



Decolonization Process in Nigeria: The Contributions of Nnamdi Azikiwe's Press and Labour Strike In 1945

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Abstract

The reactions to the economic and social effects of the Second World War were expressed through the press by the working class that were the producers of the colonial economy and ironically bears the pinch of its hardship. Attempts to bring these to the attention of the colonial administration by the workers union resulted in unpleasant reactions from the former. Nnamdi Azikiwe's press was readily at hand to assist workers to agitate for the increase of better working conditions caused by the war. At the end, the activities of these two-group led to the increase cost of living allowance (COLA) for the Nigerian workers and amendment to some of the obnoxious political policies, leading to the political independence of the country.

Keywords: Colonisation, Decolonisation, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Press, Labour Strike

Introduction

Prior to the emergence of the Zik's Press into the body politics of the country in 1945, dozens of other newspapers had already occupied the political and reading minds of Nigerians and the emergence of others later.¹ Early newspapers that emerged in the country before the emergence of Ziks newspapers were the Lagos Weekly Record 1891-1930, African Mail 1908-1915, Nigerian Chronicle 1908-1920, Nigerian Pioneer 1914-1925, Lagos Daily news 1925-1938, African Messenger 1926-1930, Daily Times 1926-1958, Nigerian Daily Telegraph 1927-1935, West African Nationhood 1932-1935, Comet 1935-1946 and Daily Service 1938-1958. It was not until the late 1930s onwards that we began to witness floodgates of Ziks newspapers hitting the ground running with Nigerian Tribune West African Pilot 1938-1958, Eastern Nigerian Guardian 1940-1952, Nigerian Spokesman 1943-1952, Daily Comet 1945-1952, Nigerian Advocate 1949-1952, Southern Defender 1949-1952, 1949-1952, Eastern State Express 1950-1952, Gaskiya Tafi Kobo 1950-1952, New Africa 1950-1952 and Nigerian Citizen 1950-1952.²

¹ Michael Crowder, *The story of Nigeria*, Faber and Faber, London, 1978 passim. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria background to Nationalism*, Broburg and Wistrom, Benin City, Katrieneholm, 1986 passim

² Ibid



The purpose of this delineation was to provide perspectives on how some these newspapers fared during the British conquest, colonization and decolonization periods that took place in the Country. It may be argued that the coverage of the early newspapers in the late 1890s to 1920s were concerned with anti-Colonial conquest and the polemics on the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates called Nigeria in 1914; those that were established in the late 1920s to 1930s were concerned with agitations for fair participation of Nigerians into the Colonial administration, the era witnessed the introduction of the Sir Clifford Huges Constitution in 1922, and the establishment of the first legislative Assembly in Lagos and world economic depression;³ while those that emerged in the late 1930s onwards and before the independence of the country in 1960, were critical of Colonial establishment, the outbreak and effects of the second World War and on the lives of Nigerians, especially the workers, which led to the general strike of 1945, introduction of the Arthur Richard Constitution of 1948, John Macpherson Constitution of 1950, establishment of the three regional Assemblies in the Northern, Eastern and Western regions and its attendant weakness, and the 1954 Constitutional Conference organized by Oliver Lyttelton that ushered the Country into independence in 1960.⁴

General Workers Strike

The question that may agitate our minds was why did the colonial administration paid attention to the activities of the Ziks newspapers and particularly the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet newspapers? Similarly, what would have led to the suspension of the newspaper? Answers to these questions can better be appreciated from what may be considered as the political ideology of the proprietor of these newspapers in the person of Nnamdi Azikiwe, whom after his University education in the USA and the Unity Kingdom, he briefly stayed in the country before proceeding to Ghana where he veered into journalism and became editor of the Accra Morning post in 1935.⁵ In Ghana, he met Kwame Nkrumah and became radicalized by Isaac Wallace Johnson, a Sierra Leonean who was committed to the emancipation of Africa from White man's rule. Shortly after, Isaac Wallace Johnson and Nnamdi Azikiwe were charged with sedition over an article which appeared on the Ghanaian Morning Post, though Nnamdi Azikiwe's sentence was squashed but incident became an eye opener for tougher times to come for him. It became the beginning of his stain into politics and the publication of his book his book, "Renascent Africa" before he returned to Lagos, where he launched a daily newspaper, called "West African Pilot" in 1937.⁶

³ Op.cit Michael Crowder, p.209-210. James S. Coleman, p.271-284

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid p.221 Sam O. Idemeili " What the West African Pilot did in the Movement of Nigerian Nationalism between 1937-1957" JSTOR production, Black American Forum, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Autumn) 1978, p.85. In 1934, Nnamdi Azikiwe was refused appointment as a classroom Tutor in Kings College, Lagos by the British Colonial administration on ground that his American Educational background does not qualified for such a position.

⁶ Ibid p.221 **Kwame Nkruma (1909-1972)** was born in Nkrroful, Gold Coast. He attended Catholic Mission School in Assani before he went to Government Teachers College in Accra, which later became Achimota school. He proceeded to the USA where he bagged B.sc in Economics and Sociology at Lincoln University in 1939 and a Master's Degree in Science Education in 1942. In the USA, he met Trinidadian Marxist, C. R. James and a member of the Trotskyite intelligentsia. He left for the UK and had his PhD in London School of Economics as an anthropologist. At the UK, he met G. Padmore and participated in organizing the 5th Pan-African congress in Manchester, where he met W. E. B. Dubois, Hasting Banda from Malawi and Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya. He joined the West African National Secretariat (WANS), whose goal was to decolonize Africa. In 1946, he returned to Gold Coast and formed United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) political party in preparation for self-



It was argued that three issues may have informed Nnamdi Azikiwe's thoughts which were reflective of his newspapers and his attitude against the British Colonial administration. Some of his thoughts were that the future struggle in the world would be between, the "White and Black" people. He holds high affection for sensationalism, pugnacity of the American yellow Journalism and his determination to make his newspapers more commercially successful.⁷ It was certain that holding to any of these views and thoughts or their combination against any occupational force like the British Colonial administration was sufficient to be in collision course with the latter in the shortest possible time. Nnamdi Azikiwe saw himself as a Nationalist after his return to Nigeria from Ghana; it was therefore expected of him to be on the opposition against the oppressive Colonial administration in the country. However, it was also apparent that taking such stance must be accompanied by genuine principles, commitment, integrity and demonstrating same virtues before the Nigerian working class against the Colonial administration whom all viewed as the oppressive. Where these virtues were lacking, the needed support and backing from the oppressed Nigerian working class to actualize such dreams was bound to wane out in a matter of time.

The opportunity for Nnamdi Azikiwe to show case his thoughts and ideas in the struggle against the Colonial administration began to gain momentum, sequel to the formation of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroun (NCNC) on 24th August, 1944, when he began to identified with Nigerian working class in their struggle for a better living condition from the Colonial administration.⁸ As the NCNC began to recruit support and mobilizing workers into its agenda, the Colonial administration was compelled to re-enact Government Order of 1942, referred to as Nigerian General Defense Regulations Act of 1942 as a means of controlling labour agitations, making strikes and lock outs illegal as part of War effort.⁹ The enactment of such repressive Order was never a deterrent to labour demands and uprising, as workers became trapped by the economic realities and had no option than to present their demands for an increase in their COLA wages to meet up with the economic hardship as promised in 1942.

Prior to the 1945, the cost of living rose by 50-75% in the urban areas and its impact was horrendously felt by the large populace that depends on wages. It was these graphic situations that made the former Governor, Sir Barnard Bourdillion to grant only 20% of the 50% COLA demanded

rule in 1947. **Isaac Theophilus Akunna Wallace-Johnson (1894-1965)** was a West African trade Union organizer, Nationalist, Political leader and Pan Africanist. He was born of Creole parents in Wilberforce, Sierra Leone. He attended United Methodist Collegiate School and had to abandon his education to support his parents. In 1930 he participated in the formation of trade Union activities in Nigeria and attended the International Trade Union Conference of Negro Workers in Hamburg and went to Moscow, where he attended classes on Marxism-Leninism theory, Union organization and political agitation. Few Months on his return to Nigeria, he was deported for illicit trade union activities. He left to the Gold Coast where he established himself as political activist and Journalist. In 1936, he was arrested for sedition after publishing an article in the African Morning Post condemning Christianity, European Civilization and Imperialism.

⁷ Ibid p.222-223

⁸ C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo: The party was founded by Herbert Macaulay as its President and Nnamdi Azikiwe as the Secretary Generak I August, 1944. The aim of the NCNC was to promote Political freedom, Economic security, Social equality and Religious tolerance. Its membership was drawn from the Trade Union Congress of Nigerian, West African Union of seamen, National Democratic Party, Union of Young Democrats, four literary Societies, eleven professional associations, eleven social clubs, sixty-nine Tribal unions and others, making about with six million memberships cutting across the country. Source: National Archives, London, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richard surrey, TW9, 4DU, UK, London, April, 2013.

⁹ Ibid p.256



by workers to cushion the effects of workers cost of living with the outbreak of the second world war. He went a step further to assure workers in a Radio broadcast to the nation that “those allowances would not remain the figure for the duration of the war but would be subjected to constant review and would be revised whenever a rise or fall in the cost of living appeared to make revision necessary”,¹⁰ which temporarily pacified workers’ demands in 1942. The failure of the Colonial administration to keep to its promise to review COLA and implement the remaining 30% increase as their situation worsen, caused the rifts between workers and the Colonial administration as the situation continued to unfold itself further. Meanwhile, the rise in number of labour Unions had been on the increase since 1940 when there was considerable unrest among railway workers, and by 1942 trade unionism among the Nigerian workers had increased from five to seventy.¹¹ The Trade Union Congress became the rally point for other Unions, when its leader presented their demands to the Secretary for Colonies in 1942, leading to the minor increase in COLA for workers.¹²

The gloomy economic hardship in the country and its realities inflicted on the livelihood of Nigerian workers continued to aggravate without any solution in sight. The 20% increase in COLA granted to workers earlier in 1942 was considered inadequate by 1945. They argued that the cost of living allowance had gone up by 200% with no corresponding wage relief. On the 21st May, 1945 the African Civil Servant Technical Workers Union (ACSTWU) took the lead to reinstate the earlier workers’ demands for 50% increase COLA and back dated to April, 1944. The President of the Union stated by the midnight of 21st June, 1945, if there was no increase in COLA, workers would proceed on indefinite strike. They further argued against the in discriminatory review of COLA for their European counterparts.¹³ On the 11th June, 1945, the Colonial administration argued that though inflation had been on the increase, Nigerian workers should contribute their quota in the fight against inflation by cutting down on commodities they need due to their scarcity. The Colonial administration presented deceitful arguments repeatedly to the Union and to the W. Tudor Davies Commission later that any increase in money wages would not secure any betterment in the conditions of living for workers unless plentiful supplies of goods and food were available for which the increased allowances would be spent, and that any increase in allowances would only add

¹⁰ W. Tudor Davies, Enquiry into the cost of living and the control of the cost of living in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, July 9th 1946, London: His Majesty stationary Office, No 204, 1946, pages 8-9. The Report is considered outstanding and one of the most comprehensive accounts on the plights of Nigerian Worker. Its recommendations were far reaching that it was adopted for implementation in both the French and British Colonies in Africa and Asia.

¹¹ Op.cit p.256. There were two main branches of trade Unions in the Country. **The Supreme Council of Nigerian Workers Union**, represented by Nigerian Civil Service Union, All Nigerian Government Technical and General Workers Federation, The Federal Union of Native Administrative Staffs, The Lagos Town Council African Workers Union, The Association of Nigerian Railway Civil Servants, The Nigerian Union of Teachers, The Government Press Technical Workers Union and The Land Survey African Technical Workers Union. **The Trade Union Congress** was the second branch of the Workers Union with over fifty-six (56) affiliates Unions.

¹² Ibid p.258-259

¹³ Ibid Wale Oyemakinde, The Nigerian General Strike of 1945, Journal Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN) Vol.VII, No.4, 1975, page 696. Daily Comet newspaper, Vol. 2, No. 317, Monday, August, 20th 1945 p.2 Source: National Archives Ibadan 18th August, 2015. Effort to get hold of West African Pilot newspaper for the corresponding year and for the Months of May to August, 1945 for comparative views was not possible. It was not found in the Library racks and there were no plausible explanations from officials of there were about.



materially to the circulation of currency and high cost of the objects on which the increase was meant to be spent and would remained static or even decrease in volume.¹⁴

The explanations and excuses of the Colonial administration to the depressed economic situation in the country remained implausible to the ears of the already charged workers. The miserable situation was further aggravated to the shift in agriculture production by local farmers for export crops, which correspondently necessitated the drift of the farming population into urban areas in search of wage employment. The response of the Colonial administration to the despondent economic situation of workers lead to the establishment of Food Price Control Board, referred to as Pullen Scheme. The name was derived from Captain A. P. Pullen who was appointed the chairman of the palliative scheme (1941-1947) to manage the distribution of the scarce basic essential commodities such gari, palm oil, rice, Guinea corn, Millet, Cocoa Yam and other essential commodities transported into major cities, particularly Lagos. The buying and selling of these produces were handled by register Government agents and sold at designated stalls at a control price. Workers were expected to queue every day of the week to procure these essentials at the designated centers.¹⁵

The aim was to relieve workers of the scarcity of these produces but turned out to aggravate the existing situation by encouraging black markets and monopoly by few marketers. The failure of the Pullen Scheme also laid on the different harvest seasons for some of these produces that were made available to the market thereby making it difficult to fix uniform price. However, the plight of workers was rather ameliorated by individuals, particularly, two women that deserved to be mentioned for their efforts by making cheap produce available to workers. Madam Alimatu Pelewura, President of the Lagos Market Women Guilds at one of the occasions helped to import £50 worth of gari to Lagos and resold to workers below the control price in an open Market, which were sometimes confiscated by Pullen officials as sabotaging the scheme. Similarly, in solidarity with the striking workers, Miss Adunni Oluwole gave strikers the sum of £200 to maintain their families and another £40 to revoke their Oath at Oke-Awo playing ground when the strike was called off.¹⁶

The weedy attitude of the Colonial administration to workers plight during the period forced seventeen Unions consisting of about 30, 000 workers, whose services were indispensable to the economic and administrative life of the Colonial economy, from railway workers, Post and Telegraph employees, and technical workers in Government Departments went on strike on the 21st June, 1945 at the expiration of one Month notice served on Ag Governor (Officer administering the Government of Nigeria), Sir Gerald Whitely.¹⁷ The president of the striking workers and president of the Trade Union Congress, Mr. T. I. Bankole unfortunately failed to led the strike at the expiration of the one Month ultimatum he earlier served on the administration for reasons he failed to disclosed to workers already set for the strike. It was at this point that the already charged workers repudiated his stands, and consequently led to their resignation and replaced by Mr. M. A. O. Imoudu, the

¹⁴ Op.cit W. Tudor Davies, page 11. On 11th June, 1945 when Governor met with Union leaders; on 24th August, 1945, when the Chief Secretary of State met with the Union leaders; and on 17th January, 1946 when the Colonial administration made its presentation to the W. Tudor Davies Commission.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid Op.cit Wale Oyemakinde, The Nigerian General Strike of 1945, page 698

¹⁷ Ibid



former President of the Railway workers Union. Mr. M. A. O. Imoudu record of unionism was undisputable, he was first held into detention for four years under the local Defence Regulations as the president of the Nigerian Railway workers before he was released on 2nd June 1945. Thus, his new role to lead the great Nigerian General workers strike was like trading on a familiar terrain for him. On the appointed day of the strike, he wore war regalia and rode on a white horse in admiration of thousands of Nigerian workers to declare the commencement of the strike.¹⁸

The declaration of the strike by the labour leaders provided opportunity for Nnmadi Azikiwe to openly identify himself with the Nigerian workers. The cover pages and columns of the West African Pilot and Daily Comet newspapers attested to these facts. The Columns “About it and about” (featured by the editor), “Searchlight over Nigeria” (featured by “Zero”) and the most prolific Columns “Strike Bulletin”, “Labor Front” and “Readers platform” were dedicated to labor and workers matters aimed at spurring workers on their rights against British Colonial policies around the country. The Zik press already had the advantage of been strategically located in major cities around the Country, which serve as sources of information and the mobilization of the Nigerian workers within and outside the Country. The West African Pilot and Daily Comet were located in Lagos, Eastern Nigerian Guardian was in Port-Harcourt, Nigerian Spokesman in Onitsha, Southern Defender in Warri, Sentinel in Enugu, The Comet, he bought from Duse Mohammed Ali, an Egyptian residing in Lagos was located in Kano and Northern Advocate was located in Jos. London correspondence of the West African Pilot was being handled by Mr. George Padmore.¹⁹ As for the Colonial administration, the declaration of the strike by the Nigerian workers, and the support it got from the Zik press was definitely a burden on how best to grapple with the two forces against it. The twist of events in few weeks ahead showed how best they all fared in the crises.

¹⁸ Daily Comet Newspaper Vol. 2, No. 317, Monday, August, 20th 1945, price one penny, page 1-4. Unconfirmed sources disclosed that Mr. T. I. Bankole resigned his appointment when he lately realized the futility for embarking on an illegal strike and overwhelmed by those in support of the strike, he gave way to the former Union leader of the Railway, Michael Imoudu to pursue the strike. Michael Imoudu (1902-2005) IMOUDU, which alphabetically means “Impregnable, Man of Unity- Duty Usual” took active part in the formation of the Railway workers Union in 1937. Five years later he played a prominent role in the agitation of COLA in 1942. In 1943, he attempted to embarrass the Railway administration by staging a lock out by suborning the gate keeper to shut down the gates of the Nigerian Railway Department in Lagos. He was detained under the Defense Regulation Act for his actions in Auchu until 2nd June 1945, when he was released as a bargaining tool to appease workers already determined to embark on the General strike. On his released, he stood his ground against other compromising Union leaders that wanted to shelve off the strike action. His distractors of the workers underestimated the power of Imoudu, who was wearing a traditional war like dress at the meeting, which was attended by large crowd of Nigerian workers in search of leadership and support to drive home their demands. He told the meeting that “negotiation had failed, so the strike must continue as scheduled”. He was elected by workers present at the meeting purposely to lead the strike. Nationalist such as Herbert Macaulay, Azikiwe, Madam Adunni Oluwole, Madam Ransokuti and Obafemi Awolowo supported the strike while some members of the Nigeria Youth Movement tried to sabotage it.

¹⁹ Ibid Nnmadi Azikiwe had the advantage of leading the struggle as a Nationalist, considering his background from his place of birth in Zungeru, one of the Northern towns, his early education in Calabar and Lagos, both in the Southern and Western part of Nigeria in 1926 before proceeding to the USA and UK for his University education, where he read Law, humanities and Journalism before returning to the Country in 1935. Mr. George Padmore (1903-1959), was born to Malcolm Ivan Meredith, a Nurse in Trinidad. He was a leading Pan-Africanist, Journalist and Author who left Trinidad in 1924 to study in the United States and from there he moved to the Soviet Union, Germany and France before settling in London and towards the end of his life, he lived in Accra, Ghana. He was a well-known colored International Socialist writer and Journalist who had his disk at the British Ministry of Information where he reported for the West African Pilot.



Alleged Interview with the PRO

On 28th June, 1945, just eight (8) days after the declaration of the general strike by the Nigerian workers, Ag Governor, Sir Gerald Whitely reacted by calling, for a meeting with Nnmadi Azikiwe to persuade workers to resume work but the latter at the meeting instantly denied having anything to do with the strike. Instead, he advised the Ag Governor, Sir Gerald Whitely to increase COLA by 30% as demanded by workers, since the last increase of 20% was made to appease the striking workers with the promise that they will not be victimized. The Ag Governor reacted by accusing Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press for supporting and prolonging the workers strike.²⁰ It was an indication of Zik's potential and threat to the Colonial establishment, if properly managed by both sides of the divide.

Having failed to secure the support of Nnmadi Azikiwe persuade to workers to resume work, the Ag Governor's immediately made a Radio broadcast on a Lagos Radio Red diffusing and appealed to workers to resume work. He criticized the actions of the striking workers as illegal, stating that their leaders must appreciate that they made mistakes by presenting their demands in the form of ultimatum.²¹ The appeal maybe viewed in two perspectives, it was timely considering that not much damaged was done to the economy, one week into the strike and hoped to win back the strikers to resume work. As for the strikers, the appeal was not enough to wish it away without addressing the reasons that caused it or remained defiant.

A week after the broadcast and having lost hope of winning back the striking workers to resume work, the administration became frustrated and decided to use the "big stick", arraigned ten (10) key Union members' with the exception of its leader, M. A. Imoudu at Saint Ann Magistrate court, with no reasons advanced and perhaps in order not aggravate the crisis. They were charged for illegal strike by the police prosecutor, Supt, A. T. G. Trumble under the Nigerian Defence Regulation before His Worship, Ayo Williams, the presiding Judge. The union members were Dennis Neh, C. N. Garber, E. A. Oyeto, J. M. Osindero, S.O. Onasanya, J.M. Smith, S. A. Anthony, P. Monrenikeji, S. O. Olateju and Williams Davies on 3rd of July, 1945. J. M. Osindero who was the Secretary General of the Railway workers Union was discharged for want of evidence, he was on his sick bed when the strike was declared on the 21st June, 1945. Olu Alakeja, A.O. Thomas, Olajide Alakija, Adeleke Adedoyin and Rotimi Williams appeared for the rest accused Union leaders and argued for their bail at the cost of £20 each and the matter was adjourned to the 11th July, 1945. Mr. E. J. Alex Taylor later led the defense counsel with Mr. Olu Alakija before he too left for the United Kingdom. The prosecutions of the strikers continued to suffer several adjournments until finally the charges against them were dismissed by His Worship, Ayo Williams for lack of evidence sequel to the suspension of the strike on 4th August, 1945.²²

Having calm down on some of the union Leaders through the law court, the administration felt it an opportunity to silent all other perceived opposition, which was the Zik's press by republishing and circulating the Nigerian Defence (press) Regulation, 1945 Act, restricting press, strike and lock out,

²⁰ Ibid p.4-5

²¹ Ibid p.6 Op.cit p.256

²² Ibid Daily Comet Newspaper Vol. 2, No. 311, Tuesday, July, 5th 1945.



as illegal on 4th July, 1945.²³ But in defiance and falling prey to the Law, just like striking workers, one of the Zik's press, the West African Pilot reporter claimed that the Public Relation Officer (PRO), Mr. Denzil Cornwall Fletcher invited the editor of the West African Pilot newspaper, Mr. C. U. M. Gardner to send one of its reporters to his Office for an interview on the 5th July 1945. In response to the invitation, the newspaper sent, Mr. J. C. Cooky who took his notes using his pencil.²⁴ But for the purpose of curiosity, why was such an important interview granted to a single newspaper outfit and covered by one of its Reporter only? Similarly, why was it conducted at a time when a new PRO had just taken over from his predecessor who proceeded on his annual leave in London.? However, what the Reporter recounted that had transpired between him and the PRO were as follows. On a single headline, it reads: - "Leaders are indicted by the PRO" the full text reads: -

"On the subject of trade Unionism in Nigeria, Mr. D.C. Fletcher maintained that the present crisis has proved the incapability and inefficiency of the Nigerian trade union leaders, in that they have failed woefully to guide their members along the right times with the result that they have find themselves where they are today."²⁵ANNEX (i)p. 25

Nnmadi Azikiwe claimed that the PRO made further comments on other issues as reported by the West African Pilot newspaper Reporter.²⁶ (See Annex 1) There was no doubt that the purported interview was falsely created to embarrass the Colonial administration only and not as means to organize political consciousness against the administration as was demonstrated by Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press. It also appeared that the Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press were operating under the delusion that yellow journalism was an instrument for admiration without any political capital as the situation unfold itself. However, the interview attracted reactions from the Colonial administration, ex-Union leader who supposed to have led the strike in the first place and none from those in support of the strike.

The Reactions to the Alleged Interview

Immediately, the content of the purported interview was published by the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet newspapers on its edition of the 6th July, 1945, the PRO swore to an Oath of affidavit of disclaimer to the publications before Chief Registrar at the Supreme Court, and a Commissioner of Oath, Mr. V.R. Bairamian. He gave the circumstance that led to his contact with a Reporter from the West African Pilot newspaper, whom he claimed asked certain questions

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Anmadi Azikikwe, MA. M.Sc. *Suppression of the Press in British West Africa*, African Books Company Ltd, Nigerian Spokesman Building, Abadom Building, Upper New Market Rd, The water side, Onitsha, Nigeria, 31st December, 1945.p.7. The book contains firsthand accounts of highlights of events as recorded by Zik himself from 11th May to 31st December, 1945. The book reaffirmed what Nnmadi Azikiwe said in that morning of the 5th of July, 1945. He said the PRO rang the editor of the West African Pilot and asked him to send a Reporter for some news he had for the press. According to the Reporter the PRO spoke badly on the trade Union leaders. The epithets he used in describing them were "inefficient, incapable" etc. After he had jotted down the sketch of his report, he handed it to the PRO, who after a glance, he gave his verbal approval. In May, 1945, D. C. Fletcher, succeeded Mr. C. R. Niven as the Public Relation Officer (PRO), who had proceeded on his annual leave to the UK. The Public Relation Department was an off shoot of the defunct Information Office before it was upgraded to a Department, which was headed by a PRO to the administration.

²⁵ Op.cit p.7

²⁶ Ibid p.8



concerning the strike without taking notes, which lasted for a couple of minutes.²⁷ (See Annex ii)p.25

The PRO statements on the sworn affidavit were in sharp contrast with the alleged interview recordings by the West African Pilot newspaper Reporter and published on the two of the Zik's press. The contrasting views expressed by the two persons raised more questions than answers as to what actually transpired. Thus, a critical discourse to establish near truth was necessary to unravel the myth surrounding the whole episode, which is the thrust of this paper. It was equally important to capture and examine the reactions of other concerns to the purported interview as published by the two newspapers to resolve our inquest to the contradictions into the two reports.

The second reaction to the purported interview came from the former President of the Trade Union Congress and ACSTWU, Mr. T. I. Bankole who resigned his post on the eve of the general strike and incidentally proceeded to the London afterwards for his medical treatment. He expressed his disappointment with the comments purportedly made by the PRO on the interview and against his ex-comrades in the Labour Union.

I am glad to hear that African Loco drivers' Union (ALDU) and Station Staff Union (SSU) have resumed duty. Unfortunately, a large number of members of the Rail Workers Union (RWU), headed by "irresponsible fellows", are stubbornly at large with the strike. The open indictment of the Union leaders in the pilot newspaper today by the PRO has badly knocked the bottom of our sincere endeavor to call off the strike. Already, a section of the press was lashing out dickens in us; now it is the PRO. I am now the most unpopular man in Lagos. What a price for leadership. It is my hope that one day my people will discover the folly.²⁸

The tone of his letter clearly demonstrated that it was not correct or true that the Union leaders were not unaware of the existing laws prohibiting the workers from proceeding on strike, as imputed in the publications by the Zik's press. It went further to explained why he resigned his position on the eve of the strike. Secondly, he was unaware that the credibility of the purported interview the PRO was reported to have granted and published by two of Zik's press, in which the former was reported to have indicted Union leaders were disreputable.

The third reactions came from the Chief Colonial Secretary, on the advised of the Attorney General that the sworn affidavit by the PRO against the publication would be treated under the Nigerian Defence (Press) Regulation, 1945 and would provide the Ag Governor grounds to exercise his powers under regulation No. 3, if he considers it proper to do so. He however, suggested that based on the principles of fair hearing, as in the UK, the parties concerned or their agents should be given

²⁷ C0583/276 Suspension of the Comet newspaper 1945-46 Public Relation Officer (PRO), Mr. Denzil Cornwall. Fletcher Affidavit, 7th July 1945, Lagos Nigeria. P.1

²⁸ Ibid Confidential letter from Mr. T. I. Bankole, No. 8, West Indian Qtrs, London to the Chief Secretary of Nigeria, Beresford Stooke Lagos dated 6th July, 1945. Daily Comet newspaper, Vol. 2, No. 311, Thursday, July, 20th 1945 p.1 and Daily Comet newspaper, Vol. 2, No. 312, Friday, July, 6th 1945 p.1. Prior to the publication of the purported interview, on the 5th July there were efforts by All Nigerian Goodwill Committee headed by Sam Bosah, Dr. Maja, Alhaji F. R. Hakeem, an Indian Islamic cleric who was residing in Lagos and some other ex-Union leaders met at Aroyola School and appeal to the striking workers to resume work but their effort made little impact.



the opportunity of being heard before Ag Governor makes up his minds.²⁹ Armed with the sworn affidavit from the PRO and the enacted Regulation 19 of 1945, the Ag Governor called for a management meeting in his official resident (Nigerian House) alongside management of Zik's press, aimed at establishing the facts of the matter over the purported interview between the PRO and the reporter of the West African Pilot, held on the 7th July 1945.³⁰ (See Annex iii) p.26

On the side of the Colonial administration at the meeting was the Ag Governor, G. C. Whitely, Chief Colonial Secretary, G. Beresford Stooke, Attorney- General, H. C. F. Cox and the PRO, D. C. Fletcher while Zik's press limited was composed of its Managing Director of Zik press limited, Nnmadi Azikiwe, editors of the West African Pilot and Daily Comet Newspapers, Mr. C.U.C. Gardiner and Anthony Enahoro respectively. At the meeting the Ag Governor, Chief Colonial Secretary, Attorney General raised all the questions against the purported interview granted by the PRO to the Reporter of the West African Pilot while Nnmadi Azikiwe was responsible for providing answers to all questions raised. At the end of the discussion, Nnmadi Azikiwe pleaded with the Ag. Governor to "consider their position and put himself in the position of the Father of two Children, one having said one thing and the other said another thing and he had no intention of causing any harm".³¹ (See Annex iv) p.26

Judging from the proceedings of the meeting, it would be time wasting to scrutinized whether the alleged press interview took place but for the purpose of curiosity, the principal actors; the alleged Reporter from the West African Pilot and the PRO were not in attendance to be across examined by either parties, perhaps on the arguments that it was a management meeting of only senior officials on both sides where the truth of the matter and decisions on any serious issues can easily resolved and taken at once. The interactive session ended without Nnmadi Azikiwe and his team guessing the outcome of the meeting. It was obvious that the tide was against Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press outfit considering the nature of their response to some of the soul-searching questions raised against them in the face of compelling facts. It was the decisions at the meeting that would determine the next level of relationship between the Colonial administrations, Zik press and striking workers.

Suspension of the Two Newspapers

On the 8th July, 1945 the Ag Governor suspended the publications of the West African Pilot and Daily Comet newspapers citing the power vested on him by sub- regulation (1) of regulation 3 of the Nigeria Defence (press) Regulation No. 19 of 1945 with effect from 6:00pm and served on the proprietors of the two newspapers. The Order claimed that the purported interview with the PRO and as it was reported by the two newspapers were incorrect statements of facts, injurious to the tranquility, created discontent and encourage feelings of ill-will, enmity or contempt between

²⁹ Memo from the Attorney General, H. C. F. Cox to the Chief Colonial Secretary, G. Beresford Stooke, dated 7th July, 1945.

³⁰ Ibid Sworn affidavit by D. C. Fletcher, PRO before the registrar of Oath, V. R. Bairaman at Lagos this seventh day of July, 1945.

³¹ Ibid G. Beresford Stooke, Draft Record of the Meeting held at Government House Marina, Lagos at 3:15pm on Saturday, the 7th of July, 1945 p1-4. Spaces will not permit to recount the long proceedings of the meeting. Similarly, the Management of Zik press present at the meeting took notes of the proceedings at the meeting and published their own notes on the Daily Comet Newspaper, Supplementary edition, Sunday, July, 8th 1945. Interestingly, there was no much difference in the content of the proceedings of the meeting.



different sections of the community.³² In addition to these reasons, the Ag Governor was at liberty to prosecute the editors of the two newspapers and their proprietor in view of the glaring evidences at his disposal but failed to do so, why?.

It was most probable that the Ag. Governor preferred to handle the matter administratively rather than to prosecute the editors of the two newspapers. If this argument were plausible, the suspension Order that was still handed down to the newspapers in spite Nmadi Azikiwe shown remorse for the publication, clearly demonstrated that the administration was on the offensive and not willing to let go anything against its interest. Thus, the situation Nmadi Azikiwe and his press had found themselves, conversely created opportunities for the former to express his displeasure to have continued on the offensive with his rest press outfits against the administration or further strengthen/renew his alliance with the already striking workers, as aggrieved parties to ensure that the administration was brought down to its knees. Any just of these positions was to reduce the nationalist struggle to a comedian play, by appealing and pleading with the Colonial administration for accommodation on its own terms.

Thus, the suspension of the two newspapers by the Ag Governor would determine the next level of relationship between the proprietors of the Zik press and the former. But more worrisome at this material time to the Colonial administration was the effect of the two weeks old strike on its economy or the combination of these factors that made Nmadi Azikiwe to explore ways of seeking external intervention to his plight and press.³³

Foreign Intervention

The impact of the suspension of the two newspapers at this material time would better be appreciated on the assessment of the two weeks old strike, which indicated that about 27, 427 strikers were involved, mostly within Lagos and major cities across the Country. The breakdown of the cadres of the strikers were; Railway workers- 18,500, P& T-927, Marine-2,700, PWD-5,400 and Lagos Town Council-2,900. The effects of the strike on the transportation of produce and minerals out of the Country were kept on hold within the short period of the strike and raining season when export of produce was slight and abandoned at various collection centers. However, special mention of available produce for export was necessary to appreciate the quantum and value of some the produce held up at the collection points for export. G/nuts -176,000 tons, valued at £3.6 million; Palm oil – 293,000 tons, valued at £3.4 million; Tin -Ore- 15, 000 tons, valued at £3.1 million; Cocoa- 77,000 tons, valued at £2.1 million; Palm Oil- 113, 000 tons, valued 1.8 million; Rubber- 43 million Ibs, valued at £1.2 million; Benniseeds- 7,000 tons, valued at £79,000; Gold- 8,000 Oz, valued at

³² Ibid The Ag. Governor suspension Order of the two newspapers made reference to the Nigerian Defense (press) Regulation, 1945 (No. 19 of 1945) Order of the Governor prohibiting the printing or publishing of the West African Pilot and Daily Comet news Papers. Signed by the Ag Governor (Officer administrating of Nigeria) G. C. Whitely and G. Beresford Stooke, Chief Secretary to the Government of Nigeria 8th July, 1945 p.1-6 (Could not reproduce the content of the Order due to its large volume). The Daily Comet Newspaper, Supplementary edition, Sunday, July, 8th 1945 also published the suspension Order handed over to both newspapers and the role played by each member that was in attendance on the 8th July, 1945 by 3:15pm. However, around town it was rumored that the Ag. Governor was going to warn the West African Pilot and Daily Comet newspapers for the publication of such purported interview and against committing offence in the future.

³³ Memo: Confidential and immediate from Ag Governor of Nigeria, G. C. Whitely to the Secretary of State for Colonies, G. H. Hall, M.P. dated 9th July, 1945, copied the Ministry of Transport.



£68,000 and Cotton-24,000 tons, valued at £63,000 in monetary terms, totaling the sum of £19.3 million.³⁴ The economic impact of the strike within the short period it commenced was so frightening that the administration considered immediate talks to the striking workers to resume work was beneficial than allowed the strike to continue indefinitely without any solution in sight.

Meanwhile, as a result of the calm down on two media outfits, Nnmadi Azikiwe became apprehensive for his personal safety and his organization, having severally been accused of supporting the striking workers. It was under this atmosphere that about a week after the suspension of his two media outfits, on 14th July, 1945, Nnmadi Azikiwe left Lagos for his home town in Onitsha for alleged fear of being killed or possibly been deported out of the country before he resurfaced on the 20th July, 1945.³⁵ The intelligent report on the other hand revealed that the assassination story was a hoaxed that emanated from the bogus telegram made up by ex-wireless operator with the Post and Telegram Department employed by the Zik press, who was in the past convicted for forging Telegrams. The purported wireless message contained discussion between the Chief Secretary, G. Beresford Stooke and Chief Commissioner of Police to a meeting held about ten miles on the sea of Lagos with the Secretary of State for Colonies, George Hall in attendance inside a camouflaged seaplane. The first item on the Agenda was to assassinate two most important persons that instigated the workers strike.³⁶ The allegation created further reasons for caution as the Colonial administration was not willing to prosecute Zik over flimsy reasons in line with its policy of containment not to create a hero or martyr out of the former, and neither was the former too willing to report the matter to the police for investigation or honor the administration's invitation to substantiate his claims.³⁷ Maybe to avoid been screwed to proof his case before the administration, similar to what he went through few Months passed over the alleged purported interview the Pilot newspaper had with the PRO.

Maybe, Zik created the whole story for his needed sympathy among his party men and striking workers or to embarrassed the Colonial administration only, without creating a political capital. The two incidents (purported interview and assassination attempt stories), though both fabricated, created their positive sides for Nnmadi Azikiwe's benefits, he was idolized and portrayed as a nationalist by ordinary people in Lagos, with new born babies named after him. He won their sympathy for supporting the striking workers, and believed that was why he was marked out for elimination by the administration. It was perhaps his failure or in ability to sustain the gains of these falsehood for too long that forced him to turn his attention to external intervention and support over his course or the combination of the two as events unfold themselves. On 14th July, 1945, Nnmadi

³⁴ Ibid Thus, this was the impact of the two (2) weeks losses caused by the strike. It was better imagined what the losses that would have been recorded for the rest days when the strike ended on 4th August, 1945.

³⁵ Op.cit Suppression of the Press in British West Africa, page 12

³⁶ Ibid Memo: O. G. R. Williams to Steward Nicholas, Institute of Journalism, London, dated 23rd May, 1946. C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo: Tagged "Secret and Personal" Memo: from Gerald Creasy, Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Ghana to George Gater, at the Colonial Office London dated 18th July 1946. Similarly, it was also rumored round Lagos that Nnmadi Azikiwe went to America in a private jet belonging to the American Consular during the period of his absence from Lagos. Some other rumor had it that he was an American Spy, that was why the British Colonial administration were not comfortable with him.

³⁷ Ibid James S. Cohen, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, Broburg and Wistrom, Benin City, Katrineholm, 1986. P.285-286



Azikiwe wrote to Mr. C. W. W. Greenidge Esq. Secretary General of the Anti- Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society in London complaining about the suppression of his newspapers and treat to his life and possible deportation from the country.³⁸

Mr. C. W. W. Greenidge Esq. responded immediately by making contact with officials of the Colonial Office in London to secure permit for Nnmadi Azikiwe to visit London at his own expense to lay his case as it relates to the strike, suspension of his two daily newspapers and his racial grievances against Colonial administration to the British public on the 17th July, 1945.³⁹ The Colonial Office told Mr. C. W. W. Greenidge that if Nnmadi Azikiwe was allowed to visit the UK, it would strengthen the attitude of the strikers that had always look upon him as champion for their course to obtain justice, but that would be allowed at the end of the strike.⁴⁰ The decision of the Colonial Office was conveyed to Nnmadi Azikiwe later by Mr. C. W. W. Greenidge.⁴¹ On the 3rd of August, 1945, not quite three weeks after the dawning report on the economic impact of the strike on the export of produce, the Colonial Office in London took steps, to unceremoniously recalled back the striking workers, some of whom have since resumed work and to address their demands for 30% increase in COLA by establishing an enquiry to look into the matter, later referred to as W. Tudor Davies Commission.⁴²

Similarly, about two weeks after, on the 14th August, 1945, the Colonial administration spontaneously removed the suspension Order placed on the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet newspapers not to allow Nnmadi Azikiwe's martyrdom go too long, which might be playing into his hands, and do more harm to the administration than he would do by publishing his papers.⁴³ However, the impact on the suspension Order on the two newspapers were enormous as recounted by Zik. The West African Pilot loss £1, 353 and Daily Comet loss £396 totally £1, 749 and if damage to the goodwill for each the papers were to be added, it would amount to £2, 000 for the West African Pilot and £1, 000 for the Daily Comet, bringing the grand total to £4, 749.⁴⁴

³⁸ Op.cit Suppression of the Press in British West Africa, p.12 **C. W.W. Greenidge (1889-1972)** was the vice president of the anti-slavery society in 1968. He was born on the 10th January, 1889 in the parish of Saint James, Barbados. Youngest son of Charles Joseph Greenidge, member of Colonial Parliament of Barbados, West Indies, he was educated in West Indies and the United Kingdom, where he studied Law in Downing College, Cambridge in 1919. He wrote twelve books on force labour and slavery from 1943-1958. In 1947 to 1951, he was a member of British Guyana-Honduras and UN adhoc- Committee of expert on slavery.

³⁹ Ibid Memo, containing conversation with C. W.W. Greenidge from O.G.R. William, Head of West Africa Department, Colonial Office to C. Crease, Under Secretary, Colonial Office London 24th July, 1945.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid Mr. C. W. W. Greenidge letter dated 2nd August, 1945 to Nnmadi Azikiwe.

⁴² Daily Comet Newspaper, Vol. 2. No. 315, Thursday, August, 16th 1945 p.1. The strike lasted for 45days, from 21st June to 4th August, 1945. The strike was called off after series of meetings between Representatives of Union leaders and the Chief Secretary to the Government, Mr. G. Beresford. Some leading strikers went to the provinces by air under Government auspices to called off the strike while the "demigod" of the strike, M. Imoudu went by rail to the provinces to persuade workers to return to work. Most of whom were on their farms when they got the news for the called off as the strike continued to drag on during the raining season.

⁴³ Ibid Memo from the Ag Governor of Nigeria, G C. Whitely to the Secretary of State for Colonies, G.H. Hall dated 21st August, 1945. The suspension of the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet newspapers lasted for 38days, 8th July-14th August, 1945.

⁴⁴ Op.cit Suspension of the Press in British West Africa p.13



Surprisingly, to the administration the first publication of the Daily Comet newspaper immediately after the lifting of the suspension Order did not allay such fears as it published another misleading account of all that transpired during the management meeting between the Ag. Governor and the management of the Zik press that was held on 7th July, 1945. The paper was quoted as stating that “No steps whatsoever were taken to communicate with the PRO in order to ascertain the accuracy of the statements made by the Reporter, and Azikiwe stated that reporters were instructed not to take notes at any interview, so as not to waste the time of person interviewed.”⁴⁵ Unknown to Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press, the misleading publication infuriated the Ag Governor, after contemplating handling the matter again under the existing Nigerian Defense (press) Regulations No. 19 of 1945, sought the advice of the Attorney General, and drew the attention of the editor to the misleading account as reported by the newspaper.⁴⁶

After the incident, the Ag. Governor sent his policy proposal for the approval of the Colonial Office on how to handle Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press in the future. First, he considered establishing of an independent newspaper, in accordance with the principles of sound journalism in a long run; amending the press regulation law to provide for complaint and Order from the Supreme Court in handling false and misleading publications and withdrawal of official recognition of newspapers that substantially gains revenue from Government advertisements and notices.⁴⁷ The Ag. Governor’s proposals were subjected to further examination at the instance of the Governor who was observing his annual leave in London. In what turned out to be a confidential policy direction, the Governor who was ferocious against Nnmadi Azikiwe and supportive of the proposals said “...saw no chance of persuading or guiding Zik to mend his ways, there were only two options in dealing with him. One would be an open policy of suppression, which was not practicable, the other was to let things go on as they are and to be ready for eventual explosion. Government should watch him very carefully and be ready to bounce on him, if he should ever give an opening.”⁴⁸

As regards the withdrawal of adverts and notices, he said... “I wish to go into this further in Nigeria and saw no reason why Zik’s press should continue to receive payments from Government for their subversion.” “aimed to see if there was any one in Lagos that would be bolstered up against the Zik press.” The Colonial Office were against the use of the press regulation to prosecute violators of the law at the Supreme Court, they noted that “It would be very easy to raise a campaign of protest against such legislation....” They don’t think suppression was the real answer; and in practice, it

⁴⁵ Ibid Secret Memo: No. 1741 saving. Ag Governor of Nigeria, G. C. Whitely to the Secretary for Colonies, G.H. Hall London, 21st August, 1945

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid In presenting his proposal, he made these sideline comments on Zik: “the statement now published by the Daily Comet serves to illustrate the lengths to which Azikiwe’s prayers are prepared to go in fabricating and publishing deliberate falsehoods in order to attained their own ends.....Azikiwe who subscribed to Reuter’s news services went to length by publishing and circulating to other newspapers false reports, attributed to Reuters, of disaffection and the West African troops overseas caused by the ban on Pilot and Comet. The newspapers own by Zik are most influential in the territory and are widely read particularly in Lagos and the Eastern Provinces.....I think Azikiwe was sufficiently astute to avoid placing himself in the position of being successfully prosecuted for sedition, criminal label or defamation.” He then implored the Colonial Office to consult with the Governor on his proposals and his sideline comments when the latter passes through London on his return to Nigeria after his annual leave. These proposals and comments later became policies directions that were used against Zik as things unfold themselves.

⁴⁸ Ibid Memo G. Creasy to Sir George Gater, Colonial Office London dated 12th September, 1945.



would probably result in the consolidation of the opposition's influence." All these goes to explain how the Colonial administration had confidentially established a policy containment against Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press. On the Governor's assumption of duty, and the appointment of W. Tudor Davies Commission into the workers strike on the 5th October, the Governor conveyed the policy decisions reached at the Colonial Office (withdrawal of adverts and licenses, withdrawal of class "B" Reuter license, and reduce supply of news print by 50%) to Nnmadi Azikiwe and his press on the 1st November, 1945.⁴⁹

As Nnmadi Azikiwe was grappling with the horrendous decisions on the next step to take, his press remained undeterred by publishing another misleading account of the Governor's opening address at the Legislative Council meeting (LEGCO) on 10th December, 1945. The Governor reacted by suspending the correspondence of the West African Pilot from covering proceedings at Legislative council until an apology to that effect was published and personally approved by him.⁵⁰ The Nnmadi Azikiwe and Zik press reacted to the Governor's suspension order by dispatching his petitions via Cables and Telegrams to Creech Jones, Parliamentary Under Secretary of Colonies, to individuals, Civil and Human rights organizations across the World, complaining about victimization and embarrassment of his newspapers, press liberty and wonder for what Nigeria fought and died on 25th February, 1946.⁵¹ (See Annex iv)p.27

In response to Ziks letters, these individuals and organizations, mostly of the Caribbean descent living in the United States, France and the United Kingdom sent their queries to the Colonial office in London demanding for explanations on the issues raised by Nnmadi Azikiwe in his letter to them.⁵² Likewise, the Secretary of State for Colonies responded to the petitioners based on the information sent to him by the Nigerian Governor, that the suspension on the Pilot and Comet were as a result of misinformation and misrepresentation, aimed at creating community discontent; that the application for payment of compensation to the Pilot and Comet was rejected by the Secretary

⁴⁹ Ibid 20th September, 1945. The Memos that emanated from the discussion between the Secretary of State for Colonies, G.H. Hall, A. Richard, Governor of Nigeria (who was on leave in London) and officials at the Colonial Office in London. What was yet to be implemented was the establishing of an independent newspaper and to alter the Zik's political dominance of the country and in particular, Lagos. But not too long the nation witnessed the emergence of Tribune newspaper and Action Group political party led by Obafemi Awolowo in 1949, which marked the demise of Zik press and political dominance in Lagos and the whole of Southwest during the Regional election in 1953.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid The content of the Cable wireless Telegram reads See Annex 1V read also Op.cit James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism p. 285.

⁵² Ibid Memo from Max Yergan, Executive Director, Council of African Affairs USA to the Colonial Office, Mr. George Hall, Secretary of State for the Colonies London and copied Sir Arthur Richards, Governor of Nigeria dated 18th April, 1946 p.1-2. The names of such individuals and organizations were: Mr. Stewart Nicholson Esq. President, Institute of Journalism in London on 7th May, 1946; Max Yergan, Executive Director, Council of African Affairs in USA on 18th April, 1946; Miss Evelyn Denington, Organizing Secretary, British Center Against Imperialism in London on 4th April, 1946; Professor Harold Laski, London School of Economics and Political Science in London on 19th March, 1946; Isaac I. T. Wallace Johnson, Chairman West African National Secretariat in London on 6th February, 1946; Dr. Harold A. Moody, Founder and President, League of Colored People on 30th January, 1946; Reuter press in London on 5th Aril, 1946; Captain C. J. Miller, New Leader press on 23rd March, 1946; Manchester Guardian London on 1st February, 1945; George Padmore in USA on 21st January, 1946; West Indies newspapers and including some World leaders, such as President Truman (USA), Joseph Stalin (Russia), De Gaulle (France), Pravda-Russian newspaper, the Indian National Congress, the Daily worker, and Many American and West Indian papers.



of State in February; that Azikiwe had severally refused invitation to substantiated his claims over treat to his life; that Zik's newspapers were most times subversive, thus the administration stopped to employ it services for its advert and notices; that the ban on Pilot at LEGECO was due to it deliberate and flagrant misrepresentation of the Governors opening address at the Council; that Azikiwe had lost his Reuter Class "B" agent for publishing false reports purported to be from Reuter; that newsprints quota for all Nigerian newspapers that was increased by 50% in January 1946 was withdrawn owing to deterioration in the newsprint to all papers including Zik press; and to added that Mr. Hall, the Secretary of State had given these matters carefully consideration and was satisfied that Mr. Azikiwe had no case and any reasonable grounds to complaints.⁵³

The response to these petitions may appeared too blunt with little or no grounds for objections by the petitioners, the latter's efforts came too little, too late to amend the blunders already committed by Zik and his press. Secondly, the intervention came at a time when the policy of containment had already been established against Zik and his press. Thirdly, Zik's attitude appeared self-seeking and personalized, aimed at protecting the threat to Zik's life and his business empire with less disquiet to the call off of workers strike, making inputs or interested in the Davies Commission of Inquiry over workers' demands for COLA increase. This perhaps explained why there was no reactions from either the former striking workers or his party stalwarts to his predicaments. On the extreme, the intervention would have made impact, if it were accompanied immediately by a delegation and representation to the British Prime Minister or the British Parliament and lastly, in the face of all the compelling facts against Zik and his press, it would have been difficult, if not impossible for these individuals and organizations to alter the already damaged relationship between Zik and the administration.

Constitutional Development and Self-rule

In spite of these temporary setbacks, Nnamdi Azikiwe diverted his attention to the NCNC activities and national issues, a move he would have concentrated his energies to abinitio and not at a time when his reputation and his press had waned down to a weak ebb. However, at the end of April, 1946, NCNC and the Zik press organized an unprecedented tour of the country, the first of its kind in the history of the country starting with the Northern provinces to the South, led by its Chairman, Herbert Macaulay and Secretary, Nnamdi Azikiwe himself. Others notables on the tour were, Dr

⁵³ Ibid Memo from O. G. R. Williams, Head of West Africa Department, Colonial Office London to Max Yergan, Steward Hicholason, Prof. Harold Laski and Miss Evelyn Denington, dated 23rd May, 1946. Short notes on some of these individuals, **Max Yergan (1892-1975)** was an African-American activist, being a Baptist Missionary for the YMCA. He was a staunch Communist who stood against the Apartheid era of South Africa. He later became the second President of National Negro Congress, which was made up of African-American organization that was created in 1935 to fight against religious, labour, Civic and racist discrimination throughout the world. Along with Paul Robinson, he co-founded the international Committee on African Affairs in 1937, later referred to as the Council on African Affairs. **Professor Harold Laski (1830-1950)**, London School of Economics and Political Science in London. He was a British Political theorist, Economist, Author and lecturer. He was active in politics and served as the chairman of the British Labour party 1945-46. He became a professor at the London school of Economics from 1926-1950. In the 1930s onwards, he became a Marxist and shifted his thoughts to class conflict with emphasis on the need for workers Revolution. Laski's position angered labour leaders, especially his attack on Winston Churchill during the 1945 general election, and the party had to disavow Laski, his Chair. **Mr. Stewart Nicholson Esq.** was president, Institute of Journalism in London. **Miss Evelyn Denington**, Organizing Secretary, British Center Against Imperialism. These were the only four (4) individuals and organizations whom the Colonial Office in London responded to their inquiries on the petitions they received from Nnamdi Azikiwe at various dates.



Abubakar Olorun-Nimbe, Medical Officer on the team, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-kuti and Michael Imoudu, the radical Union leader. The purpose of the tour was to raise the consciousness of Nigerian workers and people, through fund raising for its planned visit to the UK at his own expense on a permission he had secured earlier in August, 1945. The purpose of the tour was to express the position of the Zik and his Party to the Colonial Office over the suspension of two of his two newspapers, which were already belated but substituted with the enactment of the four obnoxious Ordinances by the administration and to express all other outstanding grievances he had with the Colonial administration in country.⁵⁴

The Chief agitations centered on the four enacted Ordinances; Public Lands Acquisition (Amendment) Ordinance of 1945; Minerals Ordinance of 1945; Appointment and Deposition of Chiefs (Amendment) Ordinance of 1945; and Royal West African Frontier Force (Nigeria Regiment) Ordinance of 1945.⁵⁵ Both Zik and the Colonial administration hold a different view on the enacted Ordinances. Zik and the NCNC argued that the Ordinances were meant to be place Nigeria under the British Crown (acquisition) while the Colonial administration on the contrary argued that they were meant to bring these aspects under the close supervision of the Colonial administration.⁵⁶ On what became known as Richard Constitution, named after the Governor, the NCNC and Zik press argued that in the Regional Houses, Government Officials should not be allowed to sit and vote but should attend the House in their capacity as advisers, that Native authority representatives should be regarded as Official members and that only the (unofficial) members elected by popular ballot under the universal suffrage should be in the majority. The party proposed the election of forty members for the entire country; five members for Lagos Municipal, two members for Lagos suburb and eleven members each for the three regions⁵⁷ as against seven-four members, twenty-two members each for the West and East and thirty for the Northern regions. Out of this number, only four members were elected and the rest were being nominated or indirectly elected. NCNC bitter criticism of the Constitution that led to its collapse was that it was introduced without consultation with the people and traditional institution in the country.⁵⁸

On the NCNC planned visit to London was fast approaching, the Colonial Officer in charge of the West African region, living in Ghana sent dawning intelligent report about notable NCNC members and the parties' activities in the country, suggesting to the Colonial Office on how best to receive the party when it eventually gets to London. He reported that the NCNC had embarked on tour of the country and enlisting moral and financial support for its proposed tour to the UK. The report was aimed at neutralizing the visit and to preempt all what the delegation had in stock to deliver to the Colonial office, in a similar fashion with what the Ag Governor did earlier to dislodge Zik and his press with his report to the Colonial office. The report started with what it term the Zik press propaganda with such headings streaming from the Pilot and Comet newspaper; "We fought and bled for Britain" "They were promised jobs and promised not kept" "We must fight for Nigeria"

⁵⁴Ibid C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo: Tagged "Secret and Personal" Memo: from Gerald Creasel, Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Ghana to George Gater, at the Colonial Office London dated 18th July 1946.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, Faber & Faber, London 1978. Page 224-5

⁵⁸ Ibid p.220 Op.cit C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo: dated 18th July 1946



“We must strike for freedom” and so on, all in reference to the sacrifice of Nigerian ex-service men during the second world war and Nigerian workers. He said such headlines were inciting and dangerous for the survival of British Officials in the country. The report further stated that the Governor was determined to take the offensive against Zik whenever possible and assured that the editors of his press would be prosecuted whenever there was reasonable chance to convict them while the security had been instructed to be aggressive in combating Zik’s propaganda. Still on Zik press, the report suggested the establishment of an independent newspaper from the UK to counter the Zik press, referred to as Kemsley newspaper.⁵⁹

The report suggested strategies on how to handle the delegation when in London. Among the suggestions were that the Colonial Office should not discuss the issue of self-Government with NCNC delegation in the event they got to London; Colonial Office should increase more recruits of cadets to the country to keep peace; members of the British Parliament should pay a study visit to Nigeria to see things for themselves and that the London Times, Economist and the Manchester Guardian newspapers should published objectively and dispassionate accounts on the NCNC proposed visit to London. In addition, it suggested, that the office should not accede to NCNC demands for the review of the four approved Ordinances; the delegation should be received by members of the British Parliament with personal facts about key members of the delegation before the British press to avoid embarrassing his Majesty’s Government and Colonial policies. It also advised that any considerable support to the delegation will enhance the prestige of the NCNC and the Zik press, which he had consciously avoided.⁶⁰

On 2nd August, 1946 the Secretary of State for Colonies agreed to increase the number of cadets recruits from forty-six to hundred cadets and made preparation with the editors of the newspapers mentioned to present suitable and balanced report during the visit but was concerned about proposals from the Governor. He concluded that the establishment of Kemsley newspaper was not possible with no alternative in sight.⁶¹ On the 27th August, 1946 the Governor on the other hand who expressed his anxiety over the visit and reiterated what the Chief Secretary, West African Council told the Secretary of State earlier. He believes in exposing the Nationalist myth of key members of the NCNC delegation to the British press and public with their dawning biographies. He added that he finds it difficult to advise the Secretary of State not to consent meeting with the NCNC delegation.⁶² On the other hand, Zik and his party were ignorant of the trap set ahead of their visit

⁵⁹ Ibid Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Gold Cost to the George Geter, Colonial Office, Downing Street London, S.W. 1 dated 18th July, 1946. The Kemsley project refers to establishing a private newspaper from London in the country to bolster Zik press. Kemsley Barry was the co-owner of the Daily Telegraph. He founded Kemsley Newspapers, which owned, the Sunday Times, Daily Sketch and Sunday Graphic amongst its titles. Berry was the Chairman of Reuter, News Agency from 1951—58.

⁶⁰ Ibid C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Secret & Personal Memo: Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Gold Cost to the George Geter, Colonial Office. A file containing negative profiles of notable NCNC members namely, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Herbert Macaulay, Dr. Abubakar Olorun-Nimbe and Michael Imoudu:

⁶¹ Ibid George Hall, Secretary of State for Colonies, Downing Street, London to the Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Gold Cost, dated 2nd August, 1946.

⁶² Ibid Secret: Memo: The Governor of Nigeria, A. Richard to George Hall, Secretary of State for Colonies, Downing Street, London, S. W. 1 to dated 9th August, 1946. See Annex V, The indicted biography of key NCNC delegation to the London Tour in August, 1946.



that was already doomed to fail on their arrival, which would amount to an exercise in futility for the delegation.

Meanwhile, at the end of June, 1947, the Party was able to raise the sum of £13,000,00 in preparation for its delegation tour to London. The delegation fell short of the initial two key members of the party billed for the tour; Herbert Macauley, who passed away during the party's campaign tour to Kano in April in 1946 and Chief Michael Imoudu, whom no reasons were advanced for his absences from the list. At last the delegation was comprised of Nnmadi Azikiwe, Adeleke Adedoyin, Dr Abubakar Olurun-Nimbe, Bukar Dipcharima, Chief Nyong Essien, P.M. Kale and Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-kuti, giving a national ethnic representation of its composition. On 13th August, 1947, before the delegation met with the Secretary of States for Colonies, it met with West African Student Union, Youth Organizations and Pan-African groups, Fabian Colonial Bureau and Labor Party imperial Committee. It demanded the revision of the Richard Constitution and submitted thirty-three memos other grievances to the Colonial Secretary. In turned, the Secretary of state assured the delegation of the British Government desire to press for self-Government; that Richard Constitution would not be amended or replace without it been tried. He urged the delegation to return to country and participate in its trail.⁶³ The comments of the Secretary of state to the delegation was the least expected to both the latter and their detractors that viewed the tour as waste of funds for achieving nothing.

After the tour, the delegation was criticized for its failure to account for the money raised by Nigerians for the tour. A rival newspaper to the Zik's press, the Daily Service newspaper and its proprietor H. O. Davies, whom long fellout with Zik, and alongside others, such as Professor S. Okoli who together with Obafemi Awolowo in the Youth National Movement (YNM) in the late 1930s made its criticism of the tour as follows: "what the delegation had achieved would have been obtained in Nigeria by air mail at the modest cost of one shilling," other criticism of the tour came from the Daily Mirror and the Economist.⁶⁴ Zik on his defense claimed that it was the Yoruba group in his party that were behind his problems. Zik adherent followers, such as Fumilayo Ransome kuti, Prince Adeleke Adedoyin and Dr. A.B. Olorunmimbe left the party to join new other formed political, especially the AG. The incident led to bitter press war between H. O. Davis and Zik to the point that Igbo's in Lagos bought machetes in large numbers believing that civil war would break out between Igbo's and Yoruba's.⁶⁵

The Governor and the Secretary intervened to settle the two and at the end of the meeting, Zik boasted that "Yoruba's would not be allowed to rule over others in Nigeria, it would appear that God of Africa had created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of ages." However, on 3rd April, 1948, in attempt to recover from its failed London tour and to demonstrate to the Colonial administration that it was still popular among Nigerian, NCNC convened a National convention of the party in Kaduna where it adopted a Freedom Charter, which was well attended.⁶⁶ But not too long the popularity of NCNC and Zik press diminished too fast to a turning point in his

⁶³ Ibid and Op.cit James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism, p. 294

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism,

⁶⁶ Op.cit Michael Crowder, The story of Nigeria, p.291-195 Op.cit James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism p.294



political dominance in the country before the 1952 Regional elections. It first started with the establishment of a youth group later referred to as Zikist Movement and sometimes regarded as the youth wing of the NCNC. The Movement felt that instead of allowing the popularity of Zik anti-colonial stance to diminished, it was time to rejig it by taking a radical step towards enforcing his ideals.⁶⁷ The activities of the Movement lasted for only three years (1947-1950) before Zik denounced its modus operandi and proscribed by the Colonial administration for alleged attempt to assassinate the Chief Secretary, Hugh Foot. All member of the Zikist Movement involved in the incident were arrested and jailed. After their jailed term, they moved to the AG, a move progressive party that would accommodate their radical positions than the NCNC.⁶⁸

The period equally witnessed the emergence of Tribune newspaper in 1949 and Action Group (AG) by Obafemi Awolowo, with flavor for liberal agenda, similar to those Kwame Nkrumah in neighboring Ghana with wide range of acceptability among its citizens; Northern People's Congress, (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello, an aristocratic and conservative party with other political parties to rival the dominance of Zik's Newspaper and his political party in the country.⁶⁹ During the 1952 regional election, Zik and his party already tipped to win the Western regional Assembly was denied when some of his party members overnight cross carpeted and joined the AG, thought to have been inspired by the British intelligence to get rid of Nnamdi Azikiwe from political dominance in the country.⁷⁰ Similarly, in 1953, another incident that hurt the relationship among these three parties was when AG tested its wits through one of its party member and ex-Zikist Movement, Chief

⁶⁷ G. O. Olusanya, The Zikist Movement -A study in the Political Radicalism, 1946-50, Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol. 4. No. 3, November, 1966. The Movement originated from a Student Association at Yaba Higher College in 1945 before it was formerly launched on 16th Feb. 1946 and early in 1947, it had 29 branches across the country. The Movement took inspiration from Nwafor Orizu's book "Without Bitterness" and Zik's book of "African Renascent" with Kolawale Balogun as its president, M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu as Secretary General, Abiodun Aloba, Nduka Eze, G. Oyeagbula, M. Ani, G. Ebo, J. Inoma, and S. Aderibegbe as members. The group was Marxist inclined and became radicalized and to demand for self-rule sequel to Indian independence in 1947 and the political concession the British Colonial administration granted to Ghana in 1953. The group advocated for civil disobedience to British rule to achieve independence through propaganda, lectures, publishing of newsletters, revolutionary pamphlets, boycott of British goods, Schools, employment, non-payment of taxes except the NCNC, violation of every law and executive orders that negate human rights. In Feb. 1949, the movement organized a public lecture which was delivered by Osita Agwuna on the topic "A call for Revolution" which was to be chaired by Zik but was absence for no reasons given in advanced and in his place Anthony Enahoro, chaired the lecture where he demanded for positive action against British at the occasion. At the end of the lecture key members of the NCNC and attendees of the lecture were arrested, charged for sedition and imprison, they included Anthony Enahoro, Osita Agwuna, Raji Abdullahi, Oged Macauley and Smart Ebbe. It appears that the extremist stands of the movement had no blessing of the NCNC and its leadership, Zik and he had this to say by distancing himself from their activities "We must inculcate a sense of discipline and responsibility in our cadre. An unprincipled and irresponsible army is a liability, and not an asset to any nation." But two other subsequent incidents led to the final end of the movement. On the same Feb. 1949, some Zikist activist were tried for sedition and imprison for instigating the Miners of Enugu Colliery protest which spread to Aba, Calabar, Onitsha and Port Harcourt and on the 18th February, 1949 some members of the movement were arrested, charged and imprison for an attempted to assassinate Mr. Hugh Foot, Chief Secretary to the Colonial administration before it was proscribed in April, 1950 bringing an end to the three years life span of the movement, 1946 to 1949.

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Ibid C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo: Tagged "Secret and Personal" Memo:



Anthony Enahoro and introduced a private bill calling for independence of the country in 1957 at the Federal Assembly, influenced by the self-rule concession granted to Ghana in 1957.⁷¹

The motion was defeated with an amended to read as soon as practicable by the NPC members. The Lagos crowd booed the NPC members for the defeated of the motion and created the first bad blood between its members and the AG before the latter retaliated when the former was on the campaign rally to Kano in the year. The already created animosity between the major political parties played out after the Federal election of 1959, ahead of independence of the country in 1960, when none of the three parties had a single majority votes to form Government and alliance became the only option out to settle the rivalry. The election result gave the NPC 1, 922, 179 popular votes cast with 143 seats in the parliament, NCNC had 2, 594, 577 votes with 89 seats, AG had 1, 992,264 votes with 73 seats and independent candidates had 7 seats, which made the formation of alliances among the parties inevitable, since none of the parties had 150 seats mark in the parliament of 312 seats. It was therefore predictable that if there was going to be any alliances among the three major parties, it was going to be between the NCNC and the NPC with the AG out of it. The AG aware of its tenuous relationship with the rest two parties, initiated alliance talks with the latter. Chief Akintola, who was deputy to Awolowo of the AG went to negotiate the idea of his party having Alliance with the NPC leader, Ahmadu Bello in Kaduna while Awolowo himself went to meet up with Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC at Asaba but two discussions were fruitless as NCNC and NPC had already concealed and concluded alliance between the two to form the next Government at Independence.⁷²

Ideological differences, driven by past animosity among leaders of the parties, not ethnicity or religion became the basis of the alliance between what may be termed the conservative NPC and the ultra-conservative NCNC pitched up together against pseudo progressive AG as the opposition. At independence, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became the Prime Minister and Nnamdi Azikiwe became the Governor- General of the country.⁷³ The last stroke of the Zik's press happened in 1963, when the West African Pilot fought against the proposed "preventive Act" of post-colonial government, which allows for indefinite proscribe punishment for reporting false report. The West African Pilot and Daily Comet news-papers folded up during the Nigerian Civil war in the mid-1960s to 1970. In 1993, attempts to revive them failed due to sky rocketed cost of news print and the crisis of the June, 12th election of 1993.⁷⁴

In conclusion, it would be correct to state that the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet newspapers were suspended for the publication of falsehood against the British Colonial administration. However, it may be argued in other stance that publication of falsehood by the newspapers were strategic due to the bitter stances of its appropriator in the person of Nnamdi Azikiwe that the two cannot be separated.⁷⁵ The proprietor and the editors of the Zik press may have their reasons for taking such stance to checkmate the British colonial administration, which was in tandem with anti- colonial rhetoric's to emancipate the country from the shackles of colonial oppression and exploitation of its resources for the benefit of the metropolis in Europe and the

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Ibid CO583/276 Labour Strike and comments 1946. CO583/291 Enquiry into the cost of living in Nigeria 1946 p.17-18.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ CO583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945 Memo:



United Kingdom. Thus, the suspension of the two newspapers for the publication of falsehood which ordinarily would have smeared their reputation, paradoxically venerated them as the mouth piece of the Nigerian working class. Similar situation presented itself when the newspapers reported the alleged assignation attempt and possible deportation of Nnamdi Azikiwe. In reaction to the allegations, new born babies were named after Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose name became household name in Urban and Rural areas. The two newspapers, Zik press and Nnamdi Azikiwe may be accused of being opportunities that capitalized on the workers strikes to achieve their anti-colonial stances, the newspapers were resilient and determined not to be deterred in face of several threat and hostilities from the British colonial administration in achieving what they have set out to achieve. As for the proprietors of the newspapers, Nnamdi Azikiwe demonstrated that he was a true nationalist but betrayed by his methodology in the handling of his press and the intrigues of the British Colonial administration to undermine him. Whatever, the shortcomings of the two newspapers, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Zik press, they were rugged in their dog fighting against the British imperialism, which was unprecedented that shock the British Colonial administration to its very foundation and precipitated independence of Nigeria in 1960.

Annex 1

Comments of the PRO as Reported by Nnamdi Azikiwe

“He observed that the Nigerian worker allowed himself to be led by the noise and listens to every sort of thing.” There was trade Union Ordinance and regulations which banned workers and their leaders and such leaders were supposed to know all these things before they assume the leadership of workers.” When the trade Union registers itself, he went on, the Labour Department provided him with rules, regulations and Ordinances, and it was for members of the Union, especially the leaders, to study them carefully.” In the present crisis, Mr. Fletcher continued, there was no necessity for the Commissioner of Labour to have interrupted, in so far as the unions have leaders.” Mr. Fletcher went to say that in fact the Labour Commissioner was not officially approached but when they did; he gave them advice, which resulted in the resignation of those Union leaders, just at last minutes?” The allegation that Government might enact laws to ban workers from going back on strike should the arbitration fail, he went on to say, it was not true, as it was not possible.“ He emphasized that the cause of the Labour crisis had been due to the leaders not being well read in the laws binding workers.” He assured, in conclusion that the conditions stipulated in the Commissioner of Labours notice of Tuesday, July 3rd were genuine and that Government would see to implementing them accordingly, should the workers obey.”

Sources: Nnamdi Azikiwe, MA. M.Sc. Suppression of the Press in British West Africa, African Books Company Ltd, Nigerian Spokesman Building, Abadom Building, Upper New Market Rd, The water side, Onitsha, Nigeria, 31st December, 1945. p.7

Annex 11

Swore Affidavit by the PRO

I, Denzil Cornwell Fletcher, of Lagos Nigeria being duly sworn make and say as follows: -



1. I am the Public Relation Officer, Nigeria;
2. My Office is in Custom Street, Lagos;
3. At or about the hour of 11:00 a. m. on Thursday the 5th instant. I was asked when in my office, if I would see a reporter from the Pilot? L agreed to do so;
4. A young reporter whose name I do not know but whom I knew as a reporter of the West African Pilot newspaper came to see me;
5. This reporter asked me in effect “why the Commissioner of Labor did not see the trade Union leaders before the strike and explained to them the correct legal position” I replied to the effect that that was a matter for the Commissioner of labor;
6. The reporter asked me certain other questions but the whole interview did not last for more than a couple of minutes and the reporter took no notes. L gave no information or opinion of any particular importance nor did I express any opinion on any matter of current importance;
7. I most emphatically did not state as appears in the “Daily Comet” of Friday the 6th of July:
-
 - a) “that the leaders have demonstrated their absolute incapability and total inability to guide their followers along the right path. That they have failed woefully in that task”, or
 - b) “before goading workers into the position in which they had now found themselves, the leaders should have read the law properly and known everything that was required for them”;
8. The heading in the “Comet” of the same date
“ACTING GOVERNOR WILL CLOSE DOWN ANY PRESS WHICH OFFENDED GOVERNMENT” is incorrect; the power to close down is subject to the law and that reason is not one of them;
9. I most emphatically did not maintain as appears in the West African Pilot of Friday the 6th of July “that the present crises had proved the incapability and inefficiency of the Nigerian Trade Union leaders in that they have failed woefully to guide their members along the right lines”;
10. I did not allege in the same copy of the paper “emphasize that the cause of the labor crises had been due to the leadership not to be well read in the laws binding workers” and;
11. I did not indict the Trade Union leaders as alleged in the heading of the first column of the first page of the aforesaid paper.

(SGN) D. C. Fletcher

Sworn before me at Lagos this seventh day of July, 1945.

(SGN) V. R. BAIRAMAIN

Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court, and Commissioner of Oaths.

Sources: National Archives Richmond Surrey, TW9 4DU, UK, London CO583/276/1945
suspension of Comet and others 7th July, 1945



Annex 111

Draft Recording of the Minutes of Meeting over the suspension of the West African Pilot and Daily Comet held at Government House Marina, Lagos at 3:15pm on Saturday, the 7th of July, 1945⁷⁶

His Excellency Presiding

Present

Colonial Government side: -Ag Governor, G. C. Whitely, Chief Colonial Secretary, G. Beresford Stooke, Attorney- General, H. C. F. Cox and the PRO, D. C. Fletcher.

Zik's press limited side: - Managing Director of Zik press limited, Nnmadi Azikiwe, editor of the West African Pilot Newspaper, Mr. C. U. M. Gardiner and editor of the Daily Comet Newspaper, Anthony Enahoro.

At the meeting the Ag Governor, Chief Colonial Secretary, Attorney General raised all the questions against the purported interview granted to the Reporter of the West African Pilot newspapers by the PRO and published by the newspaper and Daily Comet newspaper, which were considered as falsehood and misleading. Nnmadi Azikiwe was responsible for provided all the answers raised by the panel at the meeting and at the end of the discourse, he pleaded with the statements. The questions and answer session went as follows: -

- (i) Ag Governor- What defence did the editors have to put up as these statements contravened Regulation No. 19 of 1945? Nnmadi Azikiwe- I fully understood the Regulation, the Reporter was sent to the PRO for a definite purpose but for the Reporter to make his report of the interview looks as it was coming from the PRO, he felt justified in publishing it, as the views expressed therein coincided with his own and others of the community on certain leaders of the Trade Union;
 - (ii) Chief Colonial Secretary- The Reporter took no notes? Nnmadi Azikiwe-The Reporter was instructed not to take notes at the interview so as not to waste the time of the person interviewed. Mr. C. U. M. Gardiner also stated that on receiving the report, he had cross examination the Reporter as to its authenticity. The Reporter, having assured him that it was correct, he passed it for publication;
 - (iii) Attorney General-The interview lasted for about a couple of minutes and asked why was the usual practice in respect of submitting a record of the interview to the PRO or communicating by telephone with the PRO to verify the accuracy of the report, this practice was not applied? Mr. Gardiner replied that he would not remember at what time he received the report and it might have been too late to contact the PRO but that he did not make any attempt to contact him. Both Nnmadi Azikiwe and Mr. Gardiner said that the PRO usually contacted the press on occasion of any published inaccuracy, but that in this case he did not do so. They assumed therefore that the report was correct;
-



(iv) Ag Governor-The damage had already been done, and the Chief Colonial Secretary-pointed out that Reg. 19 of 1945 had by that time been published and that the report of any mis-statement attributed to Government officer must be made to him;

(v) Ag Governor- then again informed the meeting that he had evidence before him that the alleged statements as published were in correct and that they had definitely caused harm, and by so doing Reg. 19 of 1945 had been contravened.

Nnmadi Azikiwe said that he was not disputing the law but that if the PRO denied making the statements, it was his word against that of the Reporter and that as the former was a Government official his word would naturally carry the most weight;

(vi) Ag Governor-then asked the representative of the press whether they have anything further to say. Nnmadi Azikiwe, asked the Ag Governor to consider their position and put himself in the position of the Father of two Children, one having said one thing and the other said another thing and he had no intention of causing any harm. He said that he himself had seen some Trade Union leaders who had asked him to define them and their positions. He had done so but had not suggested to them any course of action;

(vii) Attorney General- drew Ag Governor's attention to the fact that the editor of Daily Comet, Anthony Enahoro had not expressed any opinion, upon which the Ag Governor asked him if he wished to do so. He replied that he had received the statement from the same Reporter. He had nothing further to say;

(viii) Ag Governor- drew the meetings attention to the headline in the Daily Comet "Ag Governor will close down any press which offends Government" and Nnmadi Azikiwe at once admitted that this was in-correct and that he had taken it up with the editor;

(ix) Ag Governor-then drew the meetings attention to the fact the he had interviewed Nnmadi Azikiwe some days previously and had explained the position to him and had drawn his attention to some of the misleading statements and had asked him to see personally that such mis-statements did not occur again. Nnmadi Azikiwe agreed to do so; and

(x) Ag Governor- then said that for some days he had observed that the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet had published matters, which had done harm. He then asked their representative whether they had anything further to say. The answer being in the negative, the Ag Governor- then said that his decision would be communicated to them either to-night or tomorrow morning, and concluded the interview.

(SGN) Chief Secretary to Nigerian Government, G. Beresford Stooke

8th July, 1945.

Sources: National Archives Richmond Surrey, TW9 4DU, UK, London CO583/276/1945 suspension of Comet and others 9th July, 1945

Annex 1V

Cable and wireless Telegram from Nnmadi Azikiwe, Chairman, Zik Press to Rt. Hon. Creech Jones, Parliamentary Secretary, Colonial Office, London dated 25th February, 1946

Since the Gen Strike x Nigeria last August x Zik group Newspapers Viz West African Pilot x Daily Comet x Eastern Nigeria Guardian x Nigerian Spokesman x Southern Nigerian Defender x five



Dailies been embarrassed and virtually victimized x Government of Nigeria had withdrawn all official advertisements including cancellation of outstanding contracts since the first of November x Governor Richard had banned Pilot from LEGCO meeting because of honest but avoidable mistakes Reporter x says ban will be removed publication suitable apology approved by him x This been done but ban un yet removed x Govt Nigeria had now refused renew annual license fifty pounds sterling which enabled Zik group received Reuters African coastal news service x No official reason yet given x

Sources: National Archives Richmond Surrey, TW9 4DU, UK, London CO583/276/1945 suspension of Comet and others 25th February, 1946

Annex V

Indicted biography of key members of the NCNC delegation to tour the UK in 1946

i) Herbert Macauley

A native of Lagos of Yoruba extraction, had a long and conquered career. He was born in Lagos in 1865 and in 1881 he joined the Colonial Service as an indexer of the crown Grants in the Public Works Department. In 1890 he was awarded scholarship and went to England to read Civil Engineering. On his returned he was appointed a Surveyor of the crown Lands but was forced to resigned for reasons of been guilty of bribery and fraud. Four times convicted for offences ranging from perjury to misappropriation (twice in 1913 for perjury and misappropriation of £150, on the second charge he was imprison for two years, in 1928 he was imprisoned for two Months for incitement and publishing rumor and was fined for publishing criminal libel). During the past 30years of his career, he had his fingers in every Lagos political pie and had usually succeeded indrawing plum for himself. He finally became distrusted by all the more reputable element in Lagos and, until he took up with Azikiwe about 1938 and showed signs of fading out of the political picture. He became a well-known figure, almost an institution and had a great influence over the Lagos mob.

ii) Azikiwe

He was a different character. He was an Ibo from Onitsha, educated at various mission schools in Eastern Province and Lagos. In 1926 he went to America where he read Law and Journalism. It was probably in America that he developed his anti-British, or anti-White prejudices. After a period in England where he again studied Journalism, he got an appointment in 1936 as Editor in Chief of the "African Morning post" published in Accra and came into contact with the notorious Sierra Leone agitator, Wallace Johnson. The association did not last long as Wallace Johnson was convicted for publishing seditious matter in the 'African Morning Post'. Azikiwe as the editor was also convicted but was acquitted on appeal on the grounds that the prosecution had failed to produce evidence that he was, in fact, editor at the time of the publication of the article. Azikiwe had returned to Lagos and immediately founded Zik's Press Ltd, and started to publish the "West African Post". Zik's now the owner of five newspapers published in various parts o the country, and was the greatest newspaper force in the country. Azikiwe was a competent Journalist and knows his public well. He had always been violently anti-Government and anti-White. He had consistently pursued an editorial policy which had bitterly opposed Government. He does not hesitate to use lies and



misrepresentations to further his ends. Few of such examples were traceable to the PRO West African Pilot interview incident and the assassination attempt story, which was hoaxed as mere fabrications. Under a quiet and unassuming manner, he conceals a passionate hatred of the British. He had always held himself up as the Champion of Nigeria and had very great influence, especially among the Ibos. On occasions, he revealed paranoiac tendencies.

iii) Dr. Olorun-Nimbe

Dr. Olorun-Nimbe was of a different caliber. He was the son of a wealthy Lagos merchant. He was educated at the King's college Lagos and went to England in 1929 to study Medicine at Glasgow University. There was reason to believe that while in Glasgow, he made contacts with certain communist elements. Having qualified, he returned to Nigeria and was employed for a time as a junior Medical Officer by Government but his work was unsatisfactory and his appointment was terminated. He then went into private practice but did not prove very successful so he entered local politics. He became an elected member of Lagos Town Council in 1944 and an elected member of Legislative Council for Lagos in 1945. Ill-mannered, crafty and avaricious with nothing to be commended for his conduct at the time of Herbert Macauley's accident in Kano. When the 81 years Herbert Macauley broke his thigh during the NCNC tour of Kano, he refused to let him admitted to the hospital that was fully equipped, and brought him back to Lagos with his thigh unset on a journal of two and half days by train as he thought that it was political expedient that if Macauley were to be ill and possibly to die, it should be Lagos rather than in the North. At the end his victim died in Lagos on the 7th May, 1946 and was never part of the Party's tour of London.

iv) Imoudu

Imoudu was a native of Ora in Kukuruku Division of the Benin Province and about 41 years old. After a little schooling, he was made a Post and Telegraphs lines man in Lagos, but left the Job after one year to become an apprentice turner and mechanic in the Railway. In 1934 he took part in formation of Railway workers Union and four later he took part in the agitation for improved condition service and COLA in 1942. In 1943 he attempted to embarrass the Railway administration by staging what would have appeared to be a lock out by suborning the gate-keeper to shut the gates when the men were going to work. The attempt failed and Imoudu completely lost his head and was guilty of acts of gross insubordination for which he was dismissed from the Railway. He had for some times been a dangerous and hot-headed agitator. During the Second World War, it was considered necessary to detain him under the Defense Regulation and later restrict his movement. At the end of the war, the restriction order was rescinded and Imoudu returned to Lagos on 2nd June, 1945. Like some members of the NCNC, there was reason to believe that he was mentally unbalanced. During the war, he was quoted to have told a European Official that "I have dreamt three times that the war will not end by weapons but by voices..... there was no arbitrator..... The blacks should have been the arbitrator but they have joined the fight. Although, I am a nonentity, I believed that if I were to be allowed to talk to the Germans, I would be able to end the war...." Imoudu was an Orator of Hitler's type and although he talks the most arrant nonsense, he seems to have the facility of whipping ignorant crowds to be frenzy, for this reason, he dangerous.

Sources: National Archives Richmond Surrey, TW9 4DU, UK, London C0583/277 Activities of NCNC 1945: Tagged "Secret and Personal" Memo: from Gerald Creasel, Chief Secretary, West African Council, Accra, Ghana to George Gater, at the Colonial Office London dated 18th July 1946.