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Chapter II

Social Life and Party Politics in Nigeria

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Introduction

Nigeria is a vast plurinational State which has, since its attainment of independence from colonial rule, had a chequered history characterised essentially by turbulence, social upheavals and political instability. Many clairvoyant observers believe that party politics is to blame.

In this chapter, we shall first of all clarify the import of the subject and establish that a symbiotic relationship exists between party politics and social life. Thereafter we shall delineate the different periods of that relationship in the political history of Nigeria, conscious of the fact that in every polity, social life is antecedent to party politics.

What is Party Politics?

This question has three sides to it because one has to understand what 'politics' is, what 'party' is and what type of politicking is peculiar to parties in Nigeria.

'Politics' is a complex and dynamic activity which is construed differently by different people. This is why it does not have any universally accepted definition; each political scientist defines it according to his traditional background. However, there are two major conceptions of the term. One conception limits the scope of politics to public policy hence, Winter and Bellows (1977) for example, say that it is "the art of government or the process of making government decisions;" Harris (1976) sees it as "public issues which give rise to conflicts;" for Van Dyke (1960), it is "a struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues;" and for Deutsche (1970), it is "the partial control of human behaviour through voluntary habits of compliance and the threat of the use of force." These authors agree with Raphael (1977) that an issue is 'political' only when it concerns the State.

The other conception of 'politics' is rather broad. With equal force of conviction, Ball (1976) argues that since politics involves conflicts and their reconciliation, it is relevant to other spheres of human activity and can occur anywhere in the family church, school, etc. Dahl (1965), Washy (1970) and a host of other political scientists support this view that the political arena transcends the public realm. It is a perspective that sees politics in every social relationship which is susceptible to conflict and the exercise of power and influence, hence the unfortunate generalisation in the saying that there is politics in everything and that everyone in an organised society is involved in politics in one form or another.

On the other hand, there are two related dimensions of politics. One dimension sees it as competition for power to administer public affairs - a task which calls for judiciousness in defining and promoting the common good. The other considers it as competition for power to control and allocate scarce public resources for the benefit of private interests. The reality of these two dimensions of politics must have led Merkel (quoted in Ball, 1976) to assert that "at its best, politics is a noble quest for good order and justice; at its worst, a selfish grab for power, glory and riches." Not surprisingly, Concise Oxford Dictionary

defines 'politics' as "a dirty business."

The negative view of politics is, *helas!* more widely held. For example, Lockard (1969) notes that "Americans tolerate politics as a necessary evil; at worst they regard it as a plague of corruption, compromise and deceit." In Nigeria, the disdain for politics is even more profound because of the activities of political parties and politicians. To many Nigerians, politics is a discreditable activity that is synonymous with craftiness, deceit, dubiousness, corruption, violence and other vices which connote *vener* behaviour. This feeling arises from the fact that politics in Nigeria is, as Dudley (1978) observes, "not about alternative policies but about the control over men and resources."

In effect, it is the activities of politicians and political parties that are considered as outrageous to common decency. A political party is, therefore, not seen by many from Burke's optic of "a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle on which they are agreed".

There is, of course, a general agreement that a political party is an essential, nay, indispensable institution of liberal democratic political system. It should be defined as an organised body or persons, united by their common desire to capture political power and exercise it either single-handedly or in coalition, with a view to promoting those interests and/or principles on which the members are agreed.

Implicit in the notion of political party are salient characteristics such as membership and followership, organisation, objectives and resources for achieving set goals. It is, of course, crucial that there must be adult suffrage. The question then arises: When did political parties appear on the Nigerian political scene before independence? Given that the expansion of the suffrage is a necessary condition for the emergence of political parties, was it in 1922 when the Clifford Constitution introduced the elective principle and permitted only 4 Nigerians from two coastal cities to be elected to the legislative council? And did the Nigerian National Democratic Party and the Nigerian Youth Movement possess the attributes of a political party? Perhaps not, except in the non-purist sense of a party being "any group, however loosely organised, seeking to elect governmental office holders under a given label" (Epstein, 1967). Besides, writing about African political parties, Hodgkin (1961) advises that "it is probably most convenient to consider as 'parties' all political organisations which regard themselves as parties and

which are generally so regarded." In support of this view, Emerson (1972) says:

To assess the significance of African political parties it is neither necessary nor useful in defining the term 'party' to draw such fine distinction as to exclude significant manifestations of African political life.

Be that as it may, it cannot be argued that an organised body of persons seeking to acquire political power without enfranchised mass followership will make relatively little impact on social life in a democratic society.

What is Social Life?

According to International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (Vol. 13 & 14), social life refers to an "encompassing network of relationships between individuals that enclose some more specific phenomenon" or, as Mezieobi and Domike (1996) more elaborately put it,

Social life is....a behavioural or attitudinal pattern of human existence or co-existence or degree of interactional or interpersonal relationships in a society which as person or group chooses, or is coerced into by group or society's norms or prescriptions, which may or may not be restricted by law.

In effect, it has to do with man's condition of existence in widely different experiences in a society. The experiences are said to be positive when the human interaction as well as the group/individual disposition to them is associative, co-operative or participative; it is negative when the experiences are competitive, conflictual or even isolational. Whether man's experiences in a given society are positive or negative may be determined by such variables as social norms or doctrines, attitudes of individual or collective superiority/deference, feelings of marginalisation, existence of mutual trust or absence of it, etc.

In any case, in talking about social life in Nigeria there is a problem of 'setting' or 'milieu' that has to be resolved. Tautologically speaking, social life is life in a society. The question then is, given the multiethnic composition of Nigeria, can we assimilate everybody into one society defined as "a group of people who have a similar cultural background and live in a specific geographical area?" (cf. World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. 18, 1982, p. 458b). As Hoogvelt (1978) posits,

"societal identity is always grounded in a common cultural or religious orientation shared by the membership." If, as he further posits, "the societal community defines 'who we are' and 'who they are' and the cultural system says why this is so", there is no denying the existence of a multiplicity of societies in Nigeria. In the circumstances, to which of the societies does the term 'social life' refer in this study?

There is, nonetheless, a broad conception of 'society' in the works of some social scientists. For instance, Parsons (1966) asserts that "the boundaries of a society tend to coincide with the territorial jurisdiction of the highest-order units of political organisation." Also, Corry (1954) opines that "society is the total social relationships within the given area of the earth's surface on which attention is focussed." In view of these two perspectives of society, one approach to our subject is to regard social life in Nigeria as referring to life in different collectivities in which individuals or groups find themselves. The other approach is to conceptualise Nigeria as a multi-power centred society within which party politics takes place; there are many units of power struggle but the federal government is the central arena of the struggle; the party in control of the federal government is also involved in the power struggle but it is the *primus inter pares* because it can make decisions that affect social life in the whole country. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive; we can accommodate them in this work.

Relationship between Social Life and Party Politics

Political parties are, in fact, a veritable link between social life and political life because the essence of social existence is politics. As Rodee et al (1976) note, behaviouralists view the political system as an integral part of the general social system. This is because the disposition of a political party to act is often dependent on an empirical evidence of its interaction with the social environment.

In a genuine democracy, party politics is preoccupied with good governance; that is, seeing to it that government provides social amenities and services, basic infrastructure; ensuring that there is social justice; promoting the economic well-being of the people etc. In a bad government party politics can generate a spirit of faction, tension and insecurity; it can promote corruption and champion economic policies that cause untold hardship and misery to the masses. In either case,

social life is directly affected.

Social Life and Party Politics in Nigeria Under Colonial Rule

When the British colonial masters arrived in the vast expanse of land which May Shaw, wife of Lord Lugard, gave the name 'Nigeria' in 1898, they met primitive peoples of distinct collectivities. Their major occupation was farming and trading and each collectivity had its traditional system of government that accorded with its cultural values. The indigenous political systems were functional and effective, but there were no political parties.

As the British Government firmly established its presence throughout the country, it introduced the system of Indirect Rule first in the north and later in the south after amalgamating the two territories in 1914. The colonial government enjoyed the monopoly of political power but the challenge to its autocratic rule by West African nationalists led to its conceding the elective principle in the Clifford Constitution of 1922. By virtue of that constitutional provision, four Nigerians (three representing Lagos and one representing Calabar) were to be elected as unofficial members of the Legislative Council based in Lagos. The membership of the Council was 46. The franchise was limited to male "resident British subjects" and "British protected persons" in the two coastal cities who were earning up to one hundred pounds a year.

It is said that the introduction of the elective principle stimulated political activity and led to the creation of two political organisations, namely, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (1922) and the Lagos Youth Movement (1934) which in 1936 assumed a national outlook and changed its name to Nigerian Youth Movement; newspapers were also established. To talk of the NNDP and NYM as political parties is to talk very loosely indeed. Four unofficial members on a legislative body of 46 members, elected to represent only two cities because other areas of Nigeria were regarded as uncivilized, could hardly be expected to make any impact on the colonial administration in terms of improving the social life of Nigerians. Where was the power to be exercised which necessitated the organisation of a political party?. No doubt, the newspapers socialized and sensitized people in Lagos and Calabar who could read to the autocratic nature of colonial rule but politics was the affair of a club of elites who just wanted to be recognized by the colonial administration and given important positions in the civil service.

In our view, party politics had not really begun; the stage was just being set. (It is, however, important to note that tribalism reared its head even in the Nigerian Youth Movement, causing an internal split that spelt its demise).

Genuine political parties did not emerge till the ferment of ideas which accompanied World War II pointed to the need to intensify the crusade against colonialism. In August 1944, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was formed not as a political party initially "but as a supra organisation to which tribal and communal unions, trade unions and other bodies sent representatives". (Osadebay, 1978:17). It was a militant movement with a pan-Nigerian membership. In 1947 the Northern Elements Progressive Association (NEPA) was formed by radical elements in the North who were opposed to feudalism. It later changed its name to Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). Its formation led moderate northern elites to create the Northern People's Congress in 1948. The major aim of NPC was to counter the radicalism of NEPU and to prevent the domination of the north by the south. In 1950 a Yoruba cultural organisation called the Egbe Omo Oduduwa founded in 1947, transformed itself to a political party known as Action Group. Like NPC, its tribal interests were manifest.

Apart from the four political parties mentioned above, there were, before independence in 1960, political parties created by minority elements agitating for state creation (for example, the Benin-Delta People's Party, 1953; the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Movement, 1954; and the United Middle Belt Congress, 1955). There were also political parties formed by politicians who had fallen out with their former political parties (for example, the National Independent Party in Eastern Nigeria 1953). In other words, when in 1951 the Macpherson Constitution consolidated the division of the country into three regions, there were parties for politics in the regions and at the centre. Of them all, three were prominent: NPC led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, which was the dominant party in the north; AG led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo which dominated the political scene in the west, and NCNC led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe which lost its nationwide followership and was compelled to seek a tribal niche in Eastern Nigeria where it was the dominant party.

The political leaders were based in their respective regions. They

did not have much in common. Sir Ahmadu Bello disliked southern Nigerians because of their radicalism and he unreservedly condemned Lord Lugard's amalgamation of the northern and southern territories in 1914. Chief Awolowo did not mince words in espousing tribalism and using it for political gains. He believed in everyone being whatever he/she wanted to be in his/her own region. He was a strong federalist. But unlike these two political leaders, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was a true nationalist, intent on forging a united and powerful Nigeria which would be envied by other third world countries. Given the diametrically opposed disposition of the political leaders towards national goals, party politics was bound to be highly competitive and often acrimonious.

The first real test came in 1953 when an Action Group member of the House of Representatives (Chief Anthony Enahoro) tabled a private member's motion for self-government for Nigeria in 1956. The NPC members did not like fixing a date for self-government and proposed an amendment substituting "as soon as practicable" for "1956". Voting on the motion was forestalled by another for adjournment tabled by a northerner. A division arose between the north and the south and the representatives of northern Nigeria were booed and insulted by the Lagos crowd as they were leaving the House. They went back to the north to propose an 8-point programme expressive of their desire for confederation or secession.

A tour undertaken by the Action Group to explain the issue at stake to the northern masses was ill-fated. It led to a riot in Kano; many Igbos were killed. The question of self government was not resolved until the constitutional conference of 1957 at which the East and the West were granted self-government on August 8, 1957, and the North on August 15, 1959.

At the regional level, party politics also created social strife. Chief Osadebay in his biography had to declare that the general election of 1951 in Nigeria taught him that "tribal feelings were stronger than national feelings" (see Osadebay, *op. cit.*, p. 31). This was because the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons under the leadership of Dr. Azikiwe won more seats than the Action Group in the west and the east and was expected to produce the first regional and central Ministers in the two regions. That was sabotaged in the west by many Yoruba members of NCNC crossing over to AG on the first day of the meeting of the Western House of Assembly. Some Igbos who know the cause of

the internal rift in the Nigerian Youth Movement and this sabotage against Dr. Azikiwe in the west understandably hesitate to confide in Yorubas in party politics.

Also, there was the demand made by the opposition party in each of the regions for the creation of more states. The regional governments were all opposed to the demand because none would accept to do so unless there was a reliable assurance that others would too. As Osadebay (op. cit., p. 63) stated, "the war between the minorities and majorities of ethnic and linguistic groups in Nigeria raged in the country's legislative houses...." Unfortunately for the minority areas, the colonial government did not support the creation of more regions and that was why the Willink Commission which it appointed in 1957 on the matter was given terms of reference that clearly reflected British opposition. So, no state was carved out of any region during colonial rule. The issue continued to constitute a source of social conflict between the minority and majority ethnic groups in the regions.

There is no doubt that the colonial administration was not averse to the situation, for as Dunn (1979:139) remarks, "during the 1950s the British government directed developments by playing Nigerian politicians off against one another..." Työden (1994:122) also notes that by its divide and rule tactics, the British colonialists encouraged each of the three regions to assert its own social, cultural and political identity.

It is important to make the point that the NPC-controlled government of the north used its threat of secession to considerable political advantage. For instance, it was allocated half the number of seats in the federal legislature, which was a leverage for domination, given the ethnic followership of the political parties, especially because after 1957 the federal government acquired the power to regulate the national economy; in addition, its share of federally earned revenue was increased. The implication of all this was that control of the federal government became a means of protecting or influencing regional governments.

In the final analysis, what party politics under colonial rule did was to use ethnicity to define the confines of political and social interaction. Nigeria, as Työden (op. cit. p. 122) would say, was like a plural society where "different sections of the community lived side by side but separately on the same political unit" and where the people

"mixed but did not combine." What the attainment of independence in 1960 did was to dissemble the antagonism between the major tribal groups in the country and the ill-feelings of the regional minority elements against the majority groups. In the circumstance, the threat which party politics posed to social life is easy to imagine.

Social Life and Party Politics Under Civil Rule

This section concerns two periods (1960-66 and 1979-83) covering the first and the second republics of Nigeria.

A. The First Republic (1960-66)

The achievement of independence without bloodshed in 1960 was for Nigerian nationalists cause for jubilation, as it was the result of years of struggle against colonialism. For the masses, it was expected to be the beginning of the era of economic and social well-being which the politicians had promised.

After the 1959 federal election, the Northern People's Congress formed a coalition government with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (later renamed National Convention of Nigerian Citizens). Action Group was the official Opposition Party. It is said that NCNC preferred to form the government with NPC instead of with AG in order not to make the North secede. But as events revealed, NPC could go to much length to establish a foothold in the west. The crisis in the Action Group in 1962 was exploited to that end.

Chief S.L. Akintola was the Premier of Western Nigeria and also Deputy Leader of AG. Soon after Chief Awolowo became the Leader of Opposition in the House of Representatives. Lagos, there appeared within the ranks of AG leadership what Chief Awolowo called "a number of real and dangerous contradictions." Chief Akintola was accused of maladministration, anti-party activities and gross indiscipline. He was relieved of the posts of Premier of Western Nigeria and Deputy Leader of AG. Alhaji D.S. Adeghenro was appointed to replace him as Premier of the region, but he refused to quit. Instead, he sacked the Governor who had removed him and appointed another Governor. The struggle for legitimization which ensued led to scuffles within the precinct of the regional legislature.

The NPC-led federal government seized the opportunity to declare a state of emergency in the West for six months and to appoint

a Commission of Inquiry to "enquire into the financial and investment policies and practices, the management and the business operations of six statutory corporations in Western Nigeria since October 1954." The Report of the Inquiry was favourable to Akintola. He also won the suit which he filed in court against his removal from office as Premier. After the state of emergency, he was reinstated and when the verdict of the Privy Council of the House of Lords, London, which was at the time Nigeria's highest court of appeal, reversed the decision of the lower court, the federal government rejected it and colluded with the Akintolan government to nullify it by amending the Constitution of Western Nigeria with retrospective effect.

The intra-party crisis in AG destroyed it irremediably and deepened the mistrust between NPC and the Awolowo faction of AG. It also gave birth to a new political configuration in Western Nigeria and changed the balance of political power in the country because NCNC had formed a coalition government with Akintola's new United People's Party (UPP) to give the government a majority in the legislature.

Chief Awolowo and his supporters were enraged. It was, perhaps, the desire to deal decisively with NPC that led to their plotting to topple the federal government. The conviction of the AG leader and some other senior members of the party to various terms of imprisonment poisoned social life in Western Nigeria. To worsen matters, the government of Chief Akintola stopped at nothing to victimize supporters or sympathizers of Chief Awolowo.

At the national level, a census controversy ensued in 1963. In May 1962 a population census was carried out. All the regions inflated their figures for political reasons. It was cancelled. In November 1963, there was a repeat exercise. This time the NPC-dominated federal government, the NPC-controlled Northern Nigeria Government and the Western Nigerian Government of Chief Akintola accepted the result which gave Nigeria a population of 55.6 million distributed as follows: North 29.7 million, East 12.3 million, West 10.2 million, the newly-created Midwest State 2.5 million, and the Federal Territory of Lagos 0.6 million.

The NCNC-controlled governments of Eastern and Midwestern Nigeria rejected the result. Later the NPC-dominated federal government threatened to cut off the federal subsidy on which the Midwest depended, if it persisted in rejecting the census figures. The midwest had to give in.

Supreme Court dismissed the suit on the ground that it had no jurisdiction to entertain it.

All over the country there was tension as the controversy degenerated into accusations and counter-accusations of tribalism and corruption. Although the NPC/NCNC federal coalition held on tenuously, it was clear to the party leaders that they were "strange bed fellows". At least, the federal election in 1964 removed any illusion in that regard.

In readiness for the Federal election, Chief Akintola formed another party called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). It was made up of the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens who succumbed to Akintola's threat of removing them from their positions in the Western Nigeria Government if they refused to join. Thus he rid himself of his partnership with NCNC and formed an alliance with NPC for the Federal election under the banner of Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). Opposition parties in the East and Midwest also were part of the alliance. On the other side of the contest was another alliance formed by NCNC, AG and opposition parties in Northern Nigeria under the name United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA).

What occurred during the electioneering campaigns was horrendous, particularly in Western Nigeria. The NNDP leaders had vowed to win the election in the region whether the electorate voted for the party or not. They spared no manner of lawlessness to achieve that objective. The President of the Republic, Dr. Azikiwe, feared there might be civil war and asked the Prime Minister to postpone the election but he refused. UPGA then decided to boycott the election. The boycott even helped Chief Akintola and his party achieve their goal of imposing themselves on the Yoruba population of Western Nigeria.

At the end of the election, the Federal Electoral Commission announced that NNA was the victor but the President opted to resign than appoint Sir Abubakar Tatawa Balewa Prime Minister. Fear of an imminent disaster gripped the entire country. Some well meaning Nigerian leaders had to intervene and bloodshed was averted by the formation of a broad-based federal government composed of NPC, NCNC and NNDP. There were 76 ministerial appointments.

Yet the cloud of impending disaster did not dissipate. The election to the Western House of Assembly in 1965 involved the same

principal actors of UPGA and NNA, even though NPC was not contesting any seat.

The election witnessed a perfection of the rigging tactics employed in 1964. Once again, the leaders of NNDP boasted of winning whether the electorate voted for the party or not. In spite of extensive security measures, there was complete break-down of law and order caused by widespread rioting, arson and killings of an unprecedented magnitude. After declaring NNDP victorious, the Chairman of the Federal Electoral Commission wrote an open letter to the Governor of Western Nigeria saying that there was "good cause for misgiving about the authority of the results. (Ojiako, 1981:220).

The reaction of the people of Western Nigeria was spontaneous. Violence reached its peak. It was real anarchy but this time the federal government did not consider it fit to declare a state of emergency. It merely sent in troops to the region which continued to "burn" until the military *coup d'etat* of January 15, 1966 which ousted the civilian government.

It hardly needs restating that party politics in the first civilian government provoked social malaise all over the country. As Alapiki (1994:63) summed it up, it could be likened to one of "elimination by destruction" because of

the intimidation and brutalization of political opponents;
the political suffocation of ethnic minorities; the partisan appropriation of the perquisites of office; the unbridled and unrestrained quest for power on the basis of inter-group animosities and suspicion.

In effect, instead of the promised fruits of democracy, what the masses experienced was social life characterised by elite domination, exploitation of the majority by the minority, corruption, insecurity and misery. Needless to say the military take-over was timely.

B. The Second Republic (1979-83)

In the second Nigerian Republic, the presidential system of multi-party government was experimented. The President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, was the leader of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which reached a co-operation agreement with the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. In an address to a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives on October 16, 1979,

President Shagari indicated that he would fulfill the yearnings and aspirations of the Nigerian masses and alleviate their sufferings. He promised to give priority attention to Agriculture, Housing, Education, Industrialization, etc.

It is on record that his government made some impact in the area of Housing, for low-cost houses were constructed in each State of the federation. In the domain of industrialization, at least the Aladja iron and steel project was operational by 1981. However, not much was done for Education. The subvention of ₦40.00 per pupil which the States were receiving from the federal government to subsidize the UPE scheme was stopped and some states could not pay their primary school teachers for months. Even grants to federal universities were insufficient. This state of affairs was probably due to the fact that by lifting the ban on the importation of certain essential commodities and placing the importation of rice under license in December 1979, President Shagari played into the hands of some fraudulent members of his government who seized the opportunity to inveigle their desire of liquidating the nation's treasury (for example, Umaru Dikko). What is more, the price of crude petroleum on the world market fell in 1981 below government's projection. As the economy was in shambles, President Shagari was compelled to take austerity measures to stem the country's drift to economic disaster. The measures caused much hardship and life in Nigeria has since then been pretty difficult.

Concerning the co-operation accord which NPN concluded with NPP "in the interest of unity, peace, stability and progress of the country," it brought the country to the brink of disintegration instead. Majority of the supporters of NPN were Hausas while those of NPP were Igbos: any disagreement between both parties tended to reverberate on the social level.

It would appear that as the working of the presidential system of government unfolded itself, the National Party of Nigeria realized that it could go it alone if it could lobby the legislators "effectively". So, barely five months after the accord was reached, it became irrelevant and from then it divided the very people it was expected to integrate. Once again, the sceptre of disintegration and war loomed large as the two parties accused each other of bad faith. In the midst of the feud, the leader of NPP held a press conference foreboding, *Inter alia*,

...In case of any holocaust or unforeseen disaster

descending upon Nigeria (God forbid), the innocent protagonists of peace and stability shall be vindicated and the guilty pedlars of turbulence and instability shall be exposed. If, therefore, any Nigerian leader or leaders must pay the price of leadership, undiluted and unfalsified history shall exculpate the benevolent patriots and damnify the culpable apostles of destabilisation.

(Daily Times, February 26, 1981).

Fortunately, the tension petered out and there was no 'holocaust' but the cloud gathered again after the general election of 1983. President Shagari must have used the advantage of incumbency to "arrange things" concerning the election.

As early as January 1982, the four other parties which had been joined by the National Advance Party (NAP) led by Dr. Tunji Braithwaite, concluded an electoral alliance in order to defeat the National Party of Nigeria. From the time of the electioneering campaign to the declaration of result, NPN employed every form of malpractice imaginable. With the complicity of the electoral officers, actual winners in the various constituencies were declared losers. In the end, NPN was said to have scored a landslide victory. Many people were, however, convinced that it was brazen robbery. Widespread demonstration and destruction of property took place in all the States where the electoral commission was believed to have imposed on the people NPN governorship candidates; for instance, Anambra, Gongola, Kano, Ondo and Oyo.

Once again, the Army intervened. Another democratic experiment had been unsuccessful. Party politics only succeeded in impacting negatively on the social life of the people, leaving on its trail mutual distrust, insecurity of life, economic hardship, abject poverty, ethnic rivalry and hatred. Unfortunately, the people in power did not include the welfare of the masses in their calculation of the obligations of government.

Social Life and Party Politics Under Authoritarian Guidance

This section concerns party politics and social life during the implementation of the democratisation programme of the military regimes of Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo and General Ibrahim Babangida.

Following the lifting of the ban on political activities by the Head

of State, Lt. General Obasanjo on September 21, 1979, numerous political associations were formed but only five were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission. They were: the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo; the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe; The Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP) led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim; and the People's Redemption Party (PRP) led by Alhaji Aminu Kano. In fact, only in name were these parties different from those of the first Republic.

All the leaders of the parties contested the presidential election which the flag-bearer of NPN was said to have won. The announcement of his victory was made amidst speculations that an electoral college was going to be constituted to conclude the election with a run-off vote, because it was believed that none of the candidates satisfied the conditions laid down by the law. In anticipation, the other four presidential candidates were already trying to form an alliance that would support the candidature of Chief Awolowo at the level of the electoral college. What was in question was the proper interpretation of "one quarter of the votes cast in each of, at least, two-thirds of all the States in the federation". (Nigeria had then 19 States). The matter had to get to the Supreme Court which confirmed Alhaji Shagari's victory by a majority decision. The Yorubas felt that they had been denied the presidency but they could not vent their anger on the military government of Lt. General Obasanjo, a Yoruba himself.

The situation in 1993 was different.

On May 3, 1989, the administration of General Babangida lifted the ban on political activities which had been imposed since the regime of General Buhari. Following this action, more than 30 political associations were formed but only 13 of them applied for registration with the National Electoral Commission (NEC). However, they did not meet NEC's requirements and were disqualified by General Babangida who decided to impose on the country a "grassroot democratic two-party system" consisting of the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Despite authoritarian interventions the two parties conducted the local government election, gubernatorial election and elections to the National and State Legislative Houses. For the presidential election, it