

CHAPTER ONE

IDEOLOGY OF THE LEFT IN COLONIAL TERRITORIES

Introduction

The potent mix of decolonisation, anti-imperialist indigenous nationalism, and Marxism-Leninism first came to regions under European colonial control in the years immediately following World War I. At the treaty talks at Versailles formally ending World War I and establishing the League of Nations, American President Woodrow Wilson's calls for a new world order built upon collective security and national self-determination inspired anti-colonial nationalist groups across Asia and the Middle East.¹ The terms of the final treaty, however, deeply disillusioned and embittered these nascent nationalists in the colonies. The new world order limited the right of self-determination to European areas of the former

1. H Grimal, *Decolonization: The British, French, Dutch and Belgian Empires, 1919-1963* (Boulder, 1978), pp 17-18. RJC Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Massachusetts/Oxford, 2001), pp 1-12; 159-181; 217-273.

Austro-Hungarian empire, reaffirmed European colonial interests across the globe, and handed over Germany's imperial holdings in China to Japan, the most recent arrival among the great powers.

Marxism-Leninism and Anti-colonial Nationalism

Marxism-Leninism emerged amid this disillusionment as a radical alternative to the post-Versailles world order.² The revolutionary theory offered indigenous nationalist leaders a coherent critique of imperialism as an outgrowth of capitalism, an understanding of capitalism as a flawed, self-destructive phase in human history, together with a vision of post-colonial, anti-Western modernisation. The Marxist component of this ideological mix, enunciated in the mid-19th-century collaborative

2. A Mayer, *Wilson vs. Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918* (New York, 1967), pp 245-266. Young, *Postcolonialism*, pp 113-134. By way of exemplifying the shift from inspiration to disillusionment, historians recount how in 1919, a young Ho Chi Minh, then living in Paris, requested a meeting with President Wilson to present an anti-colonial, nationalist petition of "The Claims of the People of Annam." Rebuffed, that same year Ho took up Marxism-Leninism as revolutionary strategy for a struggle for Vietnamese independence from France. HT Hue-Tam, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp 68-69.

writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was a normative theory of history, a radical socialist brand of political economy, and a call for international proletarian struggle against bourgeois capitalism. The Leninist component grew out of the Bolsheviks' successful revolt against tsarism in Russia in the closing years of World War I. Leninism offered a blueprint for revolutions, calling for a small, highly disciplined party to form the 'vanguard of revolution,' forge coalitions of convenience with class enemies, and employ violence to achieve revolutionary ends. This hybrid Marxism-Leninism gained ground internationally when the newly established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), repudiated tsarist treaties concerning colonial arrangements and nationalised foreign investments and properties in Russia. Bolshevism in power became synonymous with "the theory of the party as a dedicated revolutionary order, the tightening regime of party discipline, the absolutism of the party line, the intolerance of disagreement and

compromise, and the manipulative attitude toward mass organisation.”³ Ironically, as Britain and France moved to liberalise their colonial administrations, this loosening opened up avenues of access for Soviet ideological and material influence.

After World War II, decolonisation and independence movements swept through Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Once again, the words of an American president had inspired calls for self-determination, and once again, post-war realities fell far short of wartime rhetoric and promises. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, together with England’s Winston Churchill, had issued the “Atlantic Charter” in 1941, framing the war as a struggle for the principle of universal self-determination and the end of imperialist economic arrangements. While Roosevelt and Churchill had their own agenda, there is no doubt that the echoes of Woodrow Wilson’s promises provided an opening for anti-

3. M Fainsord, “Soviet Communism,” *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* (London, 1999), p 105.

colonial nationalist groups; the leading Nigerian nationalist spokesman Nnamdi Azikiwe used a visit in London in 1943 to hand-deliver to the colonial secretary a memorandum entitled, "The Atlantic Charter and British West Africa," demanding independence within fifteen years.⁴

In the immediate post-war years, however, both Britain and France refused to relinquish their colonies, and the American commitment to anti-imperialism was compromised by its growing alarm over Soviet territorial gains in Eastern Europe and apparent Soviet ideological gains in the Third World. Seeing colonial resources and markets as essential to Western European postwar recovery, the U.S. muted its opposition to French and British empire-salvaging efforts. At the same time, the Soviet Union's emergence as a counterweight to Anglo-American power meant that Marxism-Leninism gained force and legitimacy as an ideology and blueprint for

4. R Albertini, "The Impact of the Two World Wars on the Decline of Colonialism," in *The End of the European Empire: Decolonisation after World War II*, T Smith, (ed), (London, 1975), pp 3-19.

mobilising anti-colonial indigenous nationalist groups.

The decades between the Bolshevik takeover of Russia and the post-World War II push for decolonisation had broadened and complicated Marxism-Leninism. To Lenin's party dictatorship, his successor Joseph Stalin contributed to the mix and insistence upon the infallibility of party leaders, a single-party system in a totalitarian state, a command economy to achieve 'socialism in one country,' the cult of personality, a reign of terror built on institutionalised violence, intrusive Soviet domination over neighbouring communist parties, and Soviet ideological hegemony within the world-wide communist movement.

Communist revolution in China, culminating in the creation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, legitimised Maoism as an alternative road to socialism in non-industrialised, overwhelmingly peasant

societies.⁵ Although closely tied to the Soviets, the Chinese Communist Party embraced Maoism as an alternative road to socialism, and China emerged as an ideological rival for leadership in the international communist movement. China's example made it possible for socialist or communist parties to pursue alternate roads to revolution, acknowledging two types of conflict: the first, so-called "non-antagonistic contradictions" among socialist powers and within communist parties, to be resolved through fraternal discussions and self-criticism; the second, "antagonistic contradictions," between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie or the ruling elite, resolvable only through revolution.⁶ Within the Soviet bloc, Josip Tito demonstrated the utility of communism in uniting a country whose boundaries had been imposed by outside powers. Both Titoism and Maoism came to represent a

5. E Friedman, "Maoism, Titoism, Stalinism: Some origins and consequences of the Maoist theory of the socialist transition," in M Seldon, & V Lippit, (eds.) *The Transition to Socialism in China* (New York, 1982).

6. Ibid.

socialist road avowedly independent of Soviet domination, a feat made ever more difficult in the hardening bipolarity of the Cold War.

Leftist Ideology and Anti-Colonialism in British Africa

In World War I, colonial powers' reliance upon local African economies and work force, combined with greater prosperity and professionalisation among intermediaries and Western-educated Africans, increased pressures to liberalise colonial administrations. In areas with dense white settlement, such as Southern Rhodesia, British colonial reforms were too slow for black Africans but too radical for white residents. London's consequent stepping-back from pledges radicalised nationalist groups, leading in turn to greater British rigidity. The rhetoric of self-determination, given a pan-African focus by W.E.B. DuBois and the political sophistication of African students returning from British universities, mobilised elite Western-educated Africans, seen for example in

the 1918 formation of the National Congress of British West Africa, and in the mid-1920s, of the West African Youth League, and the Nigerian National Democratic Party.⁷

However, in Africa generally and West Africa more particularly, interwar anti-colonialism was "incipient rather than openly challenging."⁸ Three coherent groups emerged in West Africa as players in resistance to colonial rule. Tribal leaders and traditionalists tended to accommodate British authorities in exchange for the status quo; a professional, commercial elite—many with family ties to tribal chieftains—identified with things British and sought to negotiate higher status and some liberalisation of colonial government; a third element comprised a nascent urban-centered activist elite with connections to the British left, sharing a dawning recognition that colonial reform would never go

7. J Hatch, "The Decline of British Power in Africa," in T Smith, (ed.) *The End of the European Empire: Decolonization after World War II* (London, 1975), pp 72-100.

8. Ibid.

far enough, and might even be a hindrance to complete independence.⁹

In the late interwar years, and through the early 1940s, the second and third of these three pivotal groups emerged to dominate nationalist and decolonisation movements, often as rivals, but also as powerful pressure groups against British colonial rule. During the war, various political groups representing the second element coalesced to demand self-government—the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroon, the Nyasaland African Congress, and the Kenya African Union—inspired by the model of the Indian Congress Party. However, changing economic and demographic factors forced such groups to undertake mass mobilisation or be left behind as a vestige of colonialism.

A wartime boom, coming out of the demands on colonial markets to supply British and American troops, and the disruption of British trade routes elsewhere enhanced the economic

9. Hatch, *Ibid.*

and political power of native farmers and middlemen. Returning war veterans, overseas African students, and a self-conscious professional class, took hold of nationalist parties, pushed for expanded access to education, and established trade unions. The infrastructure laid down to move troops and supplies in wartime now provided avenues of contact and mobilisation beyond and between cities. Growing urban populations organised against price increases in consumer goods and against colonial rule more generally, as in the 1945 general strike in Nigeria, and the 1948 riots in Accra.¹⁰

In post-World War II Africa, then, the pathways to independence among nationalist movements ranged from western-oriented groups employing Mohandas Gandhi's non-violent resistance strategy, to national liberation united fronts relying upon guerrilla tactics.

10. R Albertini, "The Impact of the Two World Wars on the Decline of Colonialism," in *The End of the European Empire: Decolonization after World War II*, T Smith, (ed), (London, 1975), pp 3-19.

In colonial Nigeria, both external and internal pressures contributed to the growing strength and visibility of the more militant nationalist organisations. The Nigerian Youth Movement (1934) and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (1943) mounted continued criticism of colonial administration and demands for a constitutional roadmap to self-rule - demands for more native participation in a reformed colonial administration.¹¹ These groups were "urban based, led by the educated elite who operated through ethnic unions within the municipalities, trade unions, debating clubs, and old boys' associations" built upon shared ties to British universities.¹²

Frustration with halting and superficial colonial administrative reforms amid worsening economic conditions soon led to anger and grievances among Nigerians. Young Nigerians

11. JFA Ajayi, & AE Ekoko, "Transfer of Power in Nigeria: Its Origins and Consequences," in P Gifford, & W Louis, (eds.) *Decolonization and African Independence; the Transfers of Power, 1960-1980* (New Haven, Yale, 1988), pp 245-269.

12. Ibid, p 246.

were dissatisfied with the indigenous intelligentsia's acceptance of colonial reforms in lieu of full and immediate national independence; many of these young people were persuaded by the anti-colonial rhetoric emanating from the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Within the British colonial administration, both the Regional and Federal governments stood fast against Marxism-Leninism,¹³ enacting laws aimed against radicals, socialists, or leftists of any ilk. Socialism gained ground, however, with the rising tide of militant nationalism.

Leftist ideas were evident both in politics and trade unionism during the period. More important, Nigerian intellectuals and organisers endeavoured to adapt communism to their own colonial situation. Hence, as subsequent chapters take up in greater detail, some of them claimed to be Marxists, while

13. HI Tijani, "Communists and the nationalist movement," in T Falola (ed.) *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, 2002), p 293-313; "McCarthyism in colonial Nigeria: The ban on the employment of Communists," in A Oyebade (ed.) *The Foundations of Nigeria* (Trenton, 2003), pp 645-668.

others declared themselves Stalinists, Titoists or Maoists. These divisions soon created many pseudo-Marxist organisations in the 1950s and beyond. Nationalism, for its part, became militant partly because of support from the Communist International (from September 1947 Cominform) and its satellites in Europe. Records show, however, that attempts to form a centralised Marxist-Leninist movement in Nigeria in the 1940s and 1950s were both episodic and unorganised.¹⁴ Differences in tactics, combined with volatile personality clashes, spawned uncoordinated and pseudo-Marxist organisations mostly in the southern part of the country.¹⁵

What emerged was a cluster of pseudo-Marxist groups with different tactics for achieving the shared aim of a Nigerian socialist state that would metamorphose into a

14. CP/CENT/INT/24/04: "Draft discussion of the leadership and personnel of the Nigerian trade union and national movement," November 15, 1951, National Museum of Labour History Archives (NMLHA), Warwick, England.

15. CP/CENT/INT/24/04: Eze (Lagos) to Dafe (London), December 5, 1951, NMLHA, Warwick, England.

Nigerian communist state. Their common ground was reliance upon directives and support from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU), although as the evidence shows, such directives were not strictly followed.¹⁶ To some, a mass and nation-wide political party such as the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) could serve their purpose (Nduka Eze's group). Others were of the opinion that a Marxist party should be formed so that the bourgeoisie would not hijack the revolution (Samuel Ikoku's group). The latter were of the view that a Marxist party would metamorphose into a Communist Party of Nigeria in the near future. These differences partly explain the absence of a nation-wide Marxist movement and the failure of leftist ideology.

Communism in post-World War II Nigeria

Leftist ideology made in-roads among Nigerian nationalists because it addressed the plight of

16. CP/CENT/INT/20/01: The Nigerian Commission 1950-1953, NMLHA.

the working class and the peasantry under colonialism. There is no denying the fact those Nigerian nationalists and labour leaders were generally well informed about leftist ideology. Like their British compatriots,¹⁷ they not only understood the tensions involved in adapting it to their own situation but also ultimately created a distinctive meaning and application of the ideology. They understood the role of the working class and the peasants; the inevitability of the class struggle; the need for contingent co-operation with the bourgeoisie; the aim of the socialist state as a transition to a communist state; and the need for tactical adaptation of the process in relation to their colonial situation. As Lenin himself once declared, "all nations will arrive at socialism... but not the same way."¹⁸

Agunbiade-Bamishe succinctly highlighted the Nigerian situation when he remarked: "I am

17. S Pierson, *Marxism and the origins of socialism: The struggle for a new consciousness* (Ithaca, 1973).

18. E Friedman, "Maoism, Titoism, Stalinism: Some origins and consequences of the Maoist theory of the socialist transition," p 189.

a Communist on the conviction that a political ideology which is based on the philosophy of Marx-Lenin-Stalinism is the only political ideology that can best serve the interests of the Nigerian people."¹⁹ Samuel Ikoku, in one of his editorials in the *Nigerian Socialist Review* (successor to *Labour Champion*, of which he was a co-editor), exemplified the thinking and goal of the Nigerian Marxists during the 1950s when he wrote that: "We must start a Party...the Party of the Working class in alliance with the poor peasantry. It must be guided by the tested theory of the struggles of the working classes the world over—the theory of Marxism-Leninism. It must adopt the road of open and determined revolutionary struggle against imperialism and against all forces of exploitation and oppression."²⁰

According to Anglo-American officials (including bourgeois nationalists) Marxist ideas could not be treated lightly. Thus, in

19. CP/CENT/INT/19/01: Nigeria 1952-1957, NMLHA.

20. *Nigeria Socialist Review*, No.1, Editorial notes, February 29, 1952.

Nigeria as elsewhere, preventing the development of leftist ideology and organisations was tied with decolonisation and the transfer of power. While I have addressed British anticommunist policies as they relate to the transfer of power in another study,²¹ this study is about the various attempts to develop a nationwide leftist organisation in Nigeria between 1945 and 1965.

Literature Review

In contemporary world politics, Marxism-Leninism has provoked an enormous outpouring of literature ranging from academic to propagandist. The more academic and historical works may be classified under country studies, comparative cases, and critiques of both the ideology itself and the various revolutionary movements it inspired in both Europe and the Third World.²² While there are many solid

21. HI Tijani, "British anti-Communist policies and the transfer of power in Nigeria from the late 1930s to 1960," MPhil. History Thesis, University of London, June 1998.

22. In this category are: AZ Rubinstein, *Communist Political Systems* (New Jersey, 1966); DW Treadgold, (ed.) *Soviet and Chinese Communism* (Seattle, 1973); GK Bertsch, & TW

country studies and comparative works on nationalism and decolonisation in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, there is no comprehensive study about the development of leftist ideology and organisations in Nigeria itself between 1945 and 1965. The otherwise pioneering works of Coleman, Olusanya, and Sklar offer valuable overviews of political development and nationalist struggles in Nigeria but ascribe little significance to the long history of leftist ideology in the region; as well, they do not fully appreciate the deep inroads radical leftists made into mainstream nationalist organisations.²³

The works of Ajala, Esedebe, Langley, Legum, Nkrumah, and Padmore focus on the general Pan-African use of some of the ideals

Ganschow, *Comparative Communism: The Soviet, Chinese, and Yugoslav Models* (San Francisco, 1976); RG Wesson, *Communism and Communist Systems* (New Jersey, 1978); MA Kaplan, (ed.) *The Many Faces of Communism* (New York, 1978); A Westoby, *The Evolution of Communism* (Oxford, 1989); RJC Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Massachusetts/Oxford, 2001).

23. JS Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1958); GO Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953* (London, 1973); R Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton, 1963). Despite Sklar's analyses of party ideologies, he like Coleman did not relate them to anti-Communist policy and decolonisation. See pp 265-276.

of communism as the basis of nationalist struggle in Africa. Alade, Ikoku, Madunagu, Osoba, Waterman and Zachernuk discuss the African intelligentsia's ideological orientation.²⁴ Narasingha, on the other hand, compares the role of the Left during the colonial and post-colonial period, concluding that "socialism holds an uncertain prospect for the future of Nigeria."²⁵ Frank, in his 1979

24. A Ajala, *Pan-Africanism: Evolution, Progress and Prospects* (London, 1973); PO Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1963* (London, 1982); JA Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-1945: A Study in Ideology and Social Class* (Oxford, 1973); C Legum, *Pan-Africanism: A Short Political Guide* (London, 1965); K Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (London, 1964); *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A Guide to the Armed Phase of the Africa Revolution* (London, 1968); *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* (New York, 1964); G Padmore, *Communism or Pan-Africanism? The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London, 1956); SG Ikoku, *Nigeria for Nigerians: A Study of Contemporary Nigerian Politics from a Socialist Point of View* (Takoradi, 1962); OS Osoba, "The Development of Trade Unionism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Nigeria," in IA Akinjogbin, & OS Osoba, (eds.) *Topics on Nigerian Economic and Social History* (Ile-Ife, 1980); "The Transition to Neo-colonialism," in T Falola, (ed.) *Britain and Nigeria: Development or Underdevelopment?* (New Jersey, 1987); "Ideological Trends in the Nigerian National Liberation Movement and the Problems of National Identity, Solidarity and Motivation, 1935-1965: A Preliminary Assessment" *Ibadan*, October 1969, p 35; P Waterman, "Communist Theory in the Nigerian Trade Union Movement," in *Politics and Society*, 3,3, 1973; E Madunagu, *The Tragedy of the Nigerian Socialist Movement* (Calabar, 1980), p 2; CA Alade, "From a Bourgeois to Social Democrat: A Study in the evolution of Awolowo's concept of Ideology," in Oyelaran *et al op.cit.*: p 315; Zachernuk, P. "Awolowo's Economic Thought in Historical Perspectives," in Oyelaran *op.cit.* p 283; Both Alade and Zachernuk agree that Awolowo, like his contemporaries, was "a pro-West, arch-capitalist and anti-Communist" during the colonial period. Zachernuk, P. *Colonial subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Virginia, 2000).

25. S Narasingha, "Nigerian Intellectuals and Socialism: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal Modern African Studies*, 31, 3, 1993, pp 361-385.

essay "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism" analyses the nature of ideology in Nigeria and relates ideological competition to conflict between Federal and local interests.²⁶ In his study Olakunle Lawal identifies the significance of radical nationalism but fails to discuss the Marxist ideological undertones of this radicalism.²⁷ Abdul Raheem and Olukoshi, Falola and Adebayo, Eze, Okoye, and Uyilawa present a narrative of the left wing and socialist struggle in Nigeria. Their studies are useful tools for a more meaningful analysis. In a separate study, Falola gives an in-depth account of colonial development planning and decolonisation in Nigeria, and his work remains a vital source for understanding

26. LP Frank, "Ideological Competition in Nigeria: Urban Populism versus Elite Nationalism," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17, 3, September 1979, pp 433-452.

27. AO Lawal, "Britain and the Decolonisation of Nigeria, 1945-1960," PhD History Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1991.

anti-socialist measures in colonial developmental plans.²⁸

Awa, in his 1964 *Federal Government in Nigeria*, narrates the political history of the country by examining various constitutions and the workings of the government. In another study, he focuses on the place of ideology in Nigerian politics, identifying three distinct strands: nationalism, capitalism and socialism. On nationalism, Awa concludes, "although the nationalist movement increased the momentum of the agitation for independence, it did not evolve any ideas that could help develop consensus in the country." According to Awa, "[m]ost leaders in Nigeria favoured capitalism to [i.e., over] socialism." To him, "socialism has not made a great impact on the society in practical terms because, there are many strands

28. N Eze, *Memoirs of a Crusader*, n.d.; U Uyilawa, *The Rise and Fall of the Zikist Movement, 1946-1950* (Lagos, 1983); T Abdul Raheem & A Olukoshi, "The Left in Nigerian Politics and Struggle for Socialism, 1945-1986," in *Review of African Political Economy*, No.37, 1986; T Falola, & AG Adebayo, "The Context: The Political Economy of Colonial Nigeria" in OO Oyelaran, et al (eds.) *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era?* (Ile Ife, 1988), pp 18-63; M Okoye, *The Beard of Prometheus* (Bristol, 1965); *A Letter to Dr.Nnamdi Azikiwe: A Dissent Remembered* (Enugu, 1979); T Falola, *Development Planning and Decolonization in Nigeria* (Florida, 1996).

to the ideology. Its votaries have tended to dissipate energy fighting one another and not the primary adversary, namely, poverty, and those who perpetuate it." Another reason he gives is that the "principal spokesmen for socialism at one time or the other abandoned the cause and either went over to the capitalist camp or remained neutral in the ideological debate."²⁹

In separate studies, Aluko, Kirk-Greene and Phillips offer insights into the evolution and development of the Foreign Service and foreign policy in Nigeria, as well as into the leadership's ideological leanings. Aluko and Kirk-Greene agree that the evolution of the Foreign Service should be dated back to 1950, when the process of Africanisation was in full throttle. Both, however, fail to identify ideological undertones in the evolution and development of the Nigerian Foreign Service during the period. Phillips narrates the

29. EO Awa, *Federal Government in Nigeria* (Berkeley, 1964); "The Place of Ideology in Nigerian Politics," *African Review: Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs*, Vol.4, nos.3, 1974, pp 359-380.

emergence of a non-neutralist foreign policy on the eve of independence. He discusses the place of ideology and the East-West politics as a campaign issue during the 1959 general elections.³⁰

Writing in the mid-1960s, Apthorpe, Bhambri, Dudley, Omer-Cooper and Post were concerned about the progress and prospects of Marxism in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies* published various papers from a symposium held in July 1964 at Ibadan, where scholars gathered to discuss Marxian ideas and social progress in Nigeria. In his contribution, "Marxism and Political Change in Nigeria," Dudley concluded that Marxism succeeded only insofar as the Marxists were willing to cooperate with the bourgeoisie. "That is why," according to him, "independent

30. O Aluko, "Foreign Service," *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, nos.5, 1970, pp 33-52; "The Organisation and Administration of the Nigerian Foreign Service," *Ife International Relations, Occasional Papers, 1*, July 1981, pp 1-39; AHM Kirk-Greene, "The New African Administrator," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol.x, no.1, 1972, pp 93-107; "Diplomacy and Diplomats: The Formation of Foreign Service Cadres in Black Africa," in K Ingham, (ed.) *Foreign Relations of African States: Colston Paper no.25* (London, 1974); CS Phillips, *The Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy* (Evanston, 1964).

Nigeria emerged with a ruling governing class recruited mainly from the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie." Omer-Cooper in his "Nigeria, Marxism and Social Progress," concluded that, "if taken ... as a scheme to be applied dogmatically to circumstances so different from those which inspired its authors - it could only lead to illusion and conceal the real problems of social progress in Nigeria."³¹

Apthorpe focused on Marxism and law in Nigeria, concluding that Marxian ideas do not fit into Nigerian law, nor were they wholly applicable.

Bhambri, in his "Marxist Economic Doctrines and their Relevance to Problems of Economic Development of Nigeria," maintained that Nigeria could not afford to be aligned with the Soviet bloc. As he put it, "dependency on the communist countries is likely to expose the

31. BJ Dudley, "Marxism and Political Change in Nigeria," *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, vol.6, no.2, 1964, pp 161-162; JD Omer-Cooper, "Nigeria, Marxism and Social Progress: An Historical Perspective," *NJESS*, vol.6, no.2, 1964, p 138; KWJ Post, "Nationalism and Politics in Nigeria: A Marxist Approach," *NJESS*, vol.6, no.2, 1964.

Nigerian economy to more dangerous forms of instability."³²

More recent studies have examined the extent to which ideology influenced nationalist and labour leaders. An account of the significant role of the Zikist Movement in the nationalist struggle in Nigeria is found in the works of Iweriebor and Tijani. Iweriebor, in particular, claims that, "under Eze and Okoye, the movement's political orientation and discourse had acquired a definite socialist inflection." Tijani goes further, identifying the extent of Marxist influence in the struggle against British officials and conservative nationalists.³³

Ananaba, Akpala, Cohen, Cowan, Otobo, Egboh, Melson, Tokunboh and Yesufu have opened new avenues of inquiry in their studies of

32. R Apthorpe, "Opium of the State - Some Remarks on Law and Society in Nigeria," *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, vol.6, no.2, July 1964, pp 139-154; RS Bhambri, "Marxist Economic Doctrines and their Relevance to Problems of Economic Development of Nigeria," *The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, vol.6, no.2, July 1964, p 196.

33. EEG Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945 -1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement* (Zaria, 1996). HI Tijani, "Communists and the Nationalist Movement," in T Falola, (ed.) *Nigeria in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, 2002).

Nigerian trade union movements. Ananaba in *The Trade Union Movement in Nigeria* gives a lucid account of Labour politics in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. In his larger study, *The Trade Union Movement in Africa*, he provides insights into the evolution of labour movements in Africa generally. Akpala emphasizes the evolution of trade union movements in Nigeria and attempts after 1945 to institute educational programs for unionists.

Cohen in his *Labour and Politics in Nigeria* discusses the history of labour movements in Nigeria, emphasizing the role of international labour politics in the split of union leaders. Cowan traces the history of trade unionism worldwide, highlighting its role in nationalism. Egboh's studies are mainly about the origin of trade unionism and its problems and prospects during the colonial period. Otodo, in his various studies on labour relations and trade unions in Nigeria, provides valuable information in this regard. In *Foreign Interest and Labour Unions in Nigeria* and *State and Industrial Relations in Nigeria*, he gave a

clear account of the origin and growth of the labour movement in Nigeria but with only passing reference to the Communist International's support for labor movements. As with earlier authorities, he does not adequately address the perceived communist threat as it related to decolonisation; similarly, he does not discuss various anti-Communist measures taken by British officials and leading nationalists in Nigeria as part of an effort to establish pro-Western labour organisations in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Melson narrates ideological failure of the 1964 labour strike and its implications on Marxist groups. Tokunboh in *Labour Movements in Nigeria: Past and Present* also provides a lucid account of the emergence and development of trade unions in Nigeria. To Yesufu, modern industrial relations in Nigeria cannot be divorced from trade union agitation since the colonial period.

Some scholars and government functionaries have carried out research about Communist infiltration of the trade union movements in

the colonies generally. Although some of them might have been influenced by their ideological orientation, they nonetheless provide useful accounts about the role of Communism, Socialism and the Cominform in metropolitan and colonial trade unionism. In this category are the works of Friedland, Gonidec, Laybourn, Lichtblau, Nelkin, Roberts, Zakharia and Magigwana.³⁴ Adi, Callaghan, and Howe have individually analyses the role of the British Left in colonial politics. Stephen Howe in his *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964*, analyses the role of the Left with emphasis on the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Labour Governments, and the Movement for Colonial Freedom, within the context of colonial politics. Adi in "West

34. R Melson, "Marxists in the Nigerian labour movement: A case study in the failure of ideology," PhD Political Science, MIT, 1967; WH Friedland, "Organizational Chaos and Political Potentials," *Africa Report*, vol.10, no.6, June 1965; PF Gonidec, "The Development of Trade Unionism in Black Africa," *Bulletin of the Inter-African Labour Institute*, vol.x, no.2, May 1963; K Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain* (Sutton, 1997); GE Lichtblau, "The Dilemma of the ICFTU," *Africa Report op.cit*; "The Communist Labour Offensive in Former Colonial Countries," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, vol.15, no.3, April 1962; D Nelkin, "The Search for Continental Unity," *Africa Report op.cit*; M Roberts, "African Trade Unionism in Transition," *The World Today*, vol.17, no.10, October 1961; I Zakharia, & C Magigwana, "The Trade Unions and the Political Scene in Africa," *World Marxist Review*, December 1964.

Africans and the Communist Party in the 1950s," highlight the relationship between Nigerian students in Britain during the 1950s and the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain. This is further expanded in his doctoral thesis "West African Students and West African Nationalism in Britain, 1900-1960." And in "The Communist Movement in West Africa," he concludes, "clearly the history of communism in West Africa has still to be written." To Adi, "there is much to indicate that it was a significant ideology which exercised an important influence on individuals and the anti-colonial and labour movements." Callaghan is concerned with the role of the British Communists during the World Wars in promoting pro-Allied efforts with the hope of a socialist triumphal or at least the Labour Party momentum after the war.³⁵

35. H Adi, "West Africans and the Communist Party in 1950s"; *ICS Postgraduate Seminar*, February, 1994; "West African Students and West African Nationalism in Britain, 1900-1960," PhD History Thesis, University of London, 1994; "The Communist Movement in West Africa," *Science and Society*, vol.61, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp 94-97; S Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the end of Empire, 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993); J Callaghan, "The Communists and the colonies: Anti-imperialism between the

Ronald Hyam's documentation of the Labour Governments and the end of the British Empire is another useful lead. He suggests that between August 1945 (after VJ-Day) and September 1951 (before handing over to the Conservative Party) the issue of containing communism was paramount in Labour government international relations policy. Despite some Left-wing ideologues in the Labour Party, the government was not tolerant of Marxist-Leninist ideals in its policy formulation. Thus he concludes that the foundation of an anti-Communist policy in British strategy was the product of the two post-World War II Labour Governments.³⁶

David Goldsworthy, in his volumes on the Conservative Governments, notes that "Africa South of the Sahara was far from un-important" in Cold War politics. He notes that the

Wars," in A Geoff et al (eds.) *Opening the Books: Essays in the Social and Cultural History of Communism* (London, 1995).

36. R Hyam, (ed.) *British Documents on the end of Empire: The Labour Government and the End of Empire, 1945-1951, Part II, Economic and International Relations* (London, 1992), pp 297-379.

Conservative Governments, like their Labour predecessors, were concerned about the growing influence of Nasser's Egypt, and with it, Soviet influence in spreading communism in Africa. He also asserts that the U.S. was concerned about the menace, which led to its floating the idea of a "committee of American, British, French, and perhaps Belgian officials to consider how best to combat Soviet subversion in Africa."³⁷ The basis for this U.S. initiative is well covered in Oyebade's "Feeding America's War Machine."³⁸ More generally, the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the final decade of the twentieth century and the opening of Russian archives have confirmed earlier understandings of Soviet interest in Africa south of the Sahara. The exploration of post-independence relations between Nigeria and the USSR, up until the collapse of the

37. D Goldsworthy, (ed.) *British Documents on the end of Empire: The Conservative Government and the end of Empire, Part 1*, (London, 1994), pp xxxvii, xxxvii, and xxxix.

38. A Oyebade, "Feeding America's War Machine: The United States and Economic Expansion in West Africa During World War II," *African Economic History*, 26, 1998, pp 119-140.

Soviet Union in 1991 is contained in Maxim Matusевич's recent work.³⁹ The classic and still invaluable analyses of Soviet activities among black Africans remains Edward Wilson's 1974 study, in which he argued that "Russian involvement had begun in Africa long before the Second World War and had strong historical roots." In this pioneering work, he maintained, "Having failed to establish colonies of her own, Russia adopted a policy of preventive imperialism, attempting to deny other powers what she herself could not have."⁴⁰

Autobiographies and biographies are also useful tools in reconstructing the history of leftist ideology and organisations in Africa, Nigeria in particular, but there are distinct limits to participants' own understanding of larger events. For example, autobiographical works by Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony

39. AB Davidson, & SV Mazov, (eds.) *Russia and Africa: Documents and Materials, XVIII Century – 1960* (Moscow, 1999); M Matusевич, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe: Ideology and Pragmatism in Nigeria-Soviet Relations, 1960-1991* (Trenton, 2003).

40. ET Wilson, *Russia and Black Africa before World War II* (London, 1974).

Enahoro and Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith mention only in passing the appeal of leftist and Marxism-Leninism in Nigeria.⁴¹ Amechi, Davies, Foot, Mbadiwe, Nzimiro and Osita do not give detailed accounts of the role of the Soviet Union and the Communist International in their memoirs, emphasizing instead the evolution and ideals of Zikism.⁴² In a work that does provide a general description of Communism and the state, Nnamdi Azikiwe underscores the role of a few notable communists in post-independence Nigeria, but concludes from a participant's vantage point that: "communism is suitable for adaptation but not for adoption in Nigeria."⁴³

41. A Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge, 1962); O Awolowo, *Awo: An Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (Cambridge, 1961); A Enahoro, *A Fugitive Offender: An Autobiography* (London, 1962); BS Smith, *But Always as Friends* (London, 1964). A more general aid to political biography of African nationalists and leaders is J Grace & J Laffin, *Fontana Dictionary of Africa Since 1960* (London, 1991).

42. M Amechi, *The Forgotten Heroes of Nigerian Independence* (Onitsha, 1985); I Nzimiro, *On Being a Marxist: The Nigerian Marxist and the Nigerian Revolution, 1945-1952* (Zaria, 1983); KO Mbadiwe, *Rebirth of a Nation* (Enugu, 1991); A Osita, "A Call For Revolution and the Forgotten Heroes: The Story of the Zikist Revolution of 1948," *Journal of the Association of Francophone Studies, Vol; 1, no.1*, 1990; HO Davies, *Memoirs* (Ibadan, 1989); H Foot, *A Start in Freedom* (London, 1964).

43. N Azikiwe, *Ideology for Nigeria: Capitalism, Socialism or Welfarism?* (Lagos, 1980), p 56; *My Odyssey* (London, 1970). A critique of Azikiwe's writings and views can be found in A Igwe, *ZIK: A Philosopher of Our Time* (Enugu, 1992).

A review of relevant biographical and autobiographical literature would not be complete without studies about Tafawa Balewa, one of the leading nationalists of the period and of course the person to whom the governance of Nigeria was entrusted on October 1, 1960. Trevor Clark narrates his role first as the Leader of Government Business, and later Prime Minister of the Federation of Nigeria. In relation to this study, Clark and Epelle have separately discussed the role of Balewa in nationalist politics as well as his role in the decolonisation era. Like Nkrumah (1948-1957) in the Gold Coast and Tunku Abdul Rahman in Malaya, Balewa did not hide his distaste for leftist ideologues. This study will elaborate on his significant and unique role in the formulation and execution of anti-leftist policies in the 1950s through 1965.⁴⁴

44. T Clark, *A Right Honourable Gentleman - Abubakar from the Black Rock* (London, 1991). S Epelle, (ed.) *Nigeria Speaks: Speeches of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa* (Ikeja, 1964), pp 9-10.

Exploring the Sources

The study draws upon official and unofficial materials available in England, Nigeria, and the United States of America. Also important for accurate and lucid analyses of events, issues, and personalities are personal papers and newspaper reports in various archives and libraries in these countries. More particularly, newspaper reports and private memoirs provide useful information for the reconstruction of the Zikists' ideological orientation, activities of the Special Branch, and the colonial police. Records at the CPGB and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) corroborate newspaper reports and some official intelligence reports relating to the presence of some Nigerian Marxists and their orientation towards the CPGB "British Road to Socialism." The CPGB files also confirmed colonial and nationalist government anxieties about the activities of these men who tried to form a nation-wide Marxist-Leninist movement in the 1950s.

In the Public Record Office (PRO) - now National Archives, London, the files of the Cabinet and its committees, Colonial and Foreign Offices remained the main source of information. Records from the U.S. National Archives and Record Administration, Maryland complement this PRO material. In Nigeria, the regional archives in Ibadan and Enugu provided information concerning British administrators and their Nigerian counterparts during the period; especially valuable are the chief secretary's file, divisional records, and intelligence reports by field officers. Various government reports and annual reports of some departments (Labour, Information and Research, and the Police) have been quite useful. Also, government publications such as Notices, Gazettes, Council of Ministers' Minutes and Parliamentary Debates provided useful information. Of the many valuable Government publications in the UK, perhaps the most significant of all was His (later Her) Majesty's Stationery Office Publications entitled *Colonial Annual Reports*. The series

on Nigeria entitled, *Nigeria: Colonial Annual Reports*, covered the 1920s to 1960.

Lastly, important gaps in these other materials were filled using materials from the Moral Re-armament Archives, Cheshire and Victoria; the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) Collections, University of North London, British TUC Registry Files at the Modern Record Centre, the University of Warwick, as well as the Communist Party of Great Britain Papers at the National Museum of Labour History Archive Centre, Manchester.

Analysing the Chapters

There are eight chapters in this study. Chapter one is a general introduction, emphasizing the basis and relevance of studying the development of leftist ideology and organisations in Nigeria. The chapter identifies the significance of a comprehensive study about the development of Marxist ideology and organisations in Nigeria during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Chapter two is an assessment of the role of Zikist movement in Nigeria with emphasis on the degree of Marxian ideological influence. It analyses why and how radical youths adopted Marxian ideology in their struggle against British colonialism in Nigeria. Their radical ideology marked a departure from the hitherto peaceful demand by nationalists for devolution.

Chapter three is about attempts at regrouping after the colonial government ban on the Zikist movement in 1950. It is an account of leftist reformation, regroup, and future of the ideology and organisations in Nigeria. This study is a comprehensive analysis of "communism within," emphasizing the role of Marxists and their sympathisers in nationalist movements and labour unionism. The chapter reflects upon Nigerian attempts to adopt Marxist-Leninist ideology to a colonial situation. The official CPGB perception of their activities is also detailed.

Both chapters four and five complement one another. Chapter four is a profile of

notable Marxists during the period under study. While the list is selective, the chapter highlights further their roles, goals, aspirations, and disappointments. Chapter five addresses a major initiative on the part of the Macpherson, Balewa, and Robertson administration with regard to the employment of leftist ideologues. It also discusses how the private sector and the main political parties ostracised the Marxists in political and economic affairs. Here detail about British colonialist sanctions, measures, and co-optation as hegemonic responses to the insurgent Marxist groups is provided. Chapter six explains the collaboration between Nigerian government and France as a neighbouring colonial power; sharing of intelligence and general co-operations between Anglo-French officials is discussed with recently declassified materials from the Public Record Office, London. The important role of the United States in combating leftist ideology worldwide, and particularly in the most populated British colony of Nigeria is

discussed. There is now evidence that U.S. officials were deeply concerned with events in British West Africa, and gathered intelligence both covertly and overtly that were used to combat leftist menace. On the other hand, the study queried the sincerity of U.S. (government and non-government projects) development plans for colonial territories after World War II and its economic collaboration with the colonial office.

Chapter seven is a reflection upon embattled leftists and their quest for a place in an independent Nigerian state, emphasizing in particular leftist reactions to the process of British devolution. The role of Marxist groups between 1960 and 1965 in the new nation is also discussed. In chapter eight, which is also the conclusion, I identify plausible reasons for the failure of Marxian ideology and organisations in Nigeria.

In summary, a history of leftist ideology and organisations in Nigeria during the decolonisation era up to 1965 is relevant. An understanding of this aspect of Nigerian

history will illuminate our reflections on how and why the aspirations of the Marxists (and their sympathisers) remained elusive since independence in 1960. This explains why the Nigerian nation is pro-Western in all spheres of life.