

AN OPEN LETTER TO PROFESSOR ANGO ABDULLAHI

13th June, 2017

Prof. Ango Abdullahi,

Our attention has been drawn to your statements in the Nigerian Vanguard of Saturday June 10, 2017. You are alleged to be in support of the call on the Igbos to quit. It is unfortunate, grossly unfortunate, that a scholar of your caliber will be so partisan as to be unable to see the wisdom in retaining Nigeria as a corporate entity. I know you have, in the past, been anti-Igbo. One would have thought that our education exposes us to a level where we can live even with our enemies. You said in the alleged publication that, “each year up to the time Nigeria gained its independence, none of the two regions East and West was able to produce for its self. I mean none of the Western and Eastern Regions had the money to effectively run the affairs of the region until they got financial support from the Northern Region” It is this assumption of yours that I want to address.

First of all it is not true that the North had bailed out Eastern Region or the Western Region. But you claim that even before independence none of the regions could live without Northern subvention. Let me draw your attention to the facts before independence. You should read W.M.M Geary’s work titled “*Nigeria under the British Rule*” published by the Cass and Company Limited, London (1927). May I draw your attention especially to pages 124 and 125. You will see published, **General Revenue for the Northern and Southern Protectorates before the Amalgamation** and the Total Revenue originating from the North (figures in pounds), 1903 to 1913. You will see that contrary to your argument, it was indeed the South that was subsidizing the North. I am reproducing the tables here for clarity.

TABLE 1. 1

**GENERAL REVENUE FOR THE NORTHERN AND THE
SOUTHERN PROTECTORATES BEFORE THE
AMALGAMATION AND THE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
REVENUE ORIGINATING FROM THE NORTH (figures in
pounds) 1903 – 1913**

Year	Southern Nigeria General Revenue	Northern Nigeria General Revenue Including Jangali	Total Revenue Before Amalgamation	Difference Between the North And the	Difference Between The North And the
1903	426,860	8,433	435,296	418,427	1.94%
1904	550,012	20,864	570,876	529,148	3.65
1905	572,065	34,063	606,128	538,002	5.62
1906	1,008,717	61,158	1,149,875	1,027,559	5.32
1907	1,459,554	91,287	1,550,841	1,368,267	5.89
1908	1,387,915	124,494	1,512,409	1,263,421	8.23
1909	1,361,891	144,711	1,506,602	1,217,180	9.61
1910	1,933,235	179,630	2,112,865	1,753,605	8.50
1911	1,956,176	217,832	2,174,108	1,738,244	10.02
1912	2,235,412	154,828	2,390,240	2,080,584	6.48
1913	2,668,198	274,078	2,942,276	2,394,120	9.32

Figures are given pounds

*The increase of revenue of 1906 was a result of the amalgamation of the South. The revenue was for nine months only.

SOURCE: W.M.N Geary, Nigeria Under British Rule,
(London: Cass and Company, Limited, 1927) pp. 124 and 125

TABLE 1. 2

**PERCENTAGE OF NORTHERN NIGERIA REVENUE PAID BY
THE SOUTH AND THE IMPERIAL GRANT
(Figures in Pounds)**

Period	Lagos	South and Imperial ground	South Alone	North	Imperial
1900 – 1901	1.79				
1901 – 1902	2.97	97.88	32.97	2.12	64.91
1902 – 1903		98.61	10.68	1.39	87.93
1903 – 1904		95.43	14.20	4.57	81.23
1904 – 1905		89.44	9.39	10.56	79.61
1905 – 1906		81.41	8.94	16.80	72.47
1906 – 1907		75.17	11.87	21.87	63.30
1907 – 1908		73.30	14.10	26.70	59.20
1908 – 1909		71.85	13.78	28.15	58.07
1909 – 1910		66.86	13.00	33.14	53.86
1910 – 1911		58.99	13.45	41.01	45.54
1911 – 1912		55.65	11.29	44.35	44.36
1912 – 1913		43.32	7.27	56.67	36.06
1913		23.58	8.34	76.42	15.24
				82.88	17.12

SOURCE: Abstract of Revenue, 1809 1913

TABLE 1. 3
NORTHERN NIGERIA REVENUE PAID BY THE SOUTH AND
THE IMPERIAL GRANT
(Figures in Pounds)

	Local Revenue	Imperial Grant –in- Aid	Southern Nigeria	Lagos	Preferred Pay & WASS	Totals
1899 1900	38	56,530				
1900 1901	2,179	88,100	44,750			56,568
1901 1902	4,424	280,000	34,000			135,729
1902 1903	16,315	290,000	34,000		16,693	318,424
1903 1904	53,723	405,500	50,000			357,009
1904 1905	94,026	405,500	50,000	10,000		508,723
1905 1906	110,544	320,000	60,000	15,000		559,526
1906 1907	142,087	315,000	75,000			505,544
1907 1908	143,005	295,000	70,000			532,087
1908 1909	178,444	290,000	70,000			508,005
1909 1910	213,436	237,000	70,000			538,445
1910 1911	274,989	275,000	70,000			520,436
1911 1912	545,291	347,000	70,000			619,989
1912	476,493	95,000	52,000			962,291
April – Dec	658,309	136,100				623,419
1913						794,309

SOURCE: Abstract of Revenue, 1809 1913
Report, 1913, pp. 4,5

TABLE 1. 4

Southern Nigeria Imperial	Compared	Nigeria Total Revenue	
Revenue before Amalgamation	with Year	After Amalgamation (1914 1927)	
Year	Revenue in Pound	Year	Revenue in Pound
Yr. Ending 3-31-1899	169,565	1914	3,048,000
Yr. Ending 3-31-1890	164,106	1915	2,703,000
Yr. Ending 3-31-1891	380,894	1916	2,831,000
1901 Calendar Year	270,362	1917	3,450,000
1902	437,538	1918	4,014,000
1903	426,860	1919	4,911,470
1904	550,012	1920	6,738,042
1905	572,065	1921 Jan – Mar.	1,586,748
1906	1,088,717	1921 22	4,862,220
1907	1,459,554	1922 23	5,505,465
1908	1,387,915	1923 24	6,260,561
1909	1,361,891	1924 25	6,944,220
1910	1,933,235	1925 26	6,404,701
1911	1,956,176	1926 27	7,411,983
1912	2,235,412		
1913	2,668,198		

SOURCE: W.M.N Geary, *Op. Cit.*, p. 263

TABLE 1. 5
VALUE OF EXPORT FOR NORTH AND SOUTH NIGERIA
COMBINED BY PRODUCT (IN STERLING)
1914 AND 1925

Principal Exports	1914	1925
Cocoa	171,751	1,483,764
Cotton Lint	150,791	794,463
Palm Kernels	2,541,150	4,137,450
Palm Oil	1,571,691	4,166,096
Rubber	38,854	108,234
Tin	706,988	1,737,578
Mahogany	86,386	307,257
Groundnuts	179,219	2,934,257
Hides and Skins	407,500	625,431

ON TEN –YEARS BASIS

The value of exports seemed to have doubled in the ten years after amalgamation.

Year	Amount in Pounds
1913	7,097,646
1924	14,427,727
1925	17,245,000

I also draw your attention to Abstracts of revenue, 1809 to 1913. You will also see that the North could not have survived without the Imperial grant and the support of the South. When you look at the third table, Northern Nigeria revenue paid by the South and the Imperial grant, it will disabuse your mind and show you that without the South and the Imperial grant, the Northern government/states could not have existed.

Indeed, one of the reasons for the amalgamation was the fact that the British colonial government was tired of carrying the burden of the North and they thought that by merging the Southern and Northern protectorates, the country would be stable. Indeed, the circumstances that forced the British government to amalgamate the Northern protectorate and the Southern protectorate on January 1, 1914 were motivated neither by political exigencies nor by a closer cultural understanding among the diverse elements of the conglomeration that was later to be called Nigeria. It is obvious that the primary interest of the British government was economic. It was also obvious that the Northern protectorate, because of its geographical location and cloudy economic prospects, was not likely to be viable. In fact, the Lugard administration was

finding it rather difficult to maintain the Northern protectorate which was already running into deficit. Testifying to the financial difficulty of the North and the anticipated prosperity that would follow the projected amalgamation of the Northern protectorate with the Southern protectorate, Lord Lugard reported that “the prosperity of the Southern protectorate as evidenced by the liquor trade, had risen by 57%. In fact, the liquor trade alone yielded a revenue of One Million, One Hundred and Thirty-Eight Thousand pounds (£1,138,000) in 1913. This he believed was the result of amalgamation of the Lagos colony with the Southern protectorate.

The Northern administration could not have survived without the imperial grant-in-aid which in the year before the amalgamation stood at One Hundred and Thirty Six thousand Pounds, (£136,000) and had averaged Three Hundred and Fourteen Thousand, Five Hundred Pounds (£314,500) for the eleven years ending in March, 1912. Besides, the burden of financing the North seemed to have been resisted and bitterly criticized by the Southerners. The expenditure of the British tax payer’s money in financing a colonial territory was a contradiction of the British colonial policy enunciated sixty (60) years before by L. Gray which stipulated that “the surest test for the soundness of measures for improvement of an uncivilized people is that they should be self-supporting” This is by L. Gray in **The Colonial Policy of the Administration of Lord Russell, London: Cass and Company Limited, 1853, page 281**”. Further, the Northern protectorate was not only land-locked but bounded by territories that fell under the influence of other European powers. It was therefore inconceivable how the economic position would have improved without aid from the South. The only alternative open to Lord Lugard was to amalgamate the North and the South and thus have a legitimate reason for the expenditure of revenue from the South in developing the North. Details of this manoeuvre was laid bare in a letter written by Lord Lugard on November 22, 1912 to his wife explaining how he had used the Southern resources to finance the Northern deficit.

Regardless of the merit which Sir F.D Lugard saw in his financial amalgamation of the South and the North, the prevalence of bitter criticism in the South shows the unpopularity of the amalgamation. At that time, the export from

the South stood at Five Million, One Hundred and Twenty-Two Thousand Pounds (£5,232,000) while the export from the North stood at Two Hundred Pounds (£200,000) in 1910. This was very discouraging to the colonial system and called for urgent remedy. On Tuesday, 31st January 1911, there were attacks on the colonial secretary's suggestion that the South should advance a loan of Two Hundred Thousand Pounds (£200,000) to the North for the completion of the Baro to Kano railway, in addition to the sum of One Million, Two Hundred and Thirty Thousand which was required from the South. One of the criticisms of the Northern dependence on the South was voiced out by Honourable Sapara Williams who contended that before the loan was to be granted, the Secretary of State should settle the type of relationship that existed between Lagos and Zungeru, the two administrative headquarters for the South and the North respectively. He contended that as far as he was concerned, that the Southerners were strangers to anything connected with the railway after it has passed Offa, the last Yoruba town on the line. He referred to the existing hostility between the North and the South, particularly as regards the issues of extending the Northern boundary of the Southern protectorate to incorporate Yoruba territories now locked up in the Northern protectorate.

My dear Professor, the hostility of the Northerners towards the Southerners are not new in the Nigerian history. Even during the time of Sapara Williams, the Northerners did not see anything reasonable in the relationship with the South. You will recall the massacres of the Igbos in Jos in 1945; you will recall the massacres of the Igbos in Kano in 1953; you will recall the massacres that preceded the civil war. If we cannot live together, Mr. Professor, don't you think that it is high time we told ourselves the naked truth. You will also recall that in 1964, after the crisis that followed the elections, that Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe had called on Nigerians to call a round table conference to discuss how we could share our assets if it was impossible for us to live together. We kept on patching this unpatchable relationship. In my honest opinion, this relationship has soured enough that it will take the wisdom of God to make us love one another.

We went to Aburi and there the leaders agreed that the only solution to our problems was to have a confederation but Gowon reneged. You will recall also

that the British government, after the crisis of 1951-1952, realized that this country could not be a unitary state and they brought in the 1953 constitution which gave us regional autonomy. If the colonial masters in their wisdom knew that we could not be a unitary government and gave us what we had at independence, we should have respected their wisdom. You will also recall that after the civil war, the regional autonomy which our independence conferred on us was violated by the military government led by the Northern soldiers. We ended up having this contraption that we are having now; it has not worked. It will not work, unless there is proper restructuring of the nation. We should stop pretending.

I believe in all sincerity that if we cannot accommodate every segment of the federation in one Nigeria, we should call a constitutional conference to decide how this country can be restructured so that every area can take care of itself and we can relate on certain agreed basis. We have slaughtered ourselves enough. We do not want another civil war in order to justify the existence of “One Nigeria”. May I humbly call on all Nigerians to examine the last constitutional conference which addressed the issue of restructuring. Let us not leave it to our youths to tell us when we can stay together or when we cannot stay together. The youths in Biafra are crying; the youths in the North are crying; the Niger Delta youths are crying. The middle belt is not happy with what is happening to them.

Added to these, the strategies of the herdsmen to penetrate every nook and corner of Nigeria, is raising some issues for national discourse. The Federal Government has deliberately refused to call the herdsmen to order. They have killed many people and ravaged many communities. None of them has been arrested. Why? In May 2016, I published two articles and warned that the activities of the herdsmen was a plot which would soon cover the whole country. The heavy silence of the Federal Government tends to support the view that the herdsmen are on an undisclosed mission which only time would tell. The Government must listen to the call for restructuring in order to have a workable nation. The military, for partisan reasons, jettisoned the independence constitution and foisted an unworkable constitution on Nigeria. Let us be humble and accept that we made a gross mistake by throwing away our independence

constitution. It is now clear that unless we return to a structure that guarantees regional autonomy, there will be no peace in this country. The earlier we returned to regional autonomy the better for us.

I want you to look at the tables I have given you to see that your postulation that the North, before independence, had been carrying the burden of the South is a fallacy. The statistics I have given you here were not compiled by me. They were compiled by the colonial government in 1809 and 1813. They show that the North has always been the Southern burden. Even in this administration, without the resources from the South, the North cannot make it. This is a gospel truth. But if the North believes it can go without the South, what prevents us from restructuring so that the North can be on its own and the South can be on its own.

Let us call on our government to look seriously at this unworkable structure called Nigeria. We must not allow our youths to be slaughtered again defending the indefensible. This federation as it is, is unworkable.

My dear Professor let us come together as scholars and look at our country very objectively. You may also want to read some of my works such as: **Nigeria Nationalism and the Problems of Socio-Political Integration** and **Quo Vadis (Where Are You Going) Nigeria and Other Essays**.

My sincere regards
Prof. B.I.C Ijomah

Prof. B.I.C Ijomah is a professor of Political Sociology. He has lectured at Northwestern University in Chicago and Evanston, USA. He has been a university Registrar; Professor and Dean Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. He has worked at University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Loyola University of Chicago, USA; Federal University of Technology, Akure and Ambrose Alli University from where he retired voluntarily to set up his own educational institution. He is a co-founder of South –South Peoples, Conference and a leader in PANDEF.