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IN DEFENSE OF EMPIRE: GOVERNMENT PRESS COLLABORATION IN THE BRITISH WIN THE WAR EFFORTS IN NIGERIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This paper examines the collaboration between the Nigerian press and imperial Britain for the victory of the Allies over Nazi Germany during World War II. Guided by the descriptive-analytic, historical approach, archival sources and information provided by national dailies, which are available at the Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan, as well as secondary sources on the subject were interrogated to produce the work that is embodied in this essay. Against the background of the conventional wisdom that Nigerians were so far away from the war theater that they were indifferent to appeals for self-sacrifice demanded by the war, the study proposes the counter argument that Nigerians made substantial sacrifices which contributed to Allied victory over Nazism. The point is illustrated with the Nigeria Win the War Fund, which was a scheme designed for the purchase of war equipment. It was initiated and sustained by the press, but inaugurated with active government support and encouragement, contrary to the standard notion of frosty government-press relations during the war.

Keywords: *British Colonialism, Colonial Rule, Nazi Germany, Nigerian Press, Second World War, Win-The-War Efforts.*

Introduction

This paper examines the healthy collaboration between the Nigerian press and the colonial regime in encouraging and sustaining enthusiastic contributions of colonial Nigerians to the success of Britain's win-the-war efforts during World War II, an episode previously neglected by scholars. As it is well known, on 3 September 1939, the government of imperial Britain had declared war on Germany over the latter's occupation of Polish territory. This brazen act of German aggression struck a deathblow to the system of collective security in Europe. Great Britain, Nigeria's colonial ruler had quickly reacted by enlisting the support of France, a fellow colonial power to wage war against Germany. Consequently, the European war had soon spread like a wild, harmattan (dry, dust-laden wind) forest fire that gradually engulfed virtually the whole world in a holocaust. For British colonies, such as Nigeria, which had huge reserves

of men, food and raw materials vital to the success of British war efforts, the defense of the colonial master was imperative. For this reason, they became potential German military targets, and, were, therefore, psychologically conditioned to fight on the side of imperial Britain.

Extant studies of the Second World War and Africa, which until about 1984 made “relatively little use of original research”,¹ have tended to focus on its effect in awakening African political consciousness,² with a concomitant heightening of the tempo of political activities.³ This is often sharply contrasted with the pre-war political docility of the emergent elite,⁴ vis-a-vis the hope of the colonial overlords during the interwar years to exercise unchallenged authority for generations.⁵ In the case of Nigeria, there is an undue emphasis on the dissemination of the new consciousness and ideas of nationalism,⁶ with a consequent backlash from the colonial state.⁷ In this regard, some scholars dwell on the agenda-setting role of the press in league with the emergent elite, a role which earned it the strictures of officialdom after the war as agents of destabilization, and inciters in vituperative language of sedition against the colonial power.⁸ This official reaction was driven by the erroneous assumption that educated Africans who were categorized as semi-literate readers, “lacked the critical faculties to distinguish truth from rumor and fair criticism from gutter abuse,”⁹ and were, therefore, easily incited to violence by the written word. In effect, Nigerians of the World War II era are portrayed as people who, due to their distance from the war theater and the great issues at stake, were insensitive to government’s appeal for self-sacrifice and thus contributed next to nothing to the win-the-war efforts of Britain in Nigeria.¹⁰ The evidence does not, however, support such Eurocentric assertions, or any profound influence or success of British wartime and postwar propaganda in conditioning colonial Nigerians to fight on the side of their colonizer.¹¹

The materials for this study consist of Nigeria’s three nationally circulated newspapers, which were published in Lagos, the seat of the colonial government, as well as archival sources. They were accessed at the University of Ibadan Library and the Nigerian National Archives, Ibadan. The data was subjected to the descriptive and critical-analytic historical method, to provide a lucid chronological frame work of the episode, and also proffer explanations. The three newspapers that were studied for this paper had served as the nuclei around which the contending political tendencies of wartime Nigeria were galvanized, in the absence of any serious nationalist political organization during the period to mobilize Nigerians for or against the colonial state, after the schism in the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM).¹² The press and pressmen thus functioned both as opinion molders and nationalist leaders, mounting the podium and the soap box to popularize their view points. The facility with which the press accomplished the latter role in spite of the divergent goals and strategies espoused by its editor-publishers was not lost on the colonial overlords. It is, therefore, germane to provide a brief background of the

newspapers' editors and publishers, including the interests they represented.

The first of the newspapers, *West African Pilot* was a daily, penny newspaper, whose publication had signaled the inauguration of popular journalism in Nigeria. It was the foremost nationalist newspaper in Nigeria during the Second World War and indeed, throughout the colonial period. Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-trained Nigeria's leading journalist and nationalist politician of the period, who had cut his journalistic wisdom teeth in the Gold Coast as the editor of the Accra *African Morning Post* started publishing it on 22 November 1937.¹³ In an article in the *Vanguard* of 13 December 1995, Animashaun and Bayagbor noted that Zik, (as he was popularly known) the editor of the newspaper, emerged as "the greatest journalist in the country" during the World War II years. The *West African Pilot* had consequently grown to be "a fire-eating and aggressive nationalist paper of the highest order."¹⁴

On the other hand, the *Daily Service* which had made its debut in 1938 as the organ of the nationalist Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was the ideological and inveterate rival of the *West African Pilot*. Ernest Sisei Ikoli, the doyen of Nigerian journalism who was also vice president of the NYM, edited the paper from inception in 1938 to 1943. Obviously, Azikiwe, a prominent member of the NYM, had resented the competition represented by the *Daily Service*, and consequently opposed Ikoli's nomination as president of the NYM¹⁵. This professional-cum-business rivalry plunged the movement into a deep schism from which it never fully recovered.¹⁶ The rivalry was mirrored by the *Daily Service*, which rabidly antagonized the *West African Pilot* and Azikiwe, whose dramatic rise to prominence was resented by the Yoruba elite, especially given Azikiwe's resignation from the NYM. As from 1943, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, a former schoolteacher who was convinced that Azikiwe deliberately destroyed the NYM in order to facilitate his own political ascendancy, assumed the editorship of the *Daily Service*, and consequently intensified the latter's anti-Zik editorial stance.¹⁷

The third newspaper was the *Nigerian Daily Times*, which was published in June 1926 by European and Nigerian business men, including its foundation editor, Ikoli. Except for H.A.C.M. Bates, an expatriate who briefly acted as its General Manager and editor in chief, the paper had Nigerian editors. Notable among the latter was Ayodele Lijadu, a former staff of the *Daily Telegraph* (1930-1938) who, in 1938, joined the editorial staff of the *Nigerian Daily Times*, rising to the editorship of the newspaper, 1941-1946, and serving as its war correspondent in Burma in 1945, before taking up government appointment as Assistant Director of Information in 1946.¹⁸ This notwithstanding, the *Nigerian Daily Times* remained committed to an editorial policy which placed a premium on its business interest and support for the establishment, with attendant credibility problem.

The negative focus on the role of the Nigerian press, and of Nigerian contributions to Allied victory over Nazi Germany relegate and indeed obscure

the positive collaboration, at least from the British perspective, between the colonial government and the press in Britain's win-the-war efforts in Nigeria. This paper draws attention to the evidence of inter-racial cooperation and collaboration for the defeat of Nazism, with the press acting as the driving-force and great mobilization instruments, at a critical stage of the war when the morale of the Allied Forces was abysmally low. This point is important because the episode in question occurred at a time when Nigeria lacked a united political front to galvanize energies in one direction. The episode chosen to illustrate this point is the Nigeria- win- the- war fund, 1940-1945. But though long neglected by scholars, it deserves to be studied in great detail for its effect in getting Nigerians to remain materially and emotionally involved in the win-the- war efforts of Britain throughout the duration of the war.

Background to the Nigeria –Win- the- War Fund

The emphasis of pre-war British propaganda on Hitler's *Mein Kampf*'s equation of Africans with apes and their possible enslavement in the event of German victory had spread panic over the thought of such dehumanization. Wild rumors which were rife that Nigeria would be ceded to Germany by Britain to meet the demands of the former for the return of its territories in Africa on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities had thus caused considerable anxiety throughout Nigeria. It elicited from Nigerians profuse professions of unalloyed loyalty to Britain and their readiness to pay the supreme price in defense of the Empire.¹⁹As recorded by *West Africa* on 25 May 1940, Nigeria's colonial Governor Bernard Bourdillon aptly noted that such professions of loyalty genuinely reflected Nigerians' keen appreciation of the implications of international events and deep-seated preference for British rule for which they were ready to pay the supreme price, in spite of Nigeria's location in a remote corner of the Gulf of Guinea.

The ferocity, unprecedented tenacity and intensity which characterized the onslaught of the German military machine on the Allied Forces ensured that events moved with amazing rapidity in the European theaters of war. By May 1940, the German army had occupied the Low Countries, and knocked menacingly at the gates of beleaguered France, which sent out distress calls to her ally, Great Britain. The inauguration of a new British war cabinet and Great Britain's consequent deployment of unprecedented number of troops and material into France had no effect on the outcome of the famous battle of Dunkirk, which ended in victory for Germany and great losses in men and material for imperial Britain. As the *Nigerian Daily Times* editorialized on 24, 25 June 1940, France was crushed; German troops marched unchallenged into Paris on 14 June 1940, and accepted France's official surrender on 17 June 1940. The colonial government's public relations department noted in the *Nigerian Daily Times* of 10 November 1945 that Britain had lost 700

tanks, 2,450 guns and 50,000 vehicles of all kinds at Dunkirk. The British government was left alone to confront the German menace, and fulminated at having been abandoned and let down by an unreliable France, but elected to fight on. Conversely, the French government had expected Britain to suffer a quick defeat at the hands of Germany, to wipe away the shame and sorrow of France's occupation.²⁰ Britain's resolve to fight on, therefore, rested on the enormous colonial resources at its disposal.

It was in the wake of France's capitulation to Germany and barely two weeks after the Dunkirk debacle, when the need for weapons was acute, that the *Nigerian Daily Times*, with active government encouragement, inaugurated the Nigeria- Win- the- War Fund, on June 15, 1940. The objective of the Nigeria- Win- the -War Fund was declared to be the purchase of a tank, or an aero plane, for donation to the British army. It is instructive that the Nigerian scheme had been preceded by similar schemes in other parts of the British Empire, notably the Gold Coast, Nigeria's neighbor, as well as Malaya, Hong Kong, and Jamaica which had contributed huge sums of money to the imperial government to purchase military equipment. But the Nigerian scheme was the first of its kind to be inaugurated by the press in collaboration with the government. The press thus maintained the tradition established by its First World War predecessors which had supported similar schemes, including the National Relief Fund connected with that war.²¹

Government-Press Collaboration in the Nigeria- Win- the- War Fund

The evidence shows that initial suggestions for some contributions from Nigerians to support Britain in stemming the German onslaught had come from the *Daily Service* and *West African Pilot*, two national dailies articulating Nigerians' yearnings and aspirations during the period. In fact, colonial Nigeria's chief secretary informed legislators in September 1942 that the impetus for the fund's inauguration for the purchase of some specific war instruments had emanated from suggestions from Nigerians.²² For instance, the *West African Pilot* and *Daily Service* had urged Nigerians to be prepared to make more sacrifices in support of the war for universal freedom, in form of monetary contributions to sundry war funds, like similar sacrifices made by Africans during the First World War in defense of the 'Mother Countries'. On this score, the *West African Pilot* on 10 April 1940 canvassed a wholehearted moral and material support of the imperial power by Nigerians "Now that the war is becoming intensified on the economic as well as on the military front", and "Our Empire is in need". Similarly, on 8 June 1940, the *Daily Service* had admonished that even though Nigerians were not in any "position to vote millions out of the public treasury towards the Imperial Government's war expenditure, which must now be running to several million pounds daily", they could help in many other ways, "if only government would indicate in

what way ...”

The unanimous support for monetary and material contributions from the press was significant for at least four reasons. One, the newspapers published in Lagos, the seat of the colonial government enjoyed country-wide circulation and coverage. The *Nigerian Daily Times*, *West African Pilot*, and the *Daily Service* posted average daily circulations of 40,000, 17,000 and 10,000 copies, respectively during the period,²³ and were, therefore, positioned to widely disseminate the idea which they canvassed. Two, different segments of the Nigerian population patronized the newspapers, in varying degrees. For instance, the *Daily Service* enjoyed the patronage of NYM supporters, including Lagos-based Yoruba elite, rural-based traditional leaders and their supporters throughout the Western provinces.²⁴ *The Pilot*, on the other hand, was very popular among the youths of colonial Nigeria, Igbo and non-Igbo alike, previously marginalized groups who saw Azikiwe’s success as a symbol of their own “achievements and emancipation”.²⁵ Even Yoruba elements, who were not satisfied with the conservatism and moderation characteristic of the leadership provided by the Lagos elite, also gave their support to Azikiwe and his newspapers. In fact, there is no doubt that the newspapers reflected public opinion and guided government policy.²⁶ Their readers included both Christians and Muslims, none of whom constituted any distinct significant bloc or pressure group in support of or opposition to the war, or published any nationally circulated daily newspaper which articulated or publicized any distinct position on the war.²⁷ At any rate the widely circulated publications of the American-based Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, including books and tracts read largely by Jehovah’s Witnesses, a sect that was opposed to the war and to all earthly governments and kingdoms remained completely prohibited from circulation throughout the duration of the war.²⁸ Three, the press enjoyed the confidence of Nigerian people who looked up to it and its practitioners for guidance and information. This was because pressmen articulated the yearnings, aspirations and grievances of the readers with an “enthusiasm which lacked journalistic dispassion”, and viewed themselves as “pilots, guardians, spokesmen, defenders, sentinels, monitors and advocates” of the people.²⁹

This overwhelming rapport of the press with its readership could be traced to the immediate pre-war years following the inauguration of popular journalism in 1937, by the *West African Pilot*. The latter gave voice to previously voiceless rural dwellers, semi-educated urban workers of various shades and affiliations and forever broke the bourgeois leanings of the Victorian press which had preceded it. In thus giving publicity to all classes of Nigerians, the press of the Azikiwe era aroused a mass audience like never before in the history of Nigeria.³⁰ In fact, “for the first time, the reading public was not merely a privileged coastal intelligentsia but a relatively wide cross-section of the population.”³¹ Thus, the low level of literacy in Nigeria-about

17 percent of Southern Nigerians above the age of seven were literate in the Roman script by 1952-³² notwithstanding, the press could mobilize the people. This was because even illiterate villagers enthusiastically had the contents of newspapers read to them by their fairly literate relations³³, and especially in the hinterland, newspapers were passed from hand to hand.³⁴ Indeed, the population, even though mostly illiterate, longed for “knowledge and reading material”³⁵ to keep it abreast of developments around it. Four, the lifestyle of the population still emphasized a common communitarian ethos, whereby family and kinship ties remained so strong that families and friends could gather to have the content of a newspaper read even aloud to the hearing of all.³⁶ It is common knowledge that one newspaper was circulated among at least ten readers, while others disseminated by word of mouth information, which they gleaned from the newspapers.³⁷ It was by reading and interpreting news to illiterate rural folk, that discussion of affairs of the day was engendered. The views of the pressmen, local Nigerians, who could write and speak the white man’s language and dispute with the colonial overlord in his own terms were applauded and identified with. It is in this sense that the “high prestige attaching to education” and the “great authority”,³⁸ which the written word tended to command over the illiterate and semi-literate folk can be understood. Thus could also be explained the effectiveness of the press as a great mobilization instrument. As Coleman aptly puts it, “Nigerians throughout the country were for the first time permitted the stimulation of vicarious participation,”³⁹ by newspapers which wielded an immense influence by functioning as disseminators and purveyors of information and opinions, especially given the political milieu in which they operated. Indeed, without television and a developed radio service to compete with for audience, the press constituted the true mass media of wartime Nigeria, deploying much space and resources to mobilize support for and ensure the success of the Nigeria Win the War Fund.

In fact, the newspapers sank their differences to support war efforts. They thus provided a leeway for the government to encourage more sacrifices towards winning the war. The government, as reported by *West Africa* on 25 May 1940, held the view that it was beyond the means of Nigeria to provide munitions, and thus capitalized on the goodwill and unanimity of the press, which seemed to sink the political differences of its owners and publishers in support of war efforts to get the press to inaugurate the war fund scheme. Therefore, the *Nigerian Daily Times* based its announcement of the launch of the Nigeria –Win- the- War fund on government’s conviction, as suggested by articles and letters in the daily press, about Nigerians’ genuine anxiety to “give further and practical proof of loyalty to the British Empire”. In its editorial of 15 June 1940, the newspaper conveyed government’s desire for a “gift of money to be devoted to the purchase of some definite instrument of war, for example a tank or an aero plane”, through local initiative. By inaugurating the fund, whose target it set as a tank, which cost only £20,000, the *Nigerian*

Daily Times helped the government out of a tight corner. The *Daily Times* conferred credibility on the scheme by alluding to the editorial opinions of the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Service* as justification for its inauguration. However, in commending the win- the- war fund to the “wholehearted and generous support of our readers”, the *Nigerian Daily Times* left no one in doubt that it assumed responsibility for the scheme whose inauguration already had the blessings of the nationalist press, as well as the colonial government of Nigeria.

Implicit in the background to the launch of the win-the- war fund was a healthy collaboration for work and war between two ordinarily hostile forces. In the wake of losses in men and material incurred by the Allies the Nigerian press, especially after Dunkirk, offered concrete suggestions of ways in which Nigerians could assist the colonial power in the defeat of Nazism. The governor obviously drew strength from such friendly gestures from the press, which thereby received official encouragement to implement its suggestion. To demonstrate the importance and urgency attached to the fund and the expectation that all sections of Nigeria, including Africans, Asians, and Europeans should subscribe to it, the *Nigerian Daily Times* published the first list of subscribers and the initial subscription of £477.10. Contributors included the governor, the administrative bureaucracy, the private sector and individuals (Table 1).

TABLE 1. List of Initial Contributors to the Nigeria- Win- the- War Fund

| Identity of Contributor | Amount Contributed | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| | £ | S | D |
| His Excellency | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| J.N. Zarpas and Co. | 251 | 0 | 0 |
| Administrative staff of the colony | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| Irvin and Bonnar | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| The Hon. A. Alakija and Mrs. Alakija | 21 | 0 | 0 |
| E.F.A. Tomlinson, Esq. | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| Dr. & Mrs. Ellis | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| A. Le Mare, Esq. | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| B. Papadopulos, Esq. | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Total | 477 | 10 | 0 |

Source: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 17 June 1940:1

The Press and the Sustenance of Popular Enthusiasm for the Scheme

Publication of details of subscriptions achieved the desired effect. It engendered confidence in the transparency of the scheme as well as a competitive spirit among various classes in the society. Besides, the publication of the target sum of £20,000, gave the impression that the task was light, and Nigeria could afford it. Indeed, the Win- the -War Fund was generally well received by Nigerians, who enthusiastically supported and generously donated to it. Such was the enthusiasm that on 30 September 1940, barely three months after the inauguration of the fund, the *Nigerian Daily Times* announced that the £25,000 mark had been achieved and set a new target of £50,000, unilaterally. It assured subscribers that it had cabled £25,000 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (SOS) for the purchase of aircraft and urged Nigerians to double their efforts towards the attainment of the new target. The *Nigerian Daily Times* had obviously gauged popular enthusiasm for the fund, from the increasing subscriptions mailed to its General Manager, and determined to exploit the Nigerian goodwill in shifting the fund's initial target. It would not have made economic sense to wind up the scheme when the people were still willing to donate to it. Nigerians accepted the new target with equanimity. A healthy competition developed as each province and/or groups strove with fanfare to out-subscribe the others.

Nigerian communities, individuals and groups adopted diverse methods to raise money towards the success of the Win the War Fund. Committees were set up to coordinate fund raising efforts and proceeds were forwarded in regular installments to the *Nigerian Daily Times*. Raffle draws and dances were also organized to boost contributions to the fund. Organized labor and native administrations, including emirates and district colonial communities actively contributed to the scheme in a manner that engendered and sustained a competitive spirit. Above all, Europeans, either as social units or distinct racial groups, identified with the scheme by sending their contributions to the *Nigerian Daily Times* which, by publishing all such contributions on the same column as Nigerians' contributions practically demonstrated the unity of the human race in the fight to overthrow Nazism (Table 2).

Table 2. Contributions to the Win- the- War Fund, Aug. 1940

| Contributors | Amount Contributed | | |
|--|--------------------|----|---|
| | £ | S | D |
| Abeokuta Committee Win the War Fund (2nd Contribution) | 1021 | 3 | 4 |
| Ilesha NA & People (1st Contribution). | 178 | 9 | 4 |
| Benue Province Europeans | 63 | 19 | 6 |
| Benin European Club | 50 | 19 | 6 |

| | | | |
|--|---------------|----------|----------|
| Port-Harcourt Club proceeds of the Mrs. W. Mac Donald's Nightly Raffle | 36 | 4 | 0 |
| Benue Province Africans | 25 | 7 | 0 |
| African Staff British West African | 18 | 0 | 0 |
| Timber Co. Ltd. | | | |
| Nigerian Union of Teachers | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| Royal Hotel Dances (4th Contribution). | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Alhaji Lagos | 1 | 17 | 6 |
| Sokoto Emirate | 5,216 | 11 | 1 |
| Gwandu Emirate | 885 | 7 | 1 |
| Yauri Emirate | 40 | 0 | 0 |
| Illo District | 33 | 8 | 1 |
| Sokoto Province | 9610 | 3 | 7 |
| Emir, chiefs and Peoples of Zaria Province | 1674 | 3 | 7 |
| Chiefs and People of Bauchi Province (Further Contribution) | 294 | 0 | 0 |
| Buea, Proceeds of dance at Residency | 140 | 1 | 5 |
| Benue Province (including £100 from Anonymous Benue No. 2) | 125 | 0 | 0 |
| The Club Hitler Club (1st installment) | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Subscriptions to the Fund | 79,936 | 5 | 3 |

Sources: *Nigerian Daily Times* 31 October 1940:1; 18 September 1941: 1; 27 August 1940:5

Unique contributions from the traditional aristocracy of Northern Nigeria, however, deserve some mention. Emirs of the Northern provinces made extra contributions to the fund, reflecting the varied sizes of their emirates' resources and salaries of the native authorities. The monthly contributions constituted five percent of each Emir's salary. In the regularity and scale of such subscriptions, the Northern emirates were unique in their contributions which tended to suggest official inducement. Yet, the centralized structure of the Sokoto Caliphate in which authority issued from the Caliph, the religious inclination of the people and, above all, the close alliance between the colonial overlords and the Northern elite largely accounted for this unique support for the fund (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Monthly Contributions to the War Fund by Emirs of the Northern Provinces, 1942

| Identity of Contributor (Emir) | Normal Monthly Contribution | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| | £ | S | D |
| Abuja | 2 | 5 | 0 |

| | | | |
|-----------|----|----|---|
| Adamawa | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Agaie | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Bauchi | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Bida | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Biu | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Borno | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Bussa | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Dubai | 1 | 5 | 0 |
| Fika | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Gombe | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Gorgoram | 3 | 5 | 0 |
| Gumel | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Gwandu | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Hadeija | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Igbira | 9 | 10 | 0 |
| Ilorin | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Jamaare | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Kaiama | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Kano | 35 | 0 | 0 |
| Katagum | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Katsina | 19 | 3 | 4 |
| Kazaure | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Keffi | 1 | 6 | 6 |
| Kontagora | 3 | 15 | 0 |
| Lafiagi | 1 | 13 | 4 |
| Lapai | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Misau | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Muri | 8 | 10 | 0 |
| Nassarawa | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Pategi | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Shendam | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Sokoto | 30 | 0 | 0 |
| Wamba | 12 | 6 | 0 |
| Yauri | 2 | 7 | 6 |
| Zaria | 10 | 0 | 0 |

Source: *Nigeria Daily Times*, 24 April 1942:6.

Contributions from Eastern Nigeria, unlike the North, reflected the diffuse political structure of the Eastern provinces and the individualism of the people. Women are also mentioned in a distinct contribution, just as groups of African workers featured prominently in their regular contributions to the

scheme (Tables 4-5).

TABLE 4. Contributions to the Fund, 1940-1942

| Contributor | Amount Contributed | | |
|---|--------------------|----|----|
| | £ | S | D |
| Owerri Province Sundry Collections, Aug/Sept 1940 | 2,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Women of Ihite, Owerri town, Orlu District (Voluntary Collections) Nov. 1940 | 3 | 8 | 10 |
| A lady from the Eastern Provinces: proceeds from sales of Artistic productions. | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| Education staff Buea, (March Contribution) | 5 | 6 | 10 |
| Mallam Saidi: Buea | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Marine African staff, Onitsha (March Contribution) | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Marine African staff, Onitsha (January Contribution) | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Marine African staff, Onitsha (February Contribution) | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| G.E. Charles, Provincial Administration Degema | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Football/Dance Organized By Police Eket | 6 | 4 | 9 |
| People of Ogoni Tribal Area, Opobo | 135 | 0 | 0 |
| Staff of Ogwashi-Uku Government School (February Contribution) | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| Staff of Ogwashi-Uku Government School (March Contribution) | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| Prison Staff, Afikpo for March 1942 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| S.A. Obi Esq. Government School, Afikpo | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Staff Education Department Owerri Province, Port Harcourt | 0 | 16 | 4 |
| Staff of the Education Office, Port Harcourt (February Contribution) | 0 | 7 | 6 |
| Staff of Government School, Bonny for March | 0 | 16 | 4 |
| Staff of the Education Office, Port Harcourt (March Contribution) | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Education office, Eket, March 1942 | | 5 | 11 |
| E.E. Ekpenyong Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| E.O. Ita, Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| J.A. Agbuchen, Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| S. Uku Esq. Education Department, Abak | | 1 | 6 |

| | | | |
|---|----------------|----------|----------|
| O.R.U. Essien Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| H.I. Acholem, Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| P.K. Inyama, Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| I. Ogbonnaya, Esq. Education Department, Abak | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 104,559 | 9 | 7 |

SOURCES: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 17 Oct 1940:6; 12 Dec. 1940:6, 1 May 1942:3.

TABLE 5. Contribution to the Fund, June 1943.

| Contributor | Amount Contributed | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| | £ | S | D |
| Abakaliki Division | 2 | 12 | 6 |
| Ogoja Division: | | | |
| Chief Ekpo of Ukelle North | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Irruan Clan | 1 | 8 | 0 |
| Nkim Elders | 0 | 12 | 0 |
| Osokun Elders | 1 | 15 | 0 |
| Mbube Priest Chiefs | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Nkum Elders | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Akaju Elders | 0 | 9 | 3 |
| Northern Ukelle Elders | 7 | 10 | 0 |
| Obubra Division: | | | |
| Egup Ipa Clan | 8 | 17 | 0 |
| Bahumunu Clan Council | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Amount Subscribed to date | 135,927 | 16 | 8 |

Source: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 8 June 1943:1

The evidence suggests that despite the absence of a concrete record detailing percentage of contributions to the scheme on the bases of nationality, ethnicity or race, Nigerians of all classes contributed over 90 percent of the fund. For instance, specific mention of European contributions by June

1943 when £135, 927 16s 8d had been subscribed amounted to only £52, 10 shillings and 2 pence, or four percent. Given the enormous privileges enjoyed by Europeans in Nigeria at the time and the rising cost of living vis-à-vis acute unemployment and war time exertions of Nigerians, the huge sacrifices represented by the above figures come into bold relief.

In general, traditional rulers led their subjects by example and thereby facilitated mass mobilization in support of the fund. A notable example was provided by the paramount ruler, *Awujale* of Ijebu Ode, in Nigeria's colonial Western provinces, who had the scheme explained to his subjects through the medium of his agent that rang a bell throughout the kingdom in July 1940. The message taken round the community was that (i) contribution to the scheme was entirely voluntary, (ii) the collection which was effected through private individuals did not amount to a levy or tax by government or the native administration, (iii) tickets were issued to contributors for convenience and accountability and not to track defaulters, and (iv) the paramount ruler, his chiefs, and native administration staff had voluntarily subscribed to the fund, and expected the wholehearted support of the community for "the deserving cause, which is voluntary help towards the victorious prosecution of the war by the Forces of the British Empire".⁴⁰ So effective was the mobilization that by mid 1943 the new target of £50,000, which was set by the fourth quarter of 1940 had been more than twice exceeded. Indeed, every step was taken to sustain popular enthusiasm for the fund.

It would appear that Nigerians were deceived at the inception of the fund to believe that only one aero plane or a tank which cost £20,000 was the target of the scheme. However, indications that the fund had targeted the purchase of many tanks and aero planes, instead of one tank or an aero plane as announced by the *Nigerian Daily Times* had emerged a few days after the inauguration of the scheme. The British resident in Oyo province, A.R.A. Dickins had informed the Ibadan Native Administration Council meeting that the fund was established to finance the purchase of "tanks, aero planes and ammunition for the British Empire."⁴¹ Besides, the information officer at the Nigerian Secretariat, D.C. Fletcher had drawn the attention of residents to the fact that even though the *Nigerian Daily Times* inaugurated the fund, it was the governor's desire that it be promptly and generously supported.⁴² The information officer had further directed that the scheme be given the widest publicity possible. Consequently, residents across Nigeria alerted all their subordinate officers, notably district officers to comply with the directive. These, in turn, attended native administration council meetings, where they interacted with chiefs and elders of communities who, in turn, emphasized the importance of the fund to their communities.

The evidence, as the Ijebu Ode experience illustrates, does not suggest that Nigerians were thereby compelled to donate to the scheme. Instead, the press and government, to stimulate a healthy competition in the people for

donation to the fund, and to get Nigerians committed to its success, devised ingenious ways, which made Nigerians to view and accept the fund as theirs. They, therefore, constantly inundated the Nigerian Secretariat with suggestions for its sustenance and success, suggestions which received adequate publicity in the press, especially the *Nigerian Daily Times*.

One such ingenious suggestion came from a certain M.C.M. Bridges of Calabar. Her scheme, which was designed for propaganda purposes, was forwarded to the Acting Chief Secretary to the colonial government of Nigeria, who copied all residents in Nigeria for implementation. The core of the suggestion, whose implementation would amount to an additional poll tax on Nigerians, was that if the scheme was to achieve a resounding success, a principal source to be tapped remained the Nigerian masses, from who could be realized over £200,000, "If every man, woman and child of Nigeria's twenty million inhabitants gave two pence half penny". The money could conveniently fund the purchase of "more than a full squadron of the latest fighter aero planes, or half a squadron of the latest bomber aero planes..." to be deployed in battle against Nazi Germany, "bearing the name of Nigeria as Nigeria's contribution to the war effort of a United Empire". Bridges hinged her suggestion on similar fund raising activities in other less populated British colonies, notably the Federated Malay States and the Straits Settlements, with vast rubber and tin resources which contributed over one million pounds, as well as Nyasaland, Kenya, British Guiana and Trinidad which donated thousands of pounds "to help Britain in her fight for world freedom."⁴³

Of equal importance was the collecting and cracking of palm kernels competition among school children in Nigeria, a peculiar fund raising activity which had been initiated at a time when the low price paid for palm kernels had led to the abandonment of the economic activity by the women folk. Among schools in Ishan,⁴⁴ in Nigeria's colonial Benin province, a monthly prize was awarded to the school which cracked the most kernels per pupil, thereby generating and donating over £100 to the fund, unlike their Warri province⁴⁵ counterparts who instituted a so-called Scholar's Council that imposed fines of additional cups of kernel on pupils for breaches of discipline. But, it was among the Okeigbo School children in Nigeria's Western provinces that the kernel-cracking activity was so meticulously organized that records were kept. For instance, among the pupils of St. Luke's School, Okeigbo, in March 1943, every pupil submitted at least one cigarette tin full of kernel weekly to the class captain who, every Friday submitted the quantity collected by the whole class for the week to the senior boy of the school. The collection was centrally weighed under the supervision of a teacher, and recorded on a chart. Prizes were subsequently awarded for the best collections; the higher classes tended on balance to collect more kernels, perhaps due to their age and maturity (Table 6).

**TABLE 6. Kernel Collections in St Luke Primary School, Okeigbo
May 1943**

| Class | No of Pupils | Amount Collected | Average Collected |
|----------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Std. VI | 14 | 761bs | 551bs |
| Std. V | 29 | 981bs | 331bs |
| Std. IV | 17 | 891bs | 5251bs |
| Std. III | 33 | 341bs | 1031bs |
| Std. II | 36 | 741bs | 2051bs |
| Std. I | 35 | 791bs | 2251bs |

Source: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 16 June 1943: 1

Nigerians' Support for the Win-the-War Fund: Voluntary or Compulsory?

What is intriguing is why colonial Nigerians would willingly, as it were, sacrifice so much towards the success of the Nigeria -Win- the -War Fund. The answer is not far to seek. To be sure, the evidence does not suggest that Nigerians were overtly compelled to contribute in their diverse ways to the success of the fund. In the circumstances of colonial rule with Nigeria as a subject territory, the contributions could well qualify as 'tributes', which Britain extracted "from Nigeria during the war."⁴⁶ This view accords with the thrust of German propaganda which portrayed Africans as being harshly treated and compelled against their will to contribute to Britain's win the war efforts, generally. Crowder, however, dismisses the suggestion as out of tune with the enthusiasm with which ordinary Nigerians and their traditional rulers contributed to the scheme, in Northern Nigeria, for example.⁴⁷

Similar enthusiasm had characterized contributions to the scheme in the Western provinces, even though colonial officials tended to show more than a passing interest in local activities geared towards getting more money for the fund. For instance, Governor Bourdillon through the medium of the *Daily Times* of 1 August 1941 had enthusiastically endorsed for implementation the suggestion made in a letter to the *Daily Times* of 31 July 1941, by E. F. A. Tomlison, a colonial official, about a fundraising activity, "Club Hitler" Club, to fund the purchase of a Nigerian Squadron valued at £100,000. The governor had, probably with this suggestion in mind, officially expressed the hope that the Nigeria-Win-the-War Fund would achieve the £100,000 mark to facilitate the purchase of a squadron and fighters by Nigeria in support of the war effort. It is instructive that the Sokoto province consequently contributed £9,000 to augment the £7,000 it had contributed in the preceding year. The resident, Oyo province had held up these contributions for emulation by the people of Oyo who were noted for important chiefs and populous towns. But the people had exercised their discretion about the most convenient time to raise funds, not earlier than 1942 when they would have been paid for their cocoa produce. In fact, colonial officials on the spot exercised caution in pushing for fund raising so as not to give the local people the impression that they were being made to pay additional tax, and thereby provide an occasion for violent

resistance.⁴⁸ Thus, although the governor had earlier directed in October 1940, that facilities be provided for government employees to subscribe to the fund through monthly deductions from their salaries, yet, there is strong evidence that such deductions were at the workers' instance. Such was the case of Ijebu Remo Native Administration Staff Union which resolved to establish a thrift society into which every member would pay five per cent of his monthly salary throughout the duration of the war, to be placed at the disposal of the colonial government, at no interest, for the prosecution of the war.⁴⁹

Such apparent voluntary contributions from different classes and groups in Nigeria to mushrooming societies, canteen schemes and war funds which raked in thousands of pounds duly remitted from Nigeria to the metropolitan organizations in charge of them,⁵⁰ were a bewildering feature of Nigerian sacrifices for Allied victory as early as 1940. In fact, the war funds were so numerous that the colonial state tended to be rather open minded in its receptivity to their activities. Colonial Nigerians liberally responded to the situation which they viewed as a manifestation of the dire straits in which the British had found themselves in the aftermath of the German blitzkrieg. Thus amidst contributions to the win-the-war fund, the *Oni*, paramount ruler of Ife, Western provinces, donated £500 through the colonial district officer, for the purchase of a mobile canteen to provide succor for victims of the German blitzkrieg in London. The money had been collected in shillings from 10,000 of his subjects. Such contributions continued throughout Oyo province, and by the end of 1944, had amounted to £37,733 (Table 7).

TABLE 7. Total Collections for Oyo Province for various War Funds at the end of December 1944

| S/NO | Name of War Fund | Amount Collected |
|------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | War Relief Fund | £15,580 |
| 2 | Win the War Fund | £16, 877 |
| 3 | Greek Relief Fund | £737 |
| 4 | Crown Princess of Greece Relief Fund | £637 |
| 5 | Women Voluntary Service | £2,523 |
| 6 | Prisoners of War Fund | £272 |
| 7 | Troops Comfort | £190 |
| 8 | Red Cross | £167 |
| 9 | Mobile Canteen (Oshogbo) | £750 |
| 10 | Grand Total | £37,733 |

Source: NAI Oyo Prof. 1 File No. 2920

Beneficiaries of contributions such as this were not limited to imperial Britain, but extended to other European war-afflicted areas (Table 8).

TABLE 8. Beneficiaries of Nigerian Contributions to Various War Relief Organizations, 1943

| S/NO | Distribution | Amount £ \$ d |
|--|--|------------------|
| 1 | People of Bombed Britain through Lord Mayor of London's Air Raid Relief Fund | 7,168 |
| 2 | Royal Red Cross | 15,500 |
| 3 | King Georges Fund for Sailors | 13,000 |
| 4 | Shipwrecked Mariners Society | 9,500 |
| 5 | Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund | 6,800 |
| 6 | St Dunstan's (for men rendered blind in the war) | 6,000 |
| 7 | Various Charities in aid of the People of Malta | 9,660 |
| 8 | Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund | 6,000 |
| To the Starving Peoples of the Occupied Countries: | | |
| 9 | Polish Relief Fund | 4,700 |
| 10 | Greek War Relief Fund | 2,000 |
| 11 | Crown Princess of Greece Fund | 500 |
| 12 | Jugoslavia Relief Fund | 1,500 |
| 13 | Lady Cripps Relief for China Fund | 1,500 |
| 14 | Nigerian Disabled Soldiers' Fund | 1,500 |
| 15 | Nairobi Red Cross Account for Nigerian Troops | 550 |
| 16 | Committee for Welfare of Colonial People in the UK | 200 |
| 17 | Wharf Inn, Apapa | 1,500 |
| 18 | Africa Soldiers Canteen | 650 |
| 19 | Services Inn, Lagos | 550 |
| 20 | Seamen's Institute, Sapele | 285 |
| 21 | Anchor Inn, Port Harcourt | 200 |
| 22 | Ships Inn, Calabar | 200 |
| 23 | Tugwell House, Lagos | 600 |
| TOTAL | | 85,363 |

Source: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 23 October 1943:1.

For instance, France benefitted from medical comforts, stores and supplies, including ambulances and convalescent homes for nurses and officers worth £30,000-£40,000, while Finland and Norway similarly benefitted to the tune of £12,000. The Secretary of State for Colonies had, in fact, underscored the importance of such donations to war charities when he telegraphed British West African governors on the need to mobilize their colonial subjects to contribute money for the purchase of small mobile canteens which would serve hot foods and drinks to those who had been bombed out of their homes and were faced with the grim specter of spending long nights in the wintery cold.⁵¹ In their response, Nigerians also made donations in kind towards providing food for the military (table 9)

TABLE 9. Contributions of Yams towards Feeding the Military by Community Leaders

| S/NO | Contributors | Gifts of Yam |
|------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | The Aleruwa of Eruwa | 400 tubers of yams |
| 2 | The Bale of Ogbomosho | 1000 tubers of yams |
| 3 | The Olosi of Osi | 1000 tubers of yams |
| 4 | The Alawe of Ilawe | 2600 tubers of yams |
| 5 | The Alara of Ara | 1800 tubers of yams |
| 6 | The Alade Community of Idanre Ondo Province | 600 tubers of yams |
| 7 | The Oleja of Okemessi | 800 tubers of yams |
| 8 | The Olukere of Ikere | 31 tubers of yams |

Source: *Nigerian Daily Times*, 8 June 1943:1

It is, therefore, more rewarding to view Nigerian contributions as voluntary, even if the fear of the unknown partly sustained such contributions. In this connection, the voluntary contributions could be ascribed to five main reasons. First, Nigerians were apprehensive of any possibility of colonial domination by Nazi Germany, given its ideology of racism. In the circumstance, they chose their colonial master, who had forcibly imposed his rule on them but with whom they were familiar, Britain, instead of Germany, a prospective colonial master whose utterances foreshadowed doom for them in the event of Britain's defeat. Their ready response to calls for substantial contributions, including subscribing generously to numerous war funds was their demonstration of a preference for British rule.⁵² Second, and a corollary of this explanation, is that Nigerians believed the opinions expressed in the local press that they should support the win-the-war scheme to speed up the defeat of Nazism. The colonial government seemed to capitalize and key into Nigerians' loathe of German rule to urge a whole-hearted support for the scheme. By contributing to the purchase of war equipment, therefore, Nigerians no doubt believed they were contributing their own quota towards the speedy defeat of Hitler and Nazism. The evidence shows that British wartime propaganda was a total failure and had no effect, whatsoever⁵³. It can thus be categorically stated that the Nigerian press was largely responsible for Nigerians' embrace and unstinted support for the success of the scheme. The Nigerian press had portrayed Germany as the aggressor, which the whole world hated, and Britain as fighting Hitler with the backing of all humanity. German aggression and lawlessness on the eve of World War II certainly disintegrated the system of collective security and tended to justify might as right, even though totalitarian states, like Italy and Japan actively deployed similar tactics, thereby casting Britain in the mold of defender of endangered humanity. In fact, frontline nationalists who were also the leading journalists of the period, notably Herbert Macaulay, and Nnamdi Azikiwe lent credence

to this position.

For instance, Azikiwe, Nigeria's most charismatic nationalist journalist and politician of the World War II era toured towns in the Western and Eastern provinces during which he organized football matches, among other activities, to raise fund for war charities. The *Daily Service* and its publishers the Nigeria Youth Movement also encouraged subscriptions to the fund in diverse ways. On his part, Herbert Macaulay, the doyen of Nigerian nationalism broadcast to Nigerians, urging their support for the war effort. In one of such broadcasts, he assured that "Victory for Democracy and Freedom for mankind depend on our contributions, and our determination and our loyalty", and enjoined Nigerians to "rally round the Union Jack".⁵⁴

The third reason contributors to the fund sacrificed so much to ensure victory for the United Nations, as the Allies came to be known as from 1942, was their conviction that they were contributing to a worthy and noble cause. It was their expectation that at the end of the hostilities, when the roll of honor was called their names would not be left out. This was the major reason traditional rulers throughout Nigeria encouraged their subjects to support the scheme by all means. The *Oba* of Benin emphasized this point when he admonished the chiefs and people of Benin City in 1942:

*I make this appeal not because the United Nations cannot win the war even if the Benins fail to contribute their quotas to the sum total of the Empire's war effort...But I do make the appeal so that when the day comes, the great day of victory won by the United Nations the worthy name of Benin may be mentioned... and... Benins may be able to say with pride 'and we, too, have helped to win the war'.*⁵⁵

The personality of Governor Bourdillon was the fourth reason for Nigerians' contributions to the Win- the- War Fund. He had engendered in them a commitment to give generously. The humility, and personal touch with which he related with Nigerians, particularly the educated elite,⁵⁶ and the publicity he accorded his gratitude for their sacrifice toward the war effort endeared him to them. The governor made regular broadcasts over the Lagos radio diffusion to acknowledge donations and praise the popular enthusiasm for the success of the fund. In such broadcasts, the governor disclosed the amount realized and how it was expended. In addition, he singled out spectacular donations and fundraising efforts for mention, without failing to commend the widow's mite. By so doing, he also publicized fundraising activities in various parts of Nigeria for emulation or adoption by sundry groups. His broadcast of 23 January 1941 was typical:

Children of the Government School at Abak wrote in sending in "these few pennies from us to the British Government to buy a bomber with

*which to bomb and defeat Hitler and his wicked agents". Similarly, various group councils in the Nnewi area in Onitsha contributed the sum of £10 each to the win-the-war fund, asking that these amounts should be deducted from their executive salaries. Also, the Nsukka Division of the Onitsha Province raised over £400 for the win-the-war fund. In Ganuwari, in the Plateau Province, the elders of Biron tribe "collected our pennies" and raised nine pounds ten shillings. The win-the-war fund has caught the popular fancy.*⁵⁷

Such acknowledgements and commendations from the highest authority in the land must have boosted the morale of Nigerians, and conferred credibility, accountability and transparency on the scheme. In fact, lack of such acknowledgements or delays in the publications of subscriptions by communities in the press led to considerable anxiety among the affected groups. It also led to suggestions for investigations into the possibility of "other sums due to the fund which have not been credited to it in respect of other provinces".⁵⁸ Given the 'Spitfire' aircraft named after their towns and provinces in recognition of their generous donations, the fund, as the *Pilot* suggested on 24 April 1941, came to be likened to the well-known self-help scheme among Africans. Finally, Nigerians expected some reward after the war by way of a gradual transfer of power, which would culminate in self-government. In anticipation of this, Azikiwe outlined a phased transfer of power to Nigerians between 1943 and 1958. His blueprint had been serialized in the *West African Pilot* for the colonial authorities to read, and inwardly digest Nigerian aspirations towards political freedom.⁵⁹ Indeed, as Nwabughuogu rightly observes, "from all indications African responses seemed to have been determined more by their desire to improve themselves than to please Britain during the war."⁶⁰

To be sure, the contributions of ordinary Nigerians to the win-the-war effort were significant. In spite of their distance from the theater of war, they appreciated the enormous sacrifices called forth by war, and readily responded to government's call for increased production of export and other commodities needed for the successful prosecution of the war. As the colonial government of Nigeria acknowledged, in many other directions, Nigerians made substantial contributions to the war effort, "accepting without demur low prices for their goods, cheerfully accommodating themselves to transport restrictions and to shortage and high cost of imported goods, providing recruits for the services and subscribing generously to numerous war funds".⁶¹ Indeed, the healthy government-press collaboration while the war lasted in the conception and execution of the Nigeria- Win- the -War Fund was remarkable. So much did they cooperate that the fund received more than its fair share of publicity of all war funds and war efforts. The weight of responsibility in this regard became too heavy for the General Manager of the *Nigerian Daily*

Times to bear, having undertaken at the inception of the fund to handle all subscription to it. The government decisively intervened and ensured that the work of coordination, including receipt of all subscriptions to the fund was taken over by the Nigerian Secretariat. Such healthy collaboration ensured that the fund became the success story that it was. By the time it was closed in October 1945, over £150,000 had been realized.

As noted elsewhere, close to £140,000 of this amount had been realized by June 1943. In effect, the force that galvanized people for action in favor of the fund became slack by 1944. Governor Arthur Frederick Richards had replaced the retired, ailing Governor Bourdillon in December 1943. He had come from Jamaica, where the record of his relations with the educated elite was abysmal, determined to stem the tide of Nigerian nationalism. The old-style colonial autocracy which he represented obviously hurt popular enthusiasm for the fund. The governor had shown scant regard for Nigerian nationalist aspirations by imposing an unpopular constitution on the country, even as he triggered a general strike by Nigerian workers over his refusal to grant wage increases to cushion them from the effects of war-induced hardship and high cost of living index.⁶²

Nonetheless, the Win the War Fund achieved the objectives for which it was inaugurated. In August 1943, a Mosquito Bomber, named Nigeria was purchased for £20,000. Besides, the Nigerian squadron consisting of aircraft bought from the fund was emplaced by April 1942. The 25 planes in the fleet, each bearing the name of each of Nigeria's 23 provinces, as well as Lagos and Colony were actively engaged in the war, and by April 1942 were reported to have destroyed nearly 50 enemy aircraft. Also, in January 1945, 13 Bren gun carriers were bought from the fund and handed over to the British Ministry of Supply on behalf of Nigeria by His Grace, the Duke of Devonshire, at a ceremony, which the *Nigerian Daily Times* reported on 10 November 1945 was attended by Bernard Bourdillon. The newspaper had perceptively attributed the Nigerian feat to the fact that "the poor gave of their little and others contributed generously". As *West Africa* reported on 29 December 1945, Britain appreciated Nigeria's sacrifices and gifts with a mere gold disc, which the *Nigerian Daily Times* observed on 17 September 1947 was supplemented by a plaque from the Ministry of Aircraft Production in 1947. Nigerians justifiably felt shortchanged. As the *Daily Service* editorialized on 7 June 1946, Nigerians complained that:

... the oppressed people of the British Empire sallied forth to fight for Britain because they hoped Britain would on the morrow of victory establish for them a claim to the human rights against Nazism ... The Nazi brand of oppression and persecution, of bad faith and brute force has been completely obliterated but the British brand, equally vile and obnoxious still lingers and we are victims of it... A nation,

which fought and staked so much for liberty and freedom still has India in fetters and holds millions of so-called backward peoples in a political and economic bondage. What are we to rejoice over? Victory over what? This is the time for sober reflection.

Conclusion

Barely nine months after the outbreak of World War II, Germany inflicted heavy losses in men and material on the Allied forces at the famous battle of Dunkirk, and proceeded by mid-June 1940 to overrun France, which capitulated, to the consternation and despondency of imperial Britain. It was at this point in the war when the morale of the Allies was at its nadir that the Nigerian press, with the active encouragement of the colonial government, inaugurated the Nigeria- win-the-war fund for the purchase of war equipment for the defense of the ‘mother country’. The ready response of Nigerians to calls for substantial contributions, including subscribing generously to numerous war funds was their demonstration of a preference for British rule, and faith in the opinions expressed in the local press that such support would speed up the defeat of Nazism. By contributing to the purchase of war equipment, therefore, Nigerians no doubt believed they were contributing their own quota towards the attainment of the British declared objective of world freedom, which Nigerians had extended to include freedom from colonial rule. The Nigerian press had portrayed Germany as the aggressor, which the whole world hated, and Britain as fighting Hitler with the backing of all humanity. It was through the efforts and admonitions of the press, including nationalist-journalists like Macaulay, Azikiwe and Ikoli that popular enthusiasm for the success of the fund was achieved so much so that the Nigeria -win-the-war fund achieved the singular distinction of being the most popular of the numerous war funds in wartime Nigeria. Indeed, despite their distance from the theater of war, Nigerians appreciated the enormous sacrifices called forth by war, and readily responded to government’s call for increased production of export and other commodities, and made diverse other substantial contributions, including providing recruits for the services and subscribing generously to numerous war funds needed for the successful prosecution of the war. In fact, the healthy government-press collaboration while the war lasted in the conception and execution of the Nigeria- Win- the- War Fund was remarkable.

In effect, the Second World War era press in Nigeria had much more than a nuisance value to the colonial regime. It was also constructive and indeed, collaborative in the war against Nazism. Also, contrary to the conventional wisdom on the subject, the distance of Nigerians from the theaters of war did not make them indifferent to the war, insensitive to government’s appeal for self-sacrifice nor cushion them from the effects of the world conflagration. The press brought home to Nigerians the news and grim implications of the

war, and mobilized them to fully support all measures geared towards victory for the Allies. In their support of British war aims, wartime measures and war funds as a result of which they sacrificed so much, they expected some rewards in form of wide ranging reforms and ultimate self government after the war. They faithfully paid their dues, politically, economically and socially, but regretted at the end of the war, while Europeans celebrated victory over Nazism, that colonialism had taken them for a ride.

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