

# AFRICA NEWS

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## NIGERIA Party Squabbles Threaten Crisis

[AN] If the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) does not take care, warned opposition leader Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party (UPN) last week, the country could descend into chaos as it did in the early sixties.

Awolowo stressed that his party was not trying to destabilize the government and should not be blamed for the current troubles. The UPN, he said, would continue with its constructive development policies in the five states it controls, with an eye to winning the 1983 election — if it should be "free and fair."

Chief Awolowo's remarks come in the midst of a multi-issue wrangle for Nigeria's American-style constitutional system, which boasts five parties, nineteen states, and a federal government with a separate presidency, senate and house. Only a few days earlier, the ruling coalition of President Shehu Shagari's NPN and Nnamdi Aziki's Nigerian People's Party (NPP) appeared to have finally collapsed, with Shagari opting to go it alone. The president will now attempt to build a majority in the National Assembly by garnering votes from dissident NPP members and factions of the two other parties — the Greater Nigerian People's Party (GNPP) and the People's Redemption Party (PRP).

Since Shagari's NPN as well as the GNPP and PRP all have their strongest bases in the north of Nigeria, and the

UPN and NPP flourish in the south, the specter is being raised again of a north-south political split. This would correspond to the historical divisions between the south, with its greater and earlier exposure to Western education, and the largely Muslim north, which was administered separately by the British during the colonial period.

The complex constitutional system, introduced in 1979, was designed in large part to prevent just such a line-up of different ethnically and regionally-based political factions, ensuring by division of powers a more complex and overlapping pattern that would prevent a resurgence of civil war or military rule.

The crux of the current dispute is a revenue allocation bill just approved by a Joint Appropriations Committee of Nigeria's House and Senate, and signed by President Shagari on February 3. Twelve state governors and several members of the assembly are going to court to challenge the constitutionality of the measure, which they see as giving the states, leaving them no high a percentage of federal control.

The bill as signed advocates:

- 58.5% directly to the federal government;
- 5% to mineral-producing states to be divided on the basis of production (five states produce almost all of Nigeria's oil, the source of 85% of national revenues);
- 10% to local governments (to be disbursed directly rather than

through state governments as before); and

- 26.5% to be divided among all the states.

The last portion, for the states, would in turn be divided half in equal amounts for each state, plus 2/5 on the basis of population and 1/10 on the basis of land area. An additional amendment would require each state to pass on ten per cent of its revenue to local governments.

This formula, President Shagari noted, provides more to the states than the previous allocation of 21%. However, it is less than the 30% recommended by the Okigbo Commission which presented its report on the issue last September. Moreover, it is far from adequate to allow the states, twelve of which have governors of non-NPN parties, to carry out the ambitious social and economic development programs they have announced.

The legal challenge, however, is based not on such substantive grounds but on questions of constitutionality and procedure. NPP and UPN members of the Joint Committee, who were outvoted 13 to 11, say that the joint committee as such had no power to pass the bill, but was required to refer it to the two houses. (The House of Representatives had proposed the much larger allocation of forty per cent for the states.)

The thirteen NPN, GNPP and PRP members who voted for the bill say that the measure should be classified as a money bill, and as such is subject to a final decision by a joint

committee under Section 55(3) of the constitution.

The issue is further confused by the party infighting. The PRP member seated in the committee represents one faction — led by Aminu Kano — recently ruled by the courts as the official PRP. Governors of two states and the majority of PRP members of the assembly, however, belong to the dissident PRP faction, which is more ready to challenge the ruling party in favor of a more populist program. When the joint committee first met, representatives of the anti-Aminu Kano group forcibly prevented the official PRP member from taking his seat. Police were called, and one of the dissident legislators was thrown out of the building, while a UPN Senator, trying to enter the building, was beaten by police with whips.

In addition to the disorder in the assembly itself, clashes have been recently reported in Abeokuta between UPN and NPN supporters, and, in the most serious incident, a GNPP-NPN clash in a village some 150 miles from Maiduguri in the northeast took six lives. Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and Bayero University in Kano have been closed because of disturbances, and although the connection with party politics is obscure, the schools are located in the two states (Kaduna and Kano) headed by dissident PRP governors.

Meanwhile, in Kano, the inquiry into the violence which pitted followers of Mohammed Marwa against the government in late December, with thousands reported killed, has gotten under way. No coherent picture has yet emerged, but the thesis of Libyan involvement has gotten short shrift, and it has become clear that many Nigerians as well as foreign immigrants were involved in Marwa's sect. The situation, noted one local sociologist, was "a social time-bomb waiting to go off."

## SPECIAL REPORT How Strong Is The Dergue? Part I

[AN] Amidst the complex political tangle in the Horn of Africa, few questions are more difficult to answer with any certainty than that of the strength of the government which presently rules Ethiopia from Addis Ababa. Run by a military committee (called 'the Dergue') that emerged in the revolution against Haile Selassie's feudal regime in 1974, the Addis government has had to cope with numerous armed insurrections and profound ideological struggles, as well as drought, famine, and all the chronic economic pro-

blems of oil-importing African states. The Dergue has survived all this, but some of its challengers carry on their battle.

Since 1977, the Dergue has been under the undisputed leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam, a young captain in 1974, whom some now regard as a dedicated revolutionary nationalist, and others as a supremely opportunistic and ruthless military strongman. Seemingly beset on all sides three years ago, Mengistu succeeded, with the aid of a military alliance with the Soviet Union and Cuba, in building an army that rolled back the immediate threat from Somali forces in the east and from Eritrean nationalists in the north. In a confrontation of terror and counter-terror in Addis Ababa and surrounding areas, meanwhile, the opposition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was routed.

Subsequently, other internal opponents have been purged. And, while the promised Marxist-Leninist party has not yet been formed to take over from the military, its embryo exists in the Commission for the Establishment of the Working Peoples Party of Ethiopia (COPWE), built largely from Mengistu loyalists in the military and from peasants' and urban-dwellers' organizations formed in the last five years. There is a working bureaucracy in Addis Ababa, though observers say its apparent uniformity conceals a wide variety of backgrounds and views.

Much of Western press coverage of Ethiopia has emphasized the geopolitical implications of the Soviet involvement, but the assessments of those with first-hand experience of the country follow no easy East-West line-up. Praise comes not only from the sources one would expect — Soviet and Cuban publicans — but also from many among the Western and

international aid agencies, which still provide substantially more support for Ethiopian development efforts than the Soviet connection.

## Development Efforts Praised

London Observer editor Conon Cruise O'Brien, visiting Ethiopia in early 1980, wrote of a "pattern of serious development activity" carried out by peasant associations in Gamu Goffa Province in the south, with aid from the government, from the British private organization OXFAM, and Irish Catholic missionaries. In contrast to the gross neglect of famine that helped to bring down Haile Selassie's regime, the present government is generally described as relatively efficient in distribution of relief supplies for the victims of war and drought.

Most notable in terms of international prestige has been a major literacy campaign, for a population of thirty million that was estimated in 1974 to be 93% illiterate. Last year the International Reading Association award, one of three literacy awards presented by UNESCO, went to Ethiopia.

According to Ralph Staiger, director of the International Reading Association, headquartered in Delaware, the award was presented by a jury of experts for a campaign which showed broadly-based organizational structure and systematic planning, and which reached more than five million people in five Ethiopian languages — Amharic, Oromigna, Tigrigna, Wolaita and Somali.

On a military level, the government has reestablished effective control over much of the Somali-speaking Ogaden, and it is at least holding its own against strong guerrilla movements in Eritrea and adjoining Tigre Province. About 25% of the budget, however, is tied up in defense spending. Economically, Ethiopia



"Railroad Stop"

Six foot, eight inch George Wilson has to stoop in basement of Harriet Beecher Stowe's house in Cincinnati, which 130 years ago was a stop on the "Underground Railroad" — a system by which slaves escaped from the South to freedom in the North. Wilson's hands are on a concrete slab that covers a tunnel that led into the basement. Wilson, a former All-America basketball player, has helped restore the historic house.

can hardly be said to have fared well, being one of the ten poorest countries in the world in per capita income. The nation depends largely on exports of coffee, and revenues are drained by the need to pay for arms — and for oil for both the wars and the civilian economy. Surprisingly, however, Ethiopia does not seem to have fared worse than many other countries faced with similar problems, and it has retained the confidence of Western financial agencies, in spite of a cut-off of U.S. aid last year.

The Fiscal Year 1979 trade deficit dropped to \$153 million from some \$210 million the previous year. And under its membership in the Lome Agreement with the European Economic Community, Ethiopia should

get some \$250 million in development assistance over the next four years. Such diverse sources as Libya and Japan have made grants to support the literacy program. And the World Bank's International Development Association has recently granted \$40 million for an agricultural development project.

There are scarcely-concealed complaints within the government about the standing barter arrangements with the Soviet Union and its allies — largely arms and oil in exchange for coffee. But the supplies are needed, and the close alliance with the Soviet Union is unlikely to be seriously questioned as long as the government feels itself a target of a U.S. and conservative Arab "cold war."

To be continued

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