

2. Development of Political Parties in Nigeria (I)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Like in all modern states, political parties have always been a feature of Nigeria's political life. They give life and meaning to a society's organization of its politics.

This chapter presents the different political formations in the First Republic and those in existence before Independence. Beginning with the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) of Herbert Macaulay, widely regarded as the father of Nigerian nationalism, this chapter discusses both major and minor parties of that period. It also looks at party alliances, coalition and co-operation and intra- and inter-party conflicts and crises.

2.2 NIGERIAN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NNDP)

Origin

There was no anti-colonial Nigerian organization capable of expressing the desires of the people for self-government and ultimate independence until the emergence of the NNDP. This lack of organized movement against colonialism was exploited by the British to give free rein to what they thought was best for the colonial people (e.g the Nigerian Council of 1916). True, there was the National Congress for British West Africa (NCBWA) but this Congress had its jurisdiction over all the four British colonies of West Africa, namely, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra-leone and Gambia.

The Nigerian colony therefore had a clear need for a political organization to force the hands of the British colonial overlords to initiate political change and other reforms in the colony. However, the most important factor responsible for the formation of the NNDP was the introduction of the elective principle by the Clifford Constitution of 1922. The NNDP was formed in order to select and sponsor candidates during elections for the three elective seats for Lagos in the Legislative Council as provided for by the 1922 Constitution.

The NNDP emerged on the political scene on 24 June, 1923. It was cofounded by Herbert Macaulay and T.H. Jackson, whose father was the publisher of a nationalist newspaper, *Weekly Record*.

Party Objectives

The NNDP saw itself as the mouth-piece for the emerging nationalist movement in Nigeria. Its major aims and objectives were listed as follows:

- (i) The attainment of municipal status and local self-government for Lagos.

- (ii) Introduction of compulsory education at the primary school level. This was with a view to making Nigerians politically conscious.
- (iii) Provision of facilities for higher education in Nigeria.
- (iv) The encouragement of non-discriminatory private economic enterprises. The NNDP wanted Nigerians to compete with foreign, mainly British, economic entrepreneurs.
- (v) Africanization of the civil service. It wanted Nigerians to be involved in policy-making and execution in their own country.
- (vi) Commitment to co-operation and support for the programme of the NCBWA.

Structure and Organization

As the first political organization in Nigeria, the NNDP had a very simple structure. NNDP was almost totally a Lagos affair from 1923 to 1944, when it was politically active. It confined its political activities to Lagos. Efforts to establish branches of the party at Abeokuta, Ibadan and Kano failed. Thus the party was not “Nigerian” or “national” in organization. On the other hand the party was centralized in Herbert Macaulay, its founder. The NNDP was concerned with election into the Legislative Council (every five years) and Lagos Town Council (every three years). The Party Executives’ main function was to elect candidates to the Legislative Council.

Leadership and Membership

The NNDP paraded an array of leaders from all walks of life — professionals, traders, radicals, traditionalists, Christians and Moslems, Nigerians and non-Nigerians etc. Certainly, Herbert Macaulay was the best known of all the leaders. For almost 40 years (1908–1946), he bestrode the Nigerian political scene like a colossus. This explains why he was generally regarded as a dominant personality in Nigerian politics of the colonial era.

However, there were other leaders who ensured the electoral and other successes of the party; for example, Joseph Egerton-Shyngle of Gambia origin and a very close associate of Macaulay. There were others, mainly Nigerian and non-Nigerian professionals: C.C. Adeniyi-Jones; Eric Moore; J.C. Zizier; T.A. Doherty etc. All the same, Macaulay was reputed to have held sway over his colleagues in the party. His power of organization, rhetorical grace, hardwork, agitation and protest against obnoxious and anachronistic colonial laws; his spirited fight against the British imperialists for their deportation of the Eleko of Eko (Lagos) in 1925 and such other courageous and patriotic acts helped to endear Macaulay to his peers.

Given the peculiar blend of fiery nationalism and radicalism of Macaulay and some of his associates and the conservatism of traditional estates (seen in NNDP’s concern with the ruling house of Docemo), the party was able to draw its membership from both the radical and the conservative forces in the Nigerian capital.

The roll-call of membership included

- (i) Religious leaders of the Muslim Community (e.g. Imam);
- (ii) Organized market women;
- (iii) Influential *Ilu* Committee made up of town elders and leaders of traditional societies, chiefs etc;

- (iv) The largely illiterate groups in town;
- (v) Some wealthy merchants who were well represented in the Executive Council of the Party.

It is believed that so much importance was attached to the support of the Imams, Chiefs and Elders that they took critical decisions along with Macaulay. This largely explained why most of the Westernized Christian professionals kept their distance from the NNDP.

Achievements

From its inception in 1923 until the appearance of the NYM in 1938, that is for a space of 15 years, NNDP completely dominated the elections into the Legislative Council and the Lagos Town Council. It won all the seats in Legislative Council in all the elections of 1923, 1928 and 1933.

2.3 THE NIGERIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT (NYM)

Origin

The Nigerian Youth Movement was constituted as Lagos Youth Movement (LYM) in 1934. It changed its name to NYM only in 1936. It was formed by four Nigerian nationalists and journalists — Ernest Ikoli, H.O. Davies, J.C. Vaughan and Samuel Akinsanya

It began as a pressure group, particularly of an educational character. It is generally referred to as Nigeria's first authentic nationalist organization. Some of its relatively young members had formed an organization that was short-lived and called Union of Young Nigerians (UYN) in 1923 to oppose the NNDP. Established by Ayo Williams, Ikoli and Vaughan, the UYN could be regarded as the forebear of the NYM.

Party Objectives

The aims and objectives of the NYM were as follows:

- (i) **Educational:** The NYM wanted the propagation of the educational ideals of its leaders as against the higher education given by Yaba Higher College. More specifically, the NYM set out to campaign against the inferior quality educational policy of the British Colonial government. It sought for an appreciable increase in the number of Nigerian technicians and medical assistants through vocational education, to give sub-professional training to Nigerian students.
- (ii) **Constitutional:** The NYM sought constitutional reforms towards popular representation in the Legislative Council and ultimate self-rule through a gradualist approach.
- (iii) **National Unity:** The NYM conceived inter-ethnic amity as a prerequisite for national unity. It was of the opinion that, without unity amongst the different ethnic groups and their leaders, self-government and independence would remain mere wishful thinking. Consequently, the principle of inter-ethnic amity was enshrined in its Nigerian Youth Charter and Constitution of 1938.

Structure and Organization

Like the NNDP, the structure of the NYM was simple. However, it had branches in key centres throughout Nigeria. Local tribal unions in some areas served as provincial branches to

the NYM and were thus affiliated with it. There were also some places like Jos, where the old branches of West African Students Union (WASU) changed their names into NYM branches. The Nigerian Youth Movement had about 20 provincial branches in all parts of Nigeria by the end of 1938. There was also an Executive Council that was predominantly Yoruba in membership.

Leadership and Membership

Apart from the four co-founders, the arrival of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria from the Gold Coast (Ghana) and his joining the NYM with his massive following and popularity added more colour and glamour to the Movement's leadership. The President of the Movement until 1941, the year of election into the old Legislative Council, was Sir Kofo A. Abayomi. Azikiwe and H.O. Davies served as the Movement's intellectual pillars. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was also a notable leader.

Its membership was drawn mainly from the westernized, predominantly Christian rising class of professionals. It was also drawn from a working class that was not given to sectarian or ethnic alliances.

Achievements and Problems

On the credit side of achievements, no sooner was the NYM formed than it won the 1938 election into the Lagos Town Council and also the three elective seats in the Legislative Council. Thus, it succeeded in putting an end to the 15-year (1923–38) political and electoral supremacy of the NNDP.

The crisis/problems of the party had an electoral origin. It was a struggle for power between two major tendencies in the movement: the Yoruba (Awo) factor and the Igbo (Zik factor). Dr. K.A. Abayomi the President of NYM had resigned from the Legislative Council because of his appointment to the Executive Council by the Governor in February 1941. During the process of nominating his successor, a serious devastating crisis rocked the NYM. The principal contestants were Samuel Akinsanya (Ijebu, Yoruba) supported by Zik, his Igbo group and the Ijebus, and Ernest Ikoli (Ijaw) supported by the rest of the Yorubas. There was a fierce struggle between the two contestants and their supporters. In the end, Ernest Ikoli was selected as the candidate of the NYM. This verdict was interpreted by Akinsanya and Zik and their Ijebu and Igbo supporters as a manifestation of tribal prejudice against the Ijebus and the Igbos. Consequently, Zik and Akinsanya left the NYM with their Igbo and Ijebu — Yoruba supporters. Three years later, Zik founded the NCNC.

The crisis was also the result of power struggle and personality clash. It was the product of the determination of some key figures in the Movement to carve out local empires for themselves.

2.4 THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS (NCNC)

Origin

The NCNC was formed in Lagos on 26 August, 1944 three years after its major inspirator, Zik, broke from the NYM. It came into being as a result of decisive steps taken by a group of students in the Nigerian Union of Students (NUS) which was formed in 1939, and ex-students of King's College, Lagos. They brought pressure to bear on Zik to lead them to achieve self-government. They also wanted a National Council capable of uniting all the then

existing organizations to spiritedly oppose the British Colonial administration. Zik gave his support to the students. He therefore suggested a conference in Lagos for the formation of a National Council which would unite the masses of Nigeria into a formidable block. So on 26 August, 1944, at the suggestion of Zik and with the strong backing of his Press, the inaugural meeting of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) was held in Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos.

For eight years (1944–1951), the NCNC was the dominant force in Nigerian nationalist struggle. The first President of the party was the father of Nigerian Nationalism, Herbert Macaulay, while Dr Azikiwe was its first Secretary-General. When the former died in May 1946, Zik took over and for the next fourteen years, i.e. until August 1960 when he became the Governor-General, he led the party.

Party Objectives

At its first Constitutional Convention held barely ten months after establishment, the aims and objectives of the NCNC were listed. These included unitarist, socialist and democratic principles of the party.

- (i) **Extension of Democracy:** The NCNC which had socialist pretensions in its early days wanted the extension of democratic principles and the advancement of the interests of the people.
- (ii) **Political Education of the People:** The NCNC believed that there was a correlation between political education and self-government. It therefore wanted the adoption of suitable means for the purpose of imparting political education to the people of Nigeria. The ultimate aim, of course, was the attainment of self-government and, ultimately, independence.
- (iii) **Party as a Medium of Expression:** The NCNC saw itself as an important medium of expression for the diverse peoples of Nigeria to speak out against all forms of political subjugation, economic insecurity, social inequality and religious intolerance.

The party was ideologically homogenous. At least on paper, the theory of equality in politics propounded by its leader, Dr Azikiwe was in vogue.

Structure and Organization

During the early period of the NCNC from 1944 to 1952, the membership was restricted to organizations. In other words, for one to be a member of the party he must be a member of an organization affiliated to it. Among the organizations affiliated to the NCNC as members were, 2 trade unions, 2 political parties (democratic party and young democrats), 4 literary societies, 5 professional associations, 11 social clubs and 101 tribal unions. The 101 tribal unions included the Igbo State Union and the Ijebu National Union. It is worthy of note that the Nigerian Youth Movement and the Nigerian Union of Teachers did not affiliate as members of the NCNC. This was explained from the fact that the leaders of these organizations were Yorubas who saw the NCNC as an Igbo party.

By 1952 membership of the party was open to individuals and was from then better organized. It had three levels of organization: Local, Divisional/Regional and National. At the local and divisional levels, the organization was in the hands of Divisional Executive Committees. The Divisional organizing secretaries were co-ordinators of party activities. At the third annual convention in Kano in 1951, the party created regional counterparts of the

National Executive Committee (NEC). By 1953, during the Eastern Regional crisis, these bodies were dissolved. This was done in order to prevent the creation of local empires by regional leaders and to strengthen the unity of the National body. In the Regions, the Regional Working Committees (RWC) were mainly responsible for organization.

At the third and final level of organization was the NEC. It was dominated by NCNC legislators while the supreme authority of the party was rested in its annual and special conventions. The latter provided interesting fora for discussion of critical organizational issues. A good illustration here was the Kano Convention of June 1959.

Leadership and Membership

The NCNC is generally regarded as the most national of the three major parties of its era. This was due to the spread of its leadership and membership. National and principal officers of the party were drawn from the three regions, though a large percentage of them came from the two Southern regions.

However, like Chief Awolowo in the Action Group (AG), Dr Azikiwe also played a dominating role in the NCNC. First, he used punchy public lectures and fiery journalism in his chain of Newspapers, particularly the *West African Pilot* to fight the nationalist cause and make a name for himself. Second, some leading figures in the party saw Dr. Azikiwe as the embodiment of the ideals of the NCNC. It was either he as the leader or no other person.

In respect of membership, the NCNC emphasized organizational membership between 1944 and 1952. Thus members were affiliated not on an individual or personal basis, but rather as members of clan, town, village, tribal improvement unions, trade unions, professional associations, ex-servicemen's associations etc. Some writers (e.g. Thomas Hodgkin) claim that at the height of its influence, the NCNC had some 180 affiliated bodies. However, beginning from 1952, the party allowed individuals to register as members of the party.

All in all, the NCNC drew its main membership from Nigeria's major towns, — those that had experienced the most diversified form of modern economy and administrative development. These towns included Lagos, Abeokuta and Ijebu-Ode in the West; Port Harcourt, Aba, Enugu and Onitsha in the East and Sapele in the Mid West; Kano, Jos, Zaria and Minna in the North. In the South, the NCNC was supported by Yoruba and Ibo masses in Lagos. While in the North, broad-based support came from Southerners in the Sabon-Garis of big towns like Kano and Zaria.

Sources of Finance

It has rightly been said that of all political matters in Nigeria, party finance was the most shrouded in secrecy. Parties announced incomes and expenditure when and as they felt like. They also tended to withhold information when this suited them. This was true for the NCNC as well as for the other party formations.

The NCNC had very solid financial connections and therefore several sources of finance which are listed below:

- (i) **The African Continental Bank (ACB):** The bank which started as Tinubu Enterprises was one of Zik's chains of companies. The ACB often gave the party loans for special purposes. It was also the usual saving grace in times of critical financial distress. For instance, during the period January 1957 to July 1960 when the

party exceeded its income of £500,000 by £700,000, it was the ACB that came to its rescue.

- (ii) **Zik's Personal Fortunes:** In addition to the above, Zik was generous to the party and donated often to its coffers. He offered the party revenue-earning securities. At the Jos Convention of December 1952, Zik gave the party £5,000 in cash.
- (iii) **Donations by Party Faithfuls and Stalwarts:** We need to distinguish between irregular donations by members and notable donations by party faithfuls, stalwarts and supporters. The latter were mainly the rich merchants or businessmen. Their donations were always substantial. For instance, at the 1959 Kano Convention, a number of faithfuls gave the party £7,000.
- (iv) **Membership Subscriptions and Affiliation Fees:** The party got some money through affiliation fees of 21 shillings paid by each branch and 6 shillings paid by each individual member. Members also paid annual subscriptions. However, as in all other parties, members' subscriptions were neither adequate nor reliable. The parties were to learn that "membership did not imply regular payment of dues". All the same, the NCNC had a way of cushioning the shortfalls from this source, by selling the party constitutions, lapel buttons, etc
- (v) **Levies on Salaries of Legislators:** Another source of finance for the NCNC was the 10% levied on salaries of the party's ministers, legislators and all those holding one elective (or party) post or the other. While, some members of the party, particularly those who benefited from the patronage system in the statutory Boards and corporations often lagged behind in paying the levy, the party still got reasonable incomes from this source. For instance, between April 1955 and September 1957, some £5,000 accrued to the party.

Achievements and Problems

The NCNC, like the other political formations, had its areas of successes as well as failures.

Achievements

- (i) The party's 1946 nation-wide tour to explain the weaknesses and inadequacies of that year's Richard Constitution and to raise money to go and protest in London was a success. We have discussed this point in some detail in Book Two.
- (ii) More than the AG and the NPC, the NCNC enjoyed widespread support in the three major regions of the country and, later, in the Mid-West. The personality of the party leader, Zik, was highly responsible for this success.
- (iii) The party was in the fore-front of the struggle for Nigeria's independence; it contributed immensely to its rapid constitutional development and fought the imperialists fiercely and successfully.

Problems

- (i) *Internal divisions, conflicts and power struggles:* Until 1952, the NCNC was mainly a collection of member-unions. Even when it began to admit individual members, the party was a conglomerate of affiliated organizations, allied minor parties etc. The party was the worse for it. First, there were conflicts of interests between leaders of

local branches and the central leaders. The cadre group in the party was, for instance, constantly challenging the authority of the centre. It preferred emphasis on local interests. Second, local branches of the party were not always prepared to accept what the party considered as the “proper hierarchy of authority”™. They often posed a threat to the overall authority of the party. This phenomenon became very visible from the time Zik went to the East. The influence of the party headquarters began thereafter to dwindle.

- (ii) *Lack of ideological coherence:* One of the major failures of the NCNC was its inability to forge a coherent ideological orientation. While it canvassed the principles of unitarism, socialism and democracy, its Youth Wing challenged what it regarded as the hypocrisy of the “old men”™ who preached socialism and democracy while making money and co-operating with the British colonialists. Indeed, it was the Zikist Movement (See Book Two) which between 1948 and 1951 revived the party with its militancy. However, by the time the radical Zikists were expelled from the party (e.g. Nduka Eze, leader of Zikist Movement and a member of the NEC) or suspended from its activities (e.g. Adesanya Idowu, organizing Secretary of the NCNC in the West), the Youths, were demobilized. Discouraged youths, who were also leading party workers, quit the party.

2.5 THE ACTION GROUP (AG)

Origin

The Action Group was generally regarded as the political wing of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, which was a cultural organization of the descendants of Oduduwa. The latter is the mythical father of the Yoruba. The *Egbe* was founded in 1945 while its prime mover and founder, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was in London.

The idea of Awolowo and his lieutenants was to use the AG as a base to expand their political interests into the rest of the country. It was also to be used to give the Yoruba people a place of pride in the scheme of things. The *Egbe* was used as a springboard. It was the nucleus from which the Action Group was formed. In fact, eight members of the Executive of the *Egbe* became the original members of the AG. Similarly, the AG had links with the NYM. Leading members of the latter were in its rank; namely, Bode Thomas; F.R.A. Williams, M.A. Ogun, S.L. Akintola, etc.

The AG was inaugurated on 26 March, 1950. By its First Party Conference at Owo between 28 April–29 April, 1951, the ethnic origin of the party was no secret to anybody. The founder had in fact, stated in March 1951 that they intended to maintain the closest possible association with the *Egbe*, the Edo Union and other ethnic organizations in the West. Furthermore, the AG wanted to use the existing branches of these organizations to enhance its own interests. It also sought to use its proper organizational machinery to enlarge and consolidate its sphere of influence.

Party Objectives

As can be gleaned from the above, the first objective of the AG was to further the ethnic and cultural interests of the Yoruba. But then, the AG’s™ second objective was a nation-wide one. It sought to spread out. Indeed, in the first set of office-sharing, members from the Minority Group had an edge over the others. This second objective also explained why the

ideology refused to embrace any form of doctrinaire socialism, particularly Marxism-Leninism. Rather, the party had diverse ideological tendencies — “principled welfare statism”™; “constructive socialism”™; “fabian socialism”™; “welfare state capitalism”™ etc.

Whatever the ideological labelling, the following features were salient in the activities of the AG:

- (i) Strict emphasis on social and economic planning. This led the party to have the first Ministry of Economic Planning in the entire country.
- (ii) Objectives and elements of social welfare and economic development were considered more important than nationalization. That was how free primary education; low-cost housing, Marketing Boards; public ownership of basic industries were emphasized.
- (iii) The party was committed to the preservation and practice of Fundamental Human Rights, freedom of speech; due process of law; extension of the franchise to Northern women etc.

Structure and Organization

By its organization, the AG was basically a Yoruba party. In 1959, only one-third of the unofficial members of the party’s™ Federal (or National) Executive Council were from outside the West. The Yoruba held the most important offices. Yet, several writers on Nigerian political parties of the First Republic believe that in terms of effective central direction, the AG was the best organized, best financed and most efficiently run political organization.

In fact, for a very long time, the party leadership was so closely knit together that internal frictions from the local to the national level were thought to be non-existent. It was regarded as a veritable machine, one committed to efficiency and preservation of a high standard of discipline. If the AG survived several electoral setbacks and personality clashes, it was mainly due to the towering political figure of Awo. To some, he was an effective and ruthless dictator. To others, he was a simple *primus inter pares* (first among equals). Organizational work in the AG was hardly disrupted by internal crises unlike the NCNC. More concretely, the AG, organized on the basis of individual membership from 1951, — membership being open to all Nigerians and expatriate residents of at least 16 years of age — had branches at the levels of local government, electoral wards and the regional *constituencies*. At the latter level, the composition was as follows:

- (a) all representatives of the party in local government councils;
- (b) all Parliamentarians in the Regions and in Lagos;
- (c) all branch officers.
- (d) 4–6 representatives of local government wards;
- (e) chiefs who identified with the party’s™ programmes and aspirations;
- (f) all those who stood for Regional Legislative elections.

At the centre, the Federal Congress of the party consisted of the following members:

- (i) Two representatives from each federal constituency chosen at constituency meetings;

- (ii) All party members who were honourable Parliamentarians;
- (iii) All the party's regional ministers or, as the case may be, members of the party's shadow cabinet;
- (iv) The Party's Leader in the Lagos Town Council and any other nominated member;
- (v) All members of the party's Federal Executive Council;

However, whatever may be the powers of the Congress, the principal decision-making organ of the AG was the Federal Executive Council (FEC). It was composed as above plus 12 members appointed from each of the three regions by the Regional Conferences. While the FEC governed the party between meetings or annual congress, it also delegated functions to the Federal (or National) Working Committee. The latter composed of federal officers; three senior officers of the Party Secretariat, two regional representatives, all the Party's Parliamentary leaders. The Federal Working Committee was also known as the Central Executive Committee (CEC).

Leadership and Membership

Chief Awolowo was a firm believer in technocratic government. This means government by experts (a few intellectuals, professionals and bureaucrats) in whose hands political and economic power is concentrated. It is these people who are destined to rule. The others, particularly the masses or the rank and file of the party, have no choice but to obey. Awolowo proposed this 'principle' of governing in his 1947 book *Path to Nigerian Freedom*.

Thus, the AG had a leadership that was anchored on professionals, barristers, businessmen (particularly wealthy cocoa traders), educated elites, particularly teachers in the employment of private schools; independent men of liberal opinions, and, of course, Awo himself.

A collegiate system was maintained in terms of discussions and decision-making. Thus, while a Parliamentary Council, setup in 1951 and made up of all Parliamentarians; members of the CEC and handpicked members, coordinated and directed party policies both at the Federal and Regional levels, the core of AG leadership was, invariably, a small inner caucus of confidants. This caucus grew to become *The Leader's* (that is Awo's appellation) 'men'. Early in the day that is from 1951, this group including men like Akintola, Ogun, Shonibare, Rewane, Gbadamosi etc, became *de facto* managers of the party's affairs. These men and some others became effective 'Leaders of Thought' of the party and it was they who considered high-level policy options tendered before the party Executive and the Parliamentary Council. They were also regular participants at the Leaders' Meeting which Awo started in 1955.

The AG, like the NPC, was a cadre rather than a mass party. The emphasis, as already indicated, was on a technical leadership core made up of notables which saw itself as lacking nothing in terms of winning votes for and implementing policies of the party. Similarly, because the leadership cadre was extremely affluent and rich, the major part of the income of the party, like that of the NEC, was not subscriptions but rather the funds from companies owned by leading members of the party. However, in order to win country-wide appeal, the AG resorted to mass followership as from 1959. In spite of its elitist orientation and a rising class of business, economic and political elite, the AG could be said to have become a more or less mass party before the end of the First Republic.

Sources of Finance

The AG's sources of finance were many and diverse. These included the following:

- (i) Financial backing provided by an extensive network of business and financial structures, of which the AG was part and parcel;

National Bank of Nigeria Ltd. (NBN) and the Amalgamated Press of Nigeria Ltd. were particularly useful in this respect. The NBN, founded in February 1933 as a private enterprise with an initial capital of £10,000, became associated with the AG as from 1951. The AG thereafter emerged as the largest shareholder through the Western Region Marketing Board. Similarly, the biggest shares in the Amalgamated Press were held by the most prominent figures in the AG: Awo, Akintola, Doherty, Shonibare, Maja, Odutola, Akinsanya.

The most notable company which supplied the AG with funds was the National Investment and Properties Company founded in April 1958. Its four main shareholders, with 25,000 shares each, were all AG stalwarts.

Other sources of AG funding were:

- (ii) Annual official subscription of 12 shillings
- (iii) Levy for special purposes
- (iv) Donations by contractors to the tune of 10% of value of contracts.

Achievements and Problems

The AG recorded successes in the following areas:

- (i) **Growth in Party's Influence:** The Party Leaders succeeded in using existing branches of the Party and its organizational machinery to protect and enhance AG's spheres of influence.
- (ii) **Stronghold in the West:** In spite of penetration by other parties, notably the NCNC, the AG was able to maintain its stronghold in the West.
- (iii) **Effective Organization of the Peasantry:** The Yoruba at the grassroots level were mass mobilized to support the AG and Awo. Mythical symbols were used to invest Awo with supernatural powers. He was also reputed to be capable of seeing everything, doing everything and knowing everything.
- (iv) **Use of the Traditional Estates:** The AG used the traditional community of chiefs and elders to advance its cause among the people.
- (v) **Social Services and Welfare Programmes:** Perhaps the most important achievement of the AG was in the area of provision of social services for the people. Three of such services deserve mention here: one, a rather progressive wage policy which catered for the lowest income group; two, introduction of Free Primary Education in 1955 and three; establishment of the first television station in Africa in 1959.

However, the party faced some problems, viz:

- (i) **Personality of Awo:** Awo's personality was excessively domineering. Thus, when he fell apart with his Deputy, Chief S.L. Akintola, the AG was in serious crisis.

- (ii) **Disintegration of Party's Internal Cohesion:** For a period of time, the leadership was tightly knit. At that time, informal networks of communication and organization were useful and effective. However, when internal dissensions set in, informal contacts completely broke down.
- (iii) **Ethnic Conflicts:** While the AG was predominantly a Yoruba party, it suffered from a lot of ethnic conflicts even within the Yoruba nation. For example, the Ijebu (from which Awo and several AG leaders hailed) were at logger-heads with the Ibadan. The Ijesha fell out with people from Ife. Outside the Yoruba speaking areas, the Urhobo, who were mainly NCNC supporters, had political problems with the Itsekiri, AG supporters.
- (iv) **Religious Problems:** In some parts of Yoruba land, the AG was seen essentially as a Christian party. This led to anti-AG sentiments in Moslem areas of the Western Region. It is believed that the AG lost $\frac{1}{4}$ (16) out of the 48 (Federal) Constituencies in the West during the federal elections of 1959 mainly for this reason.
- (v) **Non-Yoruba Party's Stigma:** In spite of drives for popular appeal in the North and East, the AG recorded minimal presence in these two regions. It was thus seen as a Yoruba party.
- (vi) **Generational and Other Conflicts:** The effectiveness of the AG was also limited by conflicts of various shades. The "new elite", who saw themselves as nationalistic and progressive were critical of the "old elites", considered more conservative and reactionary. There were also problems between indigenes of particular towns who resented political ascendancy by so-called "settler people".
- (vii) **Leadership Conflict:** The most devastating failure of the Action Group was the leadership crisis in the party which led to the Action Group Crisis of 1962 This is discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this book.

2.6 THE NORTHERN PEOPLES CONGRESS (NPC)

Origin

The whole idea of the NPC started as a cultural organization or as an old boys' association of Katsina College. In the late 1940s, educated Northerners who could speak for themselves came together mainly to protect their own interests and those of the North. People like Yahaya Gusau, Dr R.A.B. Dikko (first Northern doctor) Tafawa Balewa, Aminu Kano, Abubakar Imam, editor of *Gaskiya ta fi Kwabo*, etc., based this organization on the traditional political authority. Indeed, at its inception, the Northern Nigerian Congress (*Jamayyar*) as it was then called expressed indications. at its inaugural meeting in Kaduna on 26 June, 1949, to work within the limits of the traditional political or Native Authority system. This point was reiterated at its first Annual Convention held in Kano, from 25 December–27 December 1949.

By the time the NNC became NPC on 1 October 1951 — all elected members and officers were either from N.As or were district heads. Officially, by that time, the NPC had 65 branches and over 6,000 members. To emphasize its basically Northern orientation, the motto of the NPC read "One North, one People irrespective of Religion, Rank or Tribe." While this was largely true for the rank and file of the party, the leadership structure of the NPC was bound together by three things: Islam, Native Authority and similar social

background. The backbone of this structure was formed by an economic (or commercial) elite and an administrative elite made up mainly of the Native Authority and Emirate System.

Party Objectives

To the extent that the leadership of the NPC was homogeneous, it was a party of notables of those who had quality, prestige, skill and fortune. For a long time, specifically until 1959, the party was a cadre party. It claimed to have no ideology. Yet, the NPC sought to be a northern mass party. Thus, part of its objectives read that membership was open to all people of northern descent — whether as individuals or as a union or as a political party.™ However, its ideology was not populist.

It was essentially based on ascriptive values. It was a conservative party, one determined to maintain the northern social system as it was before British colonial intervention. Thus, emphasis was on leadership rather than followership. The former was purely by ascription; ethnic, religious and traditional factors were prominent. Those in high offices in the Native Authority System, Central Native Authority Councils or Emirs Councils also held high offices in the NPC. For instance, three of the most powerful traditional rulers in the North — Sultan of Sokoto, Emir of Kano, Emir of Katsina — were among the most important power-brokers in the NPC.

Thus, as against the tenets of liberal democracy, the NPC's ideology consisted more of elements of feudalism. It was in this light that the Sardauna of Sokoto, an NPC stalwart and later the Northern Region Premier advocated a transformation of the northern society through a gradual reform from —decadent feudalism— to —liberal democracy—. One of the declared objectives was therefore the fostering of peaceful reform and democratization, in particular abolition of the sole Native Authorities.

Structure and Organization

The NPC was organizationally diffuse. As earlier stated, it was basically a traditionalist political formation. There was a near-fusion of activities of Native Authority officials and NPC officials. Consequently, the affairs of the party were in the hands of a few men. Emirs and chiefs had to bless local branches for them to be effective.

The NPC had a semblance of mass participation at the electoral level. This was in the primaries where the Electoral Colleges were easily influenced through the Native Authority of traditional office-holders. Like in the AG and the NCNC, except in some isolated cases, the legislators also held the most important offices in the Divisional or Provincial Executives.

Specifically, Provincial Committees were set up in the Administrative Provinces. Their responsibilities include co-ordinating and fortifying activities of the branches. All the 12 Provincial Presidents were also members of the Party Executive. The Councillors played a dual role — as part of the administrative structure and as part of the working of the party machine. Unlike the AG, but much like the NCNC, the organization of the NPC was essentially home-based. Strictly speaking, the party structure was in existence only in the North.

Organizational structure of the NPC was not tightly knit. The basic organizational unit was the branch which might mean the village or the wards of a town. While the Party Constitution in its 46th article made provision for local officers, the branches were not assigned any specific task other than persuading more people to join the party. The second level of

organization was the regional while national organization constituted the third level. The party's Constitution regarded the Annual Convention as the supreme authority of the Congress. Similarly, the National Convention was given absolute powers to decide major policies of the party. The National Executive Committee (NEC) was, until 1957, the party's policy-making organ. That year it was replaced by the Central Working Committee (CWC).

The NEC was made up of all officers of the Congress plus the Presidents and Secretaries of the branches. The NEC was responsible for the general administration of the Congress in the interval between Annual Conventions; it administered the business and offices of the Congress while its decisions and orders were binding on all members and branches. In fact, the party Constitution declared that these were not to be questioned, reversed, controlled or suspended except by way of an appeal to the Annual Convention. On its part, the CWC was composed mainly of party stalwarts, militants and cadres. No single Federal legislator of the party was in the CWC. This feature further underlined the regional character of the Congress — Northern Cabinet Ministers; Parliamentary Secretaries, provincial commissioners etc.

Leadership and Membership

The NPC derived its support from the following

- (i) **The Native Authority (NA):** This was a rich source of support. The NA was typified by Emirs, district and village heads, councillors and alikis. There was, for instance, solidarity among Fulani aristocrats. There was also the religious factor which linked Balewa with the Sultan. The totality of this Native Authority support was that by 1956, 68% of NPC militants were drawn from NA employees, district and village heads and traders.
- (ii) **Support among the Masses:** The NPC also enjoyed the support of the masses. Certainly, the latter were used like cannon fodder. Neither party names nor political catchwords meant much to them.
- (iii) **Support from Muslim States:** These were muslim traditional states which had common bureaucratic leadership traits with the business and commercial elite of the core North.
- (iv) **Support from Non-Muslim Areas:** This support was from the so-called minority groups in the Middle Belt — particularly the Idoma, Igbirra and Igala. These areas were used by the Fulani aristocracy as slaving grounds. Nothing but a perfect system of clientelism (relationship among two or more basically unequal partners) must have brought this support into being.

Sources of Finance

Like for the AG and the NCNC, the sources were also varied. These are given below:

- (i) Annual subscription of 12 shillings, a third of which was given to the National Headquarters.
- (ii) Levy for special purposes.

- (iii) In some areas, special dues were paid up to help the party. In Zaria, for instance, each member contributed at least three pence a month in addition to subscription.
- (iv) Individuals made donations to the party. In this respect, top flight businessmen were the most notable. For instance, in 1959 Lebanese and Syrian merchants donated over £6,000 to the party.
- (v) Sale of Party Publications is another source of raising money.
- (vi) The party made it mandatory for legislators who are members of the party to contribute 5% of their salaries to the party. It was also mandatory for legislators to increase these contributions in election years. Thus, in 1959 and 1964, they contributed 10%.
- (vii) Party members who are on the Boards of Public Corporations or parastatals normally gave up 2.5% of their salaries for party use.

Achievements and Problems

One notable area of achievement of the NPC was in terms of *membership* and *electoral successes*. At its annual convention in July 1952, the party claimed membership of over 10,000 in 76 branches. By the end of the same year, it was reported that the party had 45,000 members in over 100 branches in three West African countries, namely, Nigeria, Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sierra-Leone. The NPC also won all Regional and Federal Elections in the North from 1954 to 1965. For instance, in the Federal elections of 1954, the party won 80 of the 92 seats contested for in the North. The picture was similar in subsequent years.

The NPC had problems or areas of weakness. These include

- (i) **Regionalized and Feudalistic Party:** The most serious weakness of the NPC was that it was restricted to Northern Nigeria while at the same time acquiring power to rule the whole Nigeria. The party was established by only Northerners and for only Northerners. It therefore did not promote national Unity. Moreover, the party was feudalistic and conservative. The party held deference to the autocratic emirs and the British Colonial rulers.
- (ii) **Inability to Overcome Favouritism:** The NPC used government boards to negotiate votes and reward “good political boys”™. The result was nepotism or favouritism.
- (iii) **Weak Party Organization:** The party organization was anything but strong. This was perhaps because the NPC thought it had no need for the people other than as attachments. This weakness was revealed in internal frictions over nominations of candidates in certain urban constituencies particularly those where there were direct elections.
- (iv) **Difficulty in Becoming a Mass Party:** The NPC was undoubtedly a party of the notables, the rich, the affluent and the conservative. It therefore had tremendous difficulty making itself pass for a mass party. Thus, no matter its efforts, the NPC could not shift its primary dependence away from the Native Authority to the people.

2.7 THE NORTHERN ELEMENTS PROGRESSIVE UNION (NEPU)

Like other so-called minor parties in the country’s™ First Republic, NEPU was formed to represent and protect certain special minority interests. But it was more than that; it sought to

cater not only for the collective interests of the Northern *talakawa* (Poor) but also the interests of all poor in Nigeria.

A group of young, educated Hausa-Fulani men including Aminu Kano dissatisfied with the conservatism of the NPC and the wholly unequal Northern social system broke away from the NPC and formed the Northern Elements' Progressive union (NEPU) on August 8, 1950 with the singular purpose of overturning the system and putting political and economic power in the hands of the poor, oppressed and wretched. The major prime mover and inspirator of NEPU was Mallam Aminu Kano, a Kano-based teacher. The city of Kano which had a large group of radical population housed the headquarters of the party. NEPU strongly demanded radical political reforms.

Party Objectives

The most striking fact about the objective of NEPU was that, unlike other parties, it clearly stated the creation of a new society as its central objectives. Thus, in its document published in October 1952, entitled *Declaration of Principles*, NEPU described the history of the North and of the Nigerian society as the history of class struggle between the rich and the poor; between the Fulani-Hausa propertied class and the propertyless, oppressed talakawa. The *Declaration* stated, among other things, that "there is today in our society an antagonism of interests manifesting itself as a class struggle, between the members of the vicious circle of the Native Authority on the one hand and the ordinary *talakawa* on the other. An end to this antagonism is possible only by the emancipation of the *talakawa* from the domination of these conditions by the reform of the present autocratic political institutions into democratic institutions and placing their democratic control in the hands of the *talakawa* for whom alone they exist."

NEPU then listed its immediate objectives as the following:

- (i) Imposing a new type of social structure on society.
- (ii) Radical reform of political and juridical institutions of society through direct elections.
- (iii) The use of universal adult franchise (for men and women) in all local authorities wherever the location (village, district, city etc).
- (iv) Creation of a better North through provision of health facilities, construction of more schools; establishment of a Northern University College (a follow-up to the then University College established in Ibadan in November 1948); provision of at least a hundred overseas scholarships yearly for Northern students to further their studies.

In short, NEPU stood for a socialist state established on "egalitarian democracy".

Structure and Organization

For about a decade (1950–1960), NEPU had neither a formal organization nor a Constitution. Even after its 3rd Convention at Maiduguri in March 1952 had formed a Committee to plan a structure for the Party, the Committee did not meet and therefore could not formulate a plan. So the party's organization was largely adhoc. For example, 1959 election was organized and executed by hurriedly-put-together constituency election committees, provincial election committees and district organizers.

This trend continued until the Annual Convention in January 1961. At this Convention, a 6-man Committee was constituted to write a Constitution. Thereafter what emerged was a party that was more or less simply structured, yet highly centralized.

There were two critical levels of organization. The first was the branch level, both in urban and rural districts. The branches were, in reality, various constituencies of the Party. At the second level were Provincial Executive Committees (PEC), elected by Annual Provincial Conferences. From 1958, full-time paid provincial organizers were appointed for the 12 Northern Provinces. These organizers were chosen from the National Executive Committee (NEC). The PEC chose its own Working Committees.

However, the Party Constitution vested Supreme authority of the Party in the Annual Convention. At the Annual Convention in January 1961, a NEC was constituted. This was made up as follows:

- (i) 4 Provincial representatives each from Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Bornu, Kano, Katsina etc;
- (ii) 2 representatives each from Youth's Wing; Women's Wing; Ex-Servicemen's Union;
- (iii) 3 representatives from the West;
- (iv) 7 representatives appointed by the President-General, Aminu Kano.

The NEC was the live-wire of the Annual Convention. The latter merely ratified policy decisions taken by the former.

There was also the Working Committee of NEC which acted on behalf of NEC. There were six members in all. They were handpicked by the President-General. The Committee was assisted by a strategic Committee constituted by national officers (with departmental responsibilities) and the President-General. This Committee was later to become NEPU's most important policy-making organ.

Forming part of the Party's structure was the Secretariat. The latter was responsible for routine administrative and secretarial work. It was organized into 7 sub-committees, namely, finance; administration; education; organization; local government; legal; information and publicity. Party business was mainly conducted by the sub-committees.

Leadership and Membership

As a party of the poor and those who champion their cause, NEPU leaders were mainly recruited from the lowest groups of the "middle class". Three major sources of leadership existed: the Native Authority; School teachers and Koranic mallams. Party leader, Mallam Aminu Kano, was himself an ex-school teacher. He dominated the Party. However, in 1959, when he was elected into the House of Representatives (he became Deputy Chief Whip), he lost some grip on the party. Earlier, he was elected President-General in 1954 and life president in 1959.

Generally speaking, NEPU leaders consisted of those who protested against the unequal social and economic system in the North. They were those who were ready to voluntarily leave their relatively lucrative jobs in the traditional system or who, because of their radical activities, were dismissed from their government jobs. They all had one thing in common: they chose to suffer with the masses than to entrench a conservative system which thrived on

the gross exploitation of common folks. This phenomenon largely explained why the quality of leadership was more or less low.

It is therefore not surprising that the major source of support and membership was the lower class. Members were mainly those resident in big towns but who had lost touch with their traditional roots. In big towns like Kaduna, Zaria, Kano, Jos, Minna, Gusau, Nguru, Kaura-Namoda, those who had everything to gain from the philosophy and activities of NEPU embraced it. These were petty traders, garage mechanics, petty craftsmen; printers, and an army of tailors, butchers, shopkeepers etc.

Achievements and Problems

Areas of achievements were as follows:

- (i) NEPU recorded worthwhile electoral successes between 1951 and 1959. For instance, it won 12 out of 26 seats in the Kano Primary Election of September 1951; in the Jos direct election in November-December 1956, NEPU won; and in the Federal Parliamentary elections in 1959, the party won 8 of 174 Northern seats, the distribution being 4 rural seats and 4 urban ones.
- (ii) NEPU fought against feudal social system and imperialism and championed the radical social and political reforms.
- (iii) NEPU was the first party to suggest a Republican status for Nigeria in 1961.

The noteworthy weaknesses of the NEPU include the following:

- (i) **Little support in the rural areas:** While it was true that wherever NEPU existed it gave expression to popular resentment of peasants against the NPC, it had little support in the countryside. This was undoubtedly a big failure for a populist party.
- (ii) **Interference by the native authorities and feudal ruling class:** The NAs and the feudal ruling class constantly interfered in the party's affairs and the activities of its personnel. This phenomenon led, first, to persistent carpet-crossing by members of the leadership cadre. For instance, in 1954, several members of the rising educated elite left NEPU for NPC. This also led to difficulty in getting full-time officials.
- (iii) **Little presence outside the North:** At least between 1952 and 1959, NEPU hardly existed outside the main towns of the Northern Region. Its populist and socialist objectives were clearly in advance of the mood of that time.
- (iv) **Lack of discipline:** The leaders of the party were not always examples of discipline. The Report of an Enquiry into the party's accounts showed that three executive members (Publicity Secretary, Chairman of Finance Committee and Deputy Secretary-General) misappropriated funds. The latter official alone embezzled over £6,000. In order to avoid alienation of these key officers, the Party simply ignored the indis disciplined act. The party suffered from financial accountability as financial discipline was fragile.
- (v) **Problem of party finance:** As already stated, leadership and membership were recruited essentially from the middle class and the lower class. The party lacked wealthy patrons. Executive members, sympathizers and supporters were relatively poor people. The implication was that there was always a gap between the aspirations of the party and what it could or did realize.

2.8 THE UNITED MIDDLE BELT CONGRESS (UMBC)

Origins

The UMBC was formed in June 1955. It was the product of a merger between the Middle Zone League (MZL) which had a large following in what was called the Middle Belt of Nigeria, particularly in the Plateau area and the Middle Belt People's Party (MBPP) which emerged in July 1953. The latter had considerable support in what is today's Benue and Kwara States — particularly among the Igala, Idoma and Igbirra groups. The two merging parties came about in the first place due to two factors. First, the people of Plateau, particularly the Biroms, were exposed, relatively early, to Western Education and influences. They were instrumental in telling their people about the ideals of nationalism and democracy. They therefore exposed the myths of the Northern oligarchy. This explained why the MZL and MBPP were the fruits of antagonism of what the feudal North and the NPC stood for.

Arising from this first influence was the second factor for a separate party from the NPC, the North's dominant political formation. The educated and politically aware citizens of the Middle Belt wanted a state of their own. They wanted an outright opposition to the NPC's position on an indivisible North.

Party Objectives

The major and perhaps sole objective of the UMBC was to remove the yoke of the domination of the Hausa-Fulani. The Middle Belt politicians read their history. They discovered that the Hausa-Fulani turned their forebears and grandparents into slaves in the early 20th century. They saw the NPC as a continuation or extension of this domination. They therefore sought to assert the distinctive character of the Middle Belt. In short, they were united on the need to put an end to the dominated status where colonial authorities placed them since 1951.

Structure and Organization

There is scant information on any formal organization in the UMBC. The little that is known showed that there was a hierarchy of officials recognized by the party's rank-and-file. There was also concentration of power at the Central Secretariat. However, there were diverse and different political and administrative systems in different branches and districts of the party.

Leadership and Membership

In its early years, the UMBC had two well-known leaders who represented the two major tendencies (earlier mentioned) in the party. One of them was Pastor Lot, a Tiv. While he was in favour of a Middle Belt State, he was persuaded it was hardly practicable. This explained why he clamoured for and obtained the party's approval for alliance with the NPC in late 1955. The other leader was a Birom — Moses Rwang Pam. A co-founder of the MBPP, Pam was unyielding in his call for a separate Middle Belt Movement. While the two tendencies had their supporters, the Pam-led group was more popular.

But by far the most popular, the most well-known and most resilient leader of the UMBC was Joseph S. Tarka, a Tiv. He came into limelight at the Lafia Conference in January 1957 when he was elected President General of the party following the retirement of Pastor Lot from active politics. Tarka later became leader of the UMBC — AG alliance as well as a

Member of Parliament for Jemgbar in Tiv Division. Flamboyant and colourful, Tarka was to outlive the UMBC. He participated in the politics of the Second Republic as a Senator. Before that he was a controversial Federal Commissioner under General Yakubu Gowon (1966–1975).

Membership in the Party was drawn from several parts of the Middle Belt. The cultural and historical area of the UMBC was outside the Hausa/Fulani area. The sub-national groups which adhered to the party were therefore the following. Tiv, Birom, Igala, Igbirra, Idoma etc. However, for reasons discussed below, UMBC's political influence did not extend to all the so-called "Northern Minority elements".

Achievements and Problems

The achievements of the UMBC were very minimal. Perhaps the party's major achievement was that it had firm grips of the political and electoral situation in the Middle Belt. In the Federal Elections of 1959, the UMBC confirmed its supremacy in the area. It won majority of the seats for the area. Secondly, it served as a viable opposition against the NPC conservatism and the Hausa-Fulani domination and feudal system. Its activities later contributed to the creation of Benue-Plateau State in May 1967.

The party suffered from serious problems which include:

- (i) **Internal conflicts:** There were persistent personality, ideological and group conflicts between the two major groups in the party. In short, there were frictions between those who supported the party in power (NPC) (e.g. Lot, the Igbirra, Idoma and Igala) and those who called for a separate state.
- (ii) **NPC's negative influence:** The NPC wielded a lot of political, financial and economic power in the entire North. There was an extensive network of patronage. Its supporters and militants were well-rewarded. Members of the UMBC, particularly the educated ones, contractors and businessmen found close links with the ruling party very attractive. The romance of UMBC men with the NPC weakened the party's internal cohesion.
- (iii) **Intra-party squabbles:** Influential, westernized supporters of the UMBC had a running battle with influential but traditionalist leaders of the party. The latter were mainly N A officials and Chiefs whose attempts to privatize and personalize the party were resolutely resisted by the former.
- (iv) **Vaccination on the issue of alliance with the NPC or the AG:** An alliance is a form of co-operation or understanding between two or more persons in respect to the achievement of a goal or objective. In this context, we are talking about co-operation and alliance with a view to winning votes and parliamentary seats at elections and subsequently forming government, wielding power and controlling financial, economic, political and other state and societal resources. Sometimes, an alliance may take place only during elections. At some other times, it is a permanent co-operation between two or more political groupings. The party failed to take a definite stand on the issue of alliance with either NPC or AG. The positions shifted in line with perceived political gains from either of the two parties. This indecision caused a lot of internal wranglings and problems. For instance, at the Party's Conference at Lafia, leaders and members were divided on whether to continue alliance with the NPC or

break new grounds by allying with the AG which had solicited for this three years earlier.

2.9 THE NIGER DELTA CONGRESS (NDC)

Origins

The NDC was the fruit of the failure of the 1957–8 Constitutional Conference to provide a solution to the problem of the minorities in the three regions (North, East and West). At this Conference, the non-Ibo population of the East, particularly the old trading towns of the Eastern delta — New Calabar, Opobo, Grand Bonny, Okrika, Nembe, etc — made a passionate case for their own separate state. But they failed in spite of their argument that their special interests, which included living in a poor, under-developed creek area, justified no less than that. All they got from the Minorities' Commission was a recommendation for the creation of a special area of Federal Development in the Niger Delta. This fell short of the demand of these towns for a Rivers State.

It was with a view to continuing the fight for a separate existence for a group of the non-Ibos that Harold Biriye, a spokesman of the people at the Constitutional Conference founded the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) in May, 1959. Biriye was the son of a Bonny Chief, a lawyer and secretary of the Rivers' Chiefs and Peoples' Conference. He was appointed the President-General of the Party in mid-July of the same year.

Party Objectives

The major objective of the NDC was to use electoral means and alignment with major parties to register the presence of the NDC in the Federal Parliament. The ultimate aim was to convince Federal authorities about the political significance of the Delta people and, consequently, the need to grant them the much-needed state.

Achievements and Problems

On the positive score board, the NDC recorded some electoral successes. It fielded candidates for the Federal Elections in December 1959 in the Delta areas of Degema, Ahoada West, Ogoni East and West and Brass. It won 4 Western seats in its alliance with the NPC in the same elections. Secondly, its activities later contributed to the creation of Rivers State in May 1967.

On the negative score board, the party was characterized by indecision in its alignment strategy. There was shifting alliance with both the NPC and the NCNC. For the latter, the alliance yielded little or no fruits. This was mainly because the NCNC, for obvious reasons, vehemently opposed the carving out of states from the old Eastern Region.

Not much was heard about the Congress after legal independence.

2.10 THE UNITED NATIONAL INDEPENDENT PARTY (UNIP)

Origins

The United National Independent Party (UNIP) emerged out of the merger, in August 1954, between a splinter or break-away group of the NCNC, the National Independent Party (NIP) and an independent party, the United National Party (UNP). The NCNC leadership crisis in 1953 was caused by the decision of the NCNC led by Dr. Azikiwe that the party should not

support the 1951 Constitution because of its weaknesses. Consequent on this, the party directed its Federal Ministers to resign.

However, the NCNC Federal ministers rejected the party's directive. Three of the Federal Ministers were expelled from the party: A.C. Nwapa, Okoi Arikpo and E.E. Njoku. In the East, some ministers, forced to resign, later withdrew their resignation letters. Three of these, Professor Eyo Ita, Dr E.U. Udoma and Dr Jaja Wachukwu, joined with their Federal Minister colleagues to form the Nigerian Independent Party (NIP). The latter entered into a political marriage with an independent candidate, Alvan Ikoku, whose party, United National Party (UNP) won 3 seats in the 1953 elections. NIP won 9 seats.

Party Objectives

Like the NDC, the UNIP saw itself primarily as a movement meant to protect and enhance the interests and sensibilities of a minority non-Igbo group in a region dominated by the Igbo, NCNC majority. This was the main reason behind the politically tactful alliance between the UNIP and the leaders of the COR Movement (Calabar — Ogoja—Rivers.) It also explained why the party sought some form of electoral association with the AG. The latter, of course, also needed collaboration with minority parties to boost its national image.

Leadership and Membership

The leadership of the UNIP was provided by the 6 Federal and Regional Ministers and the COR State Movement leaders. Members, on their part, were drawn mainly from non-Igbo areas, particularly among all those who were against perceived or real Igbo domination and those unhappy with the status quo. Membership of the party was limited to the COR areas of the East.

Achievements

The UNIP's achievement was mainly, electoral. In late 1954, the party won 4 seats in the Federal elections. Five years later, in yet another Federal election the party captured 5 seats, all of which were from non-Igbo areas, specifically the COR Constituencies of Opobo, Uyo, Calabar, Eket and Obubra. Its ally, the AG, also won 13 seats from the same constituencies. Moreover, the activities of the party later contributed to the creation of South Eastern State in May 1967.

2.11 PARTY ALLIANCES, COALITION AND CO-OPERATION DURING THE FIRST REPUBLIC

All the major parties, of course in different degrees and intensities, were involved in seeking political fortunes, power and influence in regions other than that in which they had dominance and hegemony. The pattern was that in the region where a major party had little or no support, it entered into an alliance with a minor party.

During the First Republic, the AG, NCNC and the NPC sought to win political power in regions other than the one they respectively controlled. This they did more by using the name of a minor political grouping than their own names. Generally speaking, 11 of Nigeria's 13 minor parties had one form of alliance or the other with the NCNC, the AG, or the NPC.

Let's look at the alliances or marriages consummated by the 3 major parties:

(a) The AG

This Western Region-based and dominated party was regarded as the most skilful master of alliances. This was because it was the AG, out of the 3 major parties, which embarked on a most aggressive form of alliance. Its targets were naturally the North and the East. This was from 1951, the year the AG became more or less solidly implanted in the West. It defined its problem then as one of getting a foothold in other regions.

Thus, in the North, the AG opened its first branch in Kano in October 1952, held an Annual Congress in December 1953 and elected officers for the North. However, it ran into some problems. First, some of the minor parties resisted the AG's incursion into the North and with some justifications, namely, that the AG wanted its minor allies to lose their identity. These parties protested that the AG wanted to assimilate them. Given the hold of the NPC on the North, the AG and any other major party for that matter, could have an important following there only if it had a solid alliance with a minor party as well as use the complaints and grievances of minor political groupings to advance its own political interests. The AG used the former method when it recorded some electoral successes in the North in 1956. Its alliance with the *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* (ITP) gave it 4 seats in 1956. However, when it went solo in 1959, it won nothing.

Furthermore, as we have already seen, the AG had a close working relationship with the UMBC, whose best known leader, Joseph Tarka, was a close associate of the AG leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The NCNC and the AG exploited the grievances of minority groups in the North to cause the NPC to lose seats through voter alignments and realignments.

The forays of the AG in the East were not more successful than in the North. On the surface, the AG had some solid presence there. For instance, a branch was opened in Port Harcourt in 1952, while the party won 3 seats in the Eastern Region in 1954. With the commitment of its organizing secretaries who reorganized the party's organization in the East after the Regional election of March 1957, the AG became more capable of winning elections. Indeed the East was carved into two zones: Igboland and COR areas. For obvious reasons, the AG concentrated attention on the COR areas. In 1957, the AG nominated 59 candidates, UNIP 23, for 84 seats. It won 13 seats while its ally, UNIP won 5, in the same COR areas. UNIP later merged with the AG, making the position of the latter more secured thereafter.

In the core Igbo areas, the AG, like in the North, had an uphill task penetrating. Several factors were against the AG. First, the electorate was deaf to AG's attempt at exploiting local grievances against the regional political leaders. Second, no minor party was prepared for any form of alliance, formal or informal, with the AG. Third, the solidarity in the NCNC and the Igbo society was such that the DPNC which by all accounts was the AG's most potential ally in the East refused to play ball. Its leaders did not want to be accused of antagonizing their Igbo brothers in favour of the AG. It should therefore not be surprising that the AG had little presence in the East.

The AG was, however, more successful in the Mid-West. While the latter was regarded as an NCNC area, in the 1964 Federal Elections, the regional seats were evenly divided between the two parties.

(b) The NCNC

Like the AG, the NCNC's incursion into the North was successful only in the Middle Belt, that is, in the non-Fulani/Hausa areas. Thus, though the NCNC was generally regarded as the most national of the three major parties, it had serious problems in the core North. This perhaps explained why it sought electoral alliances and co-operation mainly in the West. When it eventually decided to increase its support in the North, it attracted mainly southerners living in the Sabon Gari. In a serious effort to gain a strong hold on the North, the NCNC entered into an alliance with the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in 1954. This explained why from the Lafia Conference of NEPU in July 1954, the NCNC demonstrated total support for the former. It gave NEPU financial assistance, advice and experience. It also directed its members to vote for NEPU in Northern elections.

However, it was on the West that the NCNC enjoyed most tremendous support outside its regional base. After its electoral defeat in 1951, it won an impressive 23 seats (13 of which were won in Yoruba areas) to the AG's 18 in the 1954 Elections. In the regional elections of 1956, the AG won 48 seats, while the NCNC gained 32, half of which came from Yoruba areas.

How do we explain this situation? First, certain so-called minority groups in the West had anti-AG feelings which the NCNC exploited for its own purposes. Top on the list were the Ibadan people and the Ijeshas (indigenes of Ilesha). The NCNC used the *Mabolaje group* in Ibadan ("Do not Diminish the Splendour"), an anti-Ijebu Ibadan AG Movement to make its impact felt in the Western Regional capital. The NCNC contested 8 seats in the West in 1956 in alliance with *Mabolaje* and in addition contested 67 seats alone. The alliance was however, short-lived. It broke down in October/November 1959.

Generally speaking, from 1951 till the end of the First Republic, the NCNC tended to promote its political and electoral fortunes through co-operation with minor parties, local factions and important individuals.

(c) The NPC

The NPC's first (major) alliance was with the NDC in December 1959. The two parties then contested seats in the Niger Delta area and the West. The NPC did not have any definite policy of alliance and co-operation with other parties, minor or major. In cases where it had an alliance like when it contested for parliamentary seats in Lagos Central Constituency and two East Constituency, they were initiatives of the appropriate local branches.

Perhaps the NPC adopted this attitude because it was very sure of itself and it was not interested in being a true national party. The North's numerical strength and financial base ensured for her a domination of the country's politics. Several other parties, major and minor alike, saw the NPC as the winning Party, one that ought to be allied with in order to win Federal Parliamentary seats. The NPC therefore tended to see itself as the "beautiful bride" of Nigerian politics during the First Republic. The NCNC was about the most easily attracted to the NPC.

(d) The NPC/NCNC

The 1959 Federal Election was fought as a fierce battle among the three major parties — the NPC, NCNC and Action Group, each determined to win in order to control the government of independent Nigeria. Unfortunately none of the parties was able to secure an absolute majority necessary for it to form a government in the then Nigerian parliamentary system. A lot of negotiations were held after the election by three major parties in an attempt to

determine the parties that would form a coalition government. Ultimately, the NPC and the NCNC agreed to form a coalition government. The two parties were in coalition at the federal level up till 1966 when the military took over the political power. However, the coalition was seriously threatened by the 1963 Census Crisis, the 1964 Federal Election Crisis and the 1965 Western Election Crisis. It collapsed with the formation of UPGA and NNA which is the topic for our next discussion.

(e) The Alliances of 1963–65: UPGA and NNA

The NCNC had everything going for it as the Federal elections of 1964 approached. First, when the Mid-West was created in 1963, the NCNC Parliamentary strength (in the Senate of 44 members) increased from 12 to 24. This meant that it controlled more than half of the seats. Even after its alliance with Chief S.L.A. Akintola's NNDP in the West was severed because its members refused to join the NNDP (an offspring of the NPC/UPP alliance in the West), the NCNC still had an accord with the NPC.

However, as the critical 1964 elections approached, the NCNC found itself in a vulnerable position. Other parties, except perhaps the NPC, were equally jittery. The NCNC had a bitter quarrel with the NPC over the census figures of 1962 and 1963. It broke its accord with the NPC though it retained a working arrangement with the latter in order to sustain the coalition government. For the purposes of the 1964 elections, the NCNC entered into an alliance with the AG. They were joined by the Northern Progressive Front (NPF), which was a union of the two dissident parties in the North, the NEPU and the UMBC. Their alliance was called the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The UPGA was one of the two competing groups of alliances.

The second group was constituted by the alliance between the NPC and the NNDP. It called itself the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). As the election approached, four major phases of conflicts and co-operation emerged.

First, the two competing alliances mobilized resources and public opinion in their respective favour. The tendency much in vogue in the First Republic was to create a very simple but deceptive and defective dichotomy between the North (NNA) and the South (UPGA). Second, since they lacked popular ideas, the two alliances resorted to name-calling and shadow-boxing. Third, calls and counter-calls for boycott of elections by the UPGA were resolutely opposed by the NNA that clamoured for elections. When UPGA boycotted elections, they were incomplete. This led to the winning of majority seats in the House of Representatives by NNA. Fourth, there was an escalation in the use of thuggery, violence, arson and murder. There were mutual attempts to eliminate opponents. The election battle cry for both alliances was to win at all costs.

KEY POINTS

1. NNDP

- (i) Was formed on 24 June, 1923 by Herbert Macaulay.
- (ii) Was basically a Lagos Party.
- (iii) Between 1923 and 1938, NNDP completely dominated elections into the Legislative Council.

2. NYM

- (i) Formed by Ernest Okoli, H.O. Davies, J.C. Vaughan and Samuel Akinsanya - generally regarded as Nigeria's first authentic nationalist organization.
- (ii) Its structure was rudimentary though it had branches all over Nigeria.
- (iii) Its crisis of 1941 which involved Ernest Okoli and Samuel Akinsanya destroyed the party as Zik and Akinsanya and their Igbo and Ijebu groups left the NYM.

3. NCNC

- (i) Formed in Lagos on 26 August, 1944 and was the most dominant force in Nigerian nationalist struggle for independence.
- (ii) It was founded by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.
- (iii) Waged war against all forms of social, economic and political servitude perpetrated by the British imperialists.
- (iv) Spread of leadership and membership throughout all parts of Nigeria.
- (v) Zik was a captivating leader. He was certainly more than a *â€˜primus inter paresâ€™*
- (vi) Contributed largely to emancipation of Nigeria from colonial bondage.

4. AG

- (i) Established on 26 March, 1950. Generally regarded as the political wing of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*.
- (ii) By its organization it was a Yoruba party. A veritable machine, committed to efficiency and preservation of a high standard of discipline.
- (iii) Under its control of Western Region, it provided social services and Welfare Programmes eg. free primary education.
- (iv) Contributed to the emancipation of Nigeria from colonialism.

5. NPC

- (i) Began as a cultural organization. Inaugurated in Kaduna on 26 June, 1949 by a group of young educated Northerners, bound together by Islam, Native Authority and similar social background.
- (ii) Membership open to only Northerners.
- (iii) Derived its support from the Native Authority and the Muslim states. Also it had support in non-Muslim areas of the North.
- (iv) It was involved in the nationalist struggle for Nigeria's independence.

6. NEPU

- (i) Founded in July 1950 though official foundation day is generally put at 8 August, 1950.

- (ii) It was formed by a group of young and radical educated Hausa-Fulani led by Malam Aminu Kano, former members of the NPC who were dissatisfied with the conservatism of the NPC.
- (iii) Its objectives included the creation of a new society; radical reform of social system, political and judicial institutions.
- (iv) It contributed to social and political reforms in the Northern Region and fought for Nigeria's independence.

7. UMBC

- (i) Formed by a merger of the Middle Zone League (MZL) and the Middle Belt People's Party (MBPP). Established in June 1955 as an opposition movement against the NPC.
- (ii) Major objective was to remove the yoke of the Hausa-Fulani domination.
- (iii) Its best known leaders included Pastor Lot, Rwang Pam and J.S. Tarka. Membership was drawn mainly from the Middle Belt.

8. NDC

- (i) Came into being after the 1957 and 58 Constitutional Conferences failed to grant a separate state to the Delta people (Rivers State). Founded in May 1959 by Biriye to fight for a separate existence for a group of the non-Igbo.

9. UNIP

- (i) Emerged out of the merger, in August 1954, between NIP, a splinter group of the NCNC and UNP.
- (ii) Its objective was mainly to protect and enhance the interests and sensibilities of non-Igbo minority groups. Thus UNIP/COR Movement/AG Alliance.

10. Party Alliances, Coalition and Co-operation

A party alliance is an agreement between two or more parties with a view to winning votes and Parliamentary seats at elections.

- (a) **AG:** The most skilful master of alliance. Its targets were the North and the East.
It had close working relations with the UMBC. In the East, specifically in the COR areas, it had fruitful relations with the UNIP.
- (b) **NCNC:** It was in alliance with the NEPU. It was in alliance with Akintola's UPP until Chief Akintola broke with the NCNC and formed NNDP. The NCNC entered into coalition Government with the NPC in December 1959.
- (c) **NPC:** Had no definite policy of alliance. First alliance with the NDC in December 1959 in the Niger Delta area and the West. Perhaps sure of itself given its numerical strength and financial base.

Alliances of 1963–1965

- (i) **The UPGA/NNA:** Two competing sets of alliances emerged:

- (a) **UPGA:** Composed of NCNC, AG, NEPU, UMBC
- (b) **NNA:** Made up of NPC and NNDP
- (ii) The two alliances fought the 1964 federal elections.

SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Essay Questions

1. Compare Macaulay's NNDP and the Nigerian Youth Movement in terms of origin, objective, organization and achievements.
2. To what extent was the NCNC more national than the Action Group in objective, leadership, membership, organization and activities?
3. What were the contributions of the NCNC to the political and constitutional development of Nigeria?
4. Discuss the cause and effects of party alliances in the 1964 Federal Elections?
5. Which of the three major parties in Nigeria – NPC, NCNC and Action Group, had the most far-reaching alliance network and why?

Objective Questions

1. Which of the following parties was formed as a result of the elective principle provided by the Clifford Constitution?
 - A. NNDP
 - B. NYM
 - C. NCNC
 - D. UNIP
 - E. NPC.
2. One of the founders of the Nigerian Youth Movement was
 - A. Herbert Macaulay
 - B. Nnamdi Azikiwe
 - C. Obafemi Awolowo
 - D. Ernest Ikoli
 - E. Sir Ahmadu Bello.
3. The political parties that were in coalition government at the Federal level during the First Republic were
 - A. NPC and Action Group
 - B. NCNC and Akintola's NNDP
 - C. NPC and NCNC
 - D. NPC and Akintola's NNDP

- E.** NCNC and Action Group.
- 4. UNIP was the result of a merger between
 - A.** NIP and AG
 - B.** UNP and NCNC
 - C.** UNP and NIP
 - D.** NIP and NPC
 - E.** NIP and UMBC.
- 5. The two sets of competing alliances which were formed for the 1964 Federal elections were
 - A.** AG and UMBC
 - B.** NNA and UPGA
 - C.** NPC and NCNC
 - D.** UNIP and NDC
 - E.** UPGA and NPC.

Answers

- 1. A
- 2. D
- 3. C
- 4. C
- 5. B