

# opinion

## Nigerian hopes coup solves economic, tribal woes

Editor's note: This summer's Organization of African Unity summit was brought to an abrupt close at the end of July by the news that summit member Gen. Yakubu Gowon's 9-year-old military rule of Nigeria had been quietly and bloodlessly replaced by that of Gowon's fellow officer, Brig. Gen. Muritala Rufai Mohammed.

John Ofie Ukandu, a UNL student from Aba, Nigeria, who is working on his Ph.D. in economics, here offers his analysis of Nigeria's leadership needs.

Nigeria is the richest and most populous black nation in the world. On Oct. 1, 1960, she became one of the independent African nations emerging from the shackles of colonialism. Since then, three coups—one glorious, one brutal and one indeterminate—have jolted the nation's conscience.

The first coup d'etat was glorious because it was the general yearning and genuine wishes of the entire people, and was brought into being by combined military elements with a broad base in Nigeria and without tribal orientation.

The second coup was brutal and unwarranted because its

violence was directed against one ethnic group in Nigeria, the Ibos of Biafra.

This second coup ended a dismal failure as it did not meet any of its objectives—the eradication of corruption and tribalism and the push for faster economic advancement.

Instead, corruption and tribalism quadrupled. Now a majority of Nigerians live in abject poverty in a land of plenty.

Why land of plenty? It is not within the boundary of this article to tabulate and catalogue all Nigeria's natural resources. Three here will suffice:

Nigeria is the second largest petroleum producer in Africa after Libya, seventh in the world, and the second largest producer of palm oil and cocoa.

She earns about \$25 million a day on oil and is the third largest supplier to the United States, (about 900,000 barrels per day). This is just a sketch of her riches.

The problem of Nigeria, then, is not that nature was unkind to her in the distribution of natural resources. The problem emanates from chronic tribalism, corruption, and lack of strong and effective leadership, the latter two being the brain children of the former.

In short, who is in power in Nigeria is of little or no consequence as long as this power is directed to making

Nigeria strong and united.

For a nation to be strong, united and stable, it must first of all transverse the rule of "strong men." Great Britain, the United States, Russia, France, Germany, etc., went through this transitional period:

Britain, during her revolution under Cromwell; the United States, under George Washington; Russia, under Lenin and Stalin; France, under Napoleon Bonaparte; Germany under Bismarck.

These strong men must not necessarily be military men, but men with clear objectives, with a mission transcending personal and tribal commitments and glory, a mission of higher order—the nation.

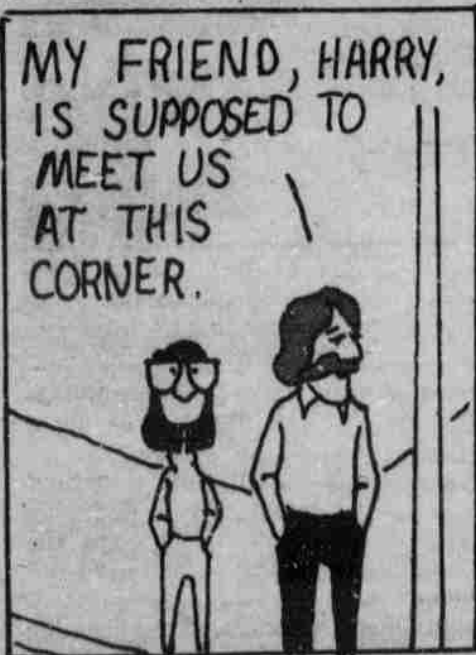
Furthermore, Nigeria's economy must not be so strongly attached to the British economy.

It is ridiculous and inconsistent to attach Nigeria's economy to that of a nation that is sinking, both economically and politically, while Nigeria's goal is faster economic development and improvements in the welfare of her people. A turnaround in policy is necessary.

This is what Nigeria needs—strong, equitable, effective leadership, an uprooting of tribalism, corruption and nepotism and a loosening of economic ties with Britain.

Let us hope that Nigeria got this in the third coup on July 28, 1975.

### RALPH *by K. Wheeler*



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