

24 CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

JUSTICE OLU AYoola COMMISSION ON THE AGBEKOYA RIOTS OF 1968/69: AN ASSESSMENT

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Background to the Setting up of the Ayoola Commission

Between October 1968 and November 1969, the old Western Nigeria witnessed peasant uprising popularly called *Agbekoya* rebellion or riot. The period was characterized by violent protests against imposition of obnoxious tax rate among other economic measures by both the State and the Federal Military governments. These measures were intended to assist the Federal Government in the prosecution of the Nigerian Civil War and cover up a severe financial deficit in the Western State.

Naturally, increase in taxation, occasioned by the civil war affected the peasantry most severely. The scattered riots, which broke out in some parts of Western State⁴ from the late 1968 were mainly against increased taxation, rates, levies, the arbitrary nature of tax assessment and the often brutal manner of its collection by tax officials.⁵ These riots were not only supported by the peasantry, but also the down-trodden civilian population.⁶

The 1968/69 peasants' protest graduated from a mere spontaneous rejection of increased taxes and the activities of corrupt local government officials into organised peasant movements, which demanded important social reforms in the state. The riots were well co-ordinated and before long, the farmers in Ibadan villages began to see themselves as peasants opposed to oppressive system.⁷ Hence, there were sporadic guerrilla actions by the peasants, which forayed into the urban areas. The Agodi prison in Ibadan was stormed and over four hundred prisoners were set free on the 16th of September, 1968. The event in the West was indeed "a war within a war"⁸ because the Nigerian civil war was being prosecuted by the Federal

Government at the same time. The farmers and the released prisoners then moved back into the districts from where they successfully defended their positions against the police⁹ for six weeks.

It was negotiation rather than the use of force and suppression that led to the restoration of peace. This was achieved through the intervention of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the then Federal Commissioner for Finance. Apparently, the peasant riot of 1968/1969 was not a total failure. It, indeed, succeeded in gaining some measure of success; the flat rate tax was reduced, reforms were made in the local government structure and sanitary inspectors were withdrawn from all rural areas. The Western State Farmers Union, (WSFU) in Ibadan was also reconstituted in order to give farmers adequate representation.

It should also be noted that the conservative official estimate of reported deaths arising from the 1968/1969 riots was put at approximately a hundred and sixty, more than half of which came from Ibadan area. These were only recorded or documented deaths, but many deaths were unrecorded and civilian figures were unreliable since the dead were often carried away.¹⁰ However, the Ayoola Commission, which was instituted by Governor Adeyinka Adebayo to look into the causes of the *Agbekoya* uprisings, came out with its findings and recommendations. The commission's recommendations led to some concessions, which though inadequate, went a long way in appeasing the peasants.

The Constitution and Mandate of the Ayoola Commission of Enquiry

In 1968 December, the Justice Ayoola Commission was appointed to collect evidence on the civil disturbances that ravaged certain parts of Western Nigeria. The three-man Commission was headed by Justice Olu Ayoola and assisted by, Mr. M.E. Ogundare, Acting Deputy Director of Public Prosecution, and Mr. O.B. Okubadejo, Administrative Officer Class III, (performed such duties as the Commissioner may from time to time direct). The Commission was mandated to find out the causes of the riots and make recommendations. The terms of reference were to inquire into and make a report on the following:

- (a) The direct and indirect causes of the disturbances
- (b) The nature and extent of the disturbances as they related to injury to persons, loss of lives and damage to property
- (c) The measures adopted by public officers and law enforcement agencies to bring the situation under control.
- (d) Any other matter incidental to any of the aforementioned.
- (e) To make appropriate recommendations in order to prevent the recurrence of similar civil disturbances and consequential events in future.¹¹

Justice Olu Ayoola took the oath of office as Sole Commissioner on 14th of January, 1969, and the preliminary sessions of the Commission were held at the Western Hall, Agodi, Ibadan, on the same day. Further sittings were adjourned to the 22nd of the same month. Public sittings were held in fifteen towns in the Western State and the towns are: Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Abeokuta, Shagamu, Ijebu Ode, Iwo, Ede, Ishara, Oshogbo, Ife, Ilesha, Ado-Ekiti, Owo, Akure and Ondo.¹² Evidences were taken from three hundred and thirty two (332) witnesses and four hundred and one (401) exhibits were tendered. Similarly, three hundred and fifty nine (359) memoranda were received and considered, while valuable information were gathered from a number of statutory corporations, experts and individuals. Scenes of the disturbances were also visited by the Commission with a view to assessing the extent of damages to property. The Commission ended its sitting on the 19th of March, 1969.¹³

From the outset, Justice Olu Ayoola Commission decided not to limit the inquiry to December 1968, though the mandate only covered up to December. The Commission realised very quickly that limiting itself to December would have amounted to disregarding the events, which added up to the December uprising. It is important to note that the major disturbances in Ibadan city and parts of Ibadan Division occurred on the 25th and 26th of November 1968. The first disturbances in Ishara occurred on the 24th and 25th of November 1968. Also, in Oyo, there had been minor disturbances as early as 7th of October, 1968, which did not receive much publicity.¹⁴

The Findings of the Ayoola Commission of Enquiry

The disturbances, which occurred in 1968/69 in some parts of Yorubaland in Western Region of Nigeria, cannot be considered in isolation. These disturbances were definitely related to the general background of the people, which depicts at any given time, their economic condition, political behaviourism, their attitude to law and order, and to authority, their expectations and their understanding of civic rights, obligations and responsibilities.¹⁵ In executing its mandate, the Commission arrived at some general and specific findings; it was found that the disturbances referred to in the terms of reference occurred against a general background of tax agitation. The Commission was also convinced that the tax agitation developed against the background of economic depression and bad harvest.

The Commission in its findings discovered that there were direct and indirect causes; the principal indirect cause of disturbances peculiar to Ibadan and part of the Division was the political leadership struggle among the Ibadan leaders. The political struggle for leadership was mainly between Chief Agbaje and his supporters (formerly of the banned NCNC) and Chief Lanleyin and his own

supporters (formerly of the banned 'Action Group'). Also, the past political hostilities between the NNDP and UPGA were part of the causes of riots in Egba Division in 1968.¹⁶

There was absolutely no understanding between the District Council Officials and the people they served, and this contributed in no small way to the tax riots in Western State.¹⁷ Also, the Commission observed that the ingredient of discontent was the Local Government structure that was susceptible to malfunction. Some of the councils were so poor in terms of revenue that they could not really discharge the statutory functions expected of them in terms of provision of amenities such as good roads, maternity homes, public toilets, etc.

The Commission also isolated some factors known as 'inferred' causes of the disturbances. The general feeling of neglect in rural areas as against the towns regarding the distribution of social amenities was an inferred cause of disturbances. The people of Oyo, Osun, Ibadan, Ife/Ijesha felt particularly marginalised by those in power because there were noticeable imbalances in the distribution of social amenities.¹⁸

In Egba, much of the 'incitement' to rioting in the initial stage appeared to have been engineered by the *Parakoyis* who felt that the district council functionaries had usurped their functions. The *Alake* also opposed the District Councils as he felt that they reduced his authority while the *Olubadan* too felt the same way in respect of the councils in Ibadan Districts. In Ogbomoso, the savage brutality¹⁹ executed by the local farmers was directed at the *Oba*.

The arrest of tax defaulters was the main catalyst for attacks on the authorities. In several cases, *Oba's* palaces were attacked and burnt down because they had allegedly called for the soldiers to assist in the tax collection exercise and in some cases, they had embezzled public funds.²⁰ In some places, like Egba Division, the dissatisfaction of market women led by the *Parakoyis* and distaste for the conduct of market supervisors/council officials played major roles. In Oyo, however, one of the causes of the December 1968 riots was the misappropriation of a grant of three thousand, five hundred pounds (£3,500) which was allocated to a privately owned school from a local education rate fund.²¹

The particular finding of the Commission concerning Ede confirmed that the agitation in other places influenced the riots in Ede. Some ex-politicians were said to have complained that Ede was too calm; too peaceful, and there was the need to stir it up a little. It was also found by the Commission that the Ede disturbances arose because the Sole Administrator, Mr. Olanre Olayemi, had earlier scheduled a meeting with the people on the 19th of December, but it was later called off on the 16th

of the same month without appropriate and timely notification. They arrived for the meeting, waited for six hours in vain and resorted to rioting. The Ede disturbance of 22nd of December 1968, it was confirmed, occurred when a crowd of people insisted upon the release of some men who had been arrested as a result of the riot of 19th of December 1968.²²

Many roads in the rural areas were in a poor state and this situation caused the reduction of economic activities of the peasant farmers, thereby making them financially poorer. Farmers often complained bitterly that the tax assessment committee, which comprised the officials of the local council and those of the ministry of finance, did not have adequate knowledge to enable a just assessment and so, they campaigned for their own representation on the committee.²³ Moreover, the Commission submitted that due to the absence of adequate security measures, many council officials obstinately refused to return to their desks in the remote areas and resultantly, the work in some council areas came to a standstill. Consequently, some uninformed people misconstrued this for "victory for the masses."²⁴

The Commission Also observed that the ingredient of discontent was the local government structure that was so easily susceptible to malfunction. Some of the councils were so poor in terms of revenue that they could not really discharge the statutory functions expected of them in terms of provision of amenities, such as good roads, maternity homes, public toilets, etc. The situation has not changed much in 2005. More often than not, official funds were diverted into personal purses. Money laundering and embezzlement by officials are still the order of the day. In 2005, some local government could only manage to pay just the staff salary annually, leaving nothing to be spent on provision of local amenities.

Another general finding of the Commission was that there existed a general feeling among the Obas and chiefs that since they had been disallowed from participating in the running of local affairs, it therefore meant that their traditional power and dignity had been reduced. Thus, they were lukewarm towards the resolution of the problems, unless it was going to lead to the restoration of their power and influence. There was no iota of doubt in anyone's mind, and the Commission too was persuaded that the disturbances in parts of *Egba* division were initiated and masterminded by the Parakoyi, who rallied market people around themselves as a means of getting their lost position as 'market priests' restored.²⁵

The Commission also noted another cause of the uprising, which was that the Sole Administrator system did not work satisfactorily because a body of people was required to assist the administrator in the performance of his functions. A single person cannot supervise the work of more than one council area efficiently. This situation enabled Local Government Council Officials to become 'tin gods' to be

worshipped and idolized, particularly in the remote and rural areas. This, in turn, allowed room for the perpetration of fraud on council finances, display of high handedness in the handling of council matters and other forms of oppressive conduct by council officials.

Tax and rates were also placed on the same tax notice form by the various collecting organs, and it was illegal to use the same procedure and form specially designed for the collection of tax for other levies. Rates and taxes should be collected separately and not lumped on the same form.²⁶ It was noted by the Commission that the twin issues of timing and inappropriateness of lump-sum payment were not properly planned and implemented. Raiding tax defaulters and the use of outdated and inaccurate tax nominal rolls contributed immensely to cause agitation. Not only that, the non-staggering of the various payments required from the low income group made the demands 'onerous and repulsive'.²⁷

According to the Ayoola Commission, the principal indirect cause of disturbances peculiar to Ibadan and part of the division was the political leadership struggle among the Ibadan leaders. The political struggle for leadership was mainly between Chief Agbaje and his supporters (formerly of the banned NCNC) and Chief Lanleyin and his own supporters (formerly of the banned 'Action Group'). Also, the past political hostilities between the NNDP and UPGA were part of the causes of riots in *Egba* division in 1968. This political strife gave impetus to the agitation when it occurred'.²⁸ The disturbances not only occurred against a general background of tax agitation, the Commission minced no words as it noted that the agitation developed, when, against a background of economic depression and bad harvest, it came to the knowledge of the low income group that they were required to by the State to pay some additional levies in one form or the other, all demanded together; namely, (a) increased water rate (in some places), (b) the National Reconstruction Levy, (c) the State Development contribution.²⁹

The Commission also isolated some factors, which he referred to as 'inferred' causes of the disturbances. The general feeling of neglect in rural areas as against the towns regarding the distribution of social amenities was an inferred cause of disturbances. The people of Oyo, Osun, Ibadan, Ife/Ilesha felt particularly slighted by those in power because there were noticeable imbalances in the distribution of social amenities. Certain areas were favoured in terms of industries and amenities.³⁰ The Commission also found that the arrest of tax defaulters was the main spark for attacks on the authorities. In several cases, *Oba's* palaces were attacked and burnt down because they had allegedly called for the soldiers to assist in the tax collection exercise and in some cases, the royal fathers were alleged to have embezzled public funds.³¹

The particular finding of the Commission concerning Ede confirmed that the agitation in other places influenced the riots in Ede. Some ex-politicians were said to have complained that Ede was too calm; that it was too peaceful, and there was the need to stir it up a little. It was also found by the Commission that the Ede disturbances arose because the Sole Administrator had earlier scheduled a meeting with the people on the 19th of December, but it was later called off on the 16th of the same month without appropriate and timely notification. The people arrived for the meeting, waited for six hours in vain and resorted to rioting.

Recommendations of the Justice Ayoola Commission

A review of the Commission's Report shows that there were both general and particular recommendations. Among other things, he recommended that staggered payment of taxes should be encouraged as this would facilitate easy payment. He also recommended, as a matter of extreme urgency, that more police posts and stations be created, particularly in the rural areas. They were also to be well equipped and adequately staffed. It was also recommended that the Water Corporation should devise a different method of collecting water rates instead of lumping them with tax³² and it was also to be reduced and staggered with a view to making it affordable and convenient to all.

Justice Ayoola Commission was very firm in its recommendation that measures aimed at quicker investigation of loss of council funds and swifter prosecution of offenders should be undertaken. He noted that protracted investigation and delayed prosecution of theft of council funds led to frustration and anger of tax payers. According to the Commission, the many attacks visited on council offices and officials definitely arose as a result of the poor image, which many of the officials had cut in the eyes of the public arising from their malpractices and partly because the agitation was aimed at refusing to pay the increased levies which the officials were out to collect.

It was also recommended that a review of the then existing local government council structure be carried out urgently with a view to finding out which councils were viable and which were not, and that only viable councils with capacity to fulfil their statutory obligations should be left in operation. The Commission also recommended that government accounts should be regularly subjected to regular checks by the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs.³³

Other particular recommendations of the Commission were that the *Parakoyis* in Egba Division should be given functions to perform in the market and should be reasonably remunerated for their services. Karimu Abemolori and Abagun of Oyo whom the divisional adviser refused to include in their list of collectors despite

popular request were to be listed as collectors. It was recommended that all special rates collected by the councils be paid into separate accounts and were to be expended on purpose(s) for which they were collected. A departmental enquiry was recommended to be held on the activities of the forest officers in Akure Division with a view to ensuring that officers who had acquired wealth illegally should be made to refund same into the coffers of the Akure District Councils. A Commission was also to be set up under the 'Riots Damages Law' to consider awards of compensation for the various losses suffered as a result of the disturbances.³⁴

Furthermore, Justice Ayoola Commission was very firm in its recommendation that measures aimed at quicker investigation of loss of council funds and swifter prosecution of offenders should be undertaken. He noted that protracted investigation and delayed prosecution of theft of council funds led to frustration and anger of tax payers. The Commission recommended that government should consider the possibility of appointing a Public Complaint Commissioner on the same basis as the parliamentary commission in Britain (Ombudsman) whose duties were to include spotlighting of public grievances, receipt of complaints of public nature, investigation of such complaints and the recommendation of prompt remedies to the Western State government.³⁵ According to the Commission, the many attacks visited on council offices and officials definitely arose as a result of the poor image, which many of the officials had cut in the eyes of the public. The attacks arose from their malpractices and partly because the agitation was aimed at refusing to pay the increased levies which the officials were out to collect. The police stations and posts were insufficient and the gap created by the abolition of the Local government police force, which was not quickly filled, weakened the enforcement of law and order.³⁶

There were also some particular recommendations; the Secretary of Ishara Local Council, Mr. Sowole, was recommended for transfer to a different council. Furthermore, council officials whose conduct had been adversely mentioned in the findings of the Commission were recommended to face disciplinary actions. It was also recommended that the *Parakoyis* in the Egba Division be given functions to perform in the market. They were also to be reasonably remunerated for their services. All special rates collected by the councils were to be paid into separate accounts and were to be expended on purpose(s) for which they were collected.³⁷

Critique of the Findings and Recommendations of the Ayoola Commission Report

It is universally accepted that at any given time, there are forces, economic, political and psychological, that act on people's mind and which sway their outlook for better or for worse, which decide their sense of value and condition their general

predisposition. An identification and appreciation of this scientific truth makes it essential that in weighing the nature and ethics of any incident or series of incidents, the antecedents of the events, remote and immediate, must not be divorced from the actual event. If this fact is not recognized and utilized, one may never see the events in their true perspective, and one would never find correct solutions for problems in need of resolution.

With this at the back of our minds, one can make bold to say that the Agbekoya 'war' can only be properly understood and appreciated if it is viewed as a class struggle. It epitomised the reactions of the peasants against the exactions by the State, which was controlled by the bureaucratic/local bourgeoisies classes. The Agbekoya farmers certainly represented a definite class interests as opposed to communal interests etc. Scholars have even attested to the existence of classes among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria.³⁸

From the outset, the Commission decided not to limit its inquiry to December 1968, although its mandate actually limited it to December. The Commission realized very quickly that to limit itself to December would have amounted to disregarding the events which added up to the December rising. This would certainly have amounted to a half view of the events preceding the December disturbances. Fortunately, the incidental power which was embedded in the terms of reference enabled the Commission to take all the preceding events into account while at the same time concentrating on the civil disturbances of December 1968. It is important to note that the major disturbances in Ibadan city and parts of Ibadan Division occurred on the 25th and 26th of November 1968. The first disturbances in Ishara occurred on the 24th and 25th of November 1968. Also, in Oyo, there had been minor disturbances as early as 7th of October, 1968, which did not receive much publicity.³⁹ The point is that but for the 'incidental power' embedded in the terms of reference, there would have been no room for Justice Ayoola to manoeuvre in order to achieve any meaningful result from his mandate.

The Commission's finding and recommendation, in many ways, vindicated the peasants', but fell much short of their expectations in other ways. The Commission attributed the upheaval to the prevailing economic depression and low pricing policy of the Western Nigeria Marketing Board; these problem were compounded by heavy rains and a poor harvest.⁴⁰ The new levies had worsened the already burdensome tax load on the lower-income group, especially the flat tax groups. Dissatisfaction with poor service of local government, corruption, insensitivity of the officials and their method of tax collection had also worsened the situation.⁴¹

Under what Ayoola called "unexpressed inferred cause" it was noted that the ignorance of the masses over the new measure, which were not properly explained to

him, covered their eyes to the real situation on ground. After careful considerations, the Commission rejected the 'conspiracy theory' of the riot as arising from 'incitement' by 'disgruntled politician'. Though Ayoola did not reject the political angles, but argued that it was subsidiary and indirect. Chief Agbaje was cleared of any intentions to...sabotage the State government and Ayoola put it clearly that the agitation was not inspired by anybody or group of person but was a spontaneous reaction...to the new economic measures.⁴²

Scholars have even affirmed that the riot was not a considered protest movement, but a 'spontaneous' response to distress; it was an instinctive reaction to discomfort. The prevalent situation at that time was enough to trigger anyone, no matter how lowly rated, into asking for socio-economic changes. The earliest of the disturbances of 1968 actually sparked off on the 7th of October, in Oyo, and as late as the 30th of December, 1968, there were disturbances in Egba Obafemi. The Commission treated the events, which led to disturbances in the different areas separately and in sequential order. It took note of the forms the disturbances took, the extent of damage to property, injury to persons and loss of lives.

In executing its mandate, the Commission arrived at some general and specific findings; it was found that the disturbances referred to in the terms of reference occurred against a general background of a burdensome taxation policy. The Commission was also convinced that the tax agitation developed, when against a background of economic depression and bad harvest, it came to the knowledge of the 'little people' that they were required by the state to pay some additional levies in one form or another. The Commission also held that the riot was not a considered rejection, but a 'spontaneous reaction by the low-income group' to the economic measures⁴³ that were mentioned earlier. Although Barrister Agbaje may have been connected with the rioter's demonstrations, there was no evidence that he advocated violence. The 'conspiracy theory' arising from 'incitement' by 'disgruntled politicians' was rejected by the Commission.

The Commission also noted that the Farmers Union, which was established by the government before the disturbances, did not operate effectively to direct protests through peaceful channels, and that explains why the populist 'confederation' turned the riots of December 1968 to the revolts of July 1969.⁴⁴ The Agbekoya were like Leopard's; a leopard would run when it could. But when cornered, it becomes nerveless, determined, no matter the means, on self preservation. The peasants were completely purged of fear of government and its superstructures when they knew for certain that the ruling class had blocked all constitutional openings of diffusing this crisis, and so they fought the State military government toot, nail and fist until the latter capitulated!

Ayoola noted that the agitators simply wanted 'reform in local government and taxation', and they made 'no secret of their existence or objectives'. He felt that the government should tolerate them as long as they continued to use constitutional means to achieve these objectives. However, if they diverted from this course, they were to be declared illegal, but 'as of the moment, there was no evidence' they were doing so.⁴⁵ Ayoola also found that local government had a 'poor image' in the eyes of the peasant due to various malpractices and the W.N.M.B could do a lot to improve the condition of the lower income groups through a more flexible pricing system. He advocated a deliberate increase in the provision of social amenities in the rural areas as well as raising the 'earning capacities' of villagers.⁴⁶

His direct recommendation urged a total review of local government system and its supervision by an inspectorate division. He suggested that local men of repute advice tax assessment committee and that tax payment be staggered to ease the burden of paying lump sum. He also suggested that the power of local government councils to impose rates be subjected to government approvals and corrupt officials be persecuted swiftly. He suggested that the peasant be paid higher cocoa prices and that more credits be channelled into the rural areas. The Commission urged that the "local adversary committee" should be disbanded and a public complaint commissioner, an ombudsmen liaison between rural areas and government. That way, the heat of discontent would be stepped down before it came to boil.⁴⁷ Curiously enough, he suggested that the Parakoyis - market-chiefs - should be given functions in market and "reasonably remunerated," that is, co-opted into the frame work of the local government.⁴⁸

The Ayoola Report is significant in several respects-as has been pointed out earlier, while not applauding peasant violence, it painstakingly noted that the "lower income group" had good reasons for their actions. By indicating cases of local government inefficiency, corruption and insensitivity towards the rural inhabitants, the Commission added an authoritative legal voice to peasant complaints. Moreover, by meticulously pointing out the prevalent background of the economic depression, low producers prices and high cost of consumer's goods, it lent voice and support to the peasant's position that he simply could not pay the new taxes. Apparently, there was the need for the government to lessen the burden of the peasants by way of assistance to build and raise their earning capacity and thus increase the amount of revenue which could be drawn from the lower income group without much risk of social upheaval.

The Ayoola Report, in many respects, epitomized a liberal approach to the problems and contradiction between the rural area, which through its produce and taxes, supported a basically urban-oriented State. It was a balance approach from an arm of the State apparatus to the contradiction between peasant producers who were not

only being exploited of their cheap labour but also being called upon to pay taxes to a State, which denied them of the fruits of their labour in the form of social amenities, a state dominated largely by non-productive classes. These classes lived of the fruits of the peasants labour while at the same time through tax reliefs and subsidized facilities, consumed a large share of the proceeds of production. Ayoola wise conclusion, in effect, called for a "just mean", a more equitable balance, which was the classic liberal approach.

The direct inclusion of two memoranda submitted by "radical" intellectuals was obviously a buttress to Ayoola conclusions. Professor Ogunshye memoranda and that of the National Issues Society, based at the University of Ife, have already been referred to.⁴⁹ Both went a little further in their criticisms of the State structure than the Ayoola's Report, but reached essentially the same conclusions. The latter memoranda critically analyzed the tax structure and came to the opinion that the "higher-income groups" (i.e. £1,000 upwards) had the benefit of very generous tax reliefs; that professionals and businessmen paid far less tax than they ought to. Their conclusions were supported with extensive data; they noted, for instance, that certain groups were entitled to a yearly educational allowance- deductible from taxable income- of (£160: =) a child up to four children, which if fully claimed added up to about ten year income of the average Ibadan peasant. The memoranda called for either the "abolishing of direct taxation of the lower income group" or if these were not done, the tax reliefs for the "higher income group"⁵⁰ should be removed.

However, the Ayoola Report (and the views if the radical intelligentsia) fell far short of the peasant's expectations, which, indeed, could only be fully realized with a total overhaul of the entire structure of the State. This, indeed, is not to say that the peasant realized this; only glimmerings of this radical conclusion were to come to him later in the course of the uprising. This, the Ayoola Report both could not and would not do. Side by side with recommendations for social justice, the Ayoola Report, also urged the strengthening of the State repressive apparatus, to avoid what it called "mob-rule".⁵¹

Five out of the fourteen clauses dealing with the direct and indirect causes of the riot attributed them to the weakness of the State's coercive arm, which the peasant, the report felt, had exploited dangerously.⁵² Ayoola noted the ease with which prisoners had been freed from the police cells in Ibadan, Oyo and Egba divisions, and warned of chaotic consequences if the trends were allowed to continue. Most of the weakness was attributed to the "gap left by the abolition of the local government police"⁵³ and shortage of personnel and equipment in the Nigeria police force. He found that police had "acted in good faith" or "fired in self-defense" in many instances when faced with crowd. At Egba for instance, he agreed that the crowd was unarmed but absolved the police for opening fire on them because the "tenacity of

the mob" made this inevitable if "law and order were to be restored."⁵⁴ He noted that the army had begun to supplement the police in operations against the rioters and attributed this to the ineffectiveness of the "ill-equipped police" although he slightly disapproved as "the police are better suited for the maintenance of the civilian peace".⁵⁵

The Commission was shocked at the undisguised arrogance with which some witnesses "boastfully referred to the use of force to obtain redress"⁵⁶ and suggested "drastic measures" to halt the trends of disrespect for "law and order" among the peasantry.⁵⁷ He also censured the media who carried out the news of "rioting and looting without equivalent publicity to deterrent measure"⁵⁸ He recommended a strengthening of the Nigeria police among his submissions to the government.

Although the Ayoola's Report was careful to stress that the emphasis should be on "prevention of disorder not suppression", the basic contradiction in his work between the liberal reformism and strengthening of the coercive apparatus was clear. While the former aspect was to be largely ignored or tardily implemented, the government rather zealous application of the suppressive mechanism was to provoke the more serious and bloody riots in July-October. The opinion of the writer is that the Ayoola Commission, which was a part of the State apparatus, apart from being bound by the limitation to the scope of the mandate given by the Governor, could not sanction the total overhaul of a post-colonial State, only its reforms.

However, this should not blind us to its merits or obscure the fact that an increasing number of people, even among the dominant groups in society, had come to accept its basic promise on the necessity for urgent reforms, at least, to preserve the State. Editorials in the *Sketch* lauded the Report and called it 'the way forward to peace in the State'.⁵⁹ Professor Oluwasanmi, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ife, at a conference on National Planning and Reconstruction, which was held in Ibadan, presented a paper outlining the 'enormous contribution' which the labour of the peasant-producers had made to development and suggested a more equitable pricing policy by the Western Nigeria Marketing Board (WNMB).⁶⁰ Commenting on the conference, *West Africa* pointed out those delegates should consider 'whether the policy of paying farmers' low prices was not economically inefficient and unjust'.⁶¹

Unfortunately, Brigadier Adebayo's acceptance of the Ayoola Report was extremely selective. He agreed to a 50% reduction in the water rate, which did not affect most peasants directly, anyway. Promises were made to investigate local government corruption and the arbitrary assessment and collection of rate. He agreed to dissolve the local advisory groups/caretakers committee and to make the W.N.M.B pay £0.25 million pounds annual subsidy to local councils for the improvement of feeder roads and to increase prices in the next season.⁶²

However, what the government rejected was more than it accepted. It was held by the state government that the staggering of tax payment was unnecessary since "farmers could pay" the lump sum at harvest time.⁶³ Ayoola suggestion for ombudsmen to articulate public complaints was also disregarded. The flat tax rate was not reduced, the governor only announcing that "in the circumstance...it is unrealistic to raise additional taxes".⁶⁴ In meetings with farmer's leaders, he claimed to have accepted 'nearly all of the Report' and urged the farmers to pay the tax.⁶⁵

Apart from being merely unyielding, the Governor also became offensive. Admittedly, the situation of stalemate could not continue indefinitely; taxes had to be paid if the government was to remain functional in its constituted form. Authority also had to be asserted over the rural areas in one form or the other. But the method by which Brigadier Adebayo's approached the problem can only be described as unwise because the return to the application of coercion and brutal force against the peasants' created more problem than it solved.

Chief Agbaje was detained on May 20th under Section 3 of Decree 29 (1967) detention order, giving authority to 'detain... those thought to be a danger...to the public peace and...order.'⁶⁶ Despite the fact that Chief Agbaje had been cleared of direct involvement with the December riots by the Ayoola Commission, he remained in detention until September 4th 1969. Although an Ibadan High Court declared the extension of the detention order illegal, (the order originally expired on May 31st) he remained in detention.⁶⁷ An attempt by the Bar Association to free him on a writ of Habeas Corpus failed in mid-July, the Federal Attorney General, T.O. Elias, pointed out later that the federal government decree...are supreme and could not be challenged at the court of law.⁶⁸ However, the fact that Agbaje was actually not the moving force behind the peasant resistance was made abundantly clear by the events of July to October. By jailing Agbaje, the government obviously imagined that it had removed one of the most potent threats to stability, peace and tax collection. This was far from the truth...'fostering on a single factor... so-called trouble makers as the villains of the piece,'⁶⁹ as one observer noted, was to ignore peasant discontent and, in the long run, solve nothing.

The peasant's major grievance against Ayoola Report was, of course, his failure to slash the new tax. The peasant demand, which was to become one of the major planks of its 'platform', was the reduction of all flat-rates to a lump sum of 30 shillings- one pound and ten shillings, (£1: 10=). Ayoola criticism of the State was a carefully balanced one as nothing specific was said on the matter of tax reduction. Meeting with the Governor ended with the latter refusing to yield, claiming he had accepted nearly all the Commission's Report. On May, 15th, various leaders of the *Mekunnu-Parapo* agreed in principle to pay the three pounds five shillings flat rate if

collection was carried out by the local Mogaji's and ward-heads (in the city). It is a measure of peasant radicalization that those leaders were disowned by the members of the movement, subsequently losing their positions among the leadership.⁷⁰

It was after this meeting that Brigadier Adebayo, perhaps feeling that he had fragmented the movement, detained Chief Agbaje. When the compromised leaders were rejected, he proscribed most of the anti-tax movement outside of the officially recognized Western State Farmer's Union (WSFU) and the co-operatives groups. All "mushroom" peasant organizations were declared banned by the State Commissioner of Police, while Brigadier Adebayo himself warned on the 22nd of June that 'all political movements remain banned...these groups i.e. the anti tax movements, were constituting security risk in the State'.⁷¹ He warned of an impending tax drive as from 1st July to collect overdue taxes for the 1968/69 financial year. The attempt to balance the State's book for that year had been a miserable failure, the West ending up, as we have noted with a 10 million pounds deficit. In his 1969/70 Budget speech, Brigadier Adebayo introduced company taxes and raised export duty but warned that his regime would collect the overdue taxes, an announcement that was constantly repeated over the mass media during the following weeks.⁷²

In the villages, especially in Ibadan rural areas, the leadership of the anti-tax movements had been purged of feet draggers. In June, delegates were sent to the *Olubadan* and senior chiefs to insist that the peasantry would not pay the new rates and if "the government (sends) armed men....on July 1st...we shall welcome them."⁷³ In Akanran, where some of the fiercest confrontation took place, women and children were evacuated to Isokun, a 'small village hidden in the bush, three miles down a winding bush-path, during the last week of June'⁷⁴ in expectation of the impending tax drive. Of course, no sane human being would allow himself to be pushed around by a government that was perceived to be insensitive to his plight and paid more attention to other areas in terms of provision of social amenities. There was bound to be some reactions from the peasant movements. Little wonder then why they reacted so violently against a social elite class that saw them as objects to be exploited for the benefit of the State.

In Ogbomosho, a new movement, the *Tepamose*, (association of poor) largely composed of small farmers of the surroundings rural areas, had already infiltrated into the town during the night of 30th June. Road locks were put in place and had strategically positioned themselves in readiness for the ambush.⁷⁵ Thus, in the period of January to June, the government lost a very important chance for compromise and decided one again to revert to the iron fist. The peasant, on the other hand, after the disappointment and 'failure' of the Ayoola Commission, simply removed

compromised leaders and maintained their position. The period of violence, which followed shook the state to its foundations and transformed what started as sporadic isolated outbreaks into a movement, which became almost totally revolutionary in its aim or goals, or as a scholar put it, transformed the 'populist' riot of December into the revolt of July".⁷⁶

Although Ayoola was part of the state apparatus, he managed to find a way around the limitations of the terms of reference, which did not permit him to extend the period of his investigation beyond December, 1968. The Commission deserves to be commended for finding a way round this encumbrance. However, Ayoola could not sanction the total overhaul of the post-colonial State, only its reform. It would even be tempting to argue that the Commission was not only foolish but also cruel to the farmers' because while urging the farmers to eschew violence, it failed to bring down its hammer on the State Government that put it in place. This was a state military government that exploited and oppressed the peasant farmers', refused to accept fair prices for their cocoa, sent fraudulent officials to harass them and denied them of the amenities that they had been promised. This was a government that demanded higher taxes and even added a series of other tax demands when the peasant farmers' did not earn enough to meet their existing obligations.⁷⁷ The atrocities committed by the tax collectors were many and the aggressive ways they went about their duties left much to be desired. Yet, the Commission did not sanction the State government. This is double standard and it is unacceptable by civilized people all over the world. The Commission was economical with the truth in order not to bite the finger that fed it.

Brigadier Adebayo's acceptance of the Ayoola report was also extremely selective. He agreed to 50% reduction in water rate, which did not directly affect most peasants anyway. Promises were made to investigate local government corruption, arbitrary assessments and collection of rates. What the government rejected was, in fact, more than what it accepted. The staggering of tax payment was considered unnecessary because 'farmers could pay' the lump sum at harvest time.⁷⁸

Complaints existed in practically the whole state concerning the following:

- (i) The unsuitability of the sole administrator system as a means of running the affairs of the local government.
- (ii) The exclusion of the *Obas*, chiefs and local men from participation in the running of local affairs, thereby divorcing them from the knowledge of how taxes generated were spent.
- (iii) The constant loss and theft of council funds, with no apparent punishment for offenders.
- (iv) The corruption and high-handedness of tax officials and other council

officials who were never punished.

- (v) Failure on the part of Local government Councils to provide amenities to local areas
- (vi) The defects in tax structure and administration with regards to tax level, system of assessment and collection.⁷⁹

Professor S.A. Aluko, in a paper submitted to the Ayoola Commission, emphasized the need to 'pay higher producer prices to cocoa producers.'⁸⁰ One could argue that it was the insincerity of the government and other contending issues of the time that provoked the farmers. The farms were a source of revenue for the government and the chiefs. Roads were constructed free of charge by the "bushmen". All the Native Court Houses were built free of charge by the "bushmen". Yet, for these they received no thanks but were heartily fined in courts for trivial sanitary offences.⁸¹ Farmers' also knew about the rising world market prices and were able to compare this with what they got locally from the Marketing Board. The disparity, which was usually inequitable often, brought about animosity between the farmers and the Marketing Board, since it was too obvious that farmers were being ripped off. The aggregate net income of the average farmer and his taxable capacity had placed him in a no nonsense mood and would no longer tolerate any imposition of new and additional fiscal levies without desperate reaction".⁸²

A strong farmer organization that was completely independent of political pressure would have been of immense advantage to the farmers and the government as well. Justice Ayoola Commission believed that the riots of December 1969 were made the more likely by the absence of an adequately independent farmers' organization in the state. He believed that the presence of a viable farmers' union would have definitely facilitated communication between the farmers and the government. This would have enabled redress of grievances to be sought constitutionally. This was what informed the Commission's recommendation that a constitutionally oriented union be set up. The Commission noted that the majority of the farmers' were uneducated and incapable of taking sufficiently active part by themselves in forming on their own a virile farmers' organization.

Also, the flat rate tax which was paid by the majority of the peasant farmers in Western State made no allowances for those whose cash income was substantially below fifty pounds (£50) per annum; all including the aged and retired, the infirm or the unemployed were expected to pay this tax that was arbitrarily collected and at times politically biased and often vindictive *Akodas* or council tax collectors.⁸³ It could be logically argued that the economic situation and the attendant measures of government was what propelled farmers into forming a movement under various names such as *Agbekoya*, *Mekunu-parapo*, *Olorunkoya*, which differently translates

to "Farmer resist suffering", "the poor unites and "God says no to suffering," and all of them regarded government as an exploiting institution that had to be fought to a standstill in order to guard against further exploitation. The presence of adequate social reform, improved tax machineries and greater purchasing power for the masses would have encouraged them to pay the same level of tax as they paid the previous year, particularly if they saw that the revenue generated were expended on providing tangible amenities for them, and not merely ending up in the pockets of some fraudulent government officials.

The Commission noted the ease with which prisoners were freed from police cells in Ibadan, Oyo and Egba division and warned of chaotic consequences if the dangerous trend was allowed to continue. Ayoola was particularly shocked at the freedom with which some witnesses 'boastfully referred to the use of force to obtain redress' and suggested 'drastic measures' to end this trend towards disrespect for 'law and order' among the peasantry. The strengthening of the Nigeria police, as recommended by Ayoola, was, indeed, a necessary deterrent for peasants with intent to riots. Ayoola Report actually stressed "prevention...and not suppression of disorder",⁸⁴ but there were basic contradictions in his work. He stood for liberal reformism and at the same time, advocated the strengthening of the coercive apparatus. While the farmer's issues were to be largely ignored or tardily implemented, the government excessive use of coercive apparatus provoked the more serious and bloody riots of July to October.

The Nigeria Police, owing to shortage of personnel and insufficient equipment had considerable difficulties in forestalling and checking mass disorderliness, anarchy and pandemonium. This situation actually necessitated the drafting of army personnel to assist the police in the maintenance of general law and order during the disturbances. It is a fact that the police are better suited for the maintenance of civilian peace. The involvement of the army in the quelling of riots anywhere in the world is an aberration. Carnage, more often than not, would always be the inevitable tragedy that would follow the engagement of the army in quelling riots.

It has been noted that much of the injury and death in the Agbekoya rebellion resulted when the police attacked the farmers, trying to force the payment of taxes. It was reported that the major complaint of the public against the police were ruthlessness, brutality and the use of violence. More often than not, armed policemen have exacerbated rather than calmed a tense situation.⁸⁵ As with the farmers, their goal was primarily economic, though its political implication may have led the government to order action against them. They usually resolved their differences with management peacefully enough when left alone.⁸⁶

It was necessary for the government to touch the lives of the masses through the

provision of increased social amenities in the rural areas, and a deliberate effort to boost their economic capacity was advocated by Ayoola. He specifically noted that it was absolutely necessary for government to create small scale industries, ensure adequate payment of cocoa prices and make provision for increased financial aid to farmers to ensure the expansion of agriculture. Such steps were meant to enable the farmers to pay taxes promptly.⁸⁷ Surely, if the economic condition of the farmers had been better, and if the cocoa producer's prices for the 1967/68 year had been higher than they were, the ability of the masses to pay the taxes would have rendered impotent such agitation and disturbances. Their increased earning capacity would have enabled them to fulfill their civic obligations.

There were times when the farmers found it necessary to uphold local values through violent demonstrations. It may seem paradoxical to say that the Yoruba of Western Nigeria used violence to obtain peace. To a large extent, the government was pressured into changing its policies. A determined government may have simply applied more force, which would have resulted in further violence, perhaps, after a delay of a few months or years.⁸⁸ The peasants really made "things hot" for the upper and especially middle level leaders who took the wrong steps. The Ayoola Commission findings and recommendations vindicated the peasants in many respects, but it fell short of their expectations in some other ways. The commission actually noted the 'ignorance' of the masses over the new measures, which were not properly explained to them. The peasants were, therefore, unwilling to sacrifice for the war efforts, and because they felt neglected, they resisted the taxes and levies.

The mandate given to Justice Ayoola was too limiting in scope to address effectively the causes, nature and extent of the disturbances. It could not possibly do justice to the question of appropriate recommendations in order to guard against the recurrence of similar disturbances in future. It is on record that the Commission was precisely mandated to investigate the riots of December 1968. However, the Commission wisely took advantage of the subsidiary terms of reference, which empowered members to enquire into "any other matters necessarily incidental" to the main terms of reference. The jurist himself noted that 'to limit his enquiry strictly to the disturbances in December 1968 without treating the disturbances, which occurred in October and November 1968 would amount to taking a half-view of the various events, and would amount to disregarding the events, which culminated in the December disturbances'. It was, indeed, the government failure to direct protests into peaceful channels that the populist 'confederation' transformed the riots of December into the revolts of July.⁹⁰

After the Commission had concluded and submitted its findings, tax related disturbances continued until the closing months of 1969. There is no gainsaying the fact that it was imperative for the Commission to expand the scope of its mandate if it

was to achieve any meaningful success in the assignment. It had to do this by consciously going beyond the dictates of the Governor, and thanks to the incidental clause, which was the enabling power. But in spite of all these, its recommendation still failed to meet the yearnings of the peasants, though some of their demands were met. On the whole, his recommendations went a milestone in addressing some of the socio-economic issues that generated the disturbances of 1968/69 in Western Nigeria.

Conclusion

The paper dwelled on the setting up of the Ayoola Commission of Enquiry, which was mandated to investigate the causes of the 1968/69 peasant farmers' anti-tax uprising in Yorubaland of the south-western Nigeria. The Commission led by a Justice, apart from locating the origins of the crisis, made recommendations so as to avert the recurrence of virulent and violent reactions of farmers to injustices perpetuated by governmental obnoxious socio-economic policies. The Commission's findings and recommendations did not absolutely lead to the permanent cessation of hostilities. Instead, it degenerated into further escalation of the crises because it failed to appease the poor peasant farmers. This explains why the anti-elitist peasant movements metamorphosed the riots of December into the revolts of July 1969.

The paper similarly did a critique of the Commission's powers and noted that it was the 'incidental power' embedded in the terms of reference, which gave enablement to the Commission in order to achieve a measure of success. It is important to note that that any government and its agents that inflict hardship on the citizenry may find itself at the end of the people's reactions as was evident in the violent peasant outburst of 1968/69. Socio-economic policies that are salutary and progressive should be formulated and implemented because peace is paramount in our desire to achieve development. When this is done, peace and harmony as well as meaningful progress and development will be guaranteed.

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| <p>4 Ijebu Remo, Ibarapa, Egba, Ibadan rural and urban, Osun and Oyo. There were also riots, for instance, in Ibadan rural districts in March 1958 following the sudden death of Adelabu Adegoke Aka. 'Penkelemes', coined or adulterated from the English words, 'peculiar mess' by his rural supporters.</p> <p>5 C. Beer. 1976. <i>The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria</i>. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 162.</p> <p>6 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 42.</p> <p>7 C. Beer. 1976. <i>The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria</i>. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 162.</p> | <p>8 <i>Nigerian Tribune</i>. 18th September, 1969.</p> <p>9 C. Beer. 1976. <i>The Politics of ...</i> p. 187.</p> <p>10 Awooner Gordon O.R W. 1982. <i>Agbekoya: A Study of the Peasant Uprising in Western Nigeria. 1968-1969</i>, M.A. Dissertation in History Department, University of Ibadan. According to him, over six thousand people died at a conservative estimate. Only 375 deaths were recorded in the News papers.</p> <p>11 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 1.</p> <p>12 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 13.</p> <p>13 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 109.</p> |
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- 14 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 13.
- 15 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 2.
- 16 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 167. Although the ex-Governor Adeyinka Adebayo too felt that some politicians whose names he refused to mention were behind the farmer's agitation, Justice Ayoola ruled out the conspiracy theory. See also Ayoola Commission Report, p. 5 where the probe panel was told at its opening in Ibadan that a prominent Ibadan lawyer, Chief A.M.F. Agbaje, was the brain behind the anti-tax campaign in parts of Ibadan Division. See also *Daily Times*, January 23rd 1969. Allegation at Ayoola Probe: 'Top Men behind Tax Riots; Agbaje named'. Front page.
- 17 *Daily Times*, January 23rd 1969, p. 9. 'Tax Probe Shifts to the Palace: Olubadan Testifies'. The wickedness of some council officials knew no bound; investigation carried out revealed that the riot was ignited when some arrested tax defaulters were asked to 'face the sun' at the top of the council offices. See *Daily Times*, 14th February, 1969. '22 held in Ogbomoso'. Front page.
- 18 *Daily Times*, 3rd February 1969, p. 3.
- 19 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 167. 'The body of Shoun of Ogbomoso was dismembered by a mob'. For more on the mob aggression against the Soun, see *Nigerian Tribune*, August, 12, 1969.
- 20 G. William, 1980, *State and Society in Nigeria*. Afrografika, Ondo, p. 125. For instance, *Daily Times* Newspaper reported that over 2,000 men, armed with dangerous weapons, stormed the palace of Oba Adetayo Sami, the Orimolusi of Ijebu-Igbo, and damaged valuable properties. See the front page of *Daily Times*, 17th of December, 1968. See also *Daily Times*, 26th January 1969, p. 3.
- 21 *Daily times*, 26th January 1969, p. 3. 'School grant caused Oyo tax riot, witness tell Ayoola probe'.
- 22 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 83 & 84.
- 23 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 112.
- 24 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 110.
- 25 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 106 & 111.
- 26 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 113. See also O.R.W. Awonor-Gordon, (1982), *Agbekoya: Study of the Peasant Uprising in Western Nigeria*.
- 27 *Ayoola Commission Report*, p.110.
- 28 *Daily Times*, February 29th, 1969. 'Politics contributed to Egba Division Tax Riots, Probe told'. See also *Ayoola Commission Report*, p. 105 & 106.
- 29 *Ayoola Commission Report*, op. cit., p. 109.
- 30 *Lagos Weekly Record*, 13th of July, 1918. See also *Daily Times*, 3rd February, 1969, p.3. & Beer, C. (1976), *Politics of Peasant Groups*, p. 163. No sane human being would allow himself to be pushed around by a government that was perceived to be insensitive to his plight and paid more attention to other areas in terms of provision of social amenities. There was bound to be some reactions from the Agbekoya peasant farmers. Little wonder then why they reacted so violently against a social elite class that saw them as objects to be exploited for the benefit of the state.
- 31 G. William, 1980, *State and Society in Nigeria*. Afrografika, Ondo, p. 125. For instance, *Daily Times* newspaper reported that over 2,000 men, armed with dangerous weapons, stormed the palace of Oba Adetayo Sami, the Orimolusi of Ijebu-Igbo, and damaged valuable properties. See also the front page of *Daily Times*, 17th of December, 1968. See also *Daily Times*, 26th January 1969, p. 3.
- 32 Ayoola Commission Report, pp. 113 & 114.
- 33 Ayoola Commission Report, pp. 110 & 114.
- 34 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 114.
- 35 *Ayoola Commission Report*, p. 110. Ex-Governor Adeyinka Adebayo stated that he was not aware that government officials handled the tax collection issue arbitrarily and carelessly. However, he admitted that taxes collected were meant to support the civil war efforts and meet the demands of Lagos. However, Justice Ayoola led Commission noted that the agitation was not inspired by anybody or group of persons, but was a spontaneous reaction by the low income group to some new economic measures put in place by the state government.
- 36 *Ayoola Commission Report*, p. 114
- 37 *Ayoola Commission Report*, p. 107. See also C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 164.
- 38 G. William has also noted the distinction between the various social groups in the Yoruba Society. There were the Olola, (rich man) Akowe, (clerk/scholar) gbajumo, (Popular free spender). He observed the distinction between these groups and the Mekunnu (the poor).
- 39 *Ayoola Commission Report*, p. 107. C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 164.
- 40 Ayoola Commission Report, pp. 83-95.
- 41 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 96.
- 42 Ayoola Commission Report, p.109.
- 43 C. Beer, (1976). *The Politics...* p. 164. Although the ex-Governor Adeyinka Adebayo too felt that some politicians whose names he refused to mention were behind the farmer's agitation, Justice Ayoola ruled out the conspiracy theory.
- 44 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 167.
- 45 Ayoola Commission Report, pp. 81-82.
- 46 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 110.
- 47 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 97, pp.113-114.
- 48 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 114.
- 49 Ayoola Commission Report, pp. 160-164.
- 50 *Memorandum of the National Issues Society*, University of Ife, pp165-181; Ayoola Commission Report.
- 51 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 102.
- 52 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 102.
- 53 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 21.
- 54 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 33.
- 55 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 110.
- 56 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 100-101.
- 57 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 102.
- 58 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 102.
- 59 *Sketch*, 28th of March, 1969.
- 60 *Sketch*, 27th of April, 1969.

- 61 *West Africa*, 29th of March, 1969.
- 62 *West Africa*, 3rd of May, 1969, *Sketch*, 2nd of April, 1969.
- 63 *West Africa*, 3rd of May, 1969.
- 64 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 184.
- 65 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 185.
- 66 *Daily Times*, 22nd May, 1969.
- 67 *West Africa*, 28th of May, 1969.
- 68 *West Africa*, 19th of July, 1969.
- 69 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 160.
- 70 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 185-186.
- 71 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 186. *Sketch*, 23rd of June 1969.
- 72 *The Sketch*, 30th of June, 1969. It was reported in the paper that the Governor warned 'all... human parasites and saboteurs' of the impending 'war on defaulters and evaders' as from the next day.
- 73 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 186.
- 74 Safiu Lamidi: Aremu Adisa: Mr. S.O. Olagbaju, Akanran 6/11/81, 8/3/82 as recorded by Awonor Gordon O.R.W. 1982. 'Agbekoya: A Study of Peasant Uprising in Western Nigeria, 1968-1969', M.A. Dissertation in History Department, University of Ibadan. Also, Ma Morianmo Adekanmbi Ajayi, wife of the then Baale of Akufu, affirmed that it was a real war that took place in Akufu. Houses were set ablaze; children were hidden inside baskets for safety and her husband, the Baale of Akufu then, Ajayi, survived by escaping to Ibadan where he stayed for seven months in exile. So many other fathers abandoned their social responsibilities as heads of the homes for their wives. Paradoxically, she believed that it was the state police that saved them from the situation of that time, which goes to show that the State, among many techniques, applied the 'divide and rule' system in her dealings with the peasant farmers.
- 75 *West Africa*, 8th & 15th of July, 1969.
- 76 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 167.
- 77 G. William. 1980. *State and Society in Nigeria*. Afrografika, Ondo, p.125. Pa Lasisi Obisesan noted that the demands made upon the income of the peasants by the government were unduly heavy and too burdensome for the peasants. Even those who had insufficient land and eked out their living by looking for additional source of income had to pay.
- 78 T. N. Tamuno, 1970. *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861-1965*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp. 9 & 439.
- 79 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 109. In his evidence to the Commission of Enquiry, Chief Emmanuel Adegboyega Adeyemi, the sixth in rank to the Oba Salawu Aminu, the Olubadan of Ibadan, noted that the Military Government failed to consult with the people it governed before taking decisions some vital issues like taxation. See *Daily Times*, January 29th, 1969. 'Evidence at Tax Riot Probe'. Front page.
- 80 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 83.
- 81 *Lagos Weekly Record*, 13th of July, 1918. See also Beer, C. (1976), *Politics of Peasant Groups*, p. 163. No sane human being would allow himself to be pushed around by a government that was perceived to be insensitive to his plight. There was bound to be some reactions from the Agbekoya peasant farmers. Little wonder then why they reacted so violently against a social elite class that saw them as objects to be exploited for the benefit of the state.
- 82 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 85.
- 83 C. Beer. 1976. *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. p. 164. See also Ayoola Commission Report, p. 26.
- 84 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 102. See also Awonor Gordon O.R.W. 1982. 'Agbekoya: A Study of Peasant Uprising in Western Nigeria, 1968-1969', M.A. Dissertation in History Department, University of Ibadan. P. 179 & 180.
- 85 M. Peil, 1976. *Nigerian Politics: The People's View*, London: Cassell & Co. Ltd. P. 172. See also T. N. Tamuno, 1970. *The Police in Modern Nigeria, 1861-1965*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, pp. 253 & 439. Much of the injury and death in the Agbekoya Rebellion resulted when the police attacked the farmers, trying to force the payment of taxes. Tamuno reported that the chief complaint of the public against the police were 'ruthlessness, brutality and the use of violence'.
- 86 A. Peace, 1974. "Industrial Protest in Nigeria". In E. de Kadt and G. Williams (eds.), *Sociology and Development* London: Tavistock Publications. See also M. Peil, 1976. *Nigerian Politics: The People's View*, London: Cassell & Co. Ltd. P. 172.
- 87 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 113.
- 88 M. Peil, 1976. *Nigerian Politics: The People's View*, London: Cassell & Co. Ltd. P. 177 & 178. The peasant farmers used the structures that was available to make their wants known when the State Military Government moved too far away from them. They resorted to force to make their point. They acted under local leaders with definite goals in mind.
- 89 Ayoola Commission Report, p. 13.
- 90 C. Beer, 1976. *The Politics of ...* p. 165. See also Ayoola Commission Report, p. 13 & E. R. Wolfe, (1969) On Peasants Rebellion, *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XX 1, 2, p. 292.