

YESTERDAY'S GUERRILLA PRESSMEN IN TODAY'S DEMOCRATIC NIGERIA: DISSATISFACTION AND DISILLUSIONMENT (Draft paper)

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Introduction

Christopher Clapham's volume, *African Guerrillas*, continues to influence the study of African guerrilla warfare until today. Clapham (1998) mapped out the route for future studies on violent resistance as he identified regions, causes, typologies and central questions relating to insurgencies in Africa. The body of literature on guerrilla warfare and other forms of violent insurgencies has become robust but they are not without lapses and hanging questions. As pointed out by van Walraven and Abbink (2003), and Bøås and Dunn (2007), these lapses include a predominant focus on anti-colonial struggles to the neglect of pre-colonial struggles; adoption of problematic parameters of explanation such as the 'greed-based' approach; undue focus on the elite as the analytical fulcrum for resistance studies, and the tendency of earlier studies to define resistance as armed physical engagement only.

More than with any of the aforementioned lapses, the current study is concerned with the question of what happened to resisters, especially their leaders, after their battles were won or lost. With a few exceptions, notable among which is Weigert (1996), resistance studies have paid little attention to this question. To address this question in part, this study focuses on a group of unarmed resisters in Nigeria who have been named 'guerrilla' journalists (Dare, 2007), who were at the forefront of the fight for democracy when the military ruled the country. Ten years after military rule gave way to civil rule, it is important to assess the current role of these journalists in the dispensation for which they fought and were brutalised. This, it is hoped, will contribute to our much-needed understanding of post-resistance issues in Africa and shed some insight into why post-resistance politics has often been complicated and peace fragile.

The study finds a smooth conceptual take-off in van Walraven and Abbink's (2003:9) definition of resistance as

intentions and concrete actions taken to oppose others and refuse to accept their ideas, actions or positions for a variety of reasons, the most common being the perception of the position, claims or actions taken by others as unjust, illegitimate

or intolerable attempts at domination [which concrete actions] may or may not be acts of physical violence...

A particular attraction in this broad definition of resistance lies in its recognition of non-violent forms of action (such as guerrilla journalism) as a valid expression of resistance. But the definition is also helpful in that it captures the rationale for popular discontent among anti-military resisters in Nigeria who contended that military rule was an unjust and illegitimate travesty.

The Nigerian Press: a tradition of resistance and discord

Pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria¹ had a vibrant culture of critical public communication that was to later influence the practice of journalism. In that culture were public communicators² who were protected by an aura believed to have been bestowed on them by the ancestors and/or the gods, such that they were significantly outside the tyrant's circumference of brutality³. Their boldness resulted from the certainty that the gods would protect them and also from fear that should they fail to deliver the message of the gods as given, they would be punished. In some cases, public communicators, especially masquerades, were regarded as the reincarnation of dead ancestors and they had "unchallengeable power of reprimand over both the people and their rulers...and latitude to air public grievances while entertaining the royalties...and they were immune from reprimand by any offended high figure" (Adagunodo, 2003:263).

In some other communities, rebuke and reprimand of evil doers, including leaders, by public communicators was believed to bring about the 'cleansing' of the society. In such communities, annually, therefore, festivals were organised during which poets, masquerades and priests exercised their power of rebuke to 'cleanse the land of evil'. The practice

¹ There was no pre-colonial Nigeria. Here I am referring to the people and land that were later named Nigeria.

² I use this term to refer to priests, poets and entertainers such as the Alarinjo mobile theatre of the Old Oyo Empire. Among these were also ancestral spirits that were believed to occasionally appear from the groves to mediate in conflicts, bless or chide people in many of the southern Nigerian ethnic groups.

³ For instance, Olabimtan (1981) reports that the Efe-Gelede poets of Egbado Ketu in Southwest Nigeria, were known for songs that were sharply critical of individuals and rulers who were perceived to be against the common interests of the society, no matter how powerful these individuals and rulers were.

continues until this day (Olukotun, 2005). On such occasions, otherwise silent elements of the society 'take it out' on the dominant groups. Women, especially, play active roles. No one is muzzled⁴ (Olabimtan, 1981; Atanda, 1996).

The second feature of the traditional societies relevant to this discussion was the power attached to the *word*. The definition of the spoken word as a mere symbol having no logical connection with reality (Gamble and Gamble, 1996) goes contrary to the traditional African understanding of communication. As Bourgault (1995:7) points out, in Africa, "...words are used to make things come into being...in powerful incantations and healing rites. This explains the power of the curse and the power of insult in traditional African societies". Words were not to be treated with levity whether spoken by ordinary citizens or by priests or rulers. It was believed that even ordinary citizens could cause things to happen by what they spoke.

Traditional public communicators deployed these two resources (their position and the power of the word) in resisting perceived tyranny as occasion demanded. Through their songs, chants and poems, they not only opposed tyranny but also, oftentimes indirectly, inspired resisters, fuelled and fired resistance (Kahari, 1981; Adagunodo, 2003). For instance, the discontent leading to the dethronement of Alaafin Jayin of the Old Oyo Empire was fuelled and given expression by scathing and unsparing poets (Olukotun, 2005) just as in the 1896 uprising of the Shona people in modern Zimbabwe poetic idioms played a significant role (Kahari, 1981). Weigert (1996) articulated the active participation by traditional priests and prophets in colonial and post-colonial guerrilla warfare and explained this in terms on the prophets' desire to fight off anti-traditional encroachments represented by colonial and post-colonial governments. He did not look back far enough into the pre-colonial protest traditions to discover that traditional religious leaders were catalysts in ancient protests and resistance.

In 1859 when modern journalism began in Nigeria, it was in that type environment, a context in which public communicators were expected to be the fearless public mouthpieces

⁴ Unfortunately, women's studies have largely ignored the active role of women in the traditional rebuke-to-cleanse rituals. Rather, they have been preoccupied by the victim figure of women in traditional African societies. Women are prominent composers among Gelede groups in Oke-Ogun, Ibarapa and Yewa in South-West Nigeria, who in attacking evil and tyranny are just as bold and blunt as men. Among Ifa worshippers, on the first day of initiation of men, women gather around the grove in an air of freedom to sing songs otherwise considered abominable and vulgar. This, too, is part of the cleansing exercise.

against domination and oppression. Journalists, quickly appropriating the role and privilege of these communicators, took centre stage in the crusade for political independence. This was evident from the start. For instance, the first Nigerian newspaper, *Iwe Irohin fun Awon Egba ati Yoruba*, published in 1859, was a missionary paper which declared its aim to be the promotion of reading among the natives but it soon engaged in “campaigns of a purely political nature which aroused hostile reactions from the colonial administration in Lagos” (Omu, 1996:2). Some of the early journalists actually became leaders of the emerging nationalist movement in Nigeria in the 1930s⁵ and fully deployed the instruments of journalism in the fight for independence (Ekpu, 2005; Omu, 1996). The outcome was a crusading journalism and aggressive and concerted efforts in the pursuit of the common goal of political independence.

However, as Nigeria approached independence and political parties were formed by nationalist leaders, earlier alliances were factionalised and bitter rivalry set in among the nationalists. Omu (1996) observed that the gradual disappearance of the colonial imperial authorities from the centre meant the disappearance of a common enemy. The alliances and solidarity forged and cemented by a common hatred thus began to crumble. The acrimony had wider devastating effects, because political parties had emerged along major ethnic lines: the Action Group (AG) was predominantly a Yoruba party; the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was Igbo and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) was Hausa-Fulani. Political rivalry thus became coterminous with ethnic rivalry and that continued for a long time in Nigerian history. Naturally, the rivalry extended to the newspapers owned by these politicians. A bitter feud broke out between *West African Pilot* owned by Nnamdi Azikwe’s NCNC and *Daily Service* belonging to Obafemi Awolowo’s AG, following the rivalry between the parties. As Ekpu (2005:284) among others has noted, the inter-press feud often got messy. For instance, in 1964, the *Nigerian Outlook* described a political party, the

⁵ Nnamdi Azikwe, who later became the first Nigerian president, was a journalist who founded *West African Pilot* in 1937 and Zik Press Limited which had a chain of newspapers all over Nigeria (*Eastern Nigeria Guardian* based in Port Harcourt and founded in 1940; *Nigerian Spokesman* based in Onitsha, founded in 1943; *Southern Nigeria Defender* based in Warri, founded in 1943; *Daily Comet* based in Lagos and Kano, founded in 1944; *Eastern Sentinel* based in Enugu, founded in 1955; and *Nigeria Monitor* based in Uyo founded in 1960). Obafemi Awolowo founded *Nigeria Tribune* in 1946. His party, the Action Group, owned *Irohin Yoruba*, *Mid-West Echo* based in Uyo; *Middle-Belt Herald* based in Jos; *Northern Star* based in Kano; *Eastern Observer* based in Onitsha and *Borno People* based in Jos but meant for Maiduguri (Omu, 1996).

Midwest Democratic Front (MDF), as “prodigal sons with unyielding contempt by reason of their treachery, double dealings and deliberate hypocrisy” and described another newspaper, *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* as a “vernacular rag”. The *Nigerian Citizen* (22 February, 1964) described NCNC members as “intellectuals who are useless in council...wolves under the cloak of gentility...irresponsible and irrational...disunited people, a pack of rebels, carpet crossers and crooks”. Some observers have claimed that irresponsible practice by journalists was in part responsible for the 1966 riots in which many Igbo people were killed in the North. Southern newspapers had celebrated the coup in which two prominent northern leaders were killed by a group of soldiers led by an officer of southern extraction, and the North responded with riots that targeted mostly Igbo people living in the North (Ekpu, 2005).

Since independence, intra-press relations in Nigeria have followed a steady trajectory: a common enemy appears and the press gangs up against him until he is pulled down. After this, the different press organisations revert into their ethnic and political enclaves. In most cases, the enemy was the military government and the sore point was always its draconian decrees or its unending postponement of the dates by which power would be handed over to civilians, or both. Thus, though the press supported Gowon’s war efforts during the Nigerian civil war (1967-70), they turned against him when it became clear that some of his ministers were corrupt and that he was going to postpone the handing over date after ruling for nine years. The Murtala-Obasanjo government that overthrew Gowon enjoyed press support much more than any other. The press supported the government’s anti-corruption crusade and state creation but a section of the press pounded it for organising a fraudulent election that produced Shehu Shagari as president. The election divided the press with some describing Shagari’s victory as “stolen mandate”.

The government of Muhammadu Buhari who overthrew Shagari gave the Nigerian press a bitter dose of military tyranny. Buhari, a former commissioner of petroleum had a score to settle with the press because they had reported that \$2.8million was missing from petroleum ministry during his period as commissioner. On assumption of office as military head of state, Buhari promulgated Decree 4 which would punish any journalist who published anything capable of bringing a public official into disrepute even if what was published was true. Within a short while, it became clear that Buhari meant business: two journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor of the *Guardian*, were jailed. Buhari promulgated a few more

draconian decrees but these rather united the press into a solid fort cemented by common hatred for the military leader.

Buhari was overthrown in 1985 by Ibrahim Babangida, one of his colleagues and friends. Babangida courted the press by repealing Decree 4 among other unpopular decrees. The press largely supported him until the assassination of Dele Giwa, a prominent journalist, and the proscription of Dele Giwa's magazine *Newswatch*. Giwa was killed through a parcel bomb which some, including human rights lawyer, late Gani Fawehinmi, claimed was sent by government to prevent him from publishing a damaging report on the government. The honeymoon over, the press attacked Babangida over several of his decisions. He responded by promulgating Decree 2 which legalised detention without trial for up to three months; introduced the harsh Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and continued to shift the date he set to terminate his government. When he annulled the 1993 presidential elections acclaimed to be the fairest in the history of Nigeria and considered to have been won by Moshood Abiola, the press went to war asking for the de-annulment of the election and asking Babangida to handover government by the date he had announced, August 27, 1993. Babangida became more ruthless but the press, along with a strong pro-democracy group, became even more daring. He proscribed a few more papers before he was forced to 'step aside' in August 1993.

General Sani Abacha, who took over after a three-month civilian interregnum, unleashed the worst terror on the Nigerian press. He deployed every available instrument of state to hound and pound the press. In response, many journalists fled the country while some went underground.

Guerrilla Journalism

Guerrilla journalism or underground press is an old resistance tool among journalists and resistant communities. Though it is difficult, even if desirable, to identify when the practice started, it is clear that guerrilla journalism widely flourished during the Second World War. The *Samizdat*⁶ in Nazi Germany (Feldbruge, 1975) and several underground publications

⁶*Samizdat*, Russian word for 'self publishing', was about circulating forbidden literature. Once a member of the forbidden network received the literature, he/she manually copied it and passed on copies to others in the network. *Samizdat* was credited for indirectly preparing Russians for the post-glasnost protests of the 1980s.

among the Jews in occupied Warsaw and Poland⁷ were some of the 20th century instances of underground or guerrilla press. The papers strengthened people's "resistance and the stamina of the masses in the face of the terrible oppression" they faced (Kremish, 1957:86). In the Netherlands, Nazi occupation led to the emergence of underground papers some of which became legal papers and frontline magazines after the war and have continued to be in circulation⁸. That same period witnessed the fastest growth in journalism in France history.

In a sense, it is the repressive state that raises guerrilla journalists against itself. By their nature, occupation or repressive governments crave a monopoly of information dissemination; it is on this they hope to thrive. Yet, it is this monopoly which in itself aggravates citizens' thirst for alternative voices and interpretations. This thirst is not a product of mere curiosity but a matter of survival in view of contestable reality typically peddled by repressive governments. Added to this is the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that often blankets the repressed or occupied state. Few emotional states drive citizens to search for more and varied information as much as a state of fear and uncertainty⁹. Guerrilla journalism is therefore a response to two prompts: one indirectly by the repressive regime and the other directly from a thirsty citizenry.

Opposition groups or insurgents have been known to form their own media outfits (Kremish, 1957). Even where this is not the case, guerrilla journalists are hardly lone rangers in their resistance to repressive regimes. Rather, they work with conventional insurgents, opposition politicians and/or civil society. The relationship is a symbiotic one with the journalists giving intelligence information to the opposition and publishing opposition views and voices, and the opposition protecting the journalists and giving them logistic support

⁷Free speech was one of the first casualties of Nazi invasion of Warsaw and Poland. But as persecution of the Jews in these places increased, so their underground publications "multiplied like mushrooms after the rain" (Kremish 1957:85). The papers included *Yunge Gvardye* (The Youth Guard); *Plomienie* (Flames), and *Di Yugent Shtimme* (Voice of the Youths). As the names suggest, these underground papers were mostly run by youths. Those meant for older people included *Neged Hazeerem* (Against the Stream).

⁸ For instance, *Vrij Nederland* (Free the Netherlands), now a leading newspaper, was an underground militant paper which debuted on August 3, 1940 calling for armed combat to free the Netherlands from Nazi. (See 'The history of *Vrij Nederland*' at www.vn.nl/Service/Over-VN/About-Vrij-Nederland.htm). Same can be said of *Trouw* which belonged to the protestant resisters of Nazi in the Netherlands.

⁹ For a discussion of how radio audience responded to an 'invasion' see Lowery, S.A. and De Fleur, M. (1995) *Milestones in Mass Communication Research: Media Effects* 3rd edition New York: Longman Publishers

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when needed (Feldbruge, 1975). It is not inconceivable that guerrilla journalists and the wider opposition are united by little beyond the desire to raise and sustain a counter-hegemonic struggle.

Across the years, the process of guerrilla journalism remained the same: producing, sometimes low-quality papers at unlikely, hidden and constantly moving locations and distributing them clandestinely. A guerrilla journalism movement remains afloat only for as long as it is at least a step ahead of the agents of the repressive state.

In Nigeria, the circumstances leading to the emergence of guerrilla journalism in the 1990s have been largely documented (Olukotun, 2005; Dare, 2007; Adebani, 2008). But it is instructive to look beyond the 1990s. Importantly, the period following the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war witnessed a ferment of Marxist activism/orientation? on key Nigerian campuses, especially at the University of Ife (where Wole Soyinka taught) and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Some of the products of those universities were later to spearhead the anti-military crusade in Nigeria. More to the point is the practice of underground publishing on the campuses among different Marxist groups. For instance, both Dapo Olorunyomi and Idowu Obasa were in the closed group of students that secretly published and distributed *The Struggle*, an underground journal of the Young Socialist Movement at Ife. *The Struggle* was distributed on nearly all Nigerian campuses secretly. After graduation, Obasa was later to engage in another clandestine publication, *Forward*, secretly distributed to factory workers to conscientise them (Adebani, 2008). Both were later to recall and deploy their skills in underground operations as senior staff of *The News* and *Tempo* in the dark days of Babangida and Abacha.

The events that led to the upswing of press resistance began in the early 1990s when it became clear that the military government of General Babangida would not hand over power to civilians in 1990 as earlier promised. The media gave expression to the brewing discontent in the citizenry to the chagrin of government. But persecution was not the first tool applied by Babangida: it was buying over and incorporation of opposition members and press into government. He established numerous government agencies and appointed as heads of such agencies members of the opposition including members of the editorial boards of the opposition press. Examples of these include People's Bank which he created and to whose

headship he appointed Dr Tai Solarin, an unbending government critic and social crusader, and the renewed Federal Road Safety Commission headed by another unwavering critic, Professor Wole Soyinka¹⁰. This style led to some cleavage in the ranks of the opposition. Simultaneously, Babangida was purging state-owned media removing non-compliant managers and installing those who would do his bidding.

But all these subtle moves did not assuage citizens' demand for democracy. The civil society began to mobilise for an onslaught against the military. It was about this time, in the late 1980s that a new generation of radical human rights and pro-democracy groups emerged. Among these were the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO); Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR); Movement for National Liberation (MNL); Constitutional Rights Project (CRP); National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL); National Association of Democratic Journalists (NADJ); Gani Fawehinmi Solidarity Association (GFSA), and Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)¹¹. This period, as Mr Dapo Olorunyomi, one of the founders of *The News*, pointed out, also coincided with the influx of university graduates into journalism. According to him,

These graduates were mostly idealists who have emerged from the crucible of articulate student unionism and were out for some adventure. They had the analytical tools for engaging journalism in an ideologically coherent manner and were ready to make significant sacrifice for fatherland¹².

These factors explained the failure of the cooptation and incorporation style adopted by Babangida to yield sufficient results.

When subtle cooptation failed, Babangida resorted to coercion. In 1990, he arrested and detained about 20 journalists¹³, several human rights activists and members of the pro-

¹⁰ Mr Ibrahim Babangida designed government projects that appealed to the passions of his critics just to trap them. If these people refused to accept these offers, Babangida would have succeeded in branding them as mere armchair critics who were willing to do nothing concrete to help the people.

¹¹ Babangida banned the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the National Association of Nigeria Students (NANS) in 1988.

¹² Author interview with Mr Dapo Olorunyomi, February 3, 2010

¹³ Some of these were detained for months; others for a few days. Some arrests were really dehumanising. For instance, when security agents did not find Paxton Idowu, editor of *Republic* at home, they arrested his wife who was eight months pregnant. They then dumped her in a cold police cell which she shared with a male detainee alleged of felony. Dapo Olorunyomi's family was later to experience the same treatment in the hands

democracy group. Same year, he shut down several newspapers including *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *Lagos News* and *Newbreed* for their coverage of the coup attempt by some officers in April that year. In 1991, the government closed down all the five titles on the *Guardian* stable and sealed up the premises of the newspaper. It also deported William Keeling of *Financial Times* from Nigeria. Keeling had done an article criticising the mismanagement of oil windfalls by the Babangida administration. But these persecutions only seemed to strengthen the anti-military movement. In fact, to harmonise their efforts, consolidate their gains and strategise their moves, eight pro-democracy groups (CDHR, NADL, CLO, NANS, GFSA, National Union of Journalists (NUJ), Women in Nigeria (WIN) and National Consultative Forum (NCF)) formed a broad coalition on November 11, 1991 known as Campaign for Democracy (CD) (Olayode, 2007). In 1992, the government proscribed all the thirteen titles on the stable of Concord Newspapers Limited and promulgated five decrees all aimed at silencing the opposition and the press. Notable among these were Decree 29 which proscribed death for anyone who spoke or wrote anything capable of disrupting the society¹⁴ and Decree 48 which proscribed 17 publications owned by five anti-military newspaper organisations. Government-owned media that were lackadaisical about promoting government propaganda were also shut down or their leaders were removed. But the groundswell of opposition only swelled bigger with every step the government took to silence the media and the pro-democracy group.

In 1993, the government annulled the presidential elections believed to have been the freest and fairest in the history of the nation; no reason was given for the annulment. Civic anger rose sharply and the media provided avenue for the expression of this. The government responded with increasing ruthlessness. For instance, in May 1993, 70,000 copies of *Tell* magazine were seized by security agents at the point of print, and its premises were shut. At this point, *Tell* went underground and began guerrilla journalism. Thousands of copies of *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM) were also seized same year. In 1993, security agents seized 50,000

of Babangida's men (A. Olukotun, 2005). In fact, Ladi Olorunyomi, Dapo's wife was again arrested and detained when security men could not find Bayo Onanuga, her husband's friend and co-founder of *The News*. (W. Adebani, 2008).

¹⁴ Others were Decree 23 which proscribed *The Reporter*; Decree 35 which conferred on the president the power to confiscate or ban any publication, and Decree 43 which set up regulations for registration of newspapers.

copies of the first edition of *The News* at the point of print. Four months later, Babangida also proscribed the magazine and declared all its editors wanted. The editors went underground, flouted the proscription order and commenced guerrilla publishing. Soon after, they founded *Tempo*, also underground. But *Tempo* suffered as well: 50,000 copies of the magazine were seized. By the time Babangida was forced to step aside in August 1993, four senior editorial staff of *Tell* were in detention: Nosa Igiebor; Ayo Akinkuotu; Kola Ilori and Onome Osifo-Whiskey. Yet the magazines marched on underground.

At *Tell* and *The News/Tempo*, guerrilla operations involved clandestine editorial meetings, printing at secret places and distributing copies secretly. The guerrillas acknowledged tacit support and timely intelligence information from some of the agents of government. Yet the exercise was with severe pain and injury especially in the days of General Abacha.

General Abacha visited the worst terror on the militant press and its sympathisers and supporters. The formation, on May 15, 1994, of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) by politicians, some retired military officers and prominent pro-democracy leaders significantly lengthened Abacha's list of worries and deepened his paranoia. His Libya-trained security guards responded with utmost ruthlessness. There were cases of arrest, detention and trial of even vendors who sold copies of guerrilla papers (Olukotun, 2005). Ninety-four journalists were attacked in 1997 (Adebanwi, 2008). Godwin Agbroko (*Week*) and Dapo Olorunyomi (*The News*) were detained and beaten with rods and electric batons. Nosa Igiebor and Onome Osifo-Whiskey (both of *Tell*) spent six months in detention. Babafemi Ojudu (*The News*) was detained for eight months without being allowed a change of clothes. Ben Charles-Obi of *Weekend Classique*; George Mbah of *Tell*; Kunle Ajibade of *The News*; Niran Malaolu of *Diet*; and Chris Anyanwu of *TSM* were jailed having been framed up in a phantom coup plot (Malaolu, 2005)¹⁵. Alex Ibru, publisher of the *Guardian*

¹⁵ Some of these were given life sentences by the military tribunals. Ben Charles-Obi, George Mbah, Kunle Ajibade and Ms Chris Anyanwu spent over three years (1995-1998) in prison. Niran Malaolu, framed up in another phantom coup spent 15 months in prison. The offence of these journalists was either that they reported the coup as a frame-up designed to punish those military officers and civilians with whom the military was not pleased, or that they had a foreknowledge of the coup. Among those so framed and jailed was General Olusegun Obasanjo. They were all released by the government of General Abdulsalami who succeeded Abacha.

was shot but escaped with injuries. Bagauda Kaltho (*The News*) was abducted and killed, and Tunde Oladepo (*The Guardian*) was killed in his house (Malaolu, 2005). Pa Alfred Rewane¹⁶ who generously supported the guerrilla journalists (Olukotun, 2005) was shot and killed. The office of *The News* was burnt by arsonists suspected to be government security agents. Yet, with all of these, the press pressed on. A new crop of young thoroughbreds kept up the tempo surviving their maximum terror, Abacha, who died in 1998.

A number of factors made the survival of guerrilla journalism possible. Among this was foreign and local financial support, the enthusiasm of and moral support from the citizenry; the location of the papers in the southwest where literacy rate is high and reading culture was vibrant; the support of the prodemocracy groups, and the geography of Lagos (especially the slums) which made clandestine movement, meetings and actions possible (Olukotun, 2005; Adebanwi, 2008). Last but very important was the support of 'whistle blowers' from within the ranks of the government security agencies.

The Study

Nigeria finally returned to civil rule in 1999 with the swearing-in of an elected president, Olusegun Obasanjo. Scholars have focused remarkable attention on the role of the Nigerian press in ushering in democracy and the performance of the press in the democratic dispensation. But attempts that seek out some of the hardest hit journalists, especially those who engaged in underground journalism in the days of the military, and try to understand their involvement in and assessment of the democracy for which they fought, are unknown. An attempt like that, in our view, will contribute to our knowledge of post-resistance issues and problems, and give a clue to the strength or fragility of the emerging democracies of Africa. This study is a modest attempt in that direction, and is based on in-depth interviews with nine former guerrilla press men¹⁷. I also examined some of their current writings as a

¹⁶ Revelations and confessions at the truth and reconciliation panel, the Oputa Panel, set up by the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo confirmed earlier suspicion that those who shot Ibru and killed Rewane and Kudirat Abiola were agents of the Abacha government acting on orders.

¹⁷ I conducted interviews with nine of these former guerrilla pressmen and examined some of their recent writings. From those who had worked with *Tell*, I interviewed editor and co-founder, Dare Babarinsa; former assistant editor, George Mbah; former Kaduna Bureau chief, Danlami Nmodi, and former Kano correspondent, Osa Director. From those who had worked with *The News/Tempo*, I interviewed Sunday Dare, associate editor of *Tempo*; Dapo Olorunyomi, founding editor of *The News* and Goodluck Ebelo, one of those younger reporters that stuck around and kept *Tempo* going when nearly all the founders were in either jail or in exile. I also

way of shedding further light on their claims. Following is a presentation of issues as they emanate from the interviews and the texts.

Missing: an agenda for response

The position of guerrilla press men in the current dispensation cannot be fully understood if separated from the situation of the entire pro-democracy crusade. Though they had all along wished, schemed and fought for an end to military rule, the pro-democracy movement and the underground media that gave it voice were caught unawares with the sudden death of Sani Abacha soon to be followed by the death, in detention, of Moshood Abiola, acclaimed winner of the annulled June 12, 1993 election. They did not sufficiently overcome that shock enough to become an integral part of the emerging civilian government. As Dare Babarinsa put it,

The entire pro-democracy movement suffered three fatalities: the sudden death of Abiola, inability of the leadership to decide on a response to the transition programme, and disagreement over leadership among those who eventually went into politics¹⁸.

Further examination showed that the failure of the pro-democracy movement possibly resulted from the ideological vacuum on which it operated and the incompatibility of the politics and methods of its members. While some of the leaders saw the solution in any kind of democracy, some others gunned for a democracy firmly laid on constitutional principles enshrined in a constitution that emerged from a broad-based sovereign constitutional conference. The former accepted to be part of the transition process and some made it into government; the latter stuck to their clamour for a sovereign constitutional conference. Arogundade¹⁹ concluded,

interviewed Niran Malaolu and Lanre Arogundade. Malaolu was founding editor of *This Day* and was editor of *Diet* when he was jailed for complicity in a coup; Arogundade led the Nigerian Union of Journalists (Lagos Chapel)¹⁷ in the days of Abacha. My selection included those who, since 1999, have picked up government appointments or gone into politics and those who have not. On the average, each interview lasted about sixty minutes.]

¹⁸ Author interview with Mr Dare Babarinsa, November 2009.

¹⁹ Author interview with Mr Lanre Arogundade, April 2009.

The so-called pro-democracy group was made of strange bedfellows. At a point in the struggle, it became fashionable to say you belonged to the pro-democracy group. You elicited sympathy and you could even use that to get visa to travel abroad for asylum. Some abused that opportunity. In fact, I would say Abacha made socialists, communists and pro-democracy heroes out of many.

It was a commonly held view that whereas many in the pro-democracy struggle were driven by the nobler motive of entrenching democracy and ending the abuses that came with military rule, a few were primarily in the struggle for their own gains.

Ideological vacuity was as true of the pro-democracy group as it was of the underground press. I asked my respondents to discuss what kept them on in the dangerous struggle against military. Mention was made of a sense of patriotism and commitment to change; the desire to end the corruption, pain and agony that was the lot of Nigerians under the military, and the relief that an Abiola presidency promised. Sunday Dare²⁰ summed it up:

It was a combination of ideology and professionalism. I came out of the background of student activism. I had read a number of books on politics and the role of the media in other societies especially how they held the feet of those in power to the fire to account. I had read and imbibed the liberating values of democratic and responsible leadership and yearned for such for my country. It was not there. The military held sway and the people moaned. I was determined to be an agent of change; a vocal citizen willing to use his pen to advance the frontiers of freedom and good government. I was motivated by a desire not just to see change come about, but to be one of the foot soldiers of change.

While Sunday Dare clearly linked the struggle with ideology, the same could not be said of all others in the struggle. In fact, Ebelo Goodluck²¹, who described himself as a latecomer to the struggle, but who was actually of the crop of younger reporters that stayed behind when the leaders were in jail or exile, said he was attracted

because the journalists who worked for *Tempo*, *The News* and *P.M. News*²² had this larger than life image of defying the military...(and) advancement was rapid for those who could do the job.

Even Mr Babarinsa felt some in the struggle stuck it out because ‘young people love danger’—the adventure of it, and Osa Director²³, a fresh graduate in his twenties during the

²⁰ Author interview with Mr Sunday Dare, August 2009

²¹ Author interview with Mr Ebelo Goodluck, December 2009

²² *PM News* was also published by the Independent Communications Nigeria Limited (ICNL) publishers of *The News* and *Tempo*. *PM News* was one of those underground outlets that emerged when *Tempo* was attacked.

struggle, said he felt the risk was fun. If founders of the news organisations had a coherent ideology—as was the case with at least *The News*- such an ideology did not pervade the entire militant press movement and also did not translate into a coherent agenda for responding to eventualities such as the sudden death of Abacha. This vacuity may explain, in part, the instances of back-stabbing even among the guerrilla crew by “insiders who masqueraded as journalists” (Osa, 2007:76). More importantly, it explains the uncoordinated response to the sudden end to military rule.

Though ideologies do not, on their own, win struggles, studies have shown that they are a strong factor in holding resisters together. Weigert (1996), in a study of selected African guerrilla movements, identified ideological vacuity as one of the major reasons for their failures. Where ideology is lacking, resistance easily becomes anarchical, resulting in abuses and acts of indiscipline by the resisters. Such a movement also becomes disrespected by outsiders and the entire movement is unprepared to respond to turns of events.

The ideological vacuity or lack of an agenda for response was probably connected with the global trends in the period under reference. The political and ideological crisis in the Soviet Union was moving the world towards a unipolar status, and this was raising strong doubts and fundamental questions in the minds of socialists in Africa (Crownley, 1992). Such certainly was not the atmosphere to indoctrinate members of a guerrilla movement about being leftists.

Dissatisfaction or disillusionment

Without exception, the ex-guerrilla pressmen are dissatisfied with the current political situation of Nigeria. The general assessment is that democracy in Nigeria is a disappointment. But the disappointment needs some qualification here. There are those who are disappointed with the people in power. They called them names: hawks, rent collectors, shylocks, and money class. But they strongly believe that with repeated elections, the right people will someday get into government. Hiley (2006) describes such people as these as distrustful people. Mr Niran Malaolu's²⁴ words best articulate the views of those in this category:

²³ Author interview with Mr Osa Director, September 2009

²⁴ Author interview with Mr Niran Malaolu, September 11, 2009

Evil people in Nigeria are just about 10% of the entire population. Today, that evil 10% are the ones in government. But I believe in democracy, this democracy. I was jailed for life; I was beaten every day. For 147 days I was not allowed to have a bath...all because I stood for democracy and justice. I prefer the worst of democracies to the best of military rule. If the soldiers had left us alone since the time of Shagari²⁵, we would have corrected most of the errors in the system. Now, let them leave us alone forever; we would learn and someday, the right people will be in power.

The second group is made up of those who are disappointed not just with the people in power but also with the entire political setup. According to these, the solution to Nigeria's problems is not in repeated multiparty elections but some landslide changes such as a revolution, or what an interviewee calls the 'Rawlings solution' in apparent reference to Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings' killing of government officials on his assumption of office as Ghanaian military ruler. Hiley describes people like these as conspiratorially or pathologically distrustful (Hiley, 2006). My interviewees who held views that reflect conspiratorial distrust believed that the system has not just been hijacked; it has also been made change-proof. They claimed that the door to power is shut forever against activists and those who may want to initiate change. One said:

The real enemies of democracy, those people who truly supported the military, are the money-class and they are now in power. They bought the offices with money and robbed people with violence. Now they have ensured that the rule of the game is such that permits only their kind to enter politics and win. They price everything including nomination forms for elections above the reach of honest people.

The hopelessness in the above is pronounced and explains why those in this group thought the solution to Nigeria's problems can be found only in some landslide events.

Distinguishing between the distrustful and the conspiratorially distrustful, Hiley describes the distrustful as those who are disappointed with the people in government and with the reality in a democratic system, and who seek change through the legally approved means such as elections or protests. The conspiratorially distrustful also distrust the government but imagines that those in power have ganged up in a conspiracy against the people for their selfish benefit. Those in this category see elections, protests and other legally

²⁵ Alhaji Shehu Shagari was an elected president overthrown in 1983 by the military led by General M. Buhari

approved means as incapable of bringing change. They rather seek change through some other means such as violence and revolution.

The third of Hiley's groups is that of the indifferent: people who have given up. They do not see hope for a change in anything legal or illegal and are completely disengaged from the system. We did not find evidence of disengagement among our interviewees.

The presence of the first group in a society is essential for the health of a democracy which, as Hiley argues, thrives on distrust and suspicion. The second and the third group do not help the health of a democracy. Whereas the second is seeking to truncate the existing system, the third ensures its continuity, with all its shortcomings, by doing nothing about it.

Following the end of the crusade, the pressmen headed in different directions but most of them seem to have experienced little satisfaction in their various engagements. Some of the pressmen picked up political appointments. However, they soon left. For instance, Sunday Dare was assistant to Minister of Information and Communication, Ms Dora Akunyili; he resigned after a while. Mr Dapo Olorunyomi was Chief of Staff at the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Ebelo Goodluck also did some work for the Chairman of the same body, Mr Nuhu Ribadu. When Ribadu was haunted out of office, these pressmen also left. Mr Niran Malaolu was Commissioner for Information in Ogun State but he resigned his appointment.

Some have attempted to contest political posts but have not done better either. For instance, Mr Dare Babarinsa contested for the governorship of Ekiti State but he did not win even the primaries. He was not the anointed candidate of the leaders of his party, the Alliance for Democracy, which claims to be a progressive party. A third group of ex-guerrillas has remained in active journalism but even among these, some are quite bitter about the situation of things.

The saddest case was that of Mr Seidu Mulero who served not just *The News* but the entire pro-democracy movement. Mr Mulero was a reporter with *The News* but he was the one who shepherded hordes of fleeing pro-democracy activists into safety through the NADECO route, a dangerous bush path that led to the Republic of Benin. After the struggle, Mr Mulero lost his job with *The News* and shortly after, died from a minor illness, unable to pay hospital bills (Dare, 2007; Adebaniwi, 2008).

Mr Lanre Arogundade explained why ex-guerrillas are frustrated in politics:

Many of these fighters cannot submit to the dirtiness of the game of politics in today's Nigeria. They do not belong there. Politics has been hijacked by very desperate people and I do not see decent journalists who risked their lives for this country being in the same parties with these people.

But it is not only the dirt in politics that frustrates activists. Many of those who are appointed are put in redundant or ineffectual positions. As Danlami Nmodu²⁶ put it, "they are appointed to positions but the power of that position is taken away from them and given someone else".

Another cause of frustration of appointees that were ex-activists was stressed by Dapo Olorunoyi²⁷, one of such appointees. Activists expected too much too soon:

Having tarried at the barricade for many years, battle-wearied activists now in government want a better Nigeria now. And that's understandable. We want to totally flush out corruption in one week—and that's understandable. We want to see change; we want to see the country we suffered for on a steady path to equality, justice and true democracy. And we want it now.

When things do not move as fast, activists wonder if they are in the right place.

The case of dissatisfaction and disillusionment cannot be separated from the fact that ten years into democracy, the Federal Government has not acknowledged the role of the press in ushering in democracy in Nigeria. Without exception, my interviewees pointed out that none of those who were in the militant press had been conferred with national honours or acknowledged in any way by the Federal Government but some of

Those who stood firmly against democracy such as Zakari Biu, the torture expert²⁸ have been conferred with honours by the same Obasanjo whom they jailed while those who fought for his release he doesn't even want to see. It's like, for Obasanjo, the press is his sworn lifetime enemy.

My interviewees were quick to point out that they did not embark on guerrilla journalism for the purpose of being conferred with national honours or for anything so 'mundane'. But they

²⁶ Author interview with Mr Danlami Nmodu, September 8, 2009

²⁷ Author interview with Dapo Olorunoyi, February 3, 2010

²⁸ Zakari Biu was said to be one of the most ruthless security agents of the Abacha days but was actually conferred with national honours by General Abubakar.

were unhappy about the way official memory was being written in a lopsided manner. Not even in his inaugural speech as president did Obasanjo mention the struggle of the press against the military, the struggle that significantly contributed to his release from prison. Osa Director said:

It is not that we want honours but can't government properly document history? Even if it is a simple interactive session where the government says 'gentlemen, we appreciate your role in getting us to where we are'. That's all.

Government's disdain for the Nigerian press has been rather overtly expressed even by civilian leaders with whom the press had done little battling. Former president Shehu Shagari declared: 'I do not read Nigerian newspapers' (*The Vanguard*, 2006:34). However, President Obasanjo seems to outdo others in press-bashing. He banned 'journalists and dogs' from his residence and proudly announced that he did not read Nigerian newspapers because 'they write nonsense ... [and are] always abusing me' (Abati, 2007:42; Andrews, 2007). If the press is held in such contempt, it is understandable that the militant press is being written out of the official memories of the democratic struggle. Dissatisfaction has cut across the different groups of ex-guerrilla journalists—those who had gone into government or politics and those who had not—but disillusionment has not.

Old fiends, old methods?

The dissatisfaction or even frustration being experienced by ex-guerrilla pressmen stemmed largely from their perception that the conditions which they fought against during the military did not remarkably improve since transition to democracy. They believed that citizens' will was still being subverted especially in rigged elections, and by the imposition of candidates by political godfathers. Corruption was getting worse; and leaders were becoming more unaccountable. The press was not essentially free especially with the refusal of Obasanjo to sign the Freedom of Information bill into law, and the unwillingness of the legislature to pass the bill as amended. Importantly, many key positions in the country were being held by ex-military men and those who opposed democracy. Reflecting on the general Nigerian situation, Babarinsa had written:

Nigeria is free from military rule but not from the governance of military men in *agbada*. Nigeria is enjoying a civil rule under President Olusegun Obasanjo, but

not a totally democratic government...Nigerians are getting poorer. (Babarinsa, 2005a: 5)

Most of the ex-guerrillas have therefore stuck to the old adversarial methods. A few weeks into the current democratic dispensation, *The News* attacked the speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Mr Salisu Buhari accusing him of certificate forgery and declaration of false age (*The News*, 1999a). *The News* kept the heat on him until his colleagues removed him (*The News*, 1999b). He was arrested, tried and jailed with an option of fine. Shortly after, *Tell* attacked the President of the Senate, Mr Evan Enwerem, over false declaration of age and name. While occasionally praising President Obasanjo's anticorruption crusade (See, for instance, Babarinsa, 2005b), the magazines kept accusing him of shielding some corrupt members of his party and family (Semenitari, 2005; Adebani, 2008). They criticised his seemingly unending international tours; his alleged bid to twist the constitution so that he could get a third term in office (*The News*, 2006a; 2006b); his disrespect for court rulings (See, for instance, Babarinsa, 2005c)²⁹, and the absoluteness with which he generally wielded powers.

The magazines continued their adversarial journalism under President Yar'Adua, who assumed power in May 2007. His replacement of Nuhu Ribadu, the fiery Chairman of the government's anticorruption body, "with a businesswoman and card-carrying member of the ruling party" (*Tell*, 2008a:20) was seen as an indication of his unwillingness to wage a serious war on corruption. His deliberately slow pace of decision making (*Tell*, 2008b) and the general collapse of infrastructure especially electricity supply also attracted fairly caustic reports (See, for instance, *Broadstreet Journal*, 2009)³⁰. Even his amnesty programme aimed at pacifying the aggrieved and violent militants in the Niger Delta came under attack (See, for instance, *Tell*, 2009a). Not only was the amnesty programme predicted to be 'heading for a brick wall' (*Tell*, 2009b:18), it was also interpreted as the president's method of recruiting thugs from the experienced militants for his future electoral engagements (*The Insider*

²⁹Dare Babarinsa, 'Supreme Contempt' *Tell*, June 6, 2005, pg 5, criticises Obasanjo's refusal to heed the Supreme Court ruling which asked the Federal Government to recognise and fund the local government areas newly created by the Lagos State Government.

³⁰Like *Tell*, *Broadstreet Journal* is published by Tell Communications Limited, Lagos

*Weekly*³¹, 2009a). Under Yar'Adua, *the Insider Weekly* declared that 'Nigeria is collapsing' (*The Insider Weekly*, 2009b) and *Tell* declared Nigeria a failed state (*Tell*, 2009c). The failing health of the president attracted widespread attention of the magazines which blamed it for nearly every woe the country was going through and called on the president to either resign or empower, in writing, his vice to act for him with full powers (*The News*, 2010; *Tell*, 2009d; *Tell*, 2009e).

Mr Dapo Olorunoyi told me that at the beginning of the current democratic dispensation, the editorial team of *The News* felt it was time to adopt a new course in their practice of journalism by essentially abandoning adversarial reporting in favour of pro-development and pro-government reporting. He said:

After a prolonged cynical engagement with the military, it was thought fit to change gear so that our relevance does not come to question. We were essentially leaving the trenches and coming to the mainstream. But this did not last; it could not.

In general, *The News*, *Tell* and *the Insider Weekly*, founded by former staff of *Tell*, have kept on the heat. The old method of muckraking journalism was still very much in use in dealing with old problems.

Role of money in the rising frustration

The Nigerian print media houses are run as businesses even if with a social crusade approach. They survive largely on funds from advertisements and sale of their copies. But little comes from sale of copies: literacy rate in Nigeria is low³², therefore, a substantial percentage of the population will not buy papers; poverty rate is high and reading culture poor.

More than all these, some of my interviewees claimed, politicians in power deliberately frustrated the press organisations that are critical of them in three ways. One of these is deliberate de-subscription. Government offices remain one of the largest buyers of newspapers and magazines in Nigeria. The cost of newspapers and magazines are sometimes built into the budget of government departments. When the magazines and newspapers are

³¹ George Mbah, Osa Director, Danlami Nmodu, all former staff of *Tell*, and Ben Charles-Obi of *Classique*, founded *the Insider Weekly* in May 2001

³² The National Bureau of Statistics, NBS (2005) puts Nigeria's literacy rate at 60.4%

unrepentantly critical of politicians or officials, my interviewees insisted, government offices sympathetic to or controlled by such officials, politicians and their network, stop buying their magazines.

The second method has to do with advertisements. Nigerian politicians spend tremendous amounts of money on advertisements. Politicians advertise not just their manifestoes during campaigns but also their achievements while in office. The latter they do regularly starting with the celebration of their first 100 days in office. These publicities are placed in numerous newspapers and magazines, all colour and gloss. Then groups and associations sympathetic to or funded by the official in power advertise their solidarity and congratulatory messages. In states where there are contentions about how government money is spent or how power is exercised, the opposition places sponsored announcements accusing the state government of mismanagement. Then the governor responds using same medium. Groups normally spring up in favour and against the governor—all using the same medium of magazines and newspapers to publicise their views. It is speculated that most soft-treading magazines—those who are in the good books of politicians—derive about 75% of their income through political advertising of this nature (Oladepo, 2007). When a newspaper or magazine does not please the politicians in power, this major pathway is blocked.

A more vicious method but which also concerned advertising was mentioned by some of my interviewees. Politicians, they claimed, not only withheld political advertisements from them, but also discouraged companies from giving them commercial advertisements. This is possible especially in companies where the politicians hold controlling shares, and such companies are in the majority in Nigeria. George Mbah³³ told me:

They count us as enemies and Nigeria is the battlefield. They employ all methods to cut off your lifeline. We have reliable information from organisations that used to advertise with us that their patrons asked them to stop. These patrons are the politicians whose evil deeds we have exposed. They're saying you either praise us or we squeeze life out of you.

Claims of political persecution may not be difficult to substantiate by George Mbah and his magazine, *The Insider Weekly*. A random perusal of *the Insider Weekly* showed that the magazine was indeed starved of advertisements. Whereas most magazines carry at least one

³³ Author interview with George Mbah; September 8, 2009

political advertisement per week, *the Insider Weekly* has about one in two months (Oladepo, 2007). Commercial advertisements in *the Insider Weekly* are also few. Most of them are quarter of a page, top and bottom strips. As a result, the magazine is gasping under the stranglehold of financial stress. I asked if *the Insider Weekly*'s plight had not to do with the quality of print or circulation figures. Neither of these explained the situation. According to its editors, *the Insider Weekly* sold more copies than even those magazines printed in full colours. They believed that their unbending criticism of politicians was responsible for their plight.

A clearer pointer to the fact that *the Insider Weekly* has not been in a good relationship with the government is the attacks on it by the State Security Services (SSS). On November 26, 2003 and September 4, 2004, the premises of the magazine were besieged by security agents. In the former attack, the editors were arrested and detained for two days. In the latter attack, armed security agents from the government forcefully gained entrance into the premises of the magazine using sledgehammers. They seized documents, arrested two staff members of the magazine and a vendor, and confiscated the entire September 5 edition billed to be released the following day. Other employees scampered into safety. Mbah recalled:

It was not different from what we experienced in the military days. They smashed our doors, whisked our staff away and detained them. They seized all the copies of the magazine. What's left? Tyranny is back full-fledged yet we say we're in a democracy.

The SSS, later in a statement, reportedly accused *the Insider Weekly* of “attacking, disparaging and humiliating the person and office of the president and commander-in-chief as well as some notable people in government” (Committee for Protection of Journalists, 2005). Remarkable outcry followed these raids including protest letters from local and international agencies (See, for instance, Human Rights Watch, 2004). It may be speculated that enraged politicians who cannot resort to the old repressive methods to silence critical press, would resort to other methods (such as financial strangulation) as listed by interviewees³⁴.

³⁴ A journalist with a daily newspaper related, in confidence, the compromise between his paper and the government of the state where the paper was located. The newspaper published a story that thousands of dollars were found in the car of the governor's daughter. This offended the governor and a few hours after the story was out, agents of the state's revenue office arrived at the newspaper's premises demanding that the paper pay up its arrears of unpaid taxes. The tax—unpaid for many years—amounted to millions. “We would have simply gone bankrupt. Our management visited the State House, tendered apologies for publishing the

Closely connected to the role of money is the proliferation of newspapers and magazines owned by active politicians, and the influx of unscrupulous people into journalism—people ‘who will do the dirty job for the politicians’. Corruption in the media was seen as a huge problem in contemporary Nigeria. *Tell*, turning its searchlight inwards, had accused the media of corrupt practices such as journalists and/or proprietors accepting millions of naira to kill stories that indict politicians. According to *Tell*, Abuja, the seat of government had become a cesspit of media corruption (*Tell*, 2002). Malaolu said:

Many of the people practising this profession today are cash and carry journalists; many columnists are robbers. And they are rubbishing the entire profession. If there’s need to go back to the trenches, few Nigerians will trust the media because of the evils these robbers are perpetrating.

The influx of ‘cash and carry’ journalists worried ex-guerrilla pressmen for some reasons. They are concerned about the general lowering of the credibility of practising journalists, and the in-seeping of fifth columnists who would willingly collaborate with government agents and back-stab genuine journalists.

Survival tactics

A discussion of the conditions of ex-guerrilla press men is incomplete if it does not cover their survival strategies in the current dispensation. Times have been hard for many of the ex-guerrilla journals. As Adebani (2008) points out, *The News* had to downsize its staff and some of those affected were former underground journalists. A group of *Tell*’s staff left and founded the *Insider Weekly* under conditions not too warm. At the time of this study, the *Insider Weekly* was in tough financial conditions. But *Tell* and *The News* have rebounded using a combination of tactics.

The News, for instance, has heavily subscribed to the financial market with its shares worth N50 million (Adebani, 2008). *Tell* and *The News* seem to have found ways of practising critical journalism and yet maintaining a hold in the market of commercial and political advertising. *Tell* began and has continued with what it termed *Advertorials*—a linguistic contraption from advertisements and editorials. Advertorials are packaged public

story and promised to avoid such ‘misbehaviour’ in future. They even published a retraction of the article and publicly apologised. Now if you write anything critical of the governor, they [the management] ask you ‘Are you ready to pay the taxes?’” The paper has since joined the league of the governor’s praise singers.

relations services for politicians in power presented as editorials. Initially, *Tell* would insert a caveat to alert readers that the portion being read was paid for but soon, that caveat disappeared altogether.

The subject of advertorials is typically the achievement of state governors, heads of federal agencies, state commissioners and local government chairmen. Advertorials, no doubt, fetch *Tell* substantial revenue from the political class. *Tell* also publishes occasional wrap-arounds from commercial organisations. In addition to this, *Tell*, on a monthly basis, publishes revenue allocation information from the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation and a deluge of political advertisements. These suggest that *Tell*'s new brand of critical journalism is different from what it was in the days of the military. Some have described as fishy *Tell*'s ability to 'have its cake and eat it' wondering if *Tell* is still 'the People's Parliament' (Oladepo, 2007) and accusing it of 'frolicking and hobnobbing with Nigeria's fledgling dictatorship' (Ejikeonye, 2008).

Conclusion

Although the expression 'guerrilla journalists' is an expanded metaphor, the referents seem to share more in common with arms-bearing guerrillas than is initially apparent. Among others parallels, it is clear that the chosen instrument of resistance has little to do with post-resistance integration. Whether armed or unarmed, guerrillas cannot expect a smooth and automatic integration into mainstream politics after their battle has been lost (or won) and their movement has atrophied. Not only this, to varying degrees, the 'decay of ideology' (Bøås and Dunn, 2007; Clapham, 2007) cuts across both armed and unarmed modern insurgencies. These parallels call to attention the need to widen the scope of resistance studies to include the activities of socio-cultural agents such as journalists.

The plight of some of the ex-guerrilla journalists in democratic Nigeria—their dissatisfaction, disillusionment and even death—further illustrates the complexities that characterise post-resistance societies especially in Africa. Where acknowledged at all, such complexities are usually a footnote in the scripts of international organisations and western countries that drive or support the struggle for democratisation in Africa. Having reduced democracy to multiparty elections, at least in practice, these organisations and nations display a sense of *fait accompli* once an elected government is in position leaving pro-democracy

groups to sort things out with the government. The losers, in the final analysis, are the pro-democracy activists. There is need for pro-democracy nations and organisations to insist that democracy should go beyond voting into a deliberate programme and philosophy of not just non-exclusion but active integration of everyone especially those who facilitated the coming of democracy.

The study shows that for the concerned journalists, resistance continues. The current resistance may be tougher than the anti-military resistance in that some of the methods of state that are allegedly employed—such as straining the financial lifelines of some magazines—are not visible and would not attract the kind of international outcry and compassion that the more overt physical attacks by the military attracted. And so, affected journalists may for a long while have to contend alone with these political forces. This has obvious implications for the health of the Nigerian democracy.

The entire optimism surrounding the global push for neo-liberalism needs to be cautiously re-examined. That a government which professes neo-liberalism can *possibly* mobilise the support of the business community against its unfriendly critics shows that neo-liberalism is not tamper-proof. Contrary then to the claim, government has business in business; only that the transactions are done in secret.

The situation of many of the former guerrilla journalists in Nigeria is better understood as a continuation of the struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces in Nigeria, a struggle that spans the pre-colonial, colonial, military and now democratic dispensations. Alliances may have changed, persons may have crossed over from one camp to the other, but the contention between these forces goes on. The totality with which power is exercised in Nigeria means that those on the counter-hegemonic side will continue to be the losers.

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