

39. *Id.*, p. 357.
40. *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979, op. cit.*, Section 170, pp. 57 — 58.
41. *Id.*, p. 58.
42. Imo House of Assembly *Fourth Session, First House, No. 21, Votes and Proceedings* (Owerri: Government Printer, 2nd November, 1982), pp. 71 — 72
43. Edmund Burke's address to the Electors of Bristol in 1774 on the relationship between the representative and his constituents. Quoted from Hitchner and Harbold, *op.cit.*, p. 393.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Id.*, p. 494
47. *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, op.cit.* Sections 78 and 116, pp. 30 and 39
48. *Daily Times*, Lagos, June 13, 1983, p. 5.

## THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE NIGERIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT, 1934 — 1941

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The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), formed in 1934, was the first political organisation in Nigeria to make real and determined efforts to bring under one umbrella the anti-colonialists and the politically conscious and articulate elements of the Nigerian population. The contributions of the movement to the growth of national and political consciousness in Nigeria have never been fully appreciated. A study of its rise and decline is a pre-requisite for a clear understanding and interpretation of the development of political ideas and the emergence of political parties in Nigeria since 1941.

This paper examines the origin of the NYM, its aims and objectives, its major activities and its contributions to the political development in Nigeria. In addition, it examines the circumstances leading to the decline of the movement and the repercussions of that decline. The political environment into which the movement was born is discussed as background information.

### THE GROWTH OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM, 1920 — 1939

As Cole has pointed out, the problem of whether nationalism existed in Nigeria before the Second World War or not depends on the definition of nationalism.<sup>1</sup> If nationalism is defined as a consciousness which makes all Nigerians, or even most Nigerians, place their national identity before their ethnic or regional identity, then Nigerian nationalism is still in the embryonic stage. But nationalism may also be conceptualised as a shared national or pan-Nigerian consciousness among the educated, even if the vast majority of the people in the country do not share such feelings of nationalism. It is a matter of political leadership. That the educated elite in Nigeria under the banner of nationalism were able to lead the country into independence cannot be denied. If the latter conception of nationalism is accepted, then nationalism existed in Nigeria before the Second World War.

During the period under review Nigeria's educated elite fervently believed in the concept of a single Nigerian nationalism and they tried to speak for Nigeria on matters affecting the whole country. It is true that they were based mainly in Lagos. But Lagos was the main centre of power in the country, and the Lagos politicians were seen by the educated people in the rest of the country as their representatives. The Lagos newspapers were full of the reports of the grievances of people from all over the country. The crucial issue should be whether the actions and the words of the educated elite as political

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leaders advanced the cause of the people's national awareness, or national consciousness, or not. From this standpoint, any concerted attack on British imperialism should be taken as a contribution to the development of nationalism in Nigeria. This is the position being taken in this article

During the late 1920s and 1930s, several factors combined to assert the growth of Nigerian nationalism. The most important of these factors included the opposition of the educated elite to the Indirect Rule System of administration in the country, the reactions of the educated elite to the new attitude of the British officials in Nigeria, the economic depressions and the consequent decline in Nigerian national revenue, the growing influence of a virile nationalist press and the role of the West African Student Union WASU.

Perhaps no other British Government policy in Nigeria evoked greater hostility among the educated than the Indirect Rule System. They saw this system as a policy designed by the British authorities to frustrate their ambitions to take an active part in the government of their country. This was why the subject featured prominently in the Nigerian Legislative Council debates during this period.<sup>2</sup> They wanted the system to be modernised and provisions made for their participation in the local government. The educated elite argued that the traditional governments in Nigerian kingdoms and states were consilior in nature with a high degree of participation by different sections of the community. Under the Indirect Rule System, the traditional rulers, by being appointed Sole Authorities, were given powers which they never possessed before the coming of the British and which made them autocrats. It was particularly irritating to the Nigerian modern elite to see the power of the traditional rulers strengthened by the British colonial authorities to such an extent that even the traditional methods of deposing them would no longer be applied, since the colonial officials had to uphold the power by all means.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons the Nigerian nationalists were relentless in their demand for the reform of the system.

The educated elite also resented the new attitude of British officials to educated Africans or Nigerians. Before the end of the 19th century, senior posts in the Colonial Civil Service were open to educated Africans.<sup>4</sup> By the 1920s, the number of educated Nigerians had increased: these were dubbed "Europeanised Africans". The fact that they began to claim equality with Europeans in many ways was a rude shock to the British officials who continued to view the educated African as a child being educated on civilisation. The British officials could not accept an educated Nigerian as an equal simply because he had acquired European education. Some of the British officials in Nigeria often ridiculed educated Nigerians as "an idle middle-class with no roots in and no love for their own country, (and) good for nothing except imitating European vices".<sup>5</sup> With this changed attitude on the part of the British officials, posts formally held by Africans, both in the civil service and in the commercial houses, began to be reserved for Europeans.

In the Church, educated Nigerians were also being excluded from the higher positions of leadership. They could only aspire to be assistant bishops, after the days of Bishop Ajayi Crowder, the first African bishop in Nigeria. It was generally believed by the European Church authorities that Africans could not provide true Christian leader-

ship. It was argued that, at heart, they retained their "pagan" beliefs even though they claimed to accept the Christian faith.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, there were Nigerians of whom this could be said; but it could not be applied as a general rule. The solution suggested was to recruit more and more European priests to go out to Nigeria so that Christianity might take a firm root.

Thus, in government, church and in commercial firms, Nigerian educated elite were side-tracked and distrusted. Consequently, they were driven into professions such as law and medicine and trades, which made them independent of the government. These professionals became the leaders of the Nigerian political parties of this period and constantly agitated for reforms of government policies.

The decade immediately after the First World War (1919—29) was marked by prosperity and a boom in trade, not only in Europe but also in countries like Nigeria. Funds released after the war were spent in expanding trade, industry and the manufacture of goods for civilians which had been almost abandoned during the war. Production and profits soon soared. Then came the period of depression, 1930-38. During this time prices fell so low that primary-producing countries like Nigeria obtained less and less for their farm products. At the peak of the boom in 1929 the value of Nigeria's external trade was £30,294,000.<sup>7</sup> In 1931 the total value of Nigeria's exports and imports amounted to approximately £17,000,000. In 1924—25 Nigeria received 3d a pound for its "American" cotton. In 1930—31, it received as little as half a penny. The quantity exported dropped from 34,500 bales to 14,000. In 1930—31, palm oil and kernels nearly maintained their level of production, the quantity being 360,000 tons as against 390,000, but the value diminished from £6,928,000 to £3,672,000.<sup>8</sup> The government revenue was also seriously affected and fell by over thirty per cent, since the greater part of this was derived from custom duties on imports. Wages fell by twenty-five to thirty per cent in certain government establishments below what was regarded as normal. The average daily wage of labourers was 9d.<sup>9</sup> The consequent retrenchment and unemployment provided an opportunity for the Nigerian nationalists to criticise the government.<sup>10</sup> They castigated the government for poor financial management during the trade boom and bad policy during the economic depression. While talking of the government's "spending propensity" in 1928, Adeniyi-Jones described Nigeria as "a paradise for European Civil Servants" which had yet to be excelled. He said that "by its liberal allowances to its members the Civil Service must be not only the most expensive, but the most coveted of the Colonial services."<sup>11</sup> By criticising and castigating the colonial administration for the economic difficulties of the people, the Nigerian political leaders were directly or indirectly stimulating political consciousness and national awareness in the country.

During this period the press played a significant role in the process of arousing national consciousness. In 1912, only four newspapers were regularly published in Nigeria. By 1926, there were thirteen such newspapers.<sup>12</sup> Of particular importance is the fact that during the period under review the Nigerian press revealed a growing concern with government policies, with major national social, economic and political issues and thus displayed an increasing sense of national consciousness.

Omu rightly describes the Nigerian Press of the period as the guardian of the rights

and liberties of the people as well as interpreters of their ideals and aspirations. He goes further to state that the newspaper press was a crucial agency in the overall strategy for meaningful participation in government and in the dissemination of national consciousness and political awareness.<sup>13</sup>

Enahoro, an erudite journalist during the 1940s, has the following to say about the Nigerian press during this period: "... the Press was in the vanguard of the progressive movements in Nigeria, leading rather than reflecting public opinion and moulding rather than reporting political development."<sup>14</sup> Of course, this is not to say that the newspapers did not reflect public opinion or report political developments. They did all these things and more. They attacked government measures which they considered bad. By its activities during the 1920s and 1930s the Nigerian press was actively preparing the rising Nigerian educated elite for the inauguration of a new stage in the development of Nigerian nationalism.

This nationalistic feeling, which was being aroused by the reaction to the economic depression of the 1930s and the Nigerian newspaper press, was greatly assisted by the emergence of Nigerian student organisations abroad. One such organisation was the West African Students Union (WASU), founded in 1925 by Ladipo Solanke, a Yoruba Law student from Abeokuta.<sup>15</sup> The declared objectives of the Union included the creation of a centre where West African Students in London could meet and discuss common problems and the fostering of a spirit of national consciousness and racial pride among its members.<sup>16</sup> Between 1929 and 1932, Solanke made an extensive tour of Nigerian and British West African countries to raise funds for the WASU students' hostel, to establish branches of the Union and to seek the co-operation of the traditional rulers. During the tour he endeavoured to bring together the nationalists in West Africa and their traditional rulers.<sup>17</sup> He aroused enthusiasm in most places he visited.

Back in London the members of the Union agitated for political, economic and social reforms in West Africa. Their strategy included lobbying among leading politicians in Britain, writing and submitting memoranda to West African governments on the burning issues of the day, periodic publication of pamphlets, writing of articles in the West African Press and the organisation of public lectures and study groups.<sup>18</sup> Through these various activities the Union provided a powerful and influential training for future West African political leaders.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, there was a great yearning among the new generation of educated elite in Lagos for the creation of a new nationalist organisation. They envisaged an organisation that would be more forward-looking, more dynamic and more radical than Herbert Macaulay's Nigerian National Democratic Party, which had been in the field since 1923.

The hour found the envisaged political organisation in the Lagos Youth Movement, which later became the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). The auspicious occasion was provided by the opening of the Yaba Higher College in Lagos on January 19, 1934. In his speech at the opening ceremony, Governor Cameron said that the college had been established to equip the youths of Nigeria to fill the posts in their country to which they were reasonably entitled to aspire in the near future.<sup>20</sup>

The Yaba College was not affiliated to any British University. It was to grant its in-

dependent diplomas in a number of disciplines, including medicine, arts, agriculture, economics and engineering. The establishment of the college was severely criticised by the Nigerian intelligentsia on the following grounds.<sup>21</sup> In the first place, the college was inferior in status to a British University. Secondly, the certificates to be awarded by the institution were also inferior and the graduates of the college would be expected to hold positions that would be subordinate to those held by graduates of British Universities in the same disciplines. Before, there had been talk of Africanisation of the civil service of the country and Nigerian nationalists thought that the establishment of the Yaba College was a subtle device by the British Government to impair this legitimate ambition. In the third place, the certificates to be awarded by the institution would only enjoy recognition in Nigeria and would not command any respect or recognition outside the country. Finally, even though the diplomas were to be inferior to University degrees, the duration of courses was to be longer than the period required for a degree in a British University in the same subject. For these reasons, the Yaba College scheme evoked a widespread resentment and condemnation in political circles in Lagos and in some areas of Southern Nigeria.<sup>22</sup> In order to canalise the objections of Nigeria's intelligentsia and to present a united front to the Nigerian Government, the Lagos Youth Movement was formed in 1934 and was re-christened Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936.<sup>23</sup>

A mass meeting was then held in the Glover Memorial Hall on Saturday, March 17, 1934. There was a very large number of people in attendance, among whom were Dr. Oguntola Sapara, the Honourable T. A. Doherty, Dr. M. R. Macaulay, Dr. M. Abayomi, Dr. J.K. Vaughan, Messrs. O. Alakija, Ernest Ikoli, A. S. Akisanya, and Dr. A. Maja.

Before the meeting ended it unequivocally deprecated the manner of introduction and execution of the Yaba Higher College Scheme. It claimed to represent the intelligentsia of Lagos and agreed with Henry Carr's earlier remark that the scheme was "shy and tentative". The meeting then passed a seven-point resolution stating, among other things, that:

It is considered inimical to the highest interest of Nigeria to flood the country with a class of mass produced men whose standard of qualification must be necessarily deficient owing to the limited facilities available locally as regards material and staff.<sup>24</sup>

The Youth Movement later submitted a memorandum to the government to follow up its resolutions. The issues contained in the memorandum may be summarised as follows:<sup>25</sup>

1. that prospectus and syllabus be prepared and published for the information of the public;
2. that students be encouraged to take external examination of British Universities and that courses of studies be so arranged to make it easy for those who might desire to go for higher studies in Europe at their own expense and the period spent at the Yaba College should be counted in their favour in any field of study they wished to pursue;
3. that the government should make definite provisions for scholarship awards to Nigerian boys who show special abilities to study in British Universities and that such an arrangement should form part of Nigerian Educational Policy so that it might be possible for boys to begin their higher education at the Yaba College and to complete same in Europe;
4. That there should be no discrimination against men who qualified at the Yaba College in favour of men trained abroad as regards entry into the civil service;

5. that in the training of teachers a general high standard of efficiency should be aimed at;
6. that a board or a "council of control" should be set up for the administration and management of the affairs of the college;
7. that the standard of admission into the college should be by the Secondary School Leaving Certificate and not the then used methods of admission which the Director of Education described as "by personal selection and oral tests".

All the memorandum achieved were explanations by Hussey, the then-Director of Education in Nigeria, as to the good intentions of the government in the establishment of the college. The government went ahead with the scheme as originally conceived.

Although the movement was primarily formed to protest against the establishment of the Yaba College, it quickly assumed a political complexion. This was because the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), which had been championing the causes of Nigerians since 1923, had suddenly become an ally of the Government following Governor Cameron's reconciliatory measures. These included the dramatic reinstatement of the Eleko (the king of Lagos) in 1931<sup>26</sup>, the establishment of a new high court system which allowed litigants and accused persons to appeal from provincial Courts to High Courts. This right had been denied them in the past. Cameron, who was Governor of Nigeria between 1931 and 1935, also established the principle that "native" courts should not exercise jurisdiction over educated Africans without the advice and consent of the Legislative Council.<sup>27</sup> These measures not only seriously undermined the role of the NNDP as a critic of the government, but it also weakened it.

About this development, Cole writes:

The appeal of the NNDP lay principally in its outspoken opposition to the government; Cameron was able to make the NNDP and its associated newspapers pro-government. ... Macaulay was by temperament a fighter. When he left that role to become a collaborator the garment did not fit. He apparently despaired and concentrated more and more of his efforts on the House of Dosunmu.<sup>28</sup>

It was the vacuum thus created by the decline of the NNDP that NYM tried to fill.

Not much is known about the activities of the NYM between 1934 and 1938. But the 1938 Lagos Town Council elections resulted in a sweeping victory for the Movement's candidates.<sup>29</sup> It also won the three Lagos seats in the Legislative Council<sup>30</sup>, thereby putting an end to the NNDP's electoral monopoly in Lagos. During its preparations for the 1938 elections, the NYM organised a powerful election campaign and set up an executive committee made up of twelve members. Kofoworola Abayomi, a well known Yoruba druggist and ophthalmologist<sup>31</sup>, was made President of the Movement while Ernest Sessei Ikoli, an Ijo and editor of various Nigerian newspapers between 1922 and 1934<sup>32</sup>, was made Vice-President. Hezekiah Oladipo Davies<sup>33</sup>, a Yoruba lawyer and journalist, was made Secretary of the Movement. Other prominent members of the Movement included Hamzat, A. Subair, Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Ogugua-Arab, J. A. Tuyo and Duro Emmanuel. Before studying the activities of the Movement it is worthwhile to look at one of the momentous events which affected the life of the Movement for good or ill and the political development of Nigeria in general. This is the arrival of Nnamdi Azikiwe, popularly known as Zik, on the Nigerian political scene.

## THE EMERGENCE OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE

In 1934, Azikiwe returned to West Africa, having successfully studied in America where he obtained two Masters Degrees<sup>34</sup>. His applications for employment in government or semi-government establishments in Liberia, the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Nigeria were cleverly rebuffed in spite of his educational attainments.<sup>35</sup> Out of frustration, Zik went to the Gold Coast and became the editor of the *Accra Morning Post*.<sup>36</sup> On Friday, May 15, 1936 the paper published an article captioned "Has the African a God?" written by I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson, a Sierra Leonean labour leader and politician, then resident in Ghana. The article was very critical of colonial rule in Africa and the words used were pungent. In 1937 Azikiwe and Wallace-Johnson were convicted for sedition, but Azikiwe was later acquitted on appeal.<sup>37</sup> He returned to Nigeria in the same year. He immediately enrolled as a member of the Youth Movement and was elected into its Central Executive Committee.<sup>38</sup> On November 12, 1937 Azikiwe founded the *West African Pilot*<sup>39</sup> with the symbolic motto: "show the light and the people will find the way". The Youth Movement began to publish a news-sheet called the "Service", which was later converted to a daily newspaper, the *Daily Service* and was edited by Ernest Ikoli, Vice-President of the Movement. Even though the *Pilot* espoused the cause of the Youth Movement, the *Daily Service* was its official organ.

The founding of the *West African Pilot* in November 1937 by Azikiwe started a new era in journalism in Nigeria. In his opening address at the launching of the paper, Azikiwe described the editorship as "the sentinel of popular liberty and guardian of civilisation whose supreme task was to make assertions in unequivocal terms".<sup>40</sup> Although, like most Nigerian newspapers of the period, it was published in Lagos, it was nevertheless distributed throughout the length and breadth of the country. It catered for the interest of the ordinary man in the country as well as that of the Lagos intelligentsia. Azikiwe brought with him what has been aptly described as "the sensationalism and pugnacity of American yellow journalism and particularly the obsessive race-consciousness of American Negro Newspapers" to Nigeria.<sup>41</sup> His editorials, which were often bold and daring, centred around the theme of injustices of colonialism and racial inequalities. In their stinging attacks on the government the editorials advocated positive and radical actions to right the wrongs. The country-wide circulation of the *West African Pilot* was an important factor in the awakening of national consciousness in Nigeria. In the words of Eppelle: "... it was the principal instrument with which Dr. Azikiwe fanned the embers of Nigerian nationalism into a bright glow".<sup>42</sup> Thus, Azikiwe was an important asset to the Youth Movement. He soon joined the other stalwarts of the Movement to form what Obafemi Awolowo has described as the famous "volcanic nationalist quartet" of Ikoli, Akisanya, H.O. Davies and Azikiwe.<sup>43</sup>

When Azikiwe arrived on the Nigerian political scene, the main strength and membership of the Youth Movement was in Lagos and the Western Provinces of Nigeria. Nearly three-quarters of its membership were said to be Yoruba, who were at the time educationally and economically in advance of other ethnic groups in Nigeria and, consequently, in a better position to take the lead in nationalist politics.<sup>44</sup> Up to this

time, the Igbo were marginally involved in nationalist politics in Nigeria. Azikiwe was thus the first Igbo to rise into prominence in the nationalist movement in Nigeria. Until 1935 no Igbo had attained a professional status. The first Igbo doctor, Sir Francis Ibiama, did not return to Nigeria until 1935 and the first Igbo lawyer, Louis Mbanefo, later Chief Judge of the Eastern Region, did not qualify until 1937.<sup>45</sup> The Yoruba, on the other hand, could count several professionals who had qualified late in the 19th century or early in this century.<sup>46</sup> But during the 1920s and 1930s, educational facilities in Igboland had expanded at a faster rate than in any other area in Nigeria through the activities of the Christian Missions and the "Progressive Unions". The products of the educational institutions began to take up jobs in the lower segments of the civil service as clerks or artisans. And so, when Azikiwe arrived on the Nigerian political scene he found waiting not only a large number of Yoruba youths who were displeased with the conservatism and moderation of their traditional Lagosian leadership, but also all the rising educated elements of one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria which until then had had no spokesmen. Azikiwe was immediately regarded as a symbol of Igbo achievement and emancipation and was able to mobilise their political support.<sup>47</sup> By then the Igbo were to be found almost everywhere in Nigeria, particularly in the urban areas. It is believed that there were more than 10,000 of them in Lagos alone at that time.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Azikiwe made three significant contributions to the political development of Nigeria at that time: a more militant national consciousness, a fire-brand and aggressive newspaper press and the political mobilisation of a large number of educated Igbo who were hitherto almost totally excluded.<sup>49</sup>

### THE AIMS, ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NYM

Although the political programme of the Movement was not radically different from that of the NNDP, it was more ambitious, more dynamic and more forward-looking. The *West African Pilot*, unofficial organ of the Movement, commenting on the new type of leadership being provided by it, wrote as follows:

... all is not well and the era of submission, without constitutional opposition and all the concomitants of Uncle Tomism is gone. And that the Nigerian of today and tomorrow must realise that it is part of the Sleeping African Giant who must be awakened from its deep sleep, in order to harness its energy and usher in a New Nigeria.<sup>50</sup>

In 1938 the Movement published "The Nigerian Youth Charter"<sup>51</sup> which contained its official objectives. The charter was actually a combination of three separate charters - political, economic and social. It was a medley of ideas borrowed from the Congress of British West Africa and the Democratic Party.

The Political Charter stated that the political goal of the Movement was the complete take-over of the government of the country by the indigenous people of the country. It condemned the principle of official majority in the Legislative Council and wanted it to be replaced by that of an unofficial majority. It demanded a restructuring of the Legislative Council in such a way that all sections of the Nigerian Community would be progressively represented. It advocated universal suffrage for all persons above

the age of twenty-one. It expressed the dissatisfaction of the Movement with the principle and practice of the Indirect Rule System.

The Economic Charter demanded equal economic opportunities for foreigners and Nigerians and stated:

We pledge ourselves to encourage and support all forms of local industry. It should be our duty to protect all Africans in industry and to resist every attempt by foreigners to crush them out of the field...<sup>52</sup>

The Cultural and Social Charter stated that the Movement believed that mass education should be the true pivot of the educational policy of the government. It urged the government to make elementary education gradually free and compulsory.

Organisationally, the Youth Movement strove to become a nation-wide political body. In October 1938, it was reported that the membership of the Movement, with 40 branches outside Lagos, was over 20,000.<sup>53</sup> Its most important branches were those established in such centres as Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Warri, Benin-City, Aba, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Kano, Sapele, Ilesa, Uyo, Ejirin, Makurdi and Yelwa.<sup>54</sup>

By the establishment of these branches the Movement had stretched much farther afield than the Democratic Party ever attempted to do. The Movement is usually regarded as a southern party by some writers because its northern branches were mainly composed of southerners who were resident there. This was not a deliberate policy of the Movement. It was due to the hostile attitude of the British colonial officials and of the emirs in the north to political organisations, particularly those with southern connections. The attitude of the emirs should not surprise anyone if it is realised that all of them were holding their offices thanks to the colonial officials. Any organisation like the NYM, which attacked the policies of these officials, was seen as a threat to their interest. In spite of the hostility, there was an active branch of the Movement in Jos embracing northerners and southerners.<sup>55</sup> Some courageous northerners like Mallam Jumare enrolled as member of the Movement. Perhaps many more would have enrolled but for the repressive attitude of the British officials and their agents. The unpalatable experience of Mallam Jumare served as a warning to other northerners who might have been interested in the Movement. Jumare lost his post as a teacher because he became a member of the Movement and had to be employed in its secretariat in Lagos.<sup>56</sup>

In pursuance of its nation-wide objectives, the Movement, in general, constantly criticised all unpopular governmental policies throughout the country. Among other things, it demanded the Africanisation of the civil service, the abolition or reform of the Indirect Rule System, the representation of the provinces, including the North, in the Legislative Council, government support for African business entrepreneurs, improvement of the conditions of service of the employees of the commercial houses in the country and aid for farmers and rural communities.<sup>57</sup> In addition to all this, the Youth Movement encouraged the organisation of trade unions in the country and some of them are believed to have owed the drafting of their constitutions to it.<sup>58</sup>

Three important events, however, brought the Movement into the limelight. The first was the unflinching support it gave to the Nigerian Motor Transporters Union in its

agitation against the "double licence" of 1937.<sup>59</sup> In the 1930s the government observed that the Nigerian railways were being run at a loss. It was of the opinion that the loss was caused by an unfair competition by motor transporters and that such a competition must be discouraged. Accordingly, the government decided that lorries plying the same routes as the railways should be made to pay double the licence fee normally imposed on other lorries. When in January 1937, the Motor Transporters Union reacted by organising a strike, it was fully backed by the Youth Movement which saw the measure taken by the government as inimical to the economic interests of the members of the union. The law was soon abolished.

The second incident was the Movement's agitation against the "cocoa Pool" of 1938. The pool was a buying agreement signed by ten leading European firms exporting about 90 percent of Nigeria's cocoa. It was designed to keep the price of cocoa down. The Youth Movement spearheaded the agitation against this agreement. A deputation from the Movement made an extensive tour of the cocoa producing areas of Western Nigeria, alerting the producers of the situation whereby the European buyers were trying to keep the price of cocoa low, persuading them to hold up their cocoa and to support the fight for the abolition of the pool.<sup>60</sup> After this tour the Movement sent another delegation to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to confer with cocoa producers there.<sup>61</sup>

In Lagos, on January 22, 1938, the Movement organised a mammoth rally to protest against the pool. A resolution which was passed deprecated the formation of the pool, expressed full sympathy with the cocoa producers, and stressed the determination of the Movement to oppose the agreement by all peaceful means. It then called on the government to dissolve the pool.<sup>62</sup>

A delegation of the Movement led by Abayomi later met Governor Bourdillon. The delegates told the governor that it was actuated less by the low price of cocoa than by the belief that outside control meant unfair treatment for the farmers. The Governor said that if the pool could be shown to be acting against the interest of the country, he could not remain neutral.<sup>63</sup> When the Cocoa Commission appointed by the British government to investigate the grievances of the farmers arrived in Nigeria, the NYM gave evidence before it and suggested that the Government should adopt the co-operative buying system.<sup>64</sup> But the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 did not allow this to materialise until much later.

The third incident was the Movement's agitation against the ban on the exportation of palm kernels. In 1940 the Government of Nigeria imposed a ban on the exportation of palm kernels from the Western Provinces of Nigeria. The official reason was that Britain did not need palm kernels exported from Nigeria. But the ban operated only in the West and not in the East because, according to the Government, the West had other export commodities to fall back on, which was not the case in the East. A delegation of the Movement again met Governor Bourdillon over the ban. Even though the Governor told the delegation that they should forget all about the palm produce because it had no future, the ban was soon lifted.<sup>65</sup>

From these various demands and activities of the Movement it can be seen that its leaders were national in their orientation. They saw things in terms of national interests

rather than in terms of parochial Lagos interests or in terms of the interests of a particular ethnic group. The Movement had provided an important political forum for the educated elite from the various ethnic groups in the country so they could speak with one voice. It had done much more than any other political party up to that point to awaken political consciousness among Nigerians. Coleman has the following to say about the performances of the NYM:

During the brief period 1938—1941, when Davies and Azikiwe (both in their early thirties) were active in the Youth Movement, there was a remarkable awakening among three new and potentially powerful groups: educated non-Yorubas; youths of all tribes, and the emergent middleclass in the cocoa area of the Yoruba provinces.<sup>66</sup>

The NYM certainly represents the first major attempt to organise a political party at a national level. The importance of the Movement lay in the fact that it was the last political organisation in which most of the Southern political leaders, who later played prominent roles in Nigeria politics, worked under one umbrella.<sup>67</sup> Awolowo and Azikiwe, great leaders of two of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and who have been foremost in making Nigeria what it is, belonged to the same party and worked for the same National objectives until 1941. Since that date, no alliance between the two leaders has succeeded.

#### THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE MOVEMENT

In spite of what the Movement tried to achieve, it had its shortcomings. Like other political parties of the period, it professed loyalty to the British Crown and wanted to maintain the link with the British Empire. During a general meeting of the Movement held on September 15, 1938, leaders of the party declared that they renewed their allegiance to His Majesty the king of England and said that they pledged themselves to give their support loyally and unreservedly to "His Majesty's Government in any emergency that might arise".<sup>68</sup> Most of the meetings of the Movement terminated with the singing of a few stanzas of the British national anthem.<sup>69</sup> In fact, it would appear that the leaders of the Movement took pride in being under the British colonial rule. It is often reported with glee that it was the body that forced the British Government to deny the rumour that Nigeria was being transferred to Hitler as part of its appeasement policy in 1938<sup>70</sup>, thus creating the impression that British colonialism was better than German colonialism. One would like to say that colonialism is colonialism, it does not matter under whom. As Samora Machel once said: "Colonialism has no race.... A parasite is a parasite and feeds on blood."<sup>71</sup>

To the leaders of the Movement, the British appeared to be unassailable. They were not prepared to organise a violent revolution. In short, they were not ready to seize independence but were satisfied to mature into self-government. Their aim was not to overthrow the system but to reform it gradually and to improve their lot. It would appear that members of the Movement, who were mainly the educated elite, had a class interest to protect. They hoped to inherit and enjoy the colonial privileges if self-rule was eventually achieved. As Hussain has pointed out:

Throughout the different phases of nationalist movements, the element of individual and class interests can be witnessed which, in the final stage and after independence, resulted, in most cases, in nationalism becoming the ideology of the middle-class to safeguard its interest.<sup>72</sup>

Although the NYM had an ambitious programme, it was incapable of carrying it out under the repressive colonial system. Many of its ideas did not go beyond mere political rhetorics. In addition, it had no clear-cut ideology.

### THE DECLINE OF THE PARTY

In February 1941, the Youth Movement was dealt a staggering blow from which it never really recovered. A major crisis within the Movement was precipitated by the resignation of Abayomi from the Legislative Council. A fierce battle ensued over the selection of his successor. The battle-line was drawn between the then-President of the Movement, Ernest Ikoli (an Ijo) and its Vice-President Samuel Akisanya (an Ijebu Yoruba). Akisanya was supported by Azikiwe and a number of Igbo and Ijebu members of the Movement, while Ikoli was backed by Awolowo (a prominent Ijebu Yoruba) and some Lagos members. When Ikoli was eventually selected by the movement, Akisanya contested as an independent candidate and lost. Akisanya and Azikiwe charged the Movement with "tribalism". They claimed that Akisanya, an Ijebu, was unacceptable to the Yoruba elite based in Lagos because they were contemptuous of hinterland Yoruba. Despite the fact that Akisanya and Ikoli were both based in Lagos, and the fact that Ikoli, an Ijo, was backed by Awolowo, a Yoruba, Azikiwe and his supporters maintained that the anti-Ijebu bigotry was responsible for the choice.<sup>73</sup> The supporters of Ikoli argued that they were standing by the Movement's policy, which stated that if its president declared his intention to contest any election, he should be automatically selected. It was a matter of principle as far as this group was concerned.<sup>74</sup>

It would appear that Azikiwe's exit song of "tribalism" was a mere smoke screen to cover up his real grievance — the challenge to his economic interest. It should be recalled that when the Movement launched the *Daily Service* as its official organ in 1938, Azikiwe, who had launched the *West African Pilot* in 1937, resented the *Daily Service's* competition for the comparatively scanty reading population of the period. He openly criticised the conversion of the *Daily Service* into a daily and a party organ and attacked H. O. Davies who was appointed to solicit shares in the paper from members and supporters of the Movement.<sup>75</sup> Azikiwe acted that way, perhaps, because he believed that the new paper was likely to affect adversely his journalistic venture, which, in any case, was a commercial enterprise and had to be run at a profit.<sup>76</sup> From this time on, however, Azikiwe's enthusiasm for the Movement began to wane. In 1939 he opted out of the executive committee of the Movement<sup>77</sup> and then announced, but later withdrew his resignation from the organisation itself. Since then, Azikiwe had been waiting for another opportunity to pull out of the Movement. The Akisanya/Ikoli crisis provided the opportunity.

One other incident which, perhaps, affected Azikiwe's attitude to the Movement needs to be mentioned here. Before his resignation from the executive of the Movement

the Azikiwe Press was involved in a nuisance action instituted by Barrister Adetokumbo Ademola (later Chief Justice of Nigeria). Ademola complained that the operation of the presses was a source of nuisance on account of constant noise and vibration. He also said, on expert advice, that this vibration was in turn a source of danger to the building and that the foundation as well as the walls were being undermined. Azikiwe said that he had put all his money and hopes into the business and had no prospects whatsoever of getting a suitable alternative place at short notice. Azikiwe believed that Ademola's fears about the building were exaggerated and that he was unsympathetic. Eventually, the case went to court. Azikiwe lost and was forced to move his plants to a new location.<sup>78</sup> Ademola's counsel was O. Caxton — Martins, the Legal Adviser to the Youth Movement.<sup>79</sup> This incident generated bad blood between Azikiwe and Ademola. Azikiwe felt that the whole matter had been an attempt to ruin his business. This incident must have affected his attitude towards the Movement.

In addition to these issues, Azikiwe was, perhaps, displeased with his role as a subordinate in the Movement. Eme Awa is of the view that Azikiwe's leaving the party was understandable because he had little in common with the other leaders. According to him, Azikiwe "was fiery, tempestuous, young and extremely radical, whereas the others were sedate and genteel in their approach"<sup>80</sup> Awa thinks that Azikiwe had to break with the others if he was to fulfil his mission. Perhaps the most important factor which marked out Azikiwe from the rest were his American training and his journalistic ability. He belonged to the same age bracket as some of the leaders of the Movement. When it came to the crunch Azikiwe's radicalism did not go beyond bellicose political rhetorics. In all his political career he never suffered a political imprisonment or even an actual arrest. The closest he ever came was during the sedition case in Ghana.<sup>81</sup>

Awolowo, from a partisan standpoint, blamed Azikiwe and some Lagos leaders of the Movement for its collapse. He wrote:

... It was Dr. Azikiwe who delivered a succession of blows — now subtle, then hard and heavy, but always accurate and harmful — which, aggravated by a series of bungling and mismanagement on the part of some of its leaders, brought about the fall and the ruin of the NYM.<sup>82</sup>

He did not see the Movement as a disciplined body. From about 1940 he no longer saw Azikiwe as a loyal member of the Movement<sup>83</sup> and thought that even when he was accused of anti-party activities the leaders failed to deal with him in a firm manner. However, whatever might have been the role of Azikiwe in the matter, it became clear that the leadership structure of the Movement was incapable of withstanding the strain and the stresses brought on it by the Ikoli — Akisanya imbroglio.

Azikiwe and Akisanya left the Movement with a bang. Since Azikiwe emerged on the Nigerian political scene at a time when the Igbo had little or no voice in Nigerian politics and he had demonstrated his fiery ardour on the pages of his newspaper, many Igbo tended to idolise him as a messiah and when he left the Movement all the Easterners, with the exception of a handful of non-Igbo elite, followed suit.<sup>84</sup> Many Ijebu — Yoruba also deserted the Movement in sympathy with Akisanya.

## THE AFTERMATH OF THE DECLINE

The collapse of the Youth Movement marked the end of an era in the growth of Nigerian nationalism and the beginning of another. The leaders of the party had seen themselves as Nigerian nationalists and not in terms of their ethnic group. They manifested their pan-Nigerian orientation and commitment in their responses to such issues as "the double licence" of 1937, the ban on the exportation of palm kernels, the "cocoa pool", mass compulsory and free education, universal adult suffrage, protection of Nigerians against unequal economic competition, Africanisation of the civil service, the separation of the judiciary from the Executive, and many other national issues. The NYM strove hard to extend political awakening and national consciousness farther afield than any of the earlier political parties in the country. About the role of the Movement, Awolowo has the following to say:

By its intrepid and enlightened leadership, it emboldened agitators in the country, regardless of where they lived, to speak their minds and damn the consequences. It provided a unique platform for the unification of all the diverse ethnic groups that constitute Nigeria, and a forum whereon all conscientious and right-thinking Nigerian patriots and nationalists could unfold their ideas and display their talents for the common good.<sup>85</sup>

With the decline of the Movement, the organisation of political parties in the country began to take a different form. The split in the NYM, to a large extent, helped to set the stage for the events which started the politicisation of ethnicity in the country. In the words of Moyibi Amoda, this "might be called the most important episode in the history of Nigeria because it set a precedent which has yet to be reversed"<sup>86</sup> When it became clear that the hope that the party would eventually emerge as a powerful instrument for the nationalist struggle for independence had been smashed, its adherents were dispirited and frustrated. For instance, H.O. Davies, who had been one of the pillars of the Movement, decamped and accepted an appointment under the government of which he had always been an ardent critic. Awolowo, who had pinned his political hope on the Movement which he saw as vigilant and dynamic and which he had credited with the genesis of political awakening in Nigeria, expressed his disappointment in the following sentences: "I saw no future for the Movement. But if the Movement became moribund, what follows? It was a baleful thought".<sup>87</sup> Perhaps as a result of this situation, Awolowo concluded that the realities of the country did not support his original position on the ideal of a single nationalism in Nigeria. This may have led him to two significant issues. The first was the development of his political ideas on a federal system of government in Nigeria whereby each ethnic group would be allowed to develop socially, politically and economically along its own lines. For him, this was crucial to the building of a lasting national unity in the country. Secondly, and directly arising from the first, he decided to form an organisation that would weld together the Yoruba-speaking people as first practical step in that direction.<sup>88</sup> The organisation was formed in London in 1945 and called the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (The Society of the descendants of Oduduwa, the cultural hero and progenitor of the Yoruba people).<sup>89</sup>

Another important issue worthy of note is that, in spite of the laudable objectives which the NYM set for itself, what finally broke it was in no way connected with the

conflicting interest of the masses of the people. Although several forces were at work, it would appear that the overriding issue in the crisis was the economic and professional interest of some of the leaders of the party — the possession and exclusive control of the nationalist press. This is a theme which continues to recur in the political experience of the country.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Patrick Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 151.
2. Joan Wherea, *The Nigerian Legislative Council* (London, Faber and Faber, 1950), p. 149.
3. Michel Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (London, Hutchinson, 1968), p. 465.
4. As late as 1900 the Registrar of the Supreme Court, the Colonial Treasurer and the Postmaster-General in Nigeria were Africans. See J. B. Webster *et al.*, *The Growth of African Civilisation: The Revolutionary Years. West Africa Since 1800* (London, Longmans Green, 1967), p. 145.
5. Rex Akpofure and M. Crowder (eds.), *Nigeria: A Modern History for Schools* (London, Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 202.
6. *Id.*, p. 203.
7. Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London, Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 216.
8. Editorial Notes, "Social and Economic Progress in Nigeria", *Journal of African Society*, Vol. XXXI, No. CXXIV, July 1932, p. 322.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Nigerian Legislative Council Debates*, September 28, 1929, pp. 12—13, September 30, 1929, pp. 36 and 41.
11. C. C. Adeniyi-Jones, "Political and Administrative Problems of Nigeria", An Address delivered to the West African Students Union in London, *West African*, September 8, 1928, p. 1224.
12. *Nigerian Handbook*, 1926, pp. 220—221.
13. Fred T. A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880 — 1937* (Ibadan, Longman, 1978), p. 166.
14. Anthony Enahoro, *Fugitive Offender: An Autobiography* (London, Cassel, 1965), p. 65.
15. *West Africa*, August 15, 1925, p. 1002.
16. J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971), p. 204.
17. *Id.*, p. 206.
18. Philip Garique, "The West African Students Union: A Study in Cultural Contact," *Africa*, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, January 1953, pp. 55—59.
19. *West Africa*, January 31, 1953, pp. 85—87.
20. *Id.*, March 3, 1934, p. 217. The Governor had earlier told the Legislative Council that the purpose of the college was "to provide the machinery whereby Africans will be able to attain the position in Nigeria in the Public Services and outside the Public Services to which they are entitled and which in the past they have not been able to attain because Government had not supplied them the means to acquire the qualifications necessary for those posts". *Legislative Council Debates, February 11, 1932*, p. 62.
21. Obafemi Awolowo, *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 115—116.
22. *West Africa*, June 9, 1934, p. 634.
23. Okoi Arikpo, *The Development of Modern Nigeria* (London, Penquin Books, 1967), p. 58.
24. *The Nigerian Daily Times*, March 19, 1934.
25. *The Nigerian Daily Telegraph*, May 22, 1934.
26. The Eleko Eshugbayi (King of Lagos), having got into trouble with the government, was deported to Oyo in 1925. Macaulay was the leading supporter of the Eleko. See the details in Tekena Tamono, *Herbert Macaulay: Nigerian Patriot* (London, Heinemann, 1975), pp. 29—34. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, pp. 152—153.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *West Africa*, June 25, 1938, p. 845.
30. *Id.*, November 19, 1938, p. 1608.
31. Abayomi had a chequered and interesting career as a druggist, soldier and medical student. After graduating from the Wesley Boys High School, Lagos, he qualified as a druggist in 1917. During the World War I he served with the British forces in the Cameroons as a dispenser. In 1922 he went to the University of Edinburgh, where hard work earned him many distinctions. He received the M.B., Ch.B. degree from the University in 1928.
32. Ikoli established himself as the leading journalist in the country and came to be known as "Father" of Nigerian journalism. The theme of most of his editorials was Nigerian independence. He was a member of the Legislative Council from 1941 to 1946. See Momoh, *The first Ten Years of Independent Nigeria*, p.6. *Who's who in Nigeria*, a Daily Times Publication, Lagos, The Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company Ltd., 1956, p. 167.
33. Davies had his education in the Methodist Boys High School, Lagos, King's College, Lagos and the London School of Economics, where he achieved distinctions as a student leader and a scholar. He later read law in the Middle Temple, London from 1944 to 1947. About him, Awolowo wrote the following: "He was a remarkable man with many distinguished accomplishments: a brilliant scholar and writer, a fearless and resourceful nationalist, the sole author and genius of the "Youth Charter", a dazzling theoretician whopropounded one new idea after another with such rapidity that he was later written off by most of his colleagues as an unstable visionary". In: Obafemi Awolowo, *op. cit.*, p. 155.
34. Jones-Quartey, *A Life of Azikiwe* (Harmondsworth, England, Penguin African Series, 1965), p.86.
35. Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp. 161—167.
36. *West Africa*, July 28, 1934, p.831. Jones-Quartey, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
37. *Id.*, pp. 134—136.
38. Awolowo, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
39. Omu, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
40. *Id.*, p. 69.
41. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p.223.
42. Sam Epelle, *The Promise of Nigeria*, (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1960), p.34.
43. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p.133.
44. *Id.*, p.132. Ogunleye Agunbiade-Bamishe, *Know the Yorubas*, (The Sketch Publishing Co., Ibadan, 1964). On page 36 he quotes H. Kano Offonry as saying: "There is no doubt that the first Nigerian teachers, clerks, lawyers, doctors, engineers and ministers of religion were all Yorubas; while Ibos and Ibibios, and other tribes have recently been welcoming home their first overseas trained lawyers and doctors a good number of Yoruba families have produced two or three generations of such professional men". Offonry is said to have written that in the *West African Review* of December 1947, pp. 1423—1424.
45. Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton, University Press, 1963), p.55.
46. See L. C. Gwam, *Great Nigerians* (A Daily Times Publication, 1967).
47. Jones-Quartey, *op.cit.*, p.141.
48. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p.224.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *The West African Pilot*, October 20, 1938.
51. Excerpts from the NYM Charter have been reproduced by Awolowo, see Awolowo, *op.cit.*, pp. 121—123.
52. *Id.*, p.122.
53. *The Daily Service*, October 24, 1938.
54. *Ibid.*
55. G.O. Olusanya, "Nationalist Movements" in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Ltd., 1980), p.559.
56. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p.116.
57. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p.226.
58. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p.124.

59. *Id.*, pp. 125—128.
60. *Id.*, pp. 123—124.
61. *West Africa*, March 5, 1938, p. 269.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Id.*, April 2, 1938, p. 412.
64. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p. 226. The Commission in its report recommended that the Government "should whole-heartedly adopt the co-operative system as the desirable method of marketing cocoa and put the whole weight of its authority behind it". *West Africa*, October 29, 1938, p. 1479. *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. XXXIII, No. CLI, April 1939, pp. 207—209.
65. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, pp. 128—131.
66. Coleman, *op.cit.*, p. 229.
67. It is significant to note that men like S.L. Akintola, Ikoli, H. O. Davies, Bode Thomas, S.O. Sonibare, Samuel Akisanya, O. A. Alakija, who later played prominent roles in Nigerian politics, were all members of the NYM.
68. *The West African Pilot*, September 16 and 26, 1938.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p. 124. *West African Review*, Vol. X, No. 136, January 1919, p. 37.
71. *West African*, July 14, 1980, p. 1269.
72. Arif Hussain, "The Educated Elite, Assailants, Nationalists: A Note on African Nationalists and Nationalism", in: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. VII, No. 3 December 1974, p. 496.
73. Sklar, *op. cit.*, p. 54
74. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Azikiwe had saved £1,000 plus from his Gold Coast (Ghana) employment. This sum was raised to about £5,000 by contributions from his family and friends. It was on this initial capital that Zik Press Limited was founded. Jones — Quartey, *op. cit.*, pp. 145—146.
77. *The West African Pilot*, February 2, 1939.
78. Jones-Quartey, *op. cit.*, pp. 145 — 146. Azikiwe, *op.cit.*, pp. 323—325.
79. Jones-Quartey, *op.cit.*, pp. 145—146.
80. Eme O. Awa, *Federal Government in Nigeria* (Berkeley, U.S.A., University of California Press, 1964), p. 97.
81. Jones-Quartey, *op.cit.*, p. 136
82. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, pp. 133—134.
83. *Id.*, p. 136.
84. Babatunde, Abraham Williams, *Nationalism and Federalism in Nigeria*, unpublished dissertation for the Ph.D. Degree of the University of Illinois, 1959, p. 157.
85. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p. 131.
86. Moyibi Amoda, "Background to the Conflict: A Summary of Nigerian Political History 1914—1964" in Joseph Okpaku (ed.), *Nigeria: Dilemma of Nationhood*. (New York, Third World Press, 1972), p. 18.
87. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p. 158.
88. Indeed, Awolowo had been anticipated by the Igbo who had formed their own Ibo Federal Union in 1944.
89. Awolowo, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

## NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC CRISIS: SOME ATTEMPTED SOLUTIONS\*

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### INTRODUCTION

The present economic crisis in Nigeria stems from the very sharp decline in the receipts from the sale of petroleum as a result of a fall in the demand for this commodity. With a given fall in the demand for oil, assuming a constant price, there is a fall in the foreign exchange earnings and consequently a decline in the foreign exchange reserves. These reserves were accumulated over the years mainly from the sale of petroleum oil. Between 1979 and 1981, for example, oil production fell by about 38% while oil export fell by 46%. Before the oil boom the foreign exchange reserves were quite high as a result of the proceeds of agricultural exports which were managed by the export monopolies of the marketing boards. For Nigeria, as an importer of many commodities, a fall in the foreign exchange earnings and a depleting of foreign exchange reserves imply a reduction in the ability to import goods and services and, consequently, a fall in the standard of living. A decline in the receipts from oil has implications for domestic revenues since the former constitute a large proportion of these revenues. The ability of government to maintain existing services or to create new ones would, therefore, be adversely affected.

The oil sector has been playing a significant role in the Nigerian economy since the mid-1970s. It has provided the means for the dramatic growth witnessed in all the sectors of the economy in the parameters like the national income, consumption, government revenues, foreign exchange earnings and reserves. For example, the national income rose from about ₦5.2 billion in 1970 to ₦40.4 billion in 1979. Gross capital formation increased from about ₦0.9 billion to about ₦12.2 billion during the same period.<sup>1</sup> Just as oil has led to increased incomes, so also has it enabled the economy to import goods and services which have to be paid for in foreign exchange. Between 1970 and 1979, exports rose from about ₦0.89 billion to about ₦11.0 billion. Imports, on the other hand, increased from about ₦0.76 billion to ₦9.5 billion during the same period. It can be seen, therefore, that the oil sector has a dominant influence on the Nigerian economy.

\* This paper was presented to the members of the Kwara State branch of the Rotary Club, Ilorin in May 1983, during the Club Week, before the Army took over the Civilian Government of Nigeria in December 1983. Most of the suggestions put forward still remain as valid as they were then.

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