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Nigeria: the Road Begins

NIGERIA'S CRISIS could not possibly have been solved by the wielders of political power who created it, for they were, as a contributor, Dr. Reginald Green, wrote in *The New African* (September 1965) "the beneficiaries of the system."

Fate seemed to provide the final impetus for the removal of these wielders of power, when public disgust at their conduct boiled over after the humiliating fiasco of the Western Region elections in October 1965.

Chief Akintola and his supporters in the Nigerian National Democratic Party might still have saved themselves from this final loss of the right to rule had they shown concern, even regret at the bloody rioting and ever-rising death toll. Instead, they—and the Federal leaders, their allies—played down this most serious blow to Nigerian hopes and self-respect. Even the holding of the Lagos Commonwealth Conference on Rhodesia added to the impression of callous disregard for the sufferings of the people as a result of the misdeeds of the politicians in power: a common view was that the Federal Prime Minister should put his own house in order before playing the Commonwealth elder statesman. Observers of the Nigerian scene saw all this but underestimated the determination of Nigerians to rid themselves of the ruling clique. The tenacity of the beneficiaries of the system seemed greater than the will to overthrow them. But Nigerians had apparently too long felt their shame and the events of 15th January were a desperate bid to reclaim for the people the dignity and the future well being of their country.

THE PRICE IS A HEAVY ONE—the use of killing as a political weapon, loss of faith in Nigeria's stability on the part of overseas investors, the hazards of military rule, threats to the survival of the Federation. If it buys for Nigeria a fresh start on the road to truly independent nationhood, it will not have been too heavy. If it ensures for Nigeria—and Africa—the future greatness which is its destiny, the painful events of 15th October will not have been in vain.

Into 1966

THE SECOND HALF of the 'sixties looks as vital to Africa as did the first half when it began. 1960 was Africa Year. The five years succeeding it have seen a struggle for survival among the new nations that came into being in those years. There have been "wars and rumours of war," and nobody can think that five years have seen the end of conflict among and within the nations of Africa. The sub-continent south of the Zambesi is still under one form of colonial domination or another, with Portugal a parasite on vast areas of unliberated Africa and with many states yet held back by neo-colonial relationships with countries outside Africa.

Our cover picture, taken in South Africa, suggests a theme for 1966, in the unliberated territories where the people may well face the militarism of their rulers in new ways.

The old cultures of Africa must grow out of conflict too, as they fuse and interact with other art forms and customs of the world. *The New African* will try to analyse and report on all these things in 1966, to carry insights, debate and information from one part of our continent to another, and also to our friends in other parts of the world.

[Cover picture: Jurgen Schadeberg]