

**MY GOVERNMENT COLLEGE IBADAN**

**EXPERIENCE**

**AND**

**50 YEARS OF NIGERIA'S**

**INDEPENDENCE**

**WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?**

*Delivered by*

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I was somewhere in Southern France, busy drinking good wine with the son of Prof. Oritsejolomi Thomas, the late and former Vice- Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, when I received a telephone call from the President, Banwo Smith, who incidentally is a relation of mine. He asked me if I could deliver a Lecture as part of the activities slated for this year's Annual Re-union. Being in a happy mood, I said, "Yes". My thinking then was that it would be a simple assignment for me to carry out. I would simply come here, talk about my experience at Government College, Ibadan (GCI) as a student and probably allow you to compare and contrast your time there with mine.

But the President was later to call me, asking, "When can we have a copy of your Anniversary Lecture on contemporary issues in Nigeria?" It was then that I realised that I would have two topics to deal with. So, today, I have two speeches to deliver here.

The first shall be titled "*My Government College, Ibadan experience*" while the second one will be "*50 Years of Nigeria's Independence: Where Did We Go Wrong?*"

Let me start by requesting that if, during the course of delivering these Lectures, it is felt that I am spending too long a time, please don't hesitate to say so and stop me. This reminds me of the Ghana High Commissioner in London who went to Cambridge. Each time he tried to make a public speech, members of the Ghana Students' Association went there to carry him off the stage because, according to the students, he always talked nonsense. In a particular instance, on the actual date of Ghana's independence (March 6, 1957) in the English- speaking Union, as soon as he started speaking, the jubilant Ghanaian students went on to the stage and carried him off. The *Manchester Guardian* newspaper reported the incident stating, "Jubilant tribesmen disrupted the Ghana High Commissioner's speech." The newspaper did not know that the event was planned. Even before then, I had a personal experience with the High Commissioner. We had invited him to come and deliver a Lecture to the African Students' Club in Cambridge. And when he came, as usual smartly dressed in dinner

jacket, he said, “On the 6th of March, by God’s power, Gold Coast will become a sovereign independent Commonwealth country.”

We thought that he would thereafter deliver his speech but he kept repeating himself, saying, “I am not a prophet, but Almighty God knows that Gold Coast will become a sovereign nation on March 6, 1957.” He said this several times. Eventually, one very radical student, called Akpumayanga, asked him, “What will be the attitude of new Gold Coast to South Africa?” “That is a good question. But as I told you before, Almighty God, through his mysterious ways, one knows that on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, Gold Coast will become a sovereign independent member of the Commonwealth.” he replied. That was all his answer.

On this particular occasion, I observed that very few Ghanaian students were present at the Lecture, and when I asked them later why Nigerian students were mainly at the Lecture, I was told by the few Ghanaian students that they knew that he would be talking nonsense.

So, if you feel that I am talking too much or too much nonsense, do not hesitate to say so. When I finish with my GCI experience, then I will go to what is published in the programme.

## **MY GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, IBADAN EXPERIENCE**

I will start by stating how I got to GCI. I had an Uncle - Chief Begho, who became a student of GCI in 1932. In fact, at that time, the Itsekiri people were so brilliant that seven out of twenty-four boys admitted into GCI were from Warri (the homeland of the Itsekiri people) and nobody took the Itsekiri for granted. Now the story is different — we are the poorest minority in Nigeria! That is a story for another day.

So, I took 2 shillings from my grandmother for my trip to GCI. Before then, nobody had passed the entrance examination to GCI from Roman Catholic School in Warri. That was my primary school. It was just a thatched roof building. Unfortunately for me, I could not attend Warri Government School which was the best school in Nigeria at that time. It was an old school, being founded in 1903. If you went there, you would find that all the learning materials were ordered from England.

Even the pupils studied logic. It was only 500 metres away from my residence. I had failed, several times, to get my hand to the ear because of my stunted growth resulting from constant bout of malaria attack from mosquito infested areas of the Escarvos, the host community of Chevron which provides 30 percent of the Nigerian oil and for which we have seen no benefit. I will come later to this.

So, by the time I was big enough to go to school, the Colonial Government, being Colonialists, had decided to scrap the lower classes of the Warri Government School. On Monday mornings, we did not start classes in the Roman Catholic School on time because of the presence of crocodiles and alligators running over our classrooms as a result of the use of the classrooms for worship by the Ijaw parishioners, who were mostly Catholics, on the previous Sundays.

Mrs. Grace Alele-Williams, in one of her granted interviews, said that she had to walk from the other end of town to come to school. Ours was the other way round, as we had to pass through the open prison where we witnessed some activities that gave inklings that some condemned prisoners were going to be executed that day. So, we waited to watch the execution but we never saw what happened. We got late to school and we got the appropriate punishment for it.

Another occasion that we got punished was when Revd. Father Hilly caned everybody for not coming to church. It did not matter to him that some of us might belong to the Anglican, Methodist or other Protestant denominations. We were all expected to attend the Catholic church on Sundays. That was how he converted everybody to Catholicism by duress. Needless to say that he died of sleepwalking, dead drunk from his floor of the parish house in Warn. Nevertheless, he has been honoured by naming a Grammar School after him.

Now back to my GCI story. We were invited for the pre-admission interview. I think we were six boys from each province. During the analysis today, I have just discovered that the quota system was adopted for the admission of boys to GCI. In fact, Ondo Province had double ration because most of them had been to Christ School, Ado-Ekiti and Ondo Boys' High School, Ondo before seeking admission to GCI. So, they captured all the scholarships over and above those of us from thatched-roofed school buildings and such like in Warri.

I must confess that the conduct of the interview was most unfair to some of us. We were made to listen to a very beautiful English lady reading a passage to us. First, we spent more time admiring this lady and her dress than listening to her message. Secondly, her diction was too sophisticated for our comprehension — we didn't understand some of the words coming out of her mouth. She talked about Bedouins'.

How did anyone expect pupils from Catholic School in Warri in 1946 to know what Bedouins are? I am sure that a lot of people here today in this hall do not know that Bedouins are the nomadic people in the Arabian Desert. Seriously speaking, many of us had not seen an English woman at such close quarters; needless to say that we didn't do too well in that comprehension exercise. However, three of us were eventually offered admission to GCI.

I was exactly 4ft 7ins (1.4 metres) at that time. So, you can imagine how small I was then. Even at that we travelled for three days from Warri to Ibadan. Our first stop after departing Warri, travelling by road, was at the Armels' Transport Park in Benin. The second day took us to Osogbo Railway Station which place we would arrive at 5.00pm. Before that trip, I had thought everywhere was flat land. It was when we arrived Owo that I saw mountains and hills. I had not studied enough Geography to know that everywhere was not flat like Warri where we came from.

At Osogbo, after the routine checks by the Train Ticket Checker (TTC) to ensure that we had paid the appropriate fares for the train journey to Ibadan, we were left to fend for ourselves. While awaiting the arrival of the Ibadan-bound coach, we slept on the platform. This was quite a good experience for us because one Old Boy of GCI, Dr. Adele (1942) who later in life studied Molecular Medicine was to put the Osogbo experience into practice when he was stranded at the Airport in U.S.A. He, just took his overcoat and laid it on the terrazzo floor and slept on in reminiscence of his Osogbo days. Almost intuitively, every other person at the Airport followed suit by sleeping on the bare floor. It was quite an experience that was useful to him later, even in Washington.

On arrival at the Ibadan Railway Station, I saw a white man in the station and I went to him and asked, "Are you supposed to be meeting Hope Harriman from Warri?" This was because I felt so important that I was going to attend the prestigious GCI. The white man must have been amazed at my effrontery as he gave me an ugly look.

He fastened his gaze at me from the crown of my head to the toes of my feet as if I was a goat smoking cigarette. In a jiffy, he drove away in his car. I thought he was not helpful at all because I had hoped and expected that he would take me to GCI.

That morning, after trekking 4.5 miles, with everyone carrying his load on his head, we got to the village called Apata-Ganga where GCI was located. When we passed by Moor Plantation, I thought this was the largest building in the world.

Upon resumption, we were to discover that those boys who had attended other secondary schools earlier on were much older than those of us coming from primary schools, although they must have falsified their ages; and I can assure you that the GCIOBA Trustee here present must have been one of them! These boys were really big in stature. Our sitting arrangement in class was in alphabetical order and somehow I found myself sitting next to one Adebisi Adeyemo who was very brilliant, a very gentle fellow instead of Mr. Odiase who turned out to be a very cantankerous person (Speak no evil of the dead!). So, I was very lucky in that respect.

We enjoyed our time in GCI. We had a lot of Masters - seventeen, I believe. We were only 136 boys in the school in my first year, out of which my Set contributed 24. We were quite good in our class. Our number was reduced to 23 when one of us was expelled because he did not score 51 percent, which was first class mark in some schools, but average in an examination.

Some of the Masters were extremely good and I want to single out some of them. The expatriate Masters taught English Language and Geography in upper classes while the 'big Nigerian Masters', such as Mr. Adesingbe and Mr. Etuk, taught the Class One boys. All I heard from Mr. Etuk was his emphasis on the beauty of Shakespeare's language — 'but me no but'. I don't think he taught anything more than that throughout the period. I can also recall our Fine Art Master, Mr. Usman Ibrahim. At that time, if one was good in Fine Art, he would be sent to Government College to teach. There were only three Colleges at that time - Government College, Umuahia, and Government College, Ibadan and King's College, Lagos (where the Art Teacher was Mr. Murray).

From day one, through the second year to the third year, Alhaji Ibrahim didn't say one word in class. All he did was to distribute water colours and painting brushes and paper to us. He dotted the walls of the Fine Art Room with drawings and paintings of 'Yoruba women carrying pots on their heads' or 'Yoruba women carrying babies at their backs.' I was wondering how a Teacher could stay for three years without saying why we were in class and what the subject was all about, In fact, in his book, Ladipo Akinkugbe also made the same assertion. So, those of us who were noise-makers, such as Ogundeko, I know that for sure, were scored last — 66 percent. And those who pretended to draw something, such as Oyebolu, and one Akinbulumo, had 94 percent equal.

My reaction was that the award of these marks was very unfair since these marks were also put into consideration with other subjects such as Mathematics and Geography when computing the boys' overall academic performance.

Next was Chief Akin Deko, I don't think he was Chief then. He was a rather diminutive fellow. He was put in charge of Technical Education. He hardly showed up and he had a state-of-the-art workshop tucked away somewhere far away from other classrooms. We were there buying biscuits from hawkers and making noise, but after three years, I succeeded in making a pen.

But if Chief Akin Deko came to class, he talked about himself — how he danced at Hammersmith Palace, how he paid to dance with a lady and when the money ran out, the woman ran away from the floor. He also talked about how he wrote and won a competitive essay which fetched him £50. That was a lot of money in those days. He read the essay to us.

So, we had these Masters then. But there was something lacking — we were not taught music. We had to rely on the senior boys who could play the piano or other musical instruments to teach us some music. I can recollect a particular case when we thought that Olutoye could teach us music, only to discover that he was totally inept. He didn't teach us anything at all and we believed that he couldn't teach himself anything either. And I had always wondered how we had such a beautiful piano and none of us knew how to play it. But one remarkable thing about Olutoye was his capacity to make a prediction as far back as 1948/49 that Warri land was oil-rich.

His father was a Headmaster in Benin in what was called Foreigners' School (the Bini had always discriminated against non-Bini). My late brother also went there. Olutoye had always told us that oil would be found in Warri in the nearest future. I don't know why a young boy from GCI in 1948/49 could forecast that there would be oil in Warri area. He did so persistently anytime he was there. I pay him that complement each time I meet him.

We were a bit on the rascally side. I can recall that one day, we decided that someone should volunteer to touch the breast of one of the female English Language Teachers. It was Adeyemi who volunteered to do so. After the English Language lesson, Adeyemi stepped forward and touched the Teacher's breasts, claiming that he was helping to drive mosquito from her nipples. She was very elegant woman. I cannot remember her name now. I do not need to tell you that Adeyemi's act was an embarrassment to the Teacher. This was one of the pranks we used to play on our Teachers then. And of course, there was Miss Braithwaite who had a Master of Science degree from Manchester in U.K. She eventually got married to one Mr. Braithwaite from Moor Plantation. She always dressed like a Scientist and in doing that a bit of her under-frock was always exposed and made visible and we called her Biology lesson 'film show'. I don't know who christened it film show. But then, boys will be boys!

Mr. Temietan, who is totally unsung by the Old Boys' Association, handled the teaching of Chemistry and he was the only one teaching the subject from Class One to Class Six then. He was so good that this subject of Halogens was slated for the session of the day. And he would come immaculately dressed and he would say, I can repeat what he said to us then, "My boys, before you this morning, I have the halogens. Halogen is the family of chemical substances just as you have the family of Ogundeko and Harriman — fluorine, bromine, chlorine and iodine. Fluorine is too reactive that no Scientist has ever seen it; just as your Master has never seen fluorine. The next halogen, bromine, is formed by the reaction of sodium bromide and sulphuric acid."

And so, when he poured sulphuric acid on the sodium bromide, there was a big explosion and everybody bolted for dear life and that was the end of the lesson.



I don't know whether he taught you as he did to us. The Master was extremely good. I can continue talking until 'Thy Kingdom Come'.

So, everything was provided for us. We had *Great Expectations* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as the set-text books. The Colonial Office sent the film which we watched and it was simple for everybody.

I believe we had nineteen out of forty-three boys with A's in Literature-in-English.

I have now spent nearly 30 minutes and I will now go to the other subject. Am I correct in letting you know my experience in GCI because for those of you younger ones, I thought I should let you know?

## **50 YEARS OF NIGERIA'S INDEPENDENCE: WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?**

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to emphasise that when I finish speaking, I will take no questions from the audience because I am only saying facts as I saw them when they happened. So, if anybody has other facts to add, he can say so. I want it to be an interactive session so that information will flow and then we will come to a conclusion. In other words, nobody should expect me to give an answer to how to solve the Nigerian problem eventually. This reminds me of the problem of Liberia.

Liberia was colonised by free blacks from the United States in 1820. During the Second World War (WW II), Liberia declared war on Germany because the Japanese bomb spell happened. And when they saw this telegram in Berlin and German Foreign Minister was mangled, they wondered which big power had joined the war in a place called Liberia. They looked at the big map of Africa and saw Liberia tucked in one corner. The Naval Chief said, "I will settle this matter" because the French had surrendered and they had new boats in Dakar. And when the bombardment took place, bombarding Liberia...

(For those of you who have not been to Liberia, Liberia is only one main street — the Duke Hall Palace, the Free Mason Hall and the Big Prison for dissidents — if you disobeyed the government of Liberia in those days.)

So when the bombardment took place, all the Liberians rushed to the church, all the bells were tolling and a Reverend gentleman put on his cassock on and prayed, *“Almighty God, Liberia don dey trouble. Come down yourself. This is no more small pickin play. Don’t send your son, Jesus Christ. Come down yourself. It don pass small pickin play.”*

So perhaps that will be the conclusion of the Nigerian problem. That it is beyond the Son of God and that God Himself should come down to solve Nigerian problem as He helped the Liberian people out of their problem.

We are celebrating fifty years of independence now. Well, when the history of Nigeria is written, depending who is writing it at a point in time, it is conveniently tilted to favour the writer. To the Ibo, the history of Nigeria centres around the pogrom in the North. To the southern Yoruba people, it was ‘the mistake of January 1, 1914’. How did that happen?

It was Lord Harcourt who wrote a proposal to The Mansion House Businessmen in London in 1910, stating that the only way to stop Her Majesty’s government in Victoria from sending salaries to the Northern Protectorate would be to amalgamate the two Protectorates which were then being ruled as two distinct countries. In doing so, Lord Fredrick Luggard, who had been the Deputy Governor of Northern Protectorate before his posting as the Governor of Hong Kong, was invited specifically to come and write the modalities of amalgamation. Lord Fredrick Luggard had nothing whatsoever to do with the policy decision to merge the Northern Protectorate with the Southern Protectorate. It was a purely British government’s policy that was endorsed by the House of Commons. He was only moved from Hong Kong to what was later to become Nigeria to implement the British government’s policy.

First, in his letter of transfer, Lord Fredrick Luggard, who was earning £4,500 in Hong Kong, had his salary increased by £1,500. Second, Lady Luggard’s permission had to be sought to make the transfer smooth sailing. Third, Lord Fredrick Luggard requested for an office in London, which took a long time to come by. To cut a long story short; Lord Fredrick Luggard prepared the thesis of direct amalgamation of the two Protectorates.

At that time, there was cocoa, palm oil/kernel boom in Southern Nigeria and we, in fact, financed the Canadian Pacific Railways and the Australian Railways, was financed by Nigeria reserves.

Unknown to everybody, it was Major Temple, after who Temple Road was named in Ikoyi, Lagos, who while supporting amalgamation, came with the theory of splitting the new country into six Regions like the Australian Federation - very loose Federation - or Canadian Federation. That is why we should be careful in changing the names of Streets in this country into something like Lasisi Aremu Street or Femi Okunnu Street. All those Colonial Officers after who the Streets were named should have played prominent and historical roles in the making of Nigeria. For instance, apart from Major Temple, Justice Osborne was the first Chief Justice in 1914. Also, if you go to India today, you will find that the main road to the house which is occupied by the Prime Minister of India still retains its name because Prime Minister Nehru made a law stating that it should not be changed. On a personal note, a Street is named after me in Lekki in Lagos because I built the road.

Unfortunately, the British government kept this document for seventy-five years instead of the normal traditional twenty-five years. I don't know how or why this was of security concern to Britain. So, when our politicians were drawing up the Constitution, they had no access to this record. That probably explains why people talk glibly now about six geo-political regions. The originator of this concept was Major Temple. I was in a meeting when Major-General David Ejoor claimed that he and General Yakubu Gowon started the six geopolitical zone arrangement. Of course, I told him he was talking nonsense. Perhaps if we had known about the document, it would have helped the country's Constitutional development.

When it became clear that the British had to concede independence to West Africa, because they were faced with Communist rebellion in Malaysia and I believe the *Mahu-Mahu* had started, they were in no position to wage another colonial war in West Africa. And also our nationalism was fuelled by the Ex-servicemen who came from Burma after the Second World War where they got to see that the Indians there were much poorer than we were. I believe that in spite of our inflated population, our income per capita is distorted as you don't see any stunted growth. I have traversed the length and breadth of this country. I have seen children in white clean

stockings in Omuo-Ekiti and other places. You need to go outside Nairobi for 10 kilometres to see evidence of poverty. But we have the advantage now because we are proclaimed poor. Hence, we have access to unlimited fund-borrowing from the World Bank which lends money to institutions, universities, etc. for development of educational institutions.

But these loans are virtually free — moratorium of 20 years and payment within 60 years. So, before our income rises, we should take as much of these loans as possible. Anyway in 1948, I was conscious enough to know that the first Constitutional Conference was in Ibadan. Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Alhaji Ribadu, who were School Teachers, were brought to Ibadan. They said that they wanted 50 percent of the seats in the Legislature, otherwise, they would walk away. We started begging them. Where were the Leaders at this time? Were they. Leaders who were supposed to have studied politics? How do you create a Federation with one State of the Federation of the old Northern Protectorate to be whereas you are breaking down the Southern Protectorate into two Regions? I believe that we made a fatal mistake there.

And so, it continued. We had series of Constitutional meetings. Luckily for me, I saw everything that happened in this country — from the arrest of Chief Anthony Enahoro in Warri Town Hall, when I was nine, to the demonstration against Chief Anthony Enahoro's motion in the Race Course (I was one of the *Area Boys* at that time — the original *Area Boys*).

By the time our Leaders came for the Constitutional Conference, I was Secretary of the African Students Club at Cambridge and I invited all the sides of the political divide to come and address us. And believe it or not, both sides (AG and NCNC) visited Cambridge in seventy-eight posh cars in a city where even the University's Vice-Chancellor rode a bicycle. Of course, the extravaganza in this country has not just started. You remember the rally slogan of the Action Group — *Freedom for all and Life More Abundant*. But for who? Definitely the abundance was for the few top shots, not for the average cocoa farmers or fishermen.

Why did they form the Action Group in 1951? The fact was that everybody was struggling for colonial freedom.

That was one important thing which, at that time was expected to bring sectional nationalism to the Yoruba people. A Research Fellow, who was former Tanzanian Adviser in African Studies, in the Cambridge University said, “At any time in the history of this country when we are in crisis, the only people equipped to salvage this country have been the Yoruba, but they naturally sank to their traditional parochialism.” These are not my words. I am quoting the Tanzanian Adviser.

We had the 1951 election and we knew that the Action Group did not win. My Uncle, the former Minister of Communications, Arthur Prest, brought me to Ibadan in a Vanguard car and at night, we stopped at Chief Obafemi Awolowo’s house.

“Uncle, we are in the wrong house.” I said,

“Shut up.” my uncle retorted. Turning to his driver, he s a i d

“Driver, take him to his school.”

Next morning, we saw the signatures of the politicians in the copy of the *‘Nigerian Tribune’* newspaper. Fortunately for me, four of us were selected from Government College, Ibadan to witness the proceedings at the Western Regional House of Assembly after the election. The four of us wore our ceremonial uniform along with our blue-black school blazer to the Parliament buildings.

And Chief Obafemi Awolowo’s glorious day was to come. He was to become the first Leader of the Government Business or Premier. He walked to us and asked if we had tickets. We felt elated and thought that it was very remarkable for Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the Leader of the Government Business to personally receive four boys from GCI. Today, such boys would be chased out of the building by the security men on the orders of the Parliamentarians. I will always remember that incident. We were later to see the ‘carpet-crossing exercise’ by the Parliamentarians on floor of the House. I saw it all; and I wrote about it when Chief Obafemi Awolowo died in 1987. I believe that it was not a fair contest. However, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (a.k.a. Zik), as a gentleman, moved to congratulate Chief Obafemi Awolowo at the end of the ‘carpet-crossing exercise’ and went to the Opposition side.

The first topic that was debated in the House of Assembly was about salaries and allowances of the Ministers and Members of the Parliament. Chief Obafemi Awolowo hinted that the Parliamentarians must look at the nearest future. He said, “Now that we have this government, after five years, some of us may not be re-elected. We’ll become Letter-writers. Therefore, we must be paid properly.” That was the first debate. You can check the Hansard.

Inflation of salaries for Legislators has not just started. It has been with us for quite some time. The year 1956 was critical in the political history of this country. The Politicians went to London for the Constitutional Conference of that year with very solid memoranda. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, believing that there were minerals in Zungeru, where he was born, wanted a strong centre so that the Ibo who didn’t have such fertile ground could migrate to other parts of Nigeria. In fact, I can assure you that half of the cocoa dealers in Ikare were Ibo and Cameroonians. I guess most of them had settled there to become Yoruba. Chief Obafemi Awolowo wanted a loose Federation because he believed, as stated in his book titled “*Paths to Nigeria Freedom*” published in 1948, that government should be based on ethnic nationalities. He was the main person to argue for this, like Major Temple, although he had not had access to this record kept by the British till 1969. It is now available, it is called ‘Amalgamation of the Nigeria: Confidential Memoranda of Luggard and Major Temple’ published by Francas. It has been printed several times.

If you read, in that book, the editorial opinion in Lagos Weekly Gazette of January 4 they called Luggard murderer; the worst names. The Nigerians in Southern Nigeria opposed amalgamation to the last. They didn’t want it because they saw the future coming. I had a French friend who was an itinerant student at that time. His father was a Senior District Officer in Northern Nigeria. He used to tell me, “Hope, if you have independence, the Hausa will march down to the South”. He knew the position of Nigeria. He knew the thinking of his father.

Anyway, we got independence, but the critical thing was that the British government said to our politicians, “If you accept Regional Self-Government, we will give you £100million to organise. Go and prepare your Region”. Our dear politicians abandoned the memoranda they took to London and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe came up with the popular statement that ‘they got independence on the platter of gold.’

Western Nigeria formed WNDC, NIPC, etc. which featured prominently in the Coker Commission of Inquiry. In the East, the Sutton Tribunal reported that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's behaviour in putting that money into African Continental Bank fell short of an honest reasonable man. What did the Ibo people do? They carried cutlasses and said, "*If he thief money, no be Ibo money he thief! Na 'oyinbo' money he thief?*" This has always been the pattern in Nigeria, we haven't changed at all.

The 1963 Constitution was reviewed but there was nothing in it but change in the title 'Governor-General' to 'President'.

In January 1966, the military struck. The recent research document that I have indicated that from 1959, the Ibo had planned a phased withdrawal from Nigeria by making sure that the Permanent Secretaries or Ministers were Ibo people and all the Information and Consular positions were held by them. And to say that the pogrom of 1966 was the reason for secession was not true. At any rate, they went to Aburi and Gowon did not take any Adviser with him. He took Brigadier-General Mobolaji Johnson along, claiming that it was a military affair. When they got to Aburi, they found that Dr. Nwokedi and all the super die-hard persons were there with their documents ready to canvas for a loose Federation. And so, the Nigerian Leaders were flacked again because they did not make a good presentation of what they needed.

After Aburi, then came the Biafran war. If the Ibo were united on citizenship and opportunity in Nigeria, which we accept because of lack of geographical mobility, all the people of Northern Nigeria and I must say that the safest place all the people of Nigeria can prosper is between Lagos, Yoruba-land and Warri. There is nowhere else in Nigeria you can go without being molested up till today. So, why did they occupy the then Mid-West? By so doing, they denied the people citizenship and opportunity in my own place. There were only eight million Ibo at that time and five million non-Ibo who were also entitled to self-determination. You will notice that I have never used the words 'civil war' because there was nothing like a civil war in Nigeria. It was a rebellion against the fatherland. Civil wars are fought on ideologies.

However, if Gowon had prepared a proper Constitution, the whole world being on our side, good Constitution with devolution or responsibility to all States as he had at that time, there would have been no Murtala Mohammed at that time whose only

venture was to implement part of Gowon's 9-point programme. This had been given to him but he did not religiously implement. Instead, he developed ambition of a further term. So, this further term ambition in Nigeria has always been with us. Hence, Muritala Mohammed came and there's no way anybody can be a hero in six months. Then came the critical point for the Constitutional Conference in 1978.

If Chief Obafemi Awolowo wanted to rule Nigeria, then he should have stayed put even if it meant sitting on the floor for that Constitutional Conference. I was actually present when the super- Permanent Secretaries were planning this. They knew that he would not accept to be part of the Constitutional Conference. That was when we had the obnoxious revenue allocation; Abuja was now as if it were a State, No-go area, Sharia, Law Reform. (Now that I talk of Law Reform, I remember how much I contributed to bringing out the National Law Reform and how it was twisted the other way round by one Dr. Udoh of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan who was procured to write a Minority Report to satisfy the hegemony. Eventually, Chief Obafemi Awolowo did not take part. Therefore, everything was loaded against him. There was no way he could make it with the Constitution properly doctored against him. So, Nigeria throughout our history had been run like a triangle, ABC. A — the Northern constant hegemony, B — the Yoruba and C — the Ibo people.

In 1963 Census, those three ethnic groups were only 14 percent of the Nigerian population when there was proper counting. But they have created so much confusion in this country by trying to hijack the country. Obasanjo hijacked the country using parts of A and C. A had always hijacked the country using parts of B and C. Until we emerge from this syndrome, we cannot make any progress. We then should go back to the drawing board, thirty-seven states are far too many. You know how much of your money is spent on all their needs. So, I cannot here tell you how to solve Nigeria's problems. Our generation has lost it. Your generation, the next one, cannot do much because the politicians can now kill the cleaners.

The way we are going and with the proliferation of half-baked University Graduates and 'a little knowledge is dangerous', we have a way of solving the Nigerian problem. It is like the Liberian problem, "Let God Himself come down and save this country and not instruct Jesus Christ to do it because *no small pickin job.*"



## **CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OTHER OLD BOYS**

### **Towo Aderemi (1965)**

I want to make three observations from what Hope Harriman said. The first is that the Action Group (AG) was actually formed in 1950, on March 24 at Oke-Bola. There were eight of them that formed it — Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Hon. Abiodun Akerele, Chief S.T. Oredein, Chief Olatunji Dosumu, Chief J.O. Adigun, Chief Ade Adesanya, Chief Ayo Adesanya, and Chief S.O. Sonibare.

The 1951 Owo Convention was the first Convention of the party. Secondly, there was no carpet-crossing! What happened in 1951 was that the party sponsored members for the election and at the end of voting, the Action Group had 48 seats which was the clear majority, just like it happens up till date. The third point I want to make is a bit personal. I remember my father telling me (my father was the 1<sup>st</sup> African Governor of Western Nigeria) that when the crisis in 1962 started, had Chief Obafemi Awolowo listened to him in 1959 he would have stayed in Western Region. My father said that the Governor- General of the country then – Sir James Robertson - called him in March 1959 to prevail on Chief Obafemi Awolowo not to attempt to take part in the December 1959 elections at the Federal level. My father came to Ibadan, told Chief Obafemi Awolowo of what he heard from the Governor-General but in his response Chief Obafemi Awolowo told my father that ‘the thing had been sorted out’, adding that he had already taken over the North.

This you will see in Chief Ayo Rosiji’s book which was published at his 70th Birthday. The British were not prepared to hand-over the reins of government to a non-Northerner and this was exactly what Sir James Robertson told my father - that if the North was not going to be in government there was no basis for Nigeria because commerce and others were ruled by other sections of the country.

### **Olutunde Oni (1954)**

I agree entirely that with the bankruptcy in which the Nigerian State finds itself, we may just be at the brink. I think what the right-thinking people should be pushing for is the national sovereign conference because all institutions have collapsed.

Take education, take security, take the economy, the industry— no power, no water, nothing anybody can rely upon. You wake up on daily basis and you cannot plan. We don't have to call the national sovereign conference because we want to talk about democracy - how it should be run, in whichever way and whatever - but because the nation is failing. We are almost... we are too daft to know that a point of emergency there is no nation... I read just this morning that even in sports, one Amos Adamu representing you in FIFA has been suspended because he was trying to sell his vote to vote for a country which should host the World (Soccer) Cup in 2018. He was asking for \$800,000.00 (American dollars) and he claimed that he needed that money to build four Football arena in Nigeria and the money should be paid directly to him. So, we have imported corruption even beyond the shores here. I know there are many powerful people in many powerful areas. Obama said, "*Don't build strong men. You don't need them. Build institutions.*"

Now I recollect that Lord Lugard, who was mentioned, also wrote that there was an economic deficit in the North whereas the South was buoyant. So, he said, "Match them to become one." and told the Foreign Office that everything was okay in Nigeria. We have been created artificially. We accepted. There were many moves to get the right people to lead Nigeria at Independence. The political parties messed up; some because of egotism, some because of pride. But now, we've got there, where the problems are mounting on daily basis, where, in fact as we are seated here, we don't know which bomb may explode.

Ladies and gentlemen, a national sovereign conference should be what we should push for.

Thank you.

### **Animasaun (1950)**

I met the Guest Speaker in school. We used to wash his towel. Coming to Nigeria's problem, I think our problem has been, in fact, magnified when we chose to change our style of government from Parliamentary, to Presidential. If Presidential system we must have, then we must run a true Presidential system of government. What we are running now is Unitary government and not Presidential.

We have to go back apply Presidential system principles. And in doing that, I think the easiest solution is resource-control. If you apply resource-control, the agricultural States will work hard to make sure that their agricultural States produce enough. The oil States will be rich. Let them be rich. Go to America, you have a very poor State like Mississippi living side by side with California.

These States don't envy each other. They work hard. It is because we are applying unitary system of government. Our local governments are not doing anything. They all go to Abuja to collect money and share. If we now claim that resource-control is our principle, everybody will sit up. The Agricultural States will produce cocoa, will produce palms and will make money. Let the oil-rich States control their resources and contribute to the running of the Federal system. We must go back to the Westminster Parliamentary system, which I think has paid us well. We were more disciplined under the Parliamentary system. Now, you have brought Presidential system of government, you have now put in a Unitary system, take all the oil money to Abuja and go and share it at Abuja and everybody fills his pocket. I hope that when we leave here, we will all preach resource- control to our politicians.

### **P.B. Oyebolu (1947)**

I don't normally have good words to say about the Guest Speaker, but today, to surprise him, I am going to congratulate him and to say that he has done very well. I also know that he is a very busy man. I think he spends more time in the air going about than he spends sitting down or being on land.

These our traditional Annual Lecture series seem to be taking roots and I very much want it to be a series of intellectual discourse and to have a repository of them. And so, I want to appeal to Hope to please (I know he's a very busy man. We have facilities now. You can have Secretaries you will dictate to) to touch up if there has been any typographical errors and let's have it; and among ourselves, we will distribute. And I think there is nothing wrong in sending copies; I mean that will be done by the President-in-Council. You can even get a collation of past ones and forward them to the authorities because we all have equal stake in the affairs of our country. But unfortunately, it is only those who are in power that think they are the source of all knowledge.

So, I want to congratulate the Association, although I am part of it (GCIOPA), and all those who have anything to do with the preparation and to say, “May God continue to give us the Grace to contribute towards the development of our nation.” We have no other nation to go. I want to say with my little experience that we are a blessed nation, a blessed people and we have very brilliant Nigerians. (Of course, we have the other group too.) If we can harness even half of the talents we have, this country has no business being poor.

### **Deoye Roluga (1963)**

I was very happy to hear the Guest Speaker mention that the six Regional geopolitical structure, which many of us thought was the brain of child of Dr. Alex Ekwueme, is actually an old idea. And I believe that this country has come to terms with the fact that politicians and politics in Nigeria now are like a blood parasite on the bloodline of the nation. We have 36 States and FCT and 769 Local Government Areas as at the last count. There is really no reason why so much of our money is being consumed by politics and bureaucracy. Several bodies, including the World Bank, have pointed out to us that of the revenue generated in this country Nigeria, only between 13 percent and 15 percent actually goes towards developmental needs. Yet, all of us are going about as if everything is normal. There is everything wrong with Nigeria.

We watch CNN and seeing how French people are up in arms, yet we have much bigger problems here and all we see around us are proliferations of Conference Centres and Party Centres and ‘*ariya*’ on almost every day of the week. It is really very sad. I think there should be a mobilisation to actually oppose the current bloated bureaucracy that we have in this country. When we had the Regional structure at the beginning with our founding fathers, one of the things that were obvious then was that there was keen competition between the Regions and I am sure that if we could go back to that time to find out what happened to our resources, it would have been a reverse of what is happening today. Probably then, at least 70 percent to 80 percent of our resources went to developmental needs as opposed to the reverse today.

Thank you very much.

## **Lekan Are (1948)**

I think we are privileged to have a good Lecture. Some of us are old enough to confirm some of the things he said. I am sorry to say that what Towo Aderemi (1965) said was wrong. The Action Group never won that first election. My Uncle - Moyo Aboderin - was one of those that crossed carpet. We know the flaws and I will give you a book to read so that you can see the proof. I am just trying to set the records straight because we were old enough to know what was happening at that time. It was the then National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons, later National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, (N.C.N.C) that won the election.

Secondly, I support Roluga's (1963) suggestion and I will marry that with that of Animaun (1950). The Regions functioned well in those days because they controlled their resources and, of course, as he pointed out, I don't see how the country or Region can have an income of 100 percent and be using 30 percent for development. In fact, when I went for the National Political Reform Conference, it was discovered that only 8percent of the Federally-generated fund was spent on development and 92 percent was spent on recurrent expenses - paying salaries, allowances, etc. You are totally correct. In fact, just to give you more facts, you will find that today, like before, for instance, the President, Obasanjo at that time, had 92 Advisers. What was he doing with them? And the Political Reform Conference said he should have only six and the Governors should have three. You can see if a Governor is moving now, they will drive everyone off the road because so many Advisers, Assistants and so on.

If the Presidential system itself is good, good in the sense that you cut your coat according to the cloth available, people would not be extravagant. People are extravagant because they don't work for the money they have. If each State was generating its own fund, they wouldn't be spending money the way they are spending. They wouldn't have so many Commissioners. In those days, for the whole of Western Region, we had only 9 Ministers. Now the place has been split into 5 or more States. You multiply that with each State. Some of these States each have 15 or 16 Ministers (or Commissioners and Advisers they call them now). They are just wasting our money. That is not how Presidential system is supposed to be run.

Thirdly, you see a man who is not working, and he is dressing too well; people would ask, “Nibo lo tiri owo?” We would ostracise the person because we know he is a thief! But now, the story is different.

There was one boy who works in Kakanfo Inn. On a particular Sunday, he didn't come to work. I asked, “Why?” He said he had to go to church. “Yes, if you go to church, you are supposed to be on afternoon duty and your work starts at 2.00pm, why didn't you show up?” I asked. He said his Pastor told him to wait for other assignments. “O.K. God says you should work and He would bless you. But you don't want to work, I will fire you.” I said, “You know so and so in your church?” (I don't want to mention names here). I went further.

“Yes, Sir,” He replied.

“You know he is a very rich man.” I asserted.

“Yes, Sir,”

“Do you know how he got his money?” I asked.

“Eh! Eh! We are told that may be he stole?”

“It is not ‘May be.’ He stole?”

“When the Pastor wants to pray for himself, how is it done?”

“It is very lengthy, Sir.”

“How is your own?”

“It is very short, Sir.”

“You see, the Pastor himself is bad!”

You see, in the society, it's our fault. We see the people who stole and we are hailing them, “Baba Rere! Baba Ke!” instead of letting people know that these are the types of people we don't want in this society.

There were some guys who came for interview. I asked one of them who his role model was. I don't want to mention names. When he mentioned his role model, I said, "Ori re o da" His role model was a thief who had plenty of money that everybody in this town knows. Even the young ones coming up, they are not picking... Adebambo here, that I know is a good man, should be his role model. He wants somebody who has plenty of money and he doesn't care how he got it. In our culture, we don't worship people who stole money. So, if we are going to have a better Nigeria, our attitude has to change. We have to listen to people who have ideas. When there is election, we should only vote for people who will do well, not people who will distribute bread or something first. Otherwise, we will remain in the same rot that we are right now.

### **Emiola Adesina (1945)**

I want to say 'Thank you' to Hope Harriman for the style he used in talking on this topic. It is a very difficult topic which, to my mind, has no easy answer to it. And you did it in such a way that you sensitised us and allowed us all to come in and make contributions and suggestions. You can't find all the solutions today. And one thing which is important is this that like Oscar Wilde said, "*There are two categories of governance — the Philistines and the Patricians. The Patricians are the good ones who are educated, knowledgeable and know what to do. The Philistines are the ones who are not literate but are in a position of power.* We are today in Nigeria ruled by Philistines, saddled by people who hardly know their right from left. And the problem we are facing today, to my mind, is not in any way peculiar to what we are actually authored up because it is all self-inflicted punishment we are going through.

Lekan Are said earlier on that today when you find someone who is rich; you don't want to find out how he acquired his wealth. He becomes 'Baba Ke' and you throw out all moral standards, and ethical standards are no longer considered. It was not so in the past. One of the solutions is the fact that we need people who are actually informed, people who actually know what to do and have the courage to carry out what they believe in. We need Nationalists.

I don't know whether many of you take note of this fact that if the National Anthem is being sung today, you will find important, educated people just walking about, tottering away, talking without taking notice of the fact that the National Anthem that is being chanted is one thing that has to be taken seriously and respected as a nation. If you get to Ghana today or you have a Ghanaian around you, if he hears the Ghanaian National Anthem being sung he will stand up automatically. It is not so in Nigeria. The only people you find who might have to stand up are those either in the Army or Policemen, in other words, people in the regimental realm or section of the community. We have to find or re-educate our children and ourselves to accept the fact that this is a nation that has to be respected. We have no other country to go.

And if that were so, we want to tell people when they are not right. If they do something which is good, oh yes, we say you are doing something.

I want to suggest, as part of the solutions to the problem, what Olutunde Oni said earlier on that like minds should come together to ask, "Where did we go wrong? What do we need to do in order to be able to get onto the path which we should follow?" There is no doubt that we have a very good collection or a very good number of intelligent people in this country. You will be surprised to find that Nigerians are in one of the areas where the Americans regard as very sensitive, working there. It is not because we are intelligent, but we have not been able to channel our God-given talent to a useful purpose.

And I also want to say this right here that the point which was made earlier on and I am happy that Lekan Are mentioned that anybody who told you that the first election in 1951 was won by AG is just telling a lie. He has not told you the truth. If any of you from Ijebu area would remember, it took a while to convince Odutola to join the AG because he went there on the platform of NCNC. Check your records. What I am trying to say is that when records are going to be referred to, we do not have to just pander the information to suit our whims. We are not politicians here.



## **ABOUT THE LECTURER**

**Chief Hope Harriman** was in GCI from 1947 to 1952. He was in Grier House. Hope went to Oxford and Cambridge and when he returned to Nigeria, he started his working career with the development of the Bodija Estate in Ibadan. So, what you see in Ibadan now, what you are proud of as a good Estate was initiated by a group of Estate Surveyors among who was Chief Hope Harriman. It was from Bodija that he was transferred to develop Ikeja Industrial and Housing Estate under the auspices of the then Western Nigeria Housing Corporation.

He was later to join the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB). That was the organisation in those days that was responsible for planning Lagos to be a good city. They did a very good job. And we are happy that an Old Boy who is now 91 years old, Engr. S.O. Fadahunsi, was the 1st African to head that place. Chief Harriman and others were the people who worked with him. Chief Harriman later formed his own company called Harriman & Co. And if one talks of Estate Development in this country, one cannot fail to mention the name of Hope Harriman. Many practising Estate Surveyors today passed through the hands of Chief Hope Harriman. Harriman is a man of many parts holding Directorship positions in several companies. People who interact with him wonder how he finds time to attend meetings of these big companies. Some of them have folded up though (such as the Commerce Bank which he started in those days). He was, for 31 years, Director of West African Milk Company and he later became the Chairman of that company. He has been Director of Mobil. He is also Director of Addis Engineering Limited. Addis Engineering was the 1st in the world to make the yam-pounder for producing pounded-yam, which the Japanese copied and is still very much in use. Chief Harriman is also Director of Stiplar Evans Nigeria Limited, a Pharmaceutical company.

He is a widely travelled person who has seen every part of the world.