

Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani, Britain, Leftist Nationalists, and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945-1965, New York and London: Routledge, 2005, XV + 167 pp.

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Hakeem Ibikunle Tijani's *Britain, Leftist Nationalists, and the Transfer of Power in Nigeria, 1945-1965* is a pioneering study of the development, activities and failure of Marxism and other left-wing organizations in Nigeria during the decolonization period up to 1965. While the literature on nationalist movements in Africa is large and expanding, the aspects of the infiltration of Marxist ideas into anti-colonial movements have been neglected for several decades. As a watershed, this research is expected to draw the attention of scholars to the study of Marxism in colonial Africa and retain its prime position as both a reference material and a *magnus colossus*. Although the study focuses on the activities of leftist nationalists in Nigeria, Tijani is able to integrate development in the country into global debates and politics of the Cold War. In other words, he is able to demonstrate how international politics of capitalism versus communism affected local issues of nationalism and vice versa. The position of British colonies as appendages of and pawns in the political and economic chess-board of the Britain, United States and France is adequately elaborated. The style of presentation is lucid and simplified in a manner that makes the book readable for academic and non-academic audiences. Tijani should be commended for achieving this feat because only few academic historical studies combine professional interpretation of facts with narratives to produce academic studies which can appeal to the sentiment of people from diverse intellectual persuasions. His presentation of themes such as Marxism, Communism, Nationalism and Capitalism, which are traditionally difficult to comprehend, in a simplified, yet academic manner makes the study a must read. One does not need a head-ache reliever to read, understand and appreciate the scholarship of the book! The entire book is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter begins with a short introduction which provides insight into the content of debates and ends with a short summary which bags the whole discourse and serve as a transition to the proceeding chapter.

Between the 1940s and 1950s, the rise and collapse of several leftist move-

ments, a majority of which identified with the Communist Party of Great Britain, inform one of the creative intelligibility of Nigerian intellectuals and the problems which anti-government organizations faced. Naturally, and as one would expect, the greatest opposition to the origin and activities of these leftist nationalist movements came from the colonial government who acted under the directives of the British government in London and the West bloc under the leadership of the United States. If the colonial government of Nigeria detested the activities of leftist nationalists movement and tried to curtail their "excesses", the condemnation and disapproval which they received from other nationalists who were not convinced of their philosophy contributed in making them an easy prey for the British predatory tendencies. Although all nationalist groups detested colonialism and its attendant exploitation and barbarism, they were nevertheless divided on the profundity of approaches and the time required for the transfer of power. Leftist nationalist belong to the category of nationalists whose communist philosophy and militancy provoked serious sentiments amongst the government and their co-nationalist.

The division amongst the nationalists introduced new dynamics to the tension-soaked nature of relations amongst the different fervent of anti-colonial movements in Nigeria.

The continuous rise and fall of leftist communist movement in the 1940s and 1950s is therefore not explicable in terms of disillusioning of members or lack of direction and proper orientation. Their failure is largely attributed to the stiff opposition they received from the colonial government and Nigerian nationalists who detested their philosophy. This opposition took different dimensions. It ranges from the arrest and incarceration of some members of communist movements such as the Zikist movement to the banning of communist from government employment. The sacking of communist loyalists which Tijani brilliantly christened "Nigeria - McCarthyism" was not only practiced by the British but also by some nationalists as seen in the case of Ghana under Nkrumah. Lack of resources, which are needed to propagate ideas and activities, also played a significant role in clipping the wings of these movements. Against all odds, leftist nationalism was able to produce many leaders such as Uduka Eze, Samuel Ikoku, H. O Davies and Fumilayo Kuti who apart from organizing and coordinating trade unions established newspapers which served as the mouthpiece of the campaign for justice and equity and political self-determination

One expects the author to identify the role leftist movement played in the development of post independent socialist thought and ideas. The demise of colonialism did not signify and end to the philosophy of radical thinkers. In contemporary Nigeria, one still notices that some Nigeria intellectuals, a good percentage of who belong to the academia continued to see the relevance of communism. The author was also less critical of the significance of ethnic nationalism on the discourse of leftist nationalism. The north-south dichotomy was a strong

factor in the nationalist movement and its relationship with the leftist organization is downplayed. Nevertheless, these shortcomings do not undermine the credibility of this study in any way. The study remains a reference source material for the study of Marxism and other leftist movement in Africa and other developing nations of the world. The author should consider looking into these when revising the book for the second edition
