter fast-moving vehicles and of the pedal-and motorcyclist; absence of alternative route for leaving or arriving at the main traffic destinations; absence of alternative media of transport like water, road and rail which could be well inte-

grated; the insufficient number of bridges across the lagoon; absence of traffic light, pedestrian crossings, underground passages at major road intersections and overhead bridges across busy streets in all but a few places; and absence of street lights on many major roads in the city, which means that drivers at night put on their headlight which dazzles others with unpleasant consequences.

The human factors are those relating to the motorists and the general public's lack of knowledge of proper road use, impatience on the part of motorists, the various obstruction created along the roads through inconsiderate parking, dumping of road building and house-building materials on a considerable portion of the road space instead of along the road margins, as well as by invasion of a certain street sides by 'squatter' petty traders;

‘The only solution is that the bridge from Ikoyi, that was mooted in 1959, has to be built to relieve the congestion, otherwise one day the whole of the reclaimed land of the Victoria Island and Lekki peninsula will sink under the weight of hundreds of growling vehicles backed up for miles. Then we’ll see who will survive that catastrophe.’

the slow slovenly manner in which road repair and reconstruction works are affected; negligent and reckless driving; obstruction caused by vehicles that have been broken down as a result of old age, overloading and ill-maintenance; obstruction caused by accidents, inefficient traffic control by the traffic police; ineptitude of the police; speedy handling of cases of road accidents and traffic offences, including violation of traffic regulations and byelaws; the dubious manner in which certain drivers obtain driving licenses and vehicle road-worthiness certificates and, very significantly, the concentration of work, business and administrative places in the island parts of the city which results to tremendous poll of people and traffic into these parts all day.”

However, in 1975, Victoria Island, part of the coastal sand bar, low-lying and swampy, was in the process of reclamation. The preliminary survey for its development was completed only in 1958. Before that, the only transportation to Victoria Island had been from 1907 to 1914 when the track of a sanitary tramway was laid. This went around Lagos collecting human waste which was



Traffic snarl in Lagos

delivered into the harbor at Dejection Jerry on Victoria Island. This was later adapted to take passengers until 1914 when it was closed.

In the 1970s, Victoria Island was designed to be a low density, residential area: in the 1980s began its conversion to Lagos Wall St. Even then, the traffic was much lighter than Lagos Island and the mainland. Today, the traffic explosion in Victoria Island has generated a sea change (pun intended), in the lives of all Lagosians who work, or reside in or visit Victoria Island whereas, before we could all plan our activities based on a reasonable estimate of the length of time it would take to get from point A to point B, now, we all have horror stories of spending two hours on Falomo bridge, or on Ozumba Mbadiwe to get to Mobil or Lekki.

The problem in the latter instance is that there is no other way to take it. In 1959, Awolowo, as premier of the Western Region, proposed to the Federal Government a bridge across the lagoon from

Ikoyi to Lekki. Because of the political conflict between AG and the Federal Government, this very sensible and long-sighted proposal was rejected. So, now all of us (myself included), who live beyond Mobil petrol station, have to crawl along the only access road.

To survive this life-limiting immobilization, one develops strategies such as leaving home earlier and earlier, forgetting lunch at home, taking clothes to change into so you don't have to go home until it is late, when the traffic eases, having lots of reading materials on laptop computer in the car to occupy oneself and if you're fortunate to possess a cellular phone, spend the time telephoning

These are just personal survival tips but there must be long term, overall strategies put in place by the police, state government and the private sector to restore some degree of normal traffic flow. I commend Platinum Bank for sponsoring traffic wardens and Lagos State for employing traffic directors but there are not enough police on all the road junctions. When they are in place, traffic does move. Even when heroic amputees take over the job of 'yellow fevers', they make a difference and should be recompensed. As the population expands from Lekki to Epe, the amount of traffic along the stretch expressively increases. The only solution is that the bridge from Ikoyi, which was mooted in 1959, has to be built to relieve the congestion. Otherwise, one day the whole of the reclaimed land of the Victoria Island and Lekki peninsula will sink under the weight of hundreds of growling vehicles backed up for miles. Then we'll see who will survive that catastrophe!

Immediately after the civil war, there was a very poignant and popular highlife song, *Happy Survival*, celebrating the end of the war for those who had been in Biafra and lived to tell the tale. Some of those survivors, especially the soldiers, experienced what we now called post-traumatic stress but was then known as shell shock. They needed skillful psychiatric treatment to restore their mental health, and this was provided by the few dedicated heroic psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses working in the east-central state. One member of that group has just died: Irene Ogbolu, the very first Nigerian psychiatric nurse, at the age of 75. She had retired as the chief nursing officer of Anambra State and also as a Girl Guides' commissioner; she will always be remembered for her compassionate insight into the mental suffering caused by the war and for the articles she wrote documenting the experiences of the psychiatric teams during the civil war. Irene was my very close friend and I mourn her passing. May her soul rest in peace.

Postscript: I had the pleasure of attending an unusual wedding last weekend. My younger son needed the services of an orthodontist, Dr Amy Binta Traore, and over the many months of treatment, we became so friendly that she invited us to her wedding. Amy is Mauritanian on her father's side and Nigerian on her mother's side. The groom is Lambert Shumbusho, a Rwandan lawyer assigned to a multinational company in Lagos.

The presence of many Mauritanian and Rwandan guests endowed the wedding with a special grace and *je ne sais quoi*, the chairman of the occasion, Prof. Ojo spoke in English and French: the bride's father in his language and French, likewise the groom's mother (the father is dead). As the witty M.C., Ali Baba observed the occasion and the marriage represents a model of that 'cooperation and integration in Africa', which the new ministry of that name, under the bilingual medical minister, Dr Bimbola Ogunkelu, advocates. I congratulate the handsome pan Africa couple and wish them a *bonne chance* of a successful, peaceful future and happy survival.

Hail the Return of *Nigeria Magazine*

ON July 17, 2001, the honorable Minister for the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ms Boma Bromilow Jack, launched a special edition of Nigeria Magazine dedicated as a tribute to Dr Garba Asiwaju (1935-2000). This is a historic and most welcomed development. To better appreciate its significance, readers must be acquainted with the background. The foreword to this special edition by Umar M. Abubakar, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the "Tribute to a cultural icon and an administrator for excellence" by the minister do try to provide this background but some amplification may illuminate further.

Nigeria Magazine began in 1927 as an educational bulletin and became a more culturally oriented publication in 1933. It was titled: Nigeria: A Quarterly Magazine of General Interest and on the Table of Contents page, it was described as "for everyone interested in the progress of the country, compiled in collaboration with private contributors and all government departments."

"Private contributors" featured prominently in terms of commercial advertisements. A typical issue of Nigeria Magazine e.g. No. 40, 1953 carried 34 pages of advertisements out of a total of 118 pages. The back cover was also an advertisement. It carried 107 black and white photos illustrating the seven articles in the issue. As a magazine rather than an academic journal, Nigeria Magazine's general tone was light-hearted, witty, humorous and personalized. Generally, the articles covered cultural, ecological, historical and current events and features. This special edition (2001) includes an article from a 1939 issue, "Dances and Plays" by E.C. Murray, the famous art teacher and popularist.

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, Nigerian Magazine (as it became known) had a literary supplement that provided a forum for aspiring writers and often their first chance of publication. Literary giants such as Ekwensi, Achebe, Soyinka, Okigbo, Aniebo and Clarke all graced Nigeria Magazine. Later on, the magazine was edited for years by the novelist, Onuora Nzekwu (Wand of Noble Wood and Blade Among the Boys).

At the same time, several scholars contributed to Nigeria Magazine articles based on their original and pioneering research, which might not have been published at that stage by scholarly journals. In that way, the magazine served as a kind of academic crucible. Ulli Beier in the 1950s, E.J. Alagoa, F. Ekejiuba, K. Williamsons, Horton in the 1960s are just a few examples.

Nigeria Magazine was the only forum responsible for disseminating and publishing research findings on Nigerian culture and for promoting and popularizing that culture until 1972 when a department of culture was created in the Federal Ministry of Information.

Dr Garba Asiwaju, a lecturer in history at ABU, was the first director of the department and as part of his responsibilities; he took over as the editor of Nigeria Magazine from 1972 to his retirement from the civil service in 1985. He was deeply committed to maintaining the high standard of the magazine as "the most credible documenting of arts and culture of Nigeria. Asiwaju saw the magazine as "serving the intellectual bedrock and professional foundation upon which the federal department for culture was built. **"(Nigeria Since Independence)."**

After his retirement, his lasting input and a corps of dedicated editors sustained the magazine until 1990 when it lapsed.

When Dr Garba Asiwaju died in March 2000, the then minister of culture and tourism, Ojo Maduekwe, during a condolence visit to Asiwaju's family pledged to revive Nigeria Magazine as the most fitting tribute to Dr Asiwaju (Sunday Vanguard, March 26, 2000). Maduekwe promised it would come out in September 2000: by the time it did emerge, Maduekwe had been moved to the Ministry of Transport. Still, it would have

been proper and courteous for his successor to have noted Maduekwe's input in the article or the magazine's editorial.

The cover of the magazine is most attractive: a photo of the National Theatre at night, brilliantly illuminated, with an inset photo of Dr Asiwaju. The back cover is plain white, which is a waste of prime space. There are ten black and white photos (plus two in Murray's 1939 article) and one colour photo of Ms Bromilow Jack.

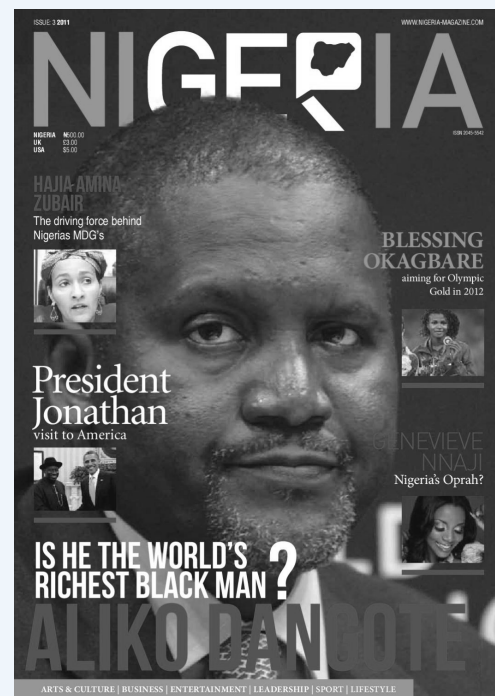
The magazine is published by the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism and this is a special issue in honor of a former director of culture but in future issues, the ministry should be less intrusive.

Excluding the reprint of the Murray article, there are nine articles and three pages of poems by Bay Bayo and Manuwa Ikuewumi. One of the most interesting articles is "Africa and the Diaspora in the Strategies for Cultural Diplomacy" by Prof. Joy Ugwu but it comprises excerpts from a paper of that title given by Prof. Ugwu ten years ago. The excerpts were not well put together because there are missing passages (p58-60).

The opening article's title, "Culture and Tourism as Aid (sic) to development in Nigeria" sounds like the theme song of the ministry which to my mind over-emphasizes the tourism part of its mandate. The author, Chike C. Aniakor, documents Nigeria's rich potential for eco and cultural tourism but ignores the oppressive reality which mocks the realization of this touristic utopia. As Chinua Achebe puts it so brilliantly:

'Nigeria Magazine was the only forum responsible for disseminating and publishing research findings on Nigerian culture.'

"It is a measure of our self-delusion that we can talk about developing tourism... only a masochist with an exuberant taste for self-violence will pick Nigeria for a holiday (Trouble with



Nigeria).

Nda Uga's article titled, "Association of Nigerian Authors: Origin and Role in Literary Culture" is a timely analysis of ANA's contributions to creative writing and advocates that it establishes a publishing house. All the other articles are about aspects of Nigeria's many cultures, in the tradition of Nigeria Magazine while some lack originality ("folklore in Achebe's Novels, "if a Divination." "Political Institutions among the Ngwa Igbo") Several others are more innovative

and imaginative: "Hausa Aesthetics," "The song composer in Tiv society" and "Tap Dance in Bonny." Overall, the articles are well researched and presented but are let down by a rather clumsy production and copy editing such defects can be easily remedied in the next issue.

The most important aspect of this return of Nigeria Magazine is that this must not be just the celebrated special edition but the maiden issue of a sustained series of regular publications. That would be the best tribute to Dr Asiwaju. By poignant coincidence, Dr Garba Asiwaju's 93-year-old mother, Mrs Arinola Omojobi Ashiwaju died just two weeks before the launch of Nigeria Magazine 2001.

Certain attitudes or mindsets seem universal and



Exhibition of Nigerian culture

timeless. For instance, prejudice against the profession of law and its practitioners. Readers in Lagos may have noticed recent posters advertising a play "Let's Kill the Lawyers." This is a line from Shakespeare's Henry VI "The first thing to do, let's kill all the lawyers."

While Shakespeare's most famous court scene in Merchant of Venice leads to "justice," this is achieved not by a lawyer/judge but by Portia impersonating a judge: Since this column is about Nigeria Magazine, this is what its editor, E. H. Duckworth wrote in the 1952 No. 39 issue.

"Lagos newspapers frequently contain announcements that I find somewhat depressing, to the effect that certain young men have sailed for England to study law or that, yet another batch of freshly qualified lawyers have landed at Apapa. It is easy for anyone of only medium intelligence, but with enough money to pay the examination fees and the cost of living in London, to pass law examinations. It is nothing to be particularly proud of or to deserve praise from relations or friends. To develop the well-being of our people, we do not need more lawyers, but we do require additional doctors, teachers, engineers and technically trained men and women.

"The profession of law may, for a few, prove a lucrative occupation, but does not create general prosperity. On the other hand, a man with knowledge of industrial processes, of engineering of the building is a potential creator of wealth and useful employment not only for himself but also for many others. In this connection, it is interesting to view the work of Mr Fawehinmi." The article goes on to praise Fawehinmi's furniture factory.

This Day' weekly supplement on law always carries jokes against lawyers, so I guess the following will not offend our learned friends:

A teacher, a petty thief and a lawyer all died and went to the Pearly Gates. Because of overcrowding, St. Peter told them they had to pass a test before entering. He asked the teacher, "What was the name of the famous ship that hit an iceberg and sank?" "The Titanic," she answered, and St. Peter motioned her into heaven.

The thief was next. "How many people died on that ship?" St. Peter asked. "Gee, that's tough," the man said, "but luckily I saw the movie just before I passed away. The answer is 1500." So, St. Peter let him through.

Then he turned to the lawyer; "What were their names?" he asked.

Unknown Soldier Dragged to Oputa Panel

The creation of the Oputa Panel Human Right Violation Investigation Commission (HRVIC) is one of the most meaningful actions of the Fourth Republic government. Though disabled by its paucity of power, HRVIC tries to appease people's gnawing hunger for truth, justice, retribution, reparations, and reconciliation. President Obasanjo has placed the full weight of his office behind the HRVIC and by appearing in person, he has demonstrated that no one is above the law. It is to be hoped that his predecessors will emulate Obasanjo's example which has been reinforced by his stated readiness to appear a second time before the HRVIC to answer charges of human rights violations made against the previous government by the Ransome-Kuti family.

The petition from the family refers to the attack by soldiers on the family residence, occupied by Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, which was called the Kalakuta Republic. When questioned by journalists about the petition, President Obasanjo was reported as replying: "I don't know what happened to the Kalakuta Republic and I don't know if there can be another republic within a republic." (ThisDay July 31, 2001).

This is pregnant speculation in the current context of the discourse on the nature of federalism in Nigeria, but it begs the big questions raised by the Ransome Kuti petition. Since the incident occurred twenty-four years ago, it is necessary to refresh the memories of older readers and inform the younger ones of just what happened to the Kalakuta Republic.

On his return from the United State in 1970, Fela who considers himself a Pan-Africanist and his mother a champion of "traditional" African culture, had founded a commune on the property at 14A Agege Motor Road. While in the United States, Fela had fallen in love with an African American, named Sandra Smith. She exposed him to the Black Power movement, which had a tremendous influence on the development of his political philosophy.

Before 1977, Fela had had several run-ins with both the army and police and, in addition to his non grata political ideology, he had been charged with drug use. After a short incarceration in the early 1970s, he had christened the home on Agege Motor Road and adjoining property as the Kalakuta Republic. "Kalakuta" referred to the name by which his jail cell had been known, and "Republic" signified his disdain for the authority of the federation of Nigeria within his compound.

On February 18, 1977, the Kalakuta Republic was surrounded by nearly a thousand soldiers. According to



Kalakuta republic

eyewitness accounts, the soldiers, armed with bayonets affixed and clubs, stormed the compound without warning, ostensibly to arrest two young men who had committed a traffic violation. The soldiers broke down the door and began beating people inside. Bekolari Ransome-Kuti was bayoneted in the forehead and hand, tossed from a window, and then beaten. He was forced to march on a broken foot from the residence to the army barracks nearby. His medical clinic in the compound was destroyed. Clothes were torn off some of the young women in the house, and they were forced to go outside naked. Some claimed they were later raped. Fela himself was severely beaten and hospitalized. Soldiers pulled Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, then nearly seventy-seven years old, by the hair and threw her out of the window, severely injuring her legs and causing her to go into shock. A fire ignited and destroyed the entire property.

Although the army blamed the fire on an explosion of the residence's generator, FRK later called that "a fantastic lie" (Daily Star, Feb 25, 1977). Other presents at the raid agreed with her and insisted that the army had deliberately set the fire. The raid, popularly known as the "Kalakuta War", received tremendous publicity in two major newspapers and caused the military govern-

ment to convene a public administrative tribunal to investigate the incident. Reportedly, the tribunal threatened to make international news when a New York Times correspondent attempted to attend hearings; the day following the first sitting of the tribunal, the correspondent was arrested and deported. In the end, blame was apportioned both to "overzealous unknown soldiers" and to Fela. The Kalakuta Republic and surrounding land occupied by uninvolved citizens were destroyed. Neither these citizens nor the Ransome-Kuti family was compensated for their property loss. This is still a sore point for them, and they continue to press their claims against the government for compensation for the destruction and con-

'Neither these citizens nor the Ransome-Kuti family was compensated for their property loss. This is still a sore point for them, and they continue to press their claims against the government for compensation for the destruction and confiscation of the property.'

fiscation of the property. Years later, a Lagos State secondary school was built on the site, and in a rather gratuitous manner, the school was named the Reverend Ransome Kuti Memorial School. On April 13, 1978, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti died as a result of her injuries.

One year after her death, her three sons and hundreds of sympathizers staged a protest march to commemorate the first anniversary of her death. They carried a mock coffin that they deposited at the 14A Agege Motor Road Property (Sunday Observer, April 15, 1979). On the second anniversary of the Kalakuta incident, the family took out a full-page advertisement in the February 18, 1979 issue of Sunday Punch.

NO JUSTICE

KALAKUTA AFFAIR

2ND ANNIVERSARY

Armed Nigeria Soldiers marched on our family house at 14A, Agege Motor Road.

They burnt it completely to the ground. It was a 5-hour long military assault.

Scores of people were severely wounded and some of us have been permanently maimed.

Properties worth millions of naira were destroyed, and hundreds of people were later rendered homeless.

Our dear mother eventually died from the shock she received from this inhuman assault on her self-esteem.

Today, two years after, we still have not heard any word of remorse or apology; nor have we had any reparations for these atrocities and all our immense losses.

Yet we know for certain that other victims of less, but similar calamity have been treated with speed and generosity.

The question in everybody's mouth is: what is our crime to deserve this oppressive treatment in our own country where we are supposed to be free citizens? Kuti Family

Twenty years later, Kalakuta's erstwhile President, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, died but his musical legacy thrives and will live on long after all the other actors in the Kalakuta incident have passed away. Decades before HRVIC was conceived, the lyrics of Fela's music bore witness to the violations of human rights by uniformed personnel and the military government.

If the hearings of the Oputa Commission sometimes appear as tragic theatre, then Fela's

lyrics should sound the background theme music.

The titles of many of Fela's songs were acronyms of radical political concepts such as Mass (Movement Against Second Slavery), ITT (International Thief Thief), BBC (Big Blind Country), VIP (Vagabonds In Power), BONN (Beast Of No Nation), which attacked government's pronouncements about respect for human rights as 'animal talk'. Fela also manipulated the spelling and sound of words to make political statements in titles such as Suffering and Smiling (in which he attacks both Christianity and Islam for perpetuating oppression in Nigeria) and in words such as Democracy, Yabis and Zombie.

In Alagbon, he pillories the tendency of a constituted authority to employ extrajudicial means and exert excessive force in the name of law and order. He sings, "...for Alagbon dem no get respect for human beings/dem no know say you get blood like them/dem go send them dog to bite-bite you/dem go point them gun for your face .../dem go lock you for months and months/dem dey call am investigation. In "VIP" he observes: Hungry people dem no see/jobless people/dem no know/dem go dey ride best car/dem



Fela Kuti's family

go dey chop best food/dem go they/live best. And in why Black Man Dey Suffer, he laments: "...some people come from far away land/dem fight and take our land/na since then trouble start o/our riches dem take away/in return then give in dem colony/dem take our culture away from us/dem give us dem culture. We no understand/black people we no know our cultural heritage."

It seems many people still do not know "our cultural heritage" nor fully appreciate current cultural achievements such as Vanguard's Art Editor, Helon Habila, who won the second Michael Caine prize for African writing in London recently for his story, Love Poems. Habila faced strong competition from 120 writers from almost 30 African countries, including works from some of the continent's renowned writers such as Nurudeen Farah.

The chair of the judging panel, Professor Dan Jacobson, a famous South African writer, said, "His story impressed the judges, especially by its qualities of intensity and alertness to some of the most sinister aspects of Nigerian life under military rule."

In the Vanguard 26 July 2001 edition, Habila reports: "In attendance were various distinguished persons such as the Zimbabwean High Commissioner, The Pakistani High Commissioner, the Mozambican High Commissioner, Mr Patrick Wilmot, Mr Ben Okri, Buchi Emecheta and many others. The Nigerian High Commissioner was represented by the Commission's Librarian."

I am very pleased to know that the Nigerian High Commission in London has liberty run by (presumably) a professional librarian and I imply no disrespect to the Librarian BUT does it not strike a discordant note that at such an important occasion for Nigeria literature, the young Habila was not supported more robustly by his nation's diplomatic representatives in the UK. What does this signal about the priorities and values of the High Commission and thus, by extension, the Nigerian government?

Posthumous Biographies

BIOGRAPHIES may be written of living or dead subjects: it is only the biographer who needs to be alive- at least until the biography is completed!

I have written published biographies of living and dead subjects: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Ayo Rosiji, who died after publication. Irrespective of whether the subject was alive or dead at the time of writing or publication, their lives may continue after death and after the publication. They continue to live through their works, their children, through their achievement and what their lives symbolized.

In the past month, both of my 'subjects' have resurfaced into our collective consciousness. The manner of death of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti has been made into a cause by the petition presented to Oputa HRVIC by Dr Beko Ransome-Kuti (as I discussed last week). As this case involved the reappearance of President Obasanjo before the panel, its implications and repercussions may be of profound significance. So FRK, in death, has in life, continues to impact dramatically



Ayo Rosiji
on Nigerian history.

As for Chief Ayo Rosiji, on the 9th of August, the Ayo Rosiji Computer Laboratory in the Kola Daisy Foundation Computer Centre, University of Ibadan, was inaugurated by the Pro-Chancellor of the university, Chief Kola Daisy. The chairman of the investment promotion commission, chairman of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and industry, Chairman of Foundation Trust Bank set up a fully equipped laboratory in the Kola Daisy Foundation Computer Centre and dedicated it to the memory of Chief Ayo Rosiji Computer Laboratory.

As Chief Daisy explained in a poignant tribute:

"In his lifetime, Chief Rosiji was a colossus in every sense of the word: intellect, charisma and personal charm. In death, he remains a hero. He radiated love and be-

nevolence throughout his life and was devoted and loyal to his friends and protégés to the end. To show appreciation for how Chief Rosiji's life has affected my own and to immortalize the name and memory of this great mentor and friend of mine in a manner that would permanently link us together in the minds of both contemporaries as well as the generation unborn."

Readers may not know that when Barrister/economist Kola Daisy returned to Nigeria from the UK in 1960, he joined Ayo Rosiji's chamber in Lagos, then in Ibadan. Daisy soon took charge of Ibadan chambers as Rosiji was based in Lagos and ran it very compe-

"The idea of MUSON originated from Mr Akintola Williams and Chief Ayo Rosiji, not with me.... The credit for the conception of MUSON must go to Chief Rosiji and Mr. Williams who were the founding chairman and vice-chairman of the society."

tently until 1964 when he was appointed Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Chamber of Commerce, at which point Rosiji closed his Ibadan chambers. I can confirm that Chief Rosiji had the highest regard for Chief Kola Daisy and as a lover of history, Rosiji would have appreciated Daisy's act of commemorating his role in Nigerian history.

Chief Ayo Rosiji's role in the history of the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) has been the subject of recent contretemps in the Guardian, thus also evoking his legacy. For several months, the Guardian has featured discourse on the founding of MUSON. On Sunday, August 12, it published two letters from Mrs P. A. Ogundipe (OON) and Mrs F.Y. Emmanuel (CON) which documented the differences between the brochure on MUSON's history which they and Mr Akintola Williams drew up in October 1993 and the final version of the brochure released by Mr Williams on the day of the MUSON centre's inauguration, 24th February 1994.

The crux of the difference is that the first version attributes the founding of MUSON to a group of Nigerians (unnamed) who, inspired by Sir Mervyn Brown, (the outgoing British High Commissioner), met in October 1983 to form the musical society. The published version, which has been amended by Mr Williams, attributes the inspiration and initiative to Mr Akintola William who approached Sir Mervyn for advice, then contacted Chief Ayo Rosiji, Mr Louis Mbanefo, Mrs Francesca Emmanuel and others. Rather belaboring the point, the brochure states "the formal establishment and success of MU-

SON are due mainly to Mr Akintola Williams who did all the spadework.

Since both versions refer to the pivotal role played by Sir Mervyn Brown, may I just quote Sir Mervyn's own words in a five-page he wrote to me, dated 28th March 1992:

In the biography of Ayo Rosiji, I record the invaluable contribution to the founding of MUSON made by Rosiji, Akintola Williams, Louis Mbanefo, Francesca Emmanuel, Rasheed Gbadamosi, J.K. Randle, Oye Williams, Helen Travers, Olga Miller, Oto Lijadu and Walter Hagg, the founding trus-



Kola Daisy

tees. I would now like to add a name not then known to me, Duncan McKellar who designed the MUSON logo and the cover for the concert programmes. The correct historical records of any organization must be preserved for posterity.

At the end of my biography of Ayo Rosiji, I complained about a "live subject who insists on getting on with his/her life and thus refuses to stay still to be captured irrevocably in print."

That was in 1992: by the time Rosiji died in 2000, he had indeed "got on" with his life. Of course, those actions/achievements are not recorded in *Ayo Rosiji: Man with Vision*. They could in another (posthumous) biography, which also comments on my biography, (regardless of whether I, the first biographer, am alive or dead!).

And so on.

While it is beneficial that the influence of some history markers operates posthumously, it is also essential that others remain sealed in their tombs forever.

Abacha is one such Nigerian example which always reminds me of the poem by the famous Russian poet, Yevtushenko, about Sta-

Let's Talk it Over

"LETs talk it over" was the title of a programme on the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (later Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria) delivered by the Right Reverend Monsignor Pedro, Ayodele Martins. Before 1960, Martins had also broadcast talks for the Religious Department of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service. As part of its celebration of fifty years of broadcasting, FRCN recently aired a couple of Monsignor's talks. It also gave out its copyright to the committee of Monsignor's "children" who organized the publication of the one set scripts of Martin's talk, which, so far, has been retrieved from the disorganized and inadequate archives of the FRCN.

A selection of forty-six talks was edited by Irene Lynch, wife of the Irish ambassador to Nigeria, with an introduction and biographical profile of Monsignor Martins and the resultant book, titled, "Let's Talk It Over."

The book was presented to the public at St. Gregory's college Hall, on the 9th of August 2001, the 58th anniversary of the ordination of Pedro Ayodele Martins who turned 90 last year.

At the presentation, Monsignor Martins was showered with tributes from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, from the Chairperson; Dr Christopher



Broad street

Kolade, from the wife of the Vice president, from his former comrades-in-arms when Martins was the Chaplain to the Nigerian Army (Retired Generals Rotimi Abisoye and Johnson), distinguished fellow Lagosians (Yomi McGregor, Francesca Emmanuel. And Olabode Emmanuel (the generous chief presenter) eminent old boys of Monsignor's Old School, King's College and of St. Gregory's where he had been a science teacher in the 1950s and parishioners: Josephine Prest (NTA), Benedicta Molokwu (Institute of Directors), and Engineer Vincent Maduka, the behind-the-scenes organiser of the whole affair.

I had the honour of reviewing the book at the presentation and I would like to share it with you. The title of the talk/book "Let's Talk It Over" is indicative of Martin's approach. Rather than declare his programme, "Hear me out" or "My Stand," Martins invites his listeners (lets) to join (us) to talk (rather than pontificating) and discuss (over) in a Socratic dialogue. The talks were given by Martin in his persona "Uncle Pedro," not by the clergyman Rev/Monsignor Martins.

Martins was always very aware of his audience which he challenged, stimulated, criticized and reasoned with. As Uncle Pedro, he created intimate relationships with listeners in the finest tradition of radio, like Alistair Coat's "Letter from America" and Chinua Achebe's talks on NBC and Voice of Nigeria in the '50s and '60s.

In the introduction, Irene Lynch, the editor, explains that the talks were not religious as such but, as he defines them, very insightful "Philosophical and sociological commentaries on life and society." She rightly emphasizes "their topicality and relevance to Nigeria of 2001 and singles out for commendation their "Wisdom, entertainment, fun, intellect, learning and mastering of language."

These talks were not only a delight to listen to but also a pleasure to read. Some of you may remember that in English language lessons, you studied rhetoric, the art which teaches eloquence and composition- which teaches effective expression.

"Let's Talk It Over" is such a model of eloquence that it would make an excellent case study for teaching rhetoric and composition. Monsignor employs all the devices of emotive language to enrich and clarify his message. Similes, metaphors, alliterations, puns, epithet, hyperbole, double extenders, wit, irony, sarcasm, satire, rhetorical questions and antithesis of contrasted words. Clauses and ideas are generously sprinkled on the literary confection. Example of antithesis: "The adversity of colonialism discovers the best and virtue of being able to live together but the prosperity of oil best discovers the vice in us." What

could be more eloquent than: "there is hardly any mortal in whose cupboard you will not find a macabre dance of skeletons and what about it if the dance is not gruesomely boisterous enough to wreck the peace of the rest of us. Dance of the skeletons is always on somewhere. Life has its seamy side."

The editor sensibly organized the selection of 46 talks around four main themes, namely: Society and governance, concern for women and youth, church and religion and philosophy.

In all the talks, Martins demonstrates an intimidating erudition, a profound intellect, catholic interests (ring the wider alternative meaning of the word), an unflagging scientific curiosity and a keen historical perspective. Throughout, the talks are illuminated by Monsignor's deep spirituality, profound consciousness and compassionate understanding of the human condition. In that understanding, there is neither naivety nor idealization but a clear-sighted insight into the character and behavior of people.

May I share with you my favorite highlights from each of the themes, starting with Church and Religion. Monsignor is very much at ease with his God. He communicates directly, honestly and intimately with God in a series of dialogues represented in this book which reminded me of *Fiddler On The Roof*.

"Dear God, this is by no means my complete shopping list, but for the moment, it should do. Do I sound cheeky? Surely, you understand me. You know that is the last thing I want to be. I have always been free with you. I love you, and I am sure you too like me and my cheekiness."

His religion is fundamentally Catholic but not exclusively so, not 'dogmatic' in the original meaning of the word, that is, it goes beyond dogma to the profound spirituality of all religions. Martins deplors the expulsion of the illegal aliens in 1982 as "human

"Martins was always very aware of his audience which he challenged, stimulated, criticized and reasoned with. As Uncle Pedro, he credited an intimate relationship with his listeners in the finest tradition of radio, like Alistair Cooks "Letter from America" and Chinua Achebe's talks on NBC and Voice of Nigeria in the '50s and '60's."

tragedy. A humanist sees in the illegal alliance, which relates us to each other and to God ultimately. This is the teaching of all religions."

Youth and Women: "If I were president – I shall heed the clamor of petticoats to be in government. I believe they have the right to do so, and I believe too that our women can perform as well as the men."

Monsignor Martins is an emancipated man: "Men have tried to shepherd our country since our independence. Their effort leaves room for more to be desired. They have been tried and tested; the result cannot be described as an unqualified success. Why should this country not consider giving our women the chance to prove what they can do?"

Philosophy: Criticizing the commercialization of death, Martins conceives of the Cost of Dying Allowance, CODA for short, "CODA in the musical language is a passage added after the natural movement in order to have a final and definitive end to a piece. And what could be more final than death."

In his talks: Martins does not pull any of the punches which made him feared by his students at St. Gregory's. "A politician is like a monkey: the higher he climbs the more exposed is his bum." In one of his dialogues with God, Martins laments: "It must be sadly amusing to you, that despite the available intelligence in this country, we have yet to learn to count ourselves. Since 1964 we have been battling with this simple arithmetic. It is only in this country that anyone could have the ignorant rashness to hold the view that headcount is not arithmetical but political. I must return to school to learn the politics of simple numbers."

Martins issues a citizens charter. "I like to feel that I am safe and secure in my own country. I like to believe that my safety is the concern of the authority in my country, that the services my country provides are safe, that my health is insured against illness, that my property is protected, that my political belief is respected, that the apparatus for securing my safety is reliable and assuring. This country has reached the stage where it should be protected against itself."

In all the talks, Martins reveals a deep appreciation of history, especially of his beloved Lagos. As he explains: "Lagos history is written in names of planes. There was a Porto-Novu market reputed for tilapia and catfish. The existence of this market was evidence of the trade relationship between Lagos and Porto-Novu. It explains the presence of Beninois in Lagos. Bishop Street, Olowogbowo District of Lagos points to the Methodist Foundation. Broad Street reminds me of the fire, which devastated the palm oil depot of the Marina. Broad Street was a safety zone to ensure that other fire incidents would be confined to the Marina and would not spread to the many thatched houses of old Lagos."

Martins discusses the Lagos-based Nigerian Youth Movement: which I have studied and written about, but I never heard of the following jingle until I read in the Monsignor's talks "Potholes in the Road to Independence." Ayo is no joy. Jones is all bones. Moore is no more" which is an attack on Dr Adeniyi Jones and Barrister Eric Moore of Herbert Macaulay's UNDP.

The 1975 purge of the civil service, which Rev. Fr. Martins reviewed as head of a commission set up by our current head of state, is described as "that mighty national convulsion which overtook this country: it did more than killing the deadwood: it hacked down the deadwood: it shattered the sense of security of government employment."

Martins' description of General Ironsi's first press conference after the first coup is electrifying. "I remember the day in February 1966; he summoned the press to a briefing in the State House Marina. The choice of venue was deliberate. The massive hall by itself was overwhelming. The polish floor threatened to betray anyone who had ignored the courtesy of the huge foot mat generously offering its services. The shades of historical personalities of this country hung from the high walls of the hall to be silent witnesses of the historical event breathlessly awaited.

"The silence in the hall that morning was frightening, harrowing. No whispers, no murmur, no feet shuffling. All eyes were riveted to the door from which the commander of the armed forces and head of government would emerge. From behind, through an unsuspected small door, this six-footer man walked in, and as he did, everybody was petrified. It was, indeed, a situation of suspended animation. An officer in charge of the expected entrance door regained consciousness and barked in panic 'All rise.'

"The General took his seat at a large table and commanded us to sit. There was no apology for his lateness. The delay was deliberate. He did not wish us a good morning. He sat down there wearing an enigmatic smile. Then he proceeded to measure and assess some chosen individuals of the media world. Then after finishing this mysterious exercise, he just said 'Serious' and 'Good day, Gentlemen'." That was the briefing.

I'm sure that Chuks Iloegbunam, the author of the excellent biography of Ironsi, will gnash his teeth at not having read this vivid description before the publication of his book.

With the publication of *Let's Talk it Over*, at least some of Monsignor Martins' talks are preserved for posterity in an accessible form. The book, well-produced by Academy Press, is thanks to the labor of love by Irene Lynch, Josephine Prest and Vincent Maduka. However, it should have been published by FRCN; I believe the FRCN should publish its programmes and sell them in its shops, just like the BBC does. Monsignor Martins, thank you for enriching us with your eloquence, insight, and wit. May your talks be listened to properly, with open ears, and read with open minds.

The Oz Obasanjo Will Meet

In October, President Obasanjo will be the first Nigeria head of state to pay an official visit to Australia (fondly abbreviated Oz by its citizens). The president will first attend the commonwealth business forum in Melbourne, with a delegation of senior Nigeria business leaders, then the commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) in Brisbane. Thereafter, as an honored guest of the Australian government, President Obasanjo will pay an official visit to Australia. Altogether, he will be in Australia for two weeks, given that it takes about 30 hours flying to Australia from Nigeria via Europe and 23 hours via South Africa, it makes economic and diplomatic sense for the president to stay for two weeks in this historic visit.

Membership of the Commonwealth is an important tie between the two countries and currently both exert a profound influence in the commonwealth. Nigeria is playing a crucial role in peace-keeping commonwealth African countries and Australia in Asia. Both countries are also important in countries outside the commonwealth in their respective areas, as in Liberia and East Timor (where a Nigeria military/police unit was part of the UN peace-keeping force headed by Australia). Both nations are members of the important caucus CEMAG (Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group). Australia and New Zealand were at the forefront of the common initiative to encourage the return of democracy in Nigeria.

This week, the Australian minister of foreign affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer M.P will meet President Obasanjo in Abuja along with several other commonwealth foreign ministers to try and resolve the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. This intervention is President Obasanjo's initiative, fully supported by the Australian government. According to the high commissioner to Nigeria, Mr Robert Whitty, the participation of foreign ministers, Lamido and Downer in CEMAG, has led to a particular rapport that has sensitized the Australian foreign minister to a deeper awareness of and interest in Africa. Australia took the lead in setting up and funding the commonwealth trade and investment facility. This encourages more balanced trade and investment relationships within the commonwealth to favor the less developed nations. High commissioner Whitty delivered an address titled, "Nigeria Australia and CHOGM" to the Nigerian Australian and New Zealand Association (NANZA) at the Aussie club, Australian high



Australian government building

commission residency ground in July.

In his talk, the high commissioner reported on CHOGM 2001 augurs well: of the 543 member nations, 90% have accepted to attend to date. This includes all the other commonwealth West African nations. All preparations are in place, including the security of the venue for the retreat to which all heads of state and government will retire for private candid talks (after the official meetings), which usually produces the most important decisions at CHOGM. The theme chosen by the member nations is "Continuity and Renewal." A month earlier, the Australian capital city will host the commonwealth parliamentary association, which Whitty informed the NANZA audience, will be attended by members of Nigerian legislators.

The Australia that President Obasanjo and the CHOGM participants will encounter is a nation that has never been more confident of itself. It is celebrating the centenary of its federal parliamentary system: It hosted the world's most successful Olympiad; its role in East Timor was universally applauded (except by Indonesia) and alone in Asia. It emerged unscathed from The Asian economic collapse; An economy which until 1979 was primarily agro-based has developed into the most e-commerce-ready economy in the world (after the US) in which agriculture constitutes less than 20 percent of the GNP. The UNDP ranking of the most desirable countries placed Australia second in the world (after Canada).

Australia's export base has diversified over the last 15 years. Australia will continue to be a major community exporter but is increasingly relying on service industries like computing, education, financial services and sophisticated manu-

facturing industries, ranging from medical equipment to last ferries. In 1999-2000 services exports (A\$28.3 billion) and manufacturing exports (A\$57.9 billion) were worth more than 2.5 times the value of primary industries exports (A\$34.1 billion).

Australian science and innovation have shaped many aspects of society and have impacted much of the world. Australians gave the world Aspro, the first heart pacemaker and the bionic ear. Australians were the first to fly across the Pacific Ocean and invented the first underwater computer. Australia was the fourth country in the world to build a computer and also the fourth to build and launch a satellite. Six Nobel prizes for science have been awarded to Australians for research work.

A society, which until the 1970s was



Australian school

predominantly European and English speaking, is today as plural or multicultural as the USA. Out of a population of 19 million, one quarter doesn't speak English as their first language. Since 1945, almost 6 million from all over the world, notably Somalia, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya have settled in Australia and acquired citizenship. There is also a community of about five thousand Nigerians in Australia.

Because Australia is globally perceived as a desirable nation to emigrate to or seek asylum in, it receives many legitimate and illegal migrants each year. Its harsh treatment of the latter is much criticized by other countries but generally accepted within Australia. The objection of most Australians is not to the race, religion or nationality of the asylums seekers and illegals but to the fact that they have jumped the queue, i.e. they have ignored the protracted procedures which immigrants have to undergo before being processed for visas, since originally, all Australians, except the indigenous Aborigines migrated from somewhere, they feel that all immigrants should line up as they did.

Hence, the current international crisis over the four hundred-odd Afghan asylum seekers on the Norwegian freighter stranded in Australian territorial waters. If the crisis is not resolved by the time CHOGM takes off, it may well be subjected to commonwealth diplomatic intervention!

It is to be hoped that the Abuja meeting achieves some measure of success in its interaction with the Zimbabwe representative. Readers may be interested to know that Alexander Downer is no stranger to political conflict, having served as leader of the opposition in Australia during the Keating Labour government. However, divisions within his liberty party forced Downer to step down for the current prime minister, John Howard and he became shadow minister for foreign affairs in March 1996. Alexander Downer, a member of the federal parliament since 1984, was appointed minister for foreign affairs when the liberal national party coalition was elected to government.

An economist by training, Downer was once active in the Australian chamber of commerce and has extensive experience in international finance, trade and banking. Such a background may predispose Downer to recognize the potential of Nigeria for Australia expertise extensively involved in the mining industries and agriculture. Australia is already extensively involved in the mining industry in Ghana. The Ashanti Mining Company is quoted on the Australia Stock Exchange and there are hundreds of Australian miners working in

Ghana, why not in Nigeria as well...?

At the end of his talk, High Commissioner Whitty quotes a telling story told by former Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku at the commonwealth meeting of ministers for women affairs held at Trinidad

'Since 1945, almost six million immigrants from all over the world, including notably Somalia, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya have settled in Australia and acquired citizenship. There is also a community of about five thousand Nigerians -Australians'

where he, as Australian high commissioner to the English-speaking Caribbean states, was representing the Australian state minister. Anyaoku buttressed his opinion that discrimination based on race, gender and region, arises in part from individual perception and attitudes, with the story of a child at a barbecue in Lagos who raced back from the stream where the children were playing to inform the parents that new friends had been made. "How nice," said the parents. "Are they boys or girls?" The child responded, "I don't know; they are not wearing their clothes."

Isn't this appropriate for the Durban conference on racism?

Past Motions...

The Vanguard of August 29, 2001, carried a report of a heated argument between Oyo State governor, Alhaji Lam Adesina, and a former first republic minister, Chief Richard Akinjide, as to whether Chief Anthony Enahoro or Chief S.L Akintola was the first to move the motion in the Federal House of Representatives for the independence of Nigerian. Both men referred to the source, i.e. the proceedings of the Federal House of Reps. Akinjide cited the proceedings of 26th March 1957 to support his contention that it was his former colleague, Akintola who moved the motion and Adesina cited those of March 31st, 1953 to support his argument that it was Enahoro who first moved the motion.

The proceedings show that there is no basis for any argument. It was

Anthony Enahoro, of Ishan constituency in the Western Region, who on March 31st, 1953, was listed as requesting the house to endorse as a primary political objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1996. The motion, which was at Enahoro's personal instance, was supported by his party, the Action Group and the National Council of Nigerian and the Camerons (NCNC) members were opposed by the members of the Northern People's Congress (NPC). The motion and that session of the house led to a political crisis in which three AG members in the central government, one of whom was S.L. Akintola, resigned.

Exactly four years later, on March 26, 1957, Chief S.L. Akintola moved a motion in favor of immediate self-government (Note that neither motion used the word "independence"). Whereas the 1953 motion was a dramatic historic event, the 1957 motion was more of an anti-climax because the decolonization of Nigeria was well underway. Had it not been for the Foster Sutton Tribunal in the Eastern region and the issue of the creation of a separate state for the Benin Delta provinces in the Western Region, the two regions would have been self-governing. However, Akintola's motion was not accepted until it was amended to read "self-government in 1959 in order that Nigeria may speak in one voice".

In both instances, the intentions behind the motions were not realized. I am reminded of T.S Elliot:

**"Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And act
Falls the shadow."**

Speaking of the subtleties of language, Australian English like Nigerian English can be quite different from standard English. President Obasanjo may find the following explanations useful.

Australian	English
Banana bender	Queenslander
Barbie	Barbecue
Bonzer	Good/Great
Sheila	Female
Dill	Idiot
Dinkum	Genuine
Bush man	One who understands living in the bush
Bush ranger	Robber
Cobber	Mate
Crook	Unwell
Mozzie	Mosquito
Kiwi	New Zealander
Pommy person	English

So, President Obasanjo, have a bonza walkabout down under, don't get crook, be careful of bushrangers. Fair Dinkum, Ozies are your cobbbers.

G'day

FT's White African and Nigerian Media

A new Nigerian magazine, *Business Confidential*, celebrated its first anniversary with a special edition, titled *Nigeria: Unlocking the Future* and a public lecture by Michael Holman, the London Financial Times Africa editor.

Business Confidential (BC) is about the first publication in Nigeria by private equity, Capital Alliance Business Media Nigeria Limited, chaired by Pascal Dozie: BC's overt technological/business focus is displayed by its high-tech advisory board (Dick Kramer, Freddie Scott, Afolabi Oladele, Imo Itsueli, and Vincent Maduka).

It began as a newsletter in May 2000 "with the ambition of providing informed and authoritative information and analysis of the Nigerian economy for public and private sector decision-makers both in Nigeria and overseas." However, the appointment early this year as Editor-in-Chief of Kaye Whiteman, formerly of *West Africa Magazine*, meant that inevitably BC has graduated to a professionally packaged well-crafted international magazine. Whiteman is strongly supported by first-class veteran journalists—Stanley Egbochukwu, Dayo Onibile and Isaac Okafor.

BC had an international launch in London in July, sponsored by the West African Business Association (formerly the over half a century old West African Committee), Leventis Foundation of Nigeria and British American Tobacco Nigeria. The anniversary issue is the first, which has taken advertisements as another evidence of its magazine status and the same corporate support is displayed in adverts from Leventis, Nigerian Breweries, Diamond Bank, Shell, FSB and refreshingly, a smaller player, Nigerian Information Technology Company Resources Ltd.

Business Media Nigeria Limited is also connected to the African Development Consulting Group Ltd., which produces expensive annual reports such as The Nigerian Oil Industry Report 2001, The Nigerian Gas Industry Report 2001, The Nigerian Solid Minerals Industry Report 2001, The Nigerian Telecoms Industry Report 2001, The Nigerian InfoTech Industry Report 2001, The Nigerian Textile Industry Report 2001, and monthly and quarterly inflation indexes.

The special edition has a solid economic core with well-researched articles on oil and gas telecom fiscal policy investment, South Africa-Nigeria trade and investment, banking and public debt. It also has articles of political orientation, one on entrepreneurship and an NGO, Junior Achievement, and agriculture "to examine ways in which the future so earnestly craved by the vast body of the population may somehow be unlocked. The role of the people, working through civil society and the private sector business is central to this endeavour." Whiteman reviews an important book, *This House Has Fallen:*

Nigeria In Crisis by journalist Earl Melen, a most appropriate choice given that the anniversary lecturer is also a foreign journalist/observer.

Whiteman concludes that rather than being a 'fallen' house Nigeria is "a work in progress."

Michael Holman is a white African of the title, born and bred in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, a university student leader in Zimbabwe detained for one year then deported. He began his career with the *Financial Times* (FT) by reporting on Zambia and for the past 17 years has been the editor of the FT's Africa section. Dick Ermer introduced Holman at the lecture in the Lagoon Victoria Island as "the single most informed and insightful observer of Africa," while Dozie described his articles as "unpalatable and controversial."

Holman first reported on Nigeria in 1980



Michael Holman, London Financial Times Africa editor

and has visited it regularly ever since. He was just one of several young reporters the FT sent to Nigeria to "mould" them.

After experiencing censorship, detention and deportation he emerged from the Nigeria crucible. Well fired for the professional trajectory. However, Holman is critical of Nigerians' disproportional obsession with foreign journals like the FT. Instead he hopes that *Business Confidential*, which is modelled on the FT, will be quoted by the FT. Holman declared that "BC fails Nigeria."

In his lecture, Holman lamented that the main Nigerian problems he reported on 20 years ago—corruption, energy, Ajaokuta, railways, divisive politics, remain critical today. He describes reporting on the Nigerian economy as a "hack looters ball." Though very critical of the IMF and the World Bank, (he satirizes their donor speech). Holman acknowledges that since Nigeria cannot manage its resources properly, it will still need World Bank loans that offer the cheapest interest rates. On the other hand, all the loans in the world will still not solve Nigeria's economic crisis until it acquires professional, accountable, management and information technology. Without the latter, Holman warns, Nigeria, "using the sledge when the wheel is available" will fall behind into technological stone age. Unpalatable truths, Holman admits but he is always

guided by the advice of a missionary in East Africa in the 1890s: "In Africa, always speak your mind and mind how you speak."

Holman sweetened his pill by offering a grant of 500 pounds sterling towards scholarships for journalists provided that ten matching grants came from the audience before the end of the lecture. Holman's gesture was to drive home his message of the importance of the Nigerian media's role in promoting development in Nigeria. He describes the press as "the main repository of a country's institutional memory."

Holman reflects that in all his years in Africa, he has witnessed two 'miracles': The liberation of Zimbabwe from racial Rhodesia and the liberation of South Africa from apartheid.

His comments on Zimbabwe, a co-incidence with the CEMAG meeting in Abuja to resolve the crisis in Zimbabwe, are illuminating. Holman explains that the Lancaster House negotiations, which led to the independence of Zimbabwe, provided for the payment of funds by the U.K. government for land resettlement. These funds were not made available to Zimbabwe and the current land crisis is a long-term result of that failure. Holman reiterates that it is the role of the media as the repository of the nation's institutional memory to bring such historical duty to light. Holman criticizes Mugabe's tactics as thuggery and condemns his destruction of democracy in Zimbabwe but asks that the background be taken into account.

Two days after Holman's lecture, the Abuja deal was signed which entailed Britain transferring funds to compensate the commercial farmers for the takeover of their lands. In other words, that should have happened twenty years ago. President Obasanjo is to be commended on his initiative in convening the CEMAG meeting and in brokering a resolution. I discussed that meeting in my column two weeks ago and the role of Australia. As it happened, the Australia Foreign Affairs Minister could not go to Abuja because of the crisis over the asylum-seekers on the Norwegian freighter. The recent court judgment that the refugees/asylum seekers must be allowed to land in Australia demonstrates dramatically the complete independence of the judiciary in Australia. Likewise in Zimbabwe where it was faced with very brutal pressure from the government, the judiciary continues to try to uphold the rule of law.

Holman believed strongly that Africans must recover that nationalist fervor and seek the confidence of the anti-colonialist and anti-apartheid movements. He supports the payment of reparations for the slave trade and colonialism for the psychological benefits to the collective African consciousness.

Holman revealed in a poignant passage that his quality of life had been severely diminished by Parkinson's disease. With extraordinary courage, he undertook radical surgery in France which involved drilling holes into his skull and brain while he was fully conscious. Holman is one of just one thousand persons in the world to have undergone that ordeal and he testifies to the great improvements in his health as a result. Holman says he can now look forward to witnessing another African miracle in his lifetime: The full flowering of Nigeria to the economy, democracy, culture and unity so that all Africans, of whom he is one, can be proud of the giant of Africa.

The More Things Change...

There is a famous French saying which, when translated, reads, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." In my recent column, I referred to the London Financial Times Africa editor, Michael Holman, who in a lecture arranged by the Lagos magazine, Business Confidential, observed that all the critical problems he encountered when he first visited Nigeria in 1980 remain as problematic today. I would like to extend the time frame back to the First Republic when Holman was a child in Rhodesia. Given today's 41st independence anniversary, it is salutary to recognize how much things have changed since 1960, yet how much they have stayed the same.

October 1 was the date on which landmark changes took place in the First Republic. The transfer of power from Britain took place at a large open-air ceremony held at Lagos race-course thenceforth to be named Tafawa Balewa Square, on October 1, 1960. The same day was the state opening of the new independent parliament. On October 1, 1961, took place the final formal farewell to the Southern Cameroons which merged with Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. On October 1, 1962, the official celebration began with the prime minister attending a service in Lagos Central Mosque, followed the next day by the Governor-General, Dr Azikiwe announcing the retirement of the last of the British governors, Sir Gawain Bell, and the appointment of Kashim Ibrahim as Governor of the Northern Region.

October 1, 1963, Dr Azikiwe ceased to be Governor-General and was sworn in as head of the federation republican state. The same day the right of appeal to the judiciary was abolished. The army, no longer royal and its infantry, no



Nigerian Presidents from 1960

more the Queen's own, marked the occasion by donning its entirely new ceremonial uniform.

The Prime Minister delivered his First Republic Day speech on October 1, 1964, and announced the first national day honours list-in which his name did not feature.

Generally, a national day in the First Republic was marked by several cultural and sporting activities and visits by overseas dignitaries. For instance, in 1965, the Society of Nigerian Artists exhibition of paintings and sculpture at Independence Building was opened by Chief Ayo Rosiji, then Minister for Information and a few days later, an entourage of Nigerian artists travelled to the Commonwealth festival of Arts in the U.K. Such attention to arts and culture would be welcome today.

The First Republic operated the British parliamentary system of government while the Fourth Republic operated the American presidential

system but conflicts within legislatures, between legislatures and executives, between state and federal executives and within political parties are the same in 2001 as they were in 1962.

Likewise, corruption, bribery and nepotism were endemic in the 1960s as now but on a far lesser scale: security of life and property was much greater in the First Republic than at any time since except at times of political conflict.

The recent ethno-religious riots and killings in Jos, Plateau State, in Benue and Taraba States, which preceded the attacks on New York and Washington, shocked the nation and the world. President Bush, in thanking President Obasanjo for his support, also commiserated with Nigerians for those killed in the riots. But in 1960 and again from 1964 to early 1966, there had been such violent riots and dis-

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order in the Benue province of the Northern region that troops were required to maintain control. Even then the soldiers could not restore law and order in the province until after the first military gov-

ernment came to power.

In the 1960s, the conflicts were more ethno-political than religious. There is a complex mosaic of indigenous nationalities in the area: Tiv, Jukun, Idoma, Igala, Birom are the major ones overlaid by the imposed Hausa and Fulani. The indigenous peoples, who were not Muslims, campaigned through their political party, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) for the creation of a Middle Belt State to be carved out of the north, a campaign supported by the Action Group Party (AG), which wanted the size and population of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) governed North reduced.

These basic ethnic/political divisions were exacerbated by demographic and ecological factors such as the demand for arable land by rapidly growing populations (especially the Tivs) and competing

rights over the rich mineral resources (especially the tin). Conflicts over resources between the indigenous people were interwoven with their shared political opposition to the Hausa/Fulani majority of the North.

The riots in 1960 were described by the Tiv who initiated them as the nande ior-burning down houses - because thirty thousand houses of persons considered to be agents of the NPC were burnt. The owners of the houses were non-Tiv, mainly Jukun Hausa and Fulani. When the police could not stop the riots, the Nigerian Army engaged in its first domestic operation. In 1964, the riots were known as a temtyo (head-breaking) and kurachacha (clear them all). Hundreds of people were killed and the troops were still engaged in peacekeeping until the imposition of military rule in 1966. The following year, the Benue - Plateau State was created with the Tiv, the majority, the Jukun, the largest of the many minorities.

Subsequently, that state has been divided and redivided but ethnic conflicts criss-cross the political boundaries as in 1990 and the current crisis which had spread from Nasarawa to Plateau and Taraba states. However, while this ethno-political scenario remains the same, there has been a change since 1999, namely the expansion of the Sharia legal system which has intensified the religious dimension of the conflict. Worse still, the forced, accelerated, politicized Islamisation is generating conflicts beyond the middle Belt area to other parts of the old North. It is painfully obvious that from 1960 to date, the government lacks the capacity and machinery to preempt and short-circuit ethnic-religious conflicts.

This anniversary is not a time to celebrate in view of the recent loss of Nigerians to the terror in New York and Jos and the underlying loss of confidence in the structure of the nation-state inherited in 1960. I condole with the families of all the innocent dead and offer as consolation the following extract from a poem by the famous Welsh poet Dylan Thomas:

"And death shall have no dominion"

And death shall have no dominion

Dead men naked, they shall be one

Honor to Whom

Render therefore to all their dues; customs to Whom Custom; to fear to

Whom fear honor to Whom honor (Romans).

The presentation of the award of national honors for 2001 was much tidier than that of October 1, 2000. The number—235—may still be too high but it is sharply reduced from 330.

According to Special Duties Minister, Yomi Edu, the reduction is a deliberate attempt to confer on the national honors the dignity and respect it deserves.

This year there was no revision of the award made by a previous government (Abubakar). 751 awards were published in January 1999 one of which was received by Abubakar himself. The list of the awards was presented in order of the status of the honor. Last year the names were presented in random order. Though the bestowal of honors by any government is discretionary, it is to be hoped that henceforth they will be. Award of Nigerian national honors began in 1963, as an annual event celebrated on October 1 before 1963.

Nigerians received British honors for outstanding and distinguished contributions to national life in various fields. In 1962, Prime Minister Balewa appointed a national honors committee under the minister of Justice, Dr, Elias to devise a new system destined for the British. In 1963, two honors were created; the order of the Federal Republic, OFR and the Officer of the Order of the Niger OON; they were awarded to the Chief Judge and the Federal Attorney General.

Legislative backing was provided by the national honors, act No 5 1964 which took retroactive effect from October 1963,

As I noted in last week's column, October 1, 1964, was the first occasion on which national honors of the Federal Republic of Nigeria were awarded. In addition, to the OFR and OON, two higher awards were created; the Grand Commander of the Federal Republic GCFR and Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger GCON. The four regional premiers each received the GCON. Sir Louis Mbanefo, the chief judge of the Eastern region received the CFR and Brigadier Aguiyi-Ironsi got the OFR. Neither President Azikwe nor Prime Minister Balewa appeared on the list.

Before examining the 2001 honors list, it is salutary to note how few national honors had been awarded by the end of the First Republic apart from the aforementioned.

Louis Edet the first Nigerian Inspector – General of police (whom I discussed in a previous column) received the OFR but not his deputy, Kam Salem; Dr M.A. Majekodunmi, a senator and federal minister, was awarded the CFR, but not so the great majority of the other federal and regional ministers and top civil servants. Nor did the president of the senate from 1963, Dr A. A Nwafor Orizu received a national honour, yet in 2001, Senate President Anyim Pius Anyim, who has served only one year in the capacity, was awarded the nation's second-highest honor, GCON.

This seems premature and blurs the distinction between the office and the person. I am reminded of Machiavelli's dictum.

"For title do not reflect/honor on men but rather men on their titles."

The restoration of democracy implies a concomitant appreciation of the contributions of individuals from all classes of society to the general good. At the presentation of the list of the awardees, Edu stressed that there were no geopolitical or federal character considerations in the choice of awardees.

However, he did not rule out consideration of gender; out of 226 Nigerian awardees, 25 are women which represent 11.3%. Only one, Ambassador Judith Attah, was bestowed with a CON (out of 29).

The 25 may be more than that of the previous years but is woefully unrepresentative of the

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talents and contributions of women in Nigeria. The female awardees include athletes, industrialists, judges, politicians, professors, religious leaders, as well as professional and business leaders. As usual, the national honors list includes some judges, top civil servants, vice-chancellors, traditional rulers and academics. This year belatedly, Nigeria honors its world-famous scientist, Col (Dr.) O. O. Ovadje, though equally famous Philip Emeagwali, who featured in President Clinton's speech in Abuja is conspicuously absent. Belated also, is recognition for 80 years old famous poet, Dr Gabriel Okara and novelist, administrator, academic and cultural activist, Professor V. Chukwemeka Ike. Until the individual citations are released, we do not know the exact reason why Col. Sani Bello is honored but we do know that he served Major General Ironsi OFR as a loyal dedicated and courageous army ADC.



Nigerians who have been awarded national honors

We do know why newspaper publishers, Alex Ibru and Sam Amuka were honored with OON. They and M.K.O. Abiola transformed the newspaper industry in Nigeria and helped create a viable fourth estate of the realm in Nigeria, in the 1980s.

It is impossible to visualize Nigeria without

the Guardian and Vanguard. These honors are also belated but congratulations to them both.

Readers, I crave your indulgence to expand on our Uncle Sam. His achievement with the Vanguard is the most outstanding because he did not have the huge financial backing of the Ibru and Abiola conglomerates and because he is that rare species of journalist/publisher, not business person. Sam Amuka is passionate about his newspaper, but he is not partial or partisan and he does not interfere in the editorial policies of the Vanguard. He inspires his staff and clients' loyalty and commitment from them. Uncle Sam, as he is popularly called, recently won an award from the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) for his contribution to journalism and the newspaper industry.

Sam Amuka is fearless minded but sometimes eccentric. No other newspaper has had such a quixotic and variety stable of columnists— including yours truly. Several of them (myself excluded) write the very best commentaries in the Nigerian print media.

One novel twist to the presentation of the list is the category at the end for foreigners. Nine in number, non-Nigerians have received national honors before but have not been separately demarcated. In the U.K. honors list, which regularly features Nigerians and other nationalities, this differentiation is not recorded. Minister Edu explained the awards were given to those who have spent the better part of their years, energy and resources to contribute to the development and progress of Nigeria as the minimum recognition that this country can give for their contribution.

This is an apt description of the work of Rev. Father Dennis Slattery, founder of St Finbarr's College, Akoka and other schools and churches in Lagos since 1941. At age 85, this award is belated but mercifully not posthumous. I am also delighted that renowned missionary, Doctor Ann Ward and Nigerian wife educationist, Dolores Mohommed have been honored alongside the men of timbre and calibre, Faisal Elkhailil, Richard L. Kramer and A.P. Leventis, whose father was a close associate of the wordsmith, Minister K.O. Mbadiwe.

It is instructive that Mbadiwe never received an award in the First Republic (I believe he did in the second) nor did another federal minister then, Kola Balogun. It is fitting that Chief Kola Balogun, almost the last surviving minister of the national government of 1957, has been awarded the OON in 2001.

Power of the Book

At the height of the Internet revolution, it was predicted that books disparaged as ink splattered on dead trees would go the way of the gramophone.

However, the sales and library turnovers of books continue to increase globally and they sustain their profound impact on society and individuals.

Next week, the Association of Nigeria Author (ANA) will hold its annual conference and prize-giving ceremony in Port Harcourt. On the same occasion, the Women Writers Association of Nigeria (WRITA) will award its first National Endowed Prize (courtesy of the National Theatre), the Zulu Sofola Prize For Literature (all genres) by a woman writer.

The ANA conference is a defining event in the literary culture of Nigeria, and I shall discuss it in a later column.

The award of literary prizes is very topical. The Nobel Prize for Literature for 2001 has just been awarded to Sir Vidia Naipaul and the U.K Bookers Prize to Peter Carey for his novel—“The True History of Ned” which stimulated intense discourse.

Naipaul was born 70 years ago to Indian migrant worker parents in Trinidad. Although his adult life has been in the U.K, Naipaul sees himself as stateless and as the interpreter of the post-colonial third world. In his journalism, travel books and novels, Naipaul presents a bitter jaundiced and seemingly racist picture of the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbeans, Latin American and Africa. He criticizes not only the politics, cultures and religions but also the writers of those countries.

In *A Bend in the Rivers* set in Africa, he attacked the obvious shortcoming of African governments but also mocked African novelists. Recently Naipaul criticized the work reputation of some famous writers, including Wole Soyinka.

So, Naipaul is not a writers' writer and has been engaged in battle with other writers (notably Theroux). To add to his controversiality, Naipaul is a fierce critic of the Islamic revival for lacking any intellectual or cultural depth. Naipaul's non-fiction books, *Among the Believers and Beyond Belief*, examined Islam in Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan and concluded that Islam in non-Arabic countries is a kind of cultural colonialism that has damaged indigenous cultures. This argument is very familiar in African historiography's analysis of the impact of Islamic and Christianity in Africa. Naipaul concluded that only Arabic can embrace Islam in a way that does not destroy their sense of who they are. These views do not make Naipaul popular in the Islamic world.

Nor has he been popular in his ancestral home, India, or his birth country, Trinidad, both of which he has satirized and criticized. However, in Naipaul's acceptance of the Nobel prize, he expressed gratitude to India. This is interpreted by critics as meaning he has made his peace with the land of his forefathers.

This issue of the ties of relocated/dislocated writers to their homeland is of increasing relevance to Nigerian writers, more and more of whom are resident in or growing up in the Nigerian Diaspora.

The U.K Booker prize has been won by non-British/expatriate, relocated authors many times. This year, it was won by an Australian novelist, Peter Carey who is resident in the U.S.

The True History of Ned Kelly is about an Irish/Australian author (armed robber) who has been glorified in Australian history (as did his British to Robin Hood) for his fight against the British colonial authorities, represented by the police and the banks. The titles are ironic because it is based on historical data, but it brilliantly captures

the spirit of the times and the poverty-stricken victimized rural workers.

In 19th century Australia, Another foreign Booker Prize winner, Nigerian Ben Okri, seems to feel that the prize has elevated him to the status of unofficial U.K poet laureate. He has written poems about events such as the foot and mouth disease in the U.K and now on the current crisis, *The Taliban*, a stanza of which was quoted in the London Evening Standard of October 17;

The Taliban;

*When they shot down the stone Buddha
it crumbled into rubble.*

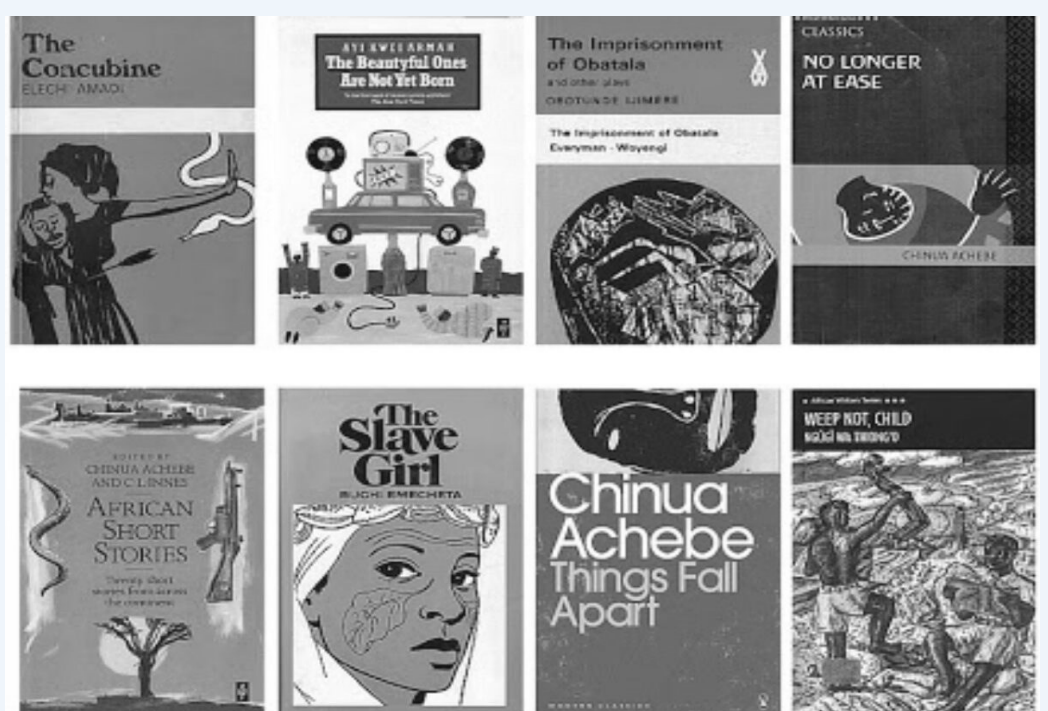
And sent round the world a deep shudder.

That would get them into trouble.

The continuing power of books to revolutionize and influence society and histo-

‘The continuing power of books to revolutionize and influence society and history is recently dramatized in the U.K by the memoir of Anthony Blunt for men surveyor of the Queen’s pictures, who was a Soviet spy. He died in 1983. The surviving executor of Blunt estate gave the type-written manuscript to the British Library which placed it in a sealed container in the safe in a vault in the basement. There is a thirty-year embargo on the memoir.’

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African writers series cover page

the memoir of Anthony Blunt, surveyor of the Queen's pictures, who was a Soviet spy. He died in 1983. The surviving executor of Blunt estate gave the type-written manuscript to the British Library which placed it in a sealed container in the safe in a vault in the basement. There is a thirty-year embargo on the memoir which means it will not be seen (and then published) until 2013. The executor is the only person alive to have read the memoir (and he is 72). There is no other copy.

Why the great secrecy? The memoir could embarrass many important people in the U.K, including the Queen. Blunt, a member of M15 throughout the Second

World War, was the so-called fourth man in the Cambridge spy ring of Philby, Burgess and Maclean. The government discovered Blunt was a spy in 1964 when he defected to Russia

A confession was obtained from Blunt in return for a promise of immunity from prosecution. Buckingham Palace was informed about Blunt's treachery, but he remained an employee of the Queen until 1972. Blunt was stripped of his Knighthood in 1979.

To better comprehend the potentially-explosive power of that memoir, imagine, if you will, that Awolowo had written a secret memoir in which he revealed the facts about what happened to the Action

Group in 1962 and entrusted that memoir to one unknown confidante with instruction to release it thirty years after his death. A good subject for future columns.

The power of books to make and unmake reputation and historical legacies is again demonstrated by two recent publications, biographies of the wives of T.S Eliot and the artist, Gauguin.

All the many books about T.S Eliot and Paul Gauguin have presented wives of these great men as unhelpful, bitter, aggrieved women who handicapped their husbands. The accepted view of Vivienne Eliot popularized in the film, *Tom and Viv*, is that she was a madwoman whose demanded behaviours and protected affairs with the philosopher, Bertrand Russell – came close to wrecking Eliot's sanity.

In fact, as Carole Seymour Jones documents in her biography, she was an artistic and gifted woman who helped

inspire his greatest poems in a unique literary partnership— whose love for the man who rejected her never died (Daily Mail, London October 20).

Gauguin's Dutch wife, Matte, was also talented and enterprising. She brought up their five children entirely on her own while her husband dallied and married 13-years-old girls in Tahiti. She remained the only woman Gauguin truly loved until his death (from syphilis).

These books will revise the accepted opinion not only of the wives but also of the great men themselves. In a future column, I shall discuss a book by the wife of a well-known Nigerian.

Crumbs Off the Wife's Table

BOOK launches/presentations have become embedded in the Nigerian publishing/book culture. Critics object to the crass commercialism, politicization and egomania which characterize the more grandiose of these occasions. It should be remembered that the original motivation for such launches was to maximize publicity and sales of the books in a non-book-reading and non-book-buying society (apart from textbooks). Records do show that post-launch book sales are very low.

There is nothing inherently wrong with celebrating the author or subject as well as the book. Besides, some book launches are tasted full and appropriate such as the presentation of "Let's Talk it Over," the collection of radio talks of Monsignor Pedro Martins which I discussed in previous columns and the one I attended in Benin City recently, to present *Crumbs off the Wife's Table* by Mrs Hilda Ogbe.

This was a modest, intimate occasion because every person in the audience was either a relative or friend or associate or colleague of the author and her late husband, Thomson O. Ogbe (the first Nigeria Lawyer employed by shell-BP in 1961). Another striking feature of this event was that one of the presenters, Mr Albert Esiri, declared, "the blind also have the right to read" and undertook to have the book brailed and produced in sufficient numbers for education institutions for the blind.

Fortunately, as readers of my column may recall, there exists in Lagos the facility to produce brailed books, the *Niger Wives Brailed Book Production Centre*.

Mr Esiri's innovative gesture is, I believe, unprecedented. (I would be pleased to be corrected) and hopefully, maybe emulate that indeed positive results can come out of book launches.

The book itself is a very special one as I hope you will see my review which I delivered at the launch.

Writing an autobiography and making a spiritual will are practically the same (Shalom Aleichem, early 20th century East European Jewish famous writer who wrote in Yiddish).

That is, the person writing his/her life story is expressing the ideas, values and feelings which define that life and is thus leaving behind a legacy of how the person wants to be remembered by posterity. Hilda Ogbe autobiography articulates with graceful clarity a consistently held set of

values, a world outlook that is deeply humanistic, humanitarian, holistic and humble.

Writing an autobiography, which is published in the lifetime of the author, takes great courage and self-confidence. Especially so when it is frank and outspoken as this one is in the prologue. Hilda Ogbe states that she was advised to be truthful in writing the book and says, "I cannot be other than truthful". Hilda Ogbe is painfully and brazenly honest and shares with the reader her most intimate feelings and reflection on her 80 years-long life.

This openness, honesty and introspection are the characteristics that distinguish an outstanding autobiography from a mediocre one; many autobiographers conceal and distort the fact of their lives and present a well-laundered image to the public

This is not the case in *Crumbs off the Wife's Table*.

The autobiographies of people in public life face the problem of how to get the right balance of the public and private spheres of life stories. Both Hilda and Tommy Ogbe were active in public life and Hilda Ogbe adroitly combines the two, so that the readers learn not only about the private lives of Hilda and family but also gain insight into the Second World War, into life in post-war Britain, the lives of Africans in Britain in the 40s and 50s and into Nigeria at the end of colonialism, during the First Republic and the Civil War.

Among the many gems of observation, I shall cite just two; in 1946, Hilda and Tommy were standing in a crowded tube when Hilda was asked by a man who stood up to offer her a seat whether she was Peggy Apiah (the daughter of a British labour Minister who married a Ghanaian). Hilda smiled and replied, "I'm sorry I'm not – but we admire you greatly Mr Prime Minister". Yes, it was Clement Attlee who doffed his hat then made his way to the exit.

And, in 1956, when Zik, then Premier of the Eastern Region was in London, Tommy Ogbe tried but failed to secure a partner for Zik "but we went dancing, all the same, to the Hammersmith Palais de Dance. Tommy and Zik took turns dancing with me. It was a tiring but enjoyable and interesting evening although the men's conversation between dances went right above my head."

The title of this book is very catchy, more so in juxtaposition with the marvelous photo on the front cover (Kudos to Spectrum Books, the publisher, for an excellent cover). The author holds the readers' curiosity for 48 pages before explaining the title, which is when Tommy explained in England before their marriage.

You know, we Nigerians always have a girlfriend in the corner somewhere, these girls come and go. They don't know what love is. But they only get the crumbs that fell from the wife's table.

Hilda resolves to accept and cope with this philosophy but, as time goes on, she sees that the crumbs became the slice and then the whole cake. Though it is indeed eye-catching and thought-provoking, I am not personally comfortable with the title precisely because it is her

husband's reality, her husband's perception, not the author's (i.e. She allows her thinking to be predicated on and defined by her husband). It is almost as if Tommy Ogbe has hijacked his wife's life story. Yet this is exactly what Hilda set out to do in her autobiography as she states in the prologue:

"My husband was a large part of (my life) of course. He would not want to be forgotten after his death. I hope that this book will help to keep him alive."

The heart of this book is the history of the relationship between and Hilda Tommy who met in 1943 in a munitions factory in wartime England, who after marriage on July 5, 1952, lived variously in Warri, Akure, Ogwashi, -Uku, Enugu, Port Harcourt and finally Benin until Tommy died 23 June 1999.

The book presents one of the best-documented marriages in Nigerian literature and historiography.

We the readers share the joy, excitement and passion of a love which consumed Hilda for 30 years and which was central to Tommy's life, up to his death. For it is clear that Tommy never stopped loving his wife but, on his terms only, which selfishness eventually destroyed Hilda's love. In 1961, Tommy flogged his 5 years old son, Monu for not washing the bath well and when Hilda, pregnant with Temi, tried to stop him, he replied, "if you try to stop me, I'll cane him harder." Hilda writes, "I had lost a large chip of my love and respect for my husband."

In 1974, the relationship had deteriorated much further, and Hilda became more disillusioned and aware. "I was no longer going to be manipulated by sweet words if my husband of 30 years understands me so little that he thought I could be mollified with a present after he had committed treacheries... there was no hope."

Finally in 1978 comes the final estrangement for Hilda when Tommy shouted: "the trouble with you is you never put a foot wrong – I will drive you"

Hilda reacted, "Drive you. I, Hilda Gerson, drive me from the house like a goat. No, I was not going to be driven, I was going to leave." Hilda moved out of her husband's house but remained deeply concerned about him till his death as this poignant passage shows.

"The old rascal had become my friend and 56 years of attachment are not a small thing in one's life. He had gone through a divorce because of me. He had brought me to his country where I could fulfill myself. He had broken my heart, but I forsake him, this though was a great comfort to me".

That phrase, "A country where I could fulfill myself" is an apt description of Hilda's relationship with Nigeria. Her contributions are enormous; the creation of a silver jewelry industry of world-class standards, which elevated the status and remuneration of a generation of silver craftsmen and impacted Nigerian fashion in terms of women's accessories and events on their materials. The Swiss lace manufacturers in 1970's made the heaven guipure lace with silver thread instead of gold which had been the fashion for many years. As Hilda puts it, "it was exciting to think that we had made a difference to the fashion in Nigerian by introducing silver jewelry."

Hilda's work was also a model of small-scale entrepreneurship which inspires other enterprises by people whom Hilda trained or encouraged. Although never formally trained as a teacher, Hilda has a passion and gift for teaching people to help and fulfil themselves.

This is demonstrated time and time again in her autobiography. Certainly, her contributions to the craftspeople of the old Mid-West state are unequalled and her Mid-West Arts and Crafts Centre was a model of how-to best project and project indigenous culture and artefacts.

Later in her life, this Renaissance woman of multiple talents and deep learning taught herself to become an authority on sickle cell care and management and this is well documented in her book. Hilda Ogbe has saved lives. She has truly made a great difference to Nigeria.

Hilda's problems have never been with Nigeria but with her relationship with her husband. She adapted quickly and smoothly to Nigerian cultures. A gifted linguist (German, French, Spanish), Hilda speaks Itsekiri and can out-dress the most regal Itsekiri or Bini women. Hilda is Jewish, Tommy a non-observing Christian, but the religious difference and isolation did not disturb Hilda.

"I was comfortable with my Jewish way of life. I did not need organized religion to carry the Jewish tenets in my heart."

Much later in her life, Hilda realizes how being Jewish did influence her with Tommy. "Perhaps, subconsciously, I threw my lot in with Tommy since the sign of Hilda's days in Germany, which says Jews and Negroes are not wanted here, had been indelibly inscribed on my memory."

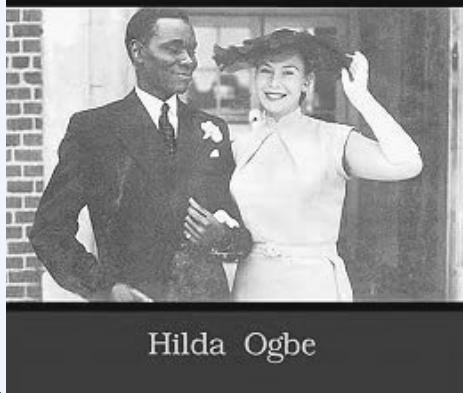
Hilda came to Britain in 1938 on her 18th birthday with her mother and brother, as Jewish refugees from Germany. Like so many other refugees, they arrived penniless and had to accept menial jobs to survive. When the war broke out, they were interned in a camp for enemy aliens. Hilda's father, who was to follow them, never made it and with many of her relations, was killed in a Nazi concentration camp. Hilda and her family were later released, and all enthusiastically joined the British war effort. Hilda became a British citizen before she came to Nigeria in 1956 and was subsequently naturalized as a Nigerian citizen.

Crumb off the Wife's Table is not the first autobiography by a foreign spouse of a Nigerian: I believe the credit for that goes to Rosemary Uwemedimo's *Mummy Wagon Marriage In the 1960s* and later Lana Solaru's autobiography in the 1970s. Marita Golden's *Migration of Heart* is an autobiographical novel of a wife who did not stay long in Nigeria. Hilda Ogbe's book extends the parameters in terms of intimacy, depth of analysis and literary skill.

English is not Hilda's mother tongue, but she is another example of a foreigner whose mastery of English has enriched the language. *The Crumbs off the Wife's Table* is beautifully written, full of linguistic felicities, elegant phrases, dry wit and crafted perceptive insight The well-crafted narrative is dramatic and makes compelling reading. This autobiography is a real contribution to the art of autobiographical writing not only in Nigeria but worldwide. I have every confidence that this book will find an attentive and absorbed audience in many countries.

Hilda Ogbe will put Nigeria, and Benin City in particular, on the world reading map just as Karen Blixen did for Kenya in "Out of Africa." Now, all we need is an enterprising Nigerian filmmaker to turn "*The Crumb off the Wife's Table*" into a film.

THE CRUMBS OFF THE WIFE'S TABLE



Hilda Ogbe

Death of Three Women

“For precious friends hid in death’s dateless night”

—Shakespeare

Rest in peace

Dr Haijiya Gambo, Ahmed Aka Sawaba 1930-2001.

Renate Albertsen Marton 1949-2001

And

Live in peace

Safiya Tungar-Tudu 1968-?

Last month, Nigeria was diminished by the deaths of two women who had contributed significantly to its development. Should the third young woman be stoned to death in December 2001 by order of a Sharia court in Sokoto, then Nigeria will have permitted such a gross abuse of women rights, that is her reputation and image will be forever diminished and bemoaned. I discuss this case in full cognizance of the warning issued by the Sokoto State Commissioner for Justice that any person criticizing the Sharia court judgment could be charged for contempt of court. (Daily Times November 13, 2001).

Does this indicate that contempt of court is defined differently under Islamic law and that Sharia has jurisdiction over non-Muslims in and beyond the area in which the Sharia court is situated?

It is sadly ironic that this anti-human judgment was passed just as the greatest champion of the rights of women in Northern Nigeria, Haiji Gambo Ahmed Sawaba, passed on. Almost fifty years ago in 1953, Gambo and 200 other women were sentenced to a month in prison by what was then known as an Alkali court in Kano. Their crime? Attending the first meeting of the Women wing of the Northern Element People Union (NEPU) led by Aminu Kano. Gambo had joined NEPU in 1951 and had been trained in political strategy by Aminu Kano who believed in the rights of women and recognized their potential power.

Inspired by her mentor, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Gambo embarked on the mobilization of

visited often in Abeokuta and with whom she collaborated in the Nigeria Women’s Union, Gambo was not only a feminist but a radical socialist. She added NEPU’s slogan, *Sawaba*, which means, freedom to her name. Interviewed not long ago, Haiji sharply criticized the Sharia system introduced in 1999 for polarizing Christians and Muslims in the North. She recalled how she grew up with Christian women in the North. (Gambo was awarded an honorary PhD by a Christian University in Glendale, California).

The Sharia has always been there in the penal code. The Sardauna of Sokoto introduced Sharia through the penal code, why can’t we stick to that? Are they now saying that they are more knowledgeable than the Sardauna? (*This Day* Sunday, October 2001)

Gambo Sawaba continued her political career after the First Republic and after Northern women were finally enfranchised in 1976 by the military government headed by General Obasanjo. In 1978, she declared

‘All of Gambo Sawaba’s lifelong work for Northern women would have been futile if Northern women did not rally against the sentence of Safiyah Tungar.’

her intention to run for president and to form an all-political party.

However, in the end, Gambo joined one of the Northern-based political parties, the GNPP. Just after that, Gambo paid a glowing tribute to Funmilayo Ransome Kuti who died as a result of the injuries she sustained in the invasion of the Kalakuta Republic.

Interestingly, one of the most eloquent tributes to Haiji Gambo Ahmed Sawaba was by a Southern woman politician, Olivia Agbajoh, a member of the Federal House of Representatives, who stated that Gambo

honor, Member of the Federal Republic (MFR), a very belated recognition of women in Nigeria after Ransome Kuti.

All of Gambo Sawaba’s lifelong work for Northern women would have been futile if Northern women did not rally against the sentence of Safiyah Tungar-Tudu.

In Afghanistan, women formed an organization of resistance against Taliban oppression and the films which exposed the Taliban public have been shown on television all over the world.. Women in Sokoto and other Sharia states need to summon the courage and take a stand, especially since the court judgment has been criticized by Dr M.T Landan, senior lecturer in Islamic law at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria who points out that the precondition of the witnesses to prove the allegation of adultery was not met nor was there any charge or sentence of the man responsible for Safiyah’s pregnancy. Moreover, the Quran rules that the punishment for adultery should be confinement to the house and/or 100 stripes (lashes) for the man and the woman.

The third woman, Renate Albertson Marton, before her death, was the doctor of the Germany Cultural Centre, the Goethe Institute in Victoria Island Lagos, a position she had held for less than two years. But previously, from 1988-1995, Renate had been head of the languages department and deputy director of the institute.

It was then that she made her greatest impact on strengthening Nigeria-German cultural relations. She organized more than 50 exhibitions at the Goethe Institute for Nigerian artists, some of whom thus received their first promotion and patronage. Renate also arranged theatre productions and concerts for Nigerian musicians and artists both in the institute and Germany. When Renate left in 1995, the arts community in Lagos mourned her departure at an elaborate farewell feast.

On November 10, the same art community held a moving and impressive farewell for Renate Albertsen Marton at the Goethe Institute; there was a roll call of who’s who in the cultural sector.

Traditional praise chants and a drum call by the Guild Nike Oshogbo Cultural Troupe, performance by the Guild of Nigerian Dancers and drama performance by the Africa project artistes and music by Benson Idonije. Others were the National Theatre Troupe by Ben Tomolaju, songs by Francesca Emmanuel and Chief Segun Olusola, poetry and speeches by Jahman Anikulapo, Professor Femi Osofisan, Duro Oni, Odia Ofeimun, Toyin Adewale, Jimoh Buraimoh, Chief Segun Olusola, the society of Nigerian artists, the National Film Institute, all paying tribute to their friend and supporter.

Renate and her husband came to love Nigeria on their first posting, so much so that when her husband sadly died during their stay, he asked to be buried in Osogbo. Since Renate died in Nigeria, not Germany, she had also arranged to be buried in Osogbo.



Haiji Gambo Ahmed Sawaba

women—Muslim and Christian in Kano—for the attainment of the emancipation and enfranchisement of women in the North. Over the next twelve years of the First Republic, Gambo was severely criticized by the Alkali court in Kano and Zaria (her hometown thought her father was Ghanaian and her mother Nupe). She endured many prison sentences with hard labor and was brutally beaten several times by thugs of the ruling party in the Northern Region. The Northern People’s Congress (NPC). Like her mentor whom she

was her mentor, an icon (who) “advised us women politicians to be courageous and learn to absorb shocks in the political system.” Agbajoh’s tribute appeared in the Vanguard on November 14, 2001. She explained that she was vice president when Gambo was first National President of the forum of Nigerian Women in Politics, which means that Gambo Sawaba remained politically active and committed up to her death. It is sadly ironic that Gambo died just a week after the award of the national

JAN Volunteers in Nigeria

In my column, titled, "Volunteers in Nigeria (Sept. 24, 2001)", I promised that from then to the end of the international year of the volunteers, I would highlight samples of the work of volunteers in Nigeria. Today, my focus is on Junior Achievement In Nigeria, one of the non-profit non-governmental, volunteers-based organizations in Nigeria with international affiliations. Junior Achievement was founded in Massachusetts, USA 1919 and is now present in 112 countries. Its mission is to inspire and educate young people to understand and value the role of business in improving their lives and communities. The main vehicle for achieving its goal is a series of economic education programmes that are delivered in schools to develop attitudes and skills necessary for personal success and social responsibility.

How did Junior Achievement come to Nigeria? Through the initiative and commitment of a young high achiever, Simisola Sanni, an old girl of Queen's College, Lagos. Simisola went to the US in 1993 for her Ivy League university education (Economics and English at Mount Holyoke College). She interned in the office of the Governor of New York and at Essence magazine, then began her career as an investment banker in New York with Goldman Sachs. There she discovered Junior Achievement because Goldman Sachs is one of its biggest funders. She volunteers as a teacher on J.A.'s programme and decided that this was an organization that was needed in Nigeria. Not that Nigerians are not great entrepreneurs but because J.A. teaches civics, ethics, and responsible leadership.

But where would she find the volunteers to go into the primary and secondary schools and teach the children? Nigerians don't volunteer outside of their village/town. She was warned. Well, she decided to take a leave from Goldman Sachs and see whether she would find people who share her enthusiasm and help her set up J.A. in Nigeria. It was 1999, a promising time with the return of democracy which encouraged J.A. members in New York. Simisola sought to replicate the American J.A. model of a professional, non-profit, non-governmental organization primarily funded by the private sector using volunteers to teach its programme.

Simisola Sanni, very articulate, well focused and highly persuasive, succeeded in recruiting a major corporation and business to support J.A. in Nigeria. She started with the American companies already familiar with or even involved with J.A. in the U.S such as Chevron, Coca Cola, Citibank, Ford Foundation and with them on board, was able to secure the backing of UBA, First Bank, Accenture, British Airways and others. The support was not just financial but in kind— office space (at UBA Marina), computers etc. which means that the bulk of funds raised can go directly to the programmes. Once Sanni had got JAN established, she decided to resign from Goldman Sachs. Based on her own experience as a J.A. volunteer in the US, she was able to motivate the pioneer volunteers. In the two years it started, JAN has recruited more than 200 Nigeria volunteers and several foreigners to teach its programmes. It has also formed a partnership with the British Council, FATE Foundation, Lagos Business Schools, among others,

JAN's programme begins with the primary schools, teaching about the school as a community, extending to the suburb, then to the city. JAN operates a sports programme with the British Council, Community Action Through Sport (CATS), with volunteers coaching, or-

ganization team refereeing etc. The primary school children are taught what money is, what a business is and how to run it. In the maiden issue of the JAN newsletter, Harness Jan 2001, a primary school child reports they were taught how money moves from one place to another and how to set up a business of their own, such as the production of doughnuts. "After the lesson, Mr Wilcox (volunteer) gave us a real doughnut?"

The volunteer referred to Mr Wilcox, who is the Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria Ltd. This is another dimension introduced by JAN, getting the executives to interact with kids in the classrooms at schools all over Lagos and benefiting from the interaction.

At the secondary school level, volunteers teach personal economics and the economics of staying in school. There are also programmes where a group of students write a business plan, conduct market research to

'The two years of JAN'S existence have been very successful, and the numbers of students reached are increasing as are the numbers of volunteer teachers.'

find out what their fellow students, teachers, staff, local people will buy before starting the business. After fifteen weeks, during which the volunteers monitor the business, offer advice and support, the students learn how to liquidate the business and share the profit or give the profit. A school student was quoted in Harness as declaring, "This is probably the happiest part of my secondary

The two years of JAN'S existence have been very successful, and the numbers of students reached are increasing as are the numbers of volunteer teachers. Sanni emphasizes the importance of civics and ethics in an interview with Business Confidential, Aug 7, 2001: "By the time you've gone through twenty years of economics, civics and ethics, you're a seasoned leader. That's the whole reason I'm in it. To build our leaders from the cradle and you're on the right path."

The British Council endorses Sanni's work in JAN. "We heartily recommend JAN to anyone with an interest in developing the leadership potential of young people (Harness No 2)."

Apropos civics and ethics, a relevant case study follows: "Once upon a time somewhere in a village, a doctor was called to the house of a poor shoemaker whose wife was seriously ill. The shoemaker begged: 'Please doctor, save her, I'll pay you anything, even if I sell everything I own.'

The doctor asked shrewdly: "What if your wife dies?"

The desperate husband cried, 'I'll pay you whether you cure her or kill her.'

The doctor treated the woman but a week later she died. The doctor sent the shoemaker a huge bill. The shoemaker insisted they go to a village elder to discuss the bill. The elders asked the doctor, "what was your agreement with the shoemaker?"

The doctor answered: "He agreed to pay me for treating his wife whether I cured or killed her."

"Did you cure her?"



JAN Volunteers in Nigeria

school life."

JAN has produced teaching programmes/kits/aids/for the school children and also more sophisticated material at the tertiary level for National Youth Service Corp members. That programme is Ventures in Management (VIMP) which is essentially a "mini-MBA" for 12-weeks where business cases are taught by volunteer lecturers from the Lagos Business School and chief executive of leading businesses. The participants act as consultants, engaging in intensive interaction, sometimes up all night, devising strategies and solutions by the end of the programme. JAN also plans to start corporate internships for university students.

'No,' admitted the doctor.

"Did you kill her, asked the elder?"

"Certainly not," retorted the doctor.

"Then (pronounced the elders). Under what contract are you claiming your fee?"

Volunteer Initiatives

As the United Nations year of volunteers 2001 draws to a close, this is the last of my series on volunteers in Nigeria. Today's focus is Youth Business Initiative, Nigeria (YBIN), affiliated with Youth Business International, based in the United Kingdom. It is an offshoot of the Prince's Trust, established by his Royal Highness (HRH), the Prince of Wales. The Trust, set up in the early 1980s, is designed to help disadvantaged young people to start their businesses. The concept is to mobilize local business communities who, working in partnership with local and national organizations, would provide access to finance for young people through a programme of business mentoring and the provision of seed money. Later the HRH formed the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum.

SINCE my column of November 19, 2001, in which I called upon Muslim Northern Nigerian women, in particular, to protest the anti-human judgment on Safiya Husseina Tungar, I am pleased to note (Vanguard, November 19, 2001) that an NGO, Help Eliminate Loneliness and Poverty (HELP) issued a statement, signed by Mrs. Halimat Abdullahi, describing the judgment as an embarrassment to the majority of Nigerian Muslims and as against Islamic law. It concludes that Safiya's male partner in the act was discharged and acquitted for want of evidence.

"Do we now assume that she impregnated herself? This is a dangerous and encouraging signal officially given to men to take advantage of society and women. Gender discrimination of the highest order." Well-spoken, HELP.

Still, on gender discrimination and times, I wish to share with you a recent disturbing but inspiring experience. I was privileged to watch a pre-release screening of a film, "Uncut playing with Life" produced and directed by Mrs Sandra Mbanefo Obiagio of the NGO, Communicating for Change (a communications organization aimed at raising awareness of environmental and development issues to change lifestyles).

The film is about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Nigeria, especially in Edo State, seen not through the eyes of the victims but of the traditional practitioner. The central character, Stella, a Bini circumciser, experienced a life-changing conversion when she watches the play, "Ikpiko and other inquiries after the fact" staged by Chuk Mike performance studio workshop which highlight the tragedy of FGM which leaves physical and emotional female victims. Once convinced of the evil of FGM, Stella works with an organization that educate the communities about the dangers of FGM and teach the practitioners alternative income-generating vocation. The film also documents how successful advocacy in 1990 worked with international companies on many aspects of sustainable development in their respective community. The two organizations recently set up a joint venture, Youth Business International (YBI). YBI helps businesspeople

and partner organizations around the world to start up Youth Business Initiative in Prince's Trust model. It has since been able to support Youth Business Initiative in over fifteen countries, including Ghana, the Caribbean, South Africa, and India.

Early in 2000, Mrs Alero Okotie-Eboh Jadesimi came into contact with Youth Business International in London. As a former broadcaster of programmes, daughter of Nigeria's Minister of Information and Communication, she led the sensitization of legislators in the Edo State House of Assembly and to the passing of the first bill in Nigeria which proscribes FGM in 1999. Since then, I believe the Rivers State House of Assembly has also outlawed FGM.

When the film is released, I am confident that the wave of progressive enlightened change will flow through the chambers of the legislature— The federal House of Rep-

'Once convinced of the evil of FGM, Stella works with organizations which educate the communities about the dangers of FGM and teach the practitioners alternative income-generating vocations.'

resentatives,

The Committee on Women Affairs and Youth Development which has condemned the Safiya judgment through its chairperson, Hon. Florence Aiya should now address the issue of FGM in its workshop on the protection and promotion of the right of women and youth in Nigeria. In February 2002, I hope members of the FHR will see Uncut playing live with the Minister of Finance who promoted education and entre-

preneurship, recognizing the potential relevance of YBI and the Prince's Trust model for Nigeria. It was his contact with His Royal Highness, Prince Charles of

Wales in 2000, which alerted him to the work of the Prince Trust and Youth Business International and he was very pleased to learn that YBI Nigeria had just been established by Mrs Alero Okotie's Eboh Jadesimi.

YBI Nigeria is a non-governmental, non-profit business organization aimed at reducing unemployment in Nigeria by availing young people of the opportunity to start and own their businesses. It works with people between the ages of 16-30, regardless of educational qualification and those who have viable business proposals but are unable to find finance from other sources. It provides each successful supplicant with volunteer business mentors and full access to the YBI business support network. The client businesses are monitored by the mentors and staff for three years to ensure that they are well established.

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Youth Business International

preneurship, recognizing the potential relevance of YBI and the Prince's Trust model for Nigeria. On her return from Nigeria, Mrs Alero Okotie-Eboh Jadesimi, in liaison with Richard Street, Executive Director, YBI – UK and Mrs Ginny Spittle (member Advisory Board YBI International) assembled a Board of Trustee with Chief Emeka Anyaokus as Chairman. Among the members are Chief (Mrs.) Toyin Olakurin, Mr Akintola Williams, Alhaji Aliko Mohammed, and a voluntary executive board. The President of Nigeria is the ex-officio patron. President Obasanjo has a particular interest in YBI Nigeria. It was his contact with His Royal Highness, Prince Charles of

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YBI Nigeria solicits and receives support from multinational and national organizations, corporate bodies and partners and other NGOs with similar objectives. It holds monthly forums with YBI clients, mentors and staff. The forums provide information on finance, insurance, apprenticeship and management for clients and a forum for them to discuss their problems and constraints. YBI's well-crafted publicity targets both prospective young clients and volunteers.

Season of Apologies

In the last two months, the issue of apologies by international institutions and organizations and by national and regional governments has evoked intense discourse and passion. The very definition of apology generates deep divisions across the globe and within nations.

The dictionary definition of apology is “an expression of regret for wrongdoing an... excuse or defence.” The Thesaurus relates apology to vindication, penitence and atonement. Each interpretation emphasizes acceptance of wrongdoing and infers some form of making up for it.

At the United Nations World Conference on Racism in Durban in September 2000, some African governments and NGOs wanted an apology for slavery and colonialism. Other African Americans wanted acknowledgement that the trans-Atlantic trade was a crime against humanity and demanded reparation as compensation. The African governments considered that an apology. While desirable, it was not as important as an increase in European investment and trade in Africa. The European ex-colonial countries were reluctant to apologize for the slave trade because of fear of liability for compensation. Their position was to accept that the slave trade was deeply regrettable but not to apologize or to agree that it was a crime against humanity.

About seventy years after Japan began the brutal colonization of Korea, followed by conquest and oppressive occupation, Japan finally apologized to Korea earlier this month. The Japanese Prime minister, on a historic visit to South Korea, apologized for Japanese aggression and abuse of the Korean people. I do not know whether Japan has accepted to pay the compensation which Korea has long demanded. Earlier this year, Japan had issued a formal apology to China for its invasion of that country in 1937 and subsequent bloody occupation until the end of the Second World War. These apologies mean that Japan has accepted, belatedly, its responsibility for the war in China and Korea. Perhaps, henceforth, Japanese school history textbooks will be rewritten to present the truth about Japanese militarism from 1931 to 1945.

Pope John Paul II has dedicated his papacy to righting the wrong of the Catholic Church. The crimes committed in the past by the method of the first church is to offer an apology to try to seek restitution for the future. The Pope has apologized to the Jews and the Muslims for their persecution by the church and has committed the Vatican to spearhead inter-faith dialogue and the betterment of relations with the other two monotheistic religions.

Recently, Pope John Paul II, over the Internet, apologized to the people of the Island of Oceania for the damage done to their culture and society by Catholic missionaries. Three years earlier, the Catholic bishops from Oceania met in the Pope Vatican and submitted to the Pope their report on the injustice committed by the missionaries. The report states that the Pope wishes to convey this apology in person, but his ill-health and fragility made such an exhausting trip impossible but because he considered the apology so important, the Pope took the revolutionary from Sydney. The message was retransmitted on a huge screen to the Pacific Island. The Pope also expressed an apology to all the victims of sexual abuse at the hand of Catholic priests and church workers. A recently publicized case has demonstrated that the Catholic Church no longer conceal and covers up the far too many cases of sexual abuses by its priests. The church has belatedly accepted responsibility for the crimes committed by its servants. In Australia, the ancient indigenous people, the Aborigine, is still waiting for an apology from the Australian government for the centuries of oppression and discrimination. The protestant church in Australia apologized to the Aborigines; I am not aware that the Catholic Church in Australia has yet done so. If not, perhaps the Pope may consider extending his apology to the people of Oceania, to the Australian indigenes. The Australian Prime Minister, John Harvard, is adamant in his refusal to apologize for the acts of the past which he and his government bear no responsibility for. Yet despite the granting of the land right

to the aborigines and some development projects, there is no doubt that aborigines continue to endure political, economic, social discrimination and marginalization. An apology would offer symbolic restitution for the past and inspire confidence in a better future for the Aborigines.

In Nigeria, recently, several apologies have been demanded, and another offered then regretted. *Ohaeneze*, in its submission to the Oputa panel, has demanded an apology from the Nigerian government for the state-sponsored pogroms in the Northern region in 1966, directed primarily against Igbo residents in the North. The group has also demanded an apology – and reparation – for the civil war and the consequent suffering of the Igbo people. The tiny community of Odi in Rivers State, supported by many human rights organizations, is demanding an apology from the federal government for the killing of innocent civilians by soldiers sent to Odi after a police unit was attacked and several policemen killed. The response of the federal government to those demands is a deafening silence.

The scenario is different, however, in the recent resurgence of violent inter-ethnic conflicts in several Middle belt states. A few days after the Tiv militia murdered 19 soldiers who were sent to the Benue

‘In Nigeria, recently, several apologies have been demanded, another offered, then regretted.’

Taraba border to keep the peace, Governor George Akume of Benue State publicly apologized to the federal government and people of Nigeria over the tragic incident.

The apology was ignored by the federal government which moved its troops into Tiv occupied areas of Benue State. Governor Akume publicly announced that he regretted apologizing to the federal gov-

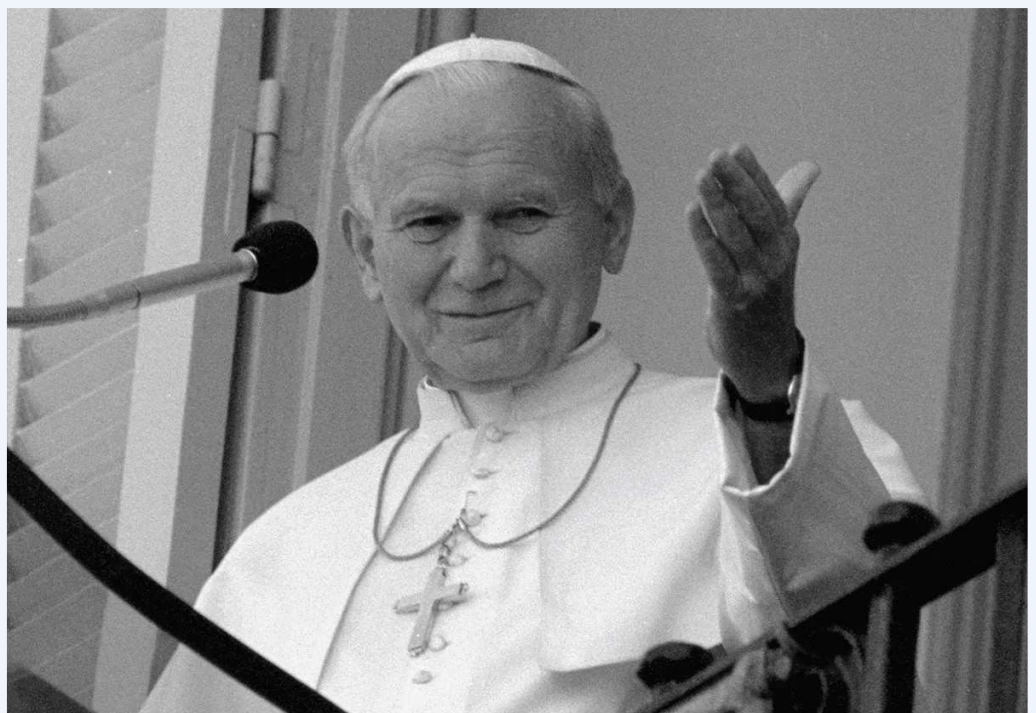
the motive and political power of a public apology.

An apology is owed to the resident of Oyinkan Abayomi Drive (formerly Queen’s Drive) Ikoyi by the owners of the generator parked outside the building which houses the U.S guest house/club. The generator has been parked there for weeks. Initially, residents thought it was broken down and awaited removal, but it is frequently turned on, emitting its fumes and noise onto the drive. Surely there is a by-law prohibiting generators on the pavement. Further along Oyinkan Abayomi Drive, opposite Adeyemi Street and next to British Airways, an open space has been converted into a motor park, mini-market and bukateria.

The only open space left in Ikoyi is on the Oyinkan Abayomi Drive-foreshore on Five Cowries Creek. Apart from the one just mentioned, the remaining undeveloped spaces have notices declaring that the land belongs to the Inland Waterway Authority. Is this a federal or state body? Readers, please advise. Did we hope that this authority will preserve the foreshore? With the uncontrolled construction going on along the Victoria Island side of the foreshore (along Ozumba Mbadiwe Road), it is getting more and more difficult to even see the lagoon and creek. I can envisage a time when an entrepreneur will set up a stall, tucked away behind a driveway, equipped with a telescope, at which people will queue to pay to look at the lagoon.

As George Bernard Shaw pontificated: “Do not do unto others as you would they should do unto you; their taste may not be the same.” The following true story illustrates the wisdom of Shaw’s dictum. An official brought the Chief Rabbi before the court of the inquisition and told him “we will leave the fate of your people to God. I am putting two slips of paper in this box. On one is written Guilty, on the other is written Innocent, Draw.”

Now, this inquisitor was known to seek the slaughter of all the Jews, and he had written Guilty on both pieces of paper. The Rabbi put his hand inside the box, withdrew the slip and swallowed it. “What are you doing?” cried the inquisitor. “How will the court know



Pope John Paul II

ernment. He said he believes his apology infuriated the federal government even more and was responsible for the reprisal. Given the conflicting statement over responsibility for authorizing the military action from within the federal government and the affected state government, it is difficult to assess the validity of Akume’s interpretation. What is clear is

what is on the slip,” said the Rabbi. “Examine the slip that’s in the box. If it reads innocent, then the paper I swallowed obviously must have read Guilty.” If it was swallowed, it must have read Innocent.”

Has the Spanish government or the Catholic Church ever apologized for the crimes of the Spanish Inquisition?

Echoes from Ghana

This week, I've had two occasions to read about Ghana's past. First, my good friend, Betty O., insisted I read an extraordinary book, "The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi" by Arthur Japin, originally published in Holland in 1997 (the English edition in 2000 by Chatto and Windus).

As the author explains, "... it is a novel, but the main characters are based on historical figures. I have reconstructed their lives around the facts I encountered in official and private documents."

In 1836, a Dutch military expedition landed at the Dutch port/fort of Elmina. It waited there for months before permission was granted by the Ashantehene (King of the Ashanti) for the leaders of the expedition to travel to Kumasi to call on the Ashantehene. Negotiations between them resulted in the 'recruitment of 500 Ashanti troops into the Dutch army for an indefinite period and their posting to the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). Although they were technically paid salaries, the Ashanti soldiers were actually in permanent servitude to the Dutch army. Forty of them were awarded medals for valour but when they were too old to serve, they retired to a small town, Semarang, in Java. They never returned to Africa.

They married Javanese women and learnt the Javanese technique of wax printing cloth (batik). The Ashantis, known as the black Hollanders, created a successful batik industry and exported the cloth to the Gold Coast. The new style supplanted the traditional designs and was very popular, so much so that around 1875, Dutch cotton manufacturers responded to the competition by flooding the West African market with Dutch cloths. The Ashanti black Dutch batik industry slumped.

The agreement between the Ashantehene and the Dutch provided for the son, Kwasi and nephew Kwame of the Ashantehene to follow the delegation to Holland. The Ashante-

two children remained in Java until 1948 when Indonesia became independent, and then they relocated to Holland. The author interviewed Kwasi Boachi's granddaughters in Holland.

Readers, after this brief synopsis, I'm sure you'll agree with Betty O. and me that this is an extraordinary tale from Ghana's history. Secondly, Reuben Abati, in his column in the *Sunday Guardian* (2 December 2001) discussed the decision by the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kuffour, to hold a reburial ceremony for the former heads of state, Generals Akuffo, Acheampong and Afrifa, who were executed in 1979 by Jerry Rawlings. After analysing the historical and political context in his usual insightful way, Abati concludes that "Kuffour is standing history on its head just to play an ethnic game." This interesting column reminds me of the politics and drama surrounding the reburial of another former Ghanaian Head of State, their first Prime Minister, then President, Kwame Nkrumah.

My recollection is greatly facilitated by reading the account of one of the persons involved in that drama, Rear-Admiral Nelson Bossman Soroh, in his soon-to-be-published autobiography, "A Sailor's Dream". In 1972, Soroh

more than mediate. As Rear Admiral Soroh recalls:

"The president asked me if I was prepared to accept the corpse for onward transfer to the Ghanaian government. Without giving too much thought I was prepared to say yes. However, we considered the implication of the offer. If on arrival in Ghana, the Ghanaian government refused to receive the corpse, I could not return the corpse to Guinea as it was apparent that President Sekou Toure would have nothing further to do with the corpse. The question now was, would the Nigerian government accept the body?"

"Finally, on 07 July all was now set. The day, however, started with very heavy thunderstorms and rain as if President Kwame Nkrumah was bidding Guinea goodbye. The special flight with the body of the late President Kwame Nkrumah, his wife and

sighted environment.

According to equal opportunity codes, employers must employ qualified blind or otherwise disabled persons. The opening ceremony's special guest of honor was the wife of the Lagos State governor, Chief Mrs Oluremi Tinubu. Frankly, I did not expect her to be present in person, because on that date, Lagos State received Miss World. Therefore, I was pleasantly surprised by Mrs Tinubu's arrival in good time with minimal fanfare. As the Patron of Nigerian Braille Book Production Centre, Professor Vincent Chukwue-meka Ike, said in his address at the occasion, "the Lagos State 'First Lady' has set an exemplary model of responsibility and commitment."

In her speech, Mrs Tinubu stressed how important she considers voluntarism and how much she has done to promote it in Lagos state as the coordinator for the International Year of Volunteers, Lagos State. Her speech was business-like, her presentation professional and her presence at a low-profile event which clashed with the Miss World reception dramatized her prioritization of voluntarism and her respect for the dedicated work of the Niger-wives Braille Book Production center.

In addition, I was pleasantly surprised by the attendance of a director in the Lagos State Ministry of Education. Kings College is a federal institution and one which has a relatively high proportion of blind students (several were present) but the Federal Ministry of Education was not represented. In education, Lagos state has its priorities right.

My sketches of voluntarism in Nigeria could not begin to do justice to the sterling achievements of professional associations and religious bodies. In closing this postscript, an unusual, inspiring alliance between health professionals and the Catholic Church has been brought to my attention.

In November, a ten-kilometre health walk from the National Stadium to the Costain roundabout in Lagos was undertaken by over five hundred members of the public who had heard about it on NTA. They each paid five hundred naira: in return, a team of doctors from LUTH provided basic check ups before and after the walk. Several persons were diagnosed with acute hypertension and diabetes fortunately before the walk. The affected persons were referred for follow up treatment and the money raised went to the Catholic chaplaincy of the Lagos University College of Medicine and Teaching Hospital which organized the event. Plans are underway to repeat the health walk in partnership with Muslim and Protestant bodies:

Walk the (health) walk and talk the (peace) talk.

'This interesting column reminds me of the politics and drama surrounding the reburial of another former Ghanaian Head of State, their first Prime Minister, then President, Kwame Nkrumah'

family, 50 Ghanaians, including Kodja Botsio, some Guinean officials, Ambassador Afolabi, and myself, took off from Conakry airport for Accra. At the airport to meet the body were senior military officers, including Major General Afere. A military guard was present.

The corpse was removed from the plane by the military and transferred into an ambulance to the military hospital. The Guinean officials who accompanied the corpse to Ghana refused to disembark. This must have been in protest against the refusal of the Ghana Government to send a delegation to Guinea. After Madam Nkrumah and family, and the other 50 Ghanaians disembarked, the Guinean plane taxied back to the runway and took off."

Postscript

Although two columns ago I concluded my series on volunteer-based organizations in Nigeria to highlight the U.N. International Year of Volunteers, may I add a postscript.

One of the organizations in Nigeria, Braille Book Production Centre, recently formally opened its computer training center at its new site at the King's College Annex, Victoria Island. As I explained earlier, the center produces school textbooks in Braille from primary to tertiary levels and sells them at a highly subsidized price of the print books. The training programme is designed for blind university graduates to qualify them to work in a



Kwame Nkrumah

hene believed they were going to acquire a Dutch education and then return: the Dutch saw them as surety for the agreement. At age ten, the two cousins were suddenly uprooted from their families, friends, clothes, beliefs, and environment to the capital and royal court of Holland. There, the African princes, as they were called, became the pets of the royal family and received a classical aristocratic European education.

Kwame, as an adult, longed to return to the Gold Coast. He obtained a commission into the Dutch army and was posted to Fort Elmina. There he waited for permission to return to Kumasi and succeed to the kingship but internal politics in the Ashanti Kingdom denied him this homecoming. Isolated in Elmina, torn between two worlds, lonely and introspective, Kwame committed suicide in 1850.

Kwasi, a gifted musician and engineer, deeply distressed by his beloved cousin's suicide and restless in Europe but not sharing his cousin's homesickness, opted to join the Dutch colonial service. Kwasi was posted to the Dutch East Indies, thus following his kinsmen soldiers. Despite discrimination against him, Kwasi settled in Java. When he retired from the service, he was given a plantation by royal patronage and married a Javanese woman. Kwasi Boachi died in Java in 1904, never having returned to Africa. His

was appointed by General Gowon, head of a Nigerian delegation to President Sekou Toure of Guinea to persuade him to release the corpse of Nkrumah to the Ghanaian government then headed by Acheampong. Readers may recall that when Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966, he took refuge in Conakry, Guinea with some followers, and died there in 1972. Sekou Toure had insisted that the only honor Ghana could do for its late president was a full national funeral and the return, in peace, of his followers. Sekou Toure felt his late friend would not forgive him otherwise. Sekou Toure also demanded that Ghana send a high-level official delegation to receive the corpse.

The Ghanaian government had not accepted these conditions and an impasse ensued which General Gowon tried to resolve, hence the delegation led by Rear Admiral Soroh. It took three trips to Conakry and complex tripartite negotiations before the mediation finally resulted in the release of Nkrumah's corpse. At one point, it seemed Nigeria would have to do

My Arrival 35 Years Ago

Next week will mark the 35th anniversary of my arrival at Lagos airport on December 30, 1996. I was supposed to arrive two days earlier, according to my itinerary as worked out by Qantas in Sydney, my hometown and point of departure. The Qantas agent was unfamiliar with flights into Lagos, but according to his 'book,' Nigeria Airways flew from Rome to Lagos.

Rome was my last stop-over after visits to Manila, Hong Kong, Bombay, Bangkok, Athens, and Tel Aviv. This meant I did not have to fly on to London to get a flight to Lagos. Rather, my ticket ended in London after Lagos because this trip to Lagos was in the nature of "Siddon look." I had met Ben Mba, my husband-to-be in New Zealand and we agreed that I would come to Lagos and see whether I could adapt to life in Nigeria. If I decided I could not adapt, I would go on to London where I had gained admission to the University of London to do an M. Phil.

I was just 22: life was full of possibilities.

In Rome, I returned in good time for my night flight to Lagos. The first shock, there was no Nigeria Airways counter at the airport. Eventually, I was referred to the BOAC counter where, the second shock, I was informed that there was no Nigeria Airways flight—there hadn't been one for some time – they had no idea when there would be a next one. Their advice: go to London and take one of their flights. I knew Ben would be waiting for me at the Lagos airport: I had no telephone number to contact him, what was I to do? I asked whether any other airlines flew to Lagos from Rome and found out that Sabena did. So, off to Sabena, I went only to learn that yes, they did fly to Lagos but that the next flight was not until three days. I quickly calculated my money and knew I could not pay for three nights in even a cheap hotel.

What next? In consternation, I just stood there. My pitiable state attracted attention: I

comprehension and added, "You know Kano is in Nigeria." Revelation. I expressed my delight, apologized for my ignorance, and said of course I was interested. From Kano, I could surely take a bus or train to Lagos. In retrospect, I shudder, at my time, ignorance was truly bliss. So off to the KLM counter I went and had my ticket endorsed to KLM. I did ask whether they knew how I'd get to Lagos from Kano but met indifferent shrugs. Not their problem.

I was disconcerted to discover when I boarded that the passengers were predominantly white Afrikaans. When in the early hours of the next morning we landed at Kano, I and two white male passengers waited for our luggage to be removed and trolled to the terminal. We followed: one of the men introduced himself to me and from then on took me under his wing. Unfortunately, I've forgotten his name but I remember

his kindness. He was Greek, a manager of the Metaloplastica factory in Kano, returning from leave: I shall call him Andreas.

'Then he asked me from which country I was from and exasperated, I replied, "but it's in my passport." The soldier frowned furiously and said something to the other two: I fixed my gaze on my passport and suddenly realized that the soldier was holding it upside down. A shiver of fear kept me silent'

As we walked across the tarmac, I was shocked to see armed soldiers on guard dotted along the route. At the entrance to the terminal, three soldiers stood behind

and exasperated I replied, "but it's in my passport". The soldier frowned furiously and said something to the other two: I fixed my gaze on my passport and suddenly realized that the soldier was holding it upside down. A shiver of fear kept me silent: Andreas spoke quickly and cheerfully to the soldier who laughed and casually flicked my passport to me. I quickly followed Andreas through the deserted terminal.

Only two cars were parked outside, and one was for Andreas, the other for the second man. Andreas offered me a lift but where was I going? I explained my predicament and Andreas told me the only solution was to return to the airport at night and join the BOAC flight that stopped over in Kano en route to Lagos. For the rest of the day, I was welcome to be his guest. The following fifteen or so hours taught me a great deal about the country I'd just landed in. I knew there had been a military coup in January, which had overthrown a parliamentary democracy, and that there had been some killings and unrest since then but frankly all that was very remote to me. Ben's letters reassured me that there was nothing to worry about and Lagos was very peaceful.

Driving through what I later knew to be the Sabongari and seeing the burnt-out cars, the smashed windows and doors of houses, forcefully brought home to me that this was where thousands of people had been slaughtered. At lunch at the Kano club, I learnt more than I needed to know from a conversation about the ferocity of ethnic prejudice.

That night, Andres got me safely to the BOAC plane and when I landed in Lagos, Ben was waiting for me there. He had come to the airport the previous two nights hoping I would turn up. These drives to and from Surulere to Ikeja at night had not been comfortable: there were military checkpoints to negotiate, which made Igbo apprehensive just three months after the last pogrom in the north. The exodus of Igbo people from Ibadan and Lagos had begun. Ben's two brothers in Lagos had already sent their families to Onitsha. They had insisted on accompanying their younger brother on his trips to the airport for his safety and also to extend a proper welcome to me from the Mba family.

Six weeks later, they were present at the registry office in Broad Street, where we got married. My "Siddon look" had convinced me I could *waka Lagos well well*. However, three months later, we too felt we had to join the continuing exodus to the East. That is another anniversary and another story for another column.



Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos

knew people were discussing my case. A KLM uniformed man approached me and said that if I was interested, a KLM plane would leave for South Africa, in three hours, with a stopover in Kano. I looked at him blankly: thinking, surely, he's not suggesting I go to South Africa; in those days a deeply hated country. The KLM man saw my non-

two tables under a handwritten sign 'Immigration'. Andreas handed over his passport and exchanged words with the guards. Then I handed in mine; the soldier asked me what I was doing in Kano. I explained that I was trying to get to Lagos etc. but he didn't seem to listen. Then he asked me from which country I was from

My Wish List for Nigeria 2002

This list is not exhaustive, in random order and tries to avoid conventional platitudes.

1. That effective medication to control and cure malaria, sickle cell anaemia, T.B. and HIV/AIDS be produced and sold cheaply.
2. That the Lagos state government build a bridge from Ikoyi to Lekki Peninsula to relieve the traffic paralysis in Victoria Island.
3. That universities and polytechnics be provided with current technology for teaching science, engineering and computer studies.
4. That the title, office and budget of the first lady (and, in future, first gentleman) at the federal, state and local levels be abolished.
5. That professionals in the public sector be paid salaries competitive with the private sector to encourage them to serve the public.
6. That Safiya's appeal be upheld, and no such punishment ever be permitted in the democratic, secular Republic of Nigeria.
7. That criteria for admission to all government educational institutions be on merit only. Since 'federal character' criteria have not succeeded in their well-intentioned objectives, they should be scrapped.
8. That the money paid for media advertisements of congratulations for birthdays and achievements of public officers be donated to charity and the donation acknowledged in a weekly paid listing in the media.
9. That federal and state legislatures pass laws that criminalize female genital mutilation and the marriage of girls below the age of 17.
10. That the pensions of retired public officials (including the armed forces) be paid on time.
11. That the archaeological site, Muson in Onikan, Lagos be restored to its original function as the extension in the progress of the National Museum.
12. That public officials whose looting of public funds in public knowledge be brought to public trial and if convicted, be sentenced.
13. That the minimum qualification for recruits to the police force be the senior school certificate, regardless of their state of origin.



Ikoyi to Lekki Peninsula

‘That the criteria for admission to all government educational institutions be on merit only. Since ‘federal character’ criteria have not succeeded in their well-intentioned objectives, they should be scrapped’

14. That a special training college for university/polytechnic graduates be set up to produce an elite corps of detectives.
15. That the Lagos domestic airport terminal be reconstructed so that the temporary “barn” can revert to its intended function of serving one airline, not one dozen.
16. That the intelligence services fulfil their mandate and monitor intelligent persons and places that are sources of religious and communal disturbances.
17. That the federal and state governments set up effective conflict resolution bodies which preempt conflict, not just carry out post-mortems.
18. That foreign proselytizers – whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish or whatever – be properly screened and monitored.
19. That all unpublished white papers of enquiries, commissions etc. be published.
20. That no person should agree to serve on such commissions, or panels without a guarantee of publication, failing which the members should ‘deep throat’ their findings.
21. That the report of the constitution review panel be released and distributed not least so that the Ford Foundation's \$2 million grant can be accounted for.
22. That federal and state legislators come to appreciate that they can learn more about the working of democracy in other countries by surfing the net or reading books than by travelling to those countries at public expense.
23. That the use of sirens be strictly limited to bonafide emergency services, state governors and the president.
24. That all my readers enjoy the holiday season and that the new year fulfills their dreams.

Ben and Nina Mba Foundation
2022