

UNAMIR to be given enforcement powers under chapter VII of the Charter of the UN. Considering the fiasco in Somalia this was not a feasible option.

The second alternative was essentially a reduction in the force strength down to a small group to be headed by the force commander and to remain in Kigali to act as intermediary between the two parties in an attempt to bring them to an agreement on a ceasefire, in addition to assisting in the resumption of humanitarian relief operations. For this reduced mandate, the Secretary-General estimated a force strength of about 270.

The third alternative, which the Secretary-General had stated clearly that he did not favour, was a complete withdrawal of UNAMIR. This he feared would amount to a complete abandonment of the people of Rwanda and a total betrayal of all the ideals of the UN and hopes of collective security.

In the end, the Security Council by its resolution 912 (1994) authorised the reduction in the force strength. I believe this was a collective failure of all members of the international community and in particular members of the Security Council. One could argue with a lot of justification that the Secretary-General did not identify his preferred alternative and push for its acceptance by the Council. Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali would have to live with that criticism.

Nonetheless the Council had the option and, I believe, the responsibility, if there was the necessary political will on the part of its members, particularly the key members, to have authorised the deployment of additional troops which the situation desperately warranted, in order to put an end to the violence, before it became genocidal. Some delegations, like mine that was a non-permanent member, argued hopelessly against cutting down and running from Rwanda. We were of course overwhelmed and presented with a fait accompli in the form of deserting peace-keepers, and had to go along with the resolution. However, with the benefit of hindsight the Nigerian delegation should have abstained. Its statement in the Council during the explanation of the vote pointed to a disagreement with the import of the resolution.

To underscore the point about lack of political will, it is enough to consider how long it took it to get the force strength of UNAMIR 11 up to the authorised level of 5,500, following another Security Council resolution of May 1994. The Security Council resolution establishing UNAMIR 11 was adopted in May 1994 during Nigeria's presidency of the Council but it took more than

three months to have the batch of troops put into the area. The anger of the present Government of Rwanda at the abandonment of their people by the UN is understandable and well justified.

Nonetheless, logistic problems were also responsible for the time lag between the authorisation of the expanded UNAMIR, the contribution of sufficient numbers of troops and their actual deployment in Rwanda. The principal lesson here is that even when African States were persuaded to contribute troops to an international peace-keeping force (some countries outside the continent are reluctant to do so when conflicts in Africa are concerned), the constraints posed by logistic problems such as equipment for the troops, air-lifting, communication facilities, are enormous. For example, as Anyidoho has pointed out in his narration, the Zambian troops for the expanded UNAMIR took a ridiculously long time in arriving Kigali (my italics). The elements of the Zambian troops trained on Dutch equipment arrived on August 26, 1994 but their colleagues who proved less fortunate, the advanced party of the same battalion, did not arrive until October 30, 1994.

Gambari, a professor of Political Science was Nigeria's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN

The Lioness of Lisabi

BY OMOWUMI SEGUN

Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba, FOR WOMEN AND THE NATION: FUNMILAYO RANSOME-KUTI OF NIGERIA, University of Illinois Press, (Nigerian edition, Crucible Publishers, Lagos), 1998, 198pp.

THIS publication gives a general account of women's participation in Nigerian politics over the years. Of greater significance is the fact that it chronicles the life of a remarkable, nay phenomenal Nigerian woman - Funmilayo Ransome Kuti (nee Tho-



Women who were jailed for six months in 1948 for protesting against poll tax.

Fourth on fourth row (sitting) is Mrs Kuti. And first on the front row (sitting) is Eniola Soyinka, playwright Wole Soyinka's mother.

©The West African Photo House, Abeokuta, Nigeria

mas). Described as a feminist and political activist, the study recognises FRK's efforts to subvert social and political norms to become an active participant in the political affairs of her community and the nation. Her role in shaping the course of our political history is undeniable and unparalleled even in contemporary times. Fondly remembered as Beere meaning first born daughter, Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Nina Emma Mba have recorded her story - intertwined with the story of Abeokuta, and the nascent nation.

For Women and the nation offers the reader a feminist perspective on FRK's life in 179 pages of an extensively researched study which documents the fact and provides in-depth analyses of FRK's unending quest for justice, equality and the emancipation of Nigerian women.

The first chapter, which gives a historical background of Abeokuta from colonial times to the present, is of particular interest in setting the record straight by drawing attention to the position of women within the political hierarchy previous to colonial rule. The authors note that there was a 'gendered division of labour' which gave women access to economic and political power as exemplified in the case of Madam Tinubu whose thriving arms trade provided Egba warriors ammuni-

tion which gave them victory over their enemies in the 1864 Abeokuta-Dahomey war. As a result of which, Madam Tinubu was rewarded with the title of Iyalode of all Egbaland. This was the apex of women's involvement in the socio-political affairs of society. The balance of power shifted under the colonial administration's deliberate policy of relegating women to the purely domestic sphere of life thereby excluding them from bodies such as the advisory ENA council, native courts or bureaucracy. Despite attempts to suppress them, the biography reveals women's incursion, once more, into the arena of politics long before FRK began her political career. For instance, in 1940, Alimotu Pelewura led the Lagos market women's protest against the payment of taxes in Lagos. This was prior to FRK's political career. Political action by women was therefore not unprecedented in Yorubaland.

In the second chapter, the illuminating facts of FRK's ancestry are noteworthy. Her ancestral background provides us with the knowledge of tradition and societal values that influenced and helped to mould her personality. The most prominent of her ancestors was her paternal great-grandmother, Sarah Taiwo, whose life was marked by vicissitudes. Captured and sold into slavery,

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<< shipwrecked on the coast of Badagry, widowed twice, Sarah Taiwo eventually returned to her native land in Abeokuta. Sarah Taiwo's resilience in life can very easily be likened to FRK's tenacity and struggle in politics. Sarah Taiwo's son by her first husband, Ebenezer Sobowale Thomas, was Funmilayo Thomas' grandfather. The biography takes a glimpse at Funmilayo's early childhood, telling rather than showing that she had an early tendency to be assertive and daring. The reader is very likely to meet with disappointment as the biography does not probe further but focuses on FRK's career development, which dim even the courtship between Israel Oludotun Ransome Kuti and Funmilayo that lasted thirteen years. This could have been accorded more attention, especially as there seems to be a question about FRK's femininity which comes to fore in the third chapter. The fact is that FRK's public image tends to overshadow her personal life to the extent of rendering almost futile the authors' attempt to depict her femininity by stating that from '...her courtship correspondence with her fiancé... emerges a portrait of a woman of deep sentiment and feeling.' Not even the 'evidence that her concern with her appearance included the use of imported hair dyes and other toiletries, such as perfumes and cosmetics...' is likely to change public opinion. However this is as much insight as we get into her personal life. For much of the perspective on FRK's relationship with her husband is related to their mutual support for each other's public activity. Theirs was a true partnership in which both 'operated from a sense of equality.' This consciousness was raised in the Ransome-Kuti children, especially the boys who were taught the culinary art and involved in domestic chores. FRK's relationship with her children is discussed in greater detail than is her personal relationship with her husband. It is noteworthy that her two eldest children resented their mother's political activities as it deprived them of her full attention. Although there are divergent views on her capabilities as a mother, there are instances that suggest that she was very supportive of her children. For instance, when Dolu became pregnant and gave birth to her daughter Synod Frances while studying in England, FRK always sent money and routed herself through London to see the child on her international trips.

In the chapters that follow, the public personae of FRK is given more prominence. Her political growth - firmly rooted in her feminism - is supported with heaps of facts that testify to the painstaking research carried out over almost a decade. However, the authors appear to be bound by the limita-

tions of biography. The reader is obliged to wade through a deluge of facts where factation (a melting of facts with fiction) might have enhanced the narrative style. This technique, for instance, is employed in Wole Soyinka's autobiographical novel, covering the same period, events and personae Ake, the result of which is a more vivid representation of the same reality and a greater insight into the women's protest against taxation. Minor issues aside, the fourth chapter marks the beginning of FRK's feminist convictions. Her early exposure to western education and her subsequent trips to England prepared FRK for her role as feminist and nationalist. Her feminism took root in the Abeokuta Ladies Club and like her husband was a staunch believer in education being the ticket to freedom and emancipation. She pursued this vigorously conscripting her children, nephew and cousin as tutors. The study discusses the formative years and the *raison d'être* of the ALC at length such that the reader becomes acquainted with the stages of re-orientation of the ALC which started off more or less as a social club whose aim was to teach western educated Christian wives social graces. In 1944, the ALC was expanded to accommodate the *aroso* - market women - who were keen on learning to read and write. In 1945, barely a year after the literacy classes took off, the market women began to complain about seizure of their rice and the degrading and inhuman treatment meted out to victims. FRK's rage is almost palpable in the rash of protests that follow, culminating in the abdication of Oba Ademola as Alake or king of Ake - a feat that earned FRK the appellation of *Lioness of Lisabi*. FRK's fearlessness and disdain for oppressive traditional practices is captivating. Enraged by the impunity with which the tax agents carried out their acts of intimidation, she not only stands up to tradition but subverts it through the 'appropriation of the man-exclusive cult - oro.' FRK was a western educated woman who believed in traditional values in as long as they did not suppress women. Whereas she changed to wearing wrappers and began to speak mainly in Yoruba in consonance with her anti-colonial stance, she refused to kneel down to anyone including her husband.

FRK's feminist nationalism fuelled her inexorable campaign against colonial rule, and her struggle for the emancipation of Nigerian women. Her political convictions spurred her to tour the country, thus inspiring the formation of branches of the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) of which she was president. FRK was also relentless in her efforts to enhance the political status of

<< women. To this end, she convened a meeting of all women's organisations under the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) with the aim of consolidating her political agenda of obtaining franchise for women as well as proportional representation of women in government. She, however, fell prey to her ideals of universal feminism and loyalty based on gender solidarity and failed to win the support of all the women's organisations including her bid for one of the Egba constituencies in the 1959 federal election. Undeterred, the indefatigable FRK went on to form The Commoners People's Party, a mainly feminist party which failed to take off properly. It would appear - as the authors rightly note that - 'FRK was more effective in the politics against the colonial regime than in the ethnicised party politics of independent Nigeria.' Nonetheless, FRK will always be remembered in the annals of Nigerian history as being one of four female members of the Abokuta Urban Council (AUDC) created in 1950 as well as the only female candidate in the 1951 election. She was also the only woman selected to be part of the delegation

to Britain to protest the Richards constitution. Perhaps, what is most remarkable in FRK's political life is the fact that she showed herself to be an astute and pragmatic politician whose skillful manoeuvres in the international political arena helped to mobilise public opinion in her campaign against the payment of water rates imposed on women in Abeokuta. She was a principled person until the end of her life, but this did not prevent her soliciting help from organisations of different ideological persuasions in the attempt to further her political campaigns.

FRK left a legacy not only for her children - particularly Koye, Fela and Beko who embraced her ideals - but also for Nigerian women. Yet two decades after her death, FRK's vision for Nigerian women has not fully been realised as the political horizon continues to be clouded by men without mettle. *For Women and the Nation* would appear to be a book about the past, it however contains facts that are even more relevant for the future.

Segun, a librarian, is also a novelist.

Dripping with fire and gutter

BY ANKE WEILER-ODUNTAN

Toyin Adewale (German translation by Bettina Obrecht) DIE AROMAFORSCHERIN (EXPLORER OF AROMAS), POEMS AND SHORT STORIES, Edition Solitude, Stuttgart, 1998, 100pp.

INDEED, this collection of about thirty poems and three short stories throws us into a world of rich imagery and exploration, not only of aromas but also colours and visions. The collection deals with manifold topics such as womanhood (*Woman of Cush*) exile and experiences abroad, civil unrest and disorder (*A Tale of Two Vultures, Ken Wails*), experiences with fellow writers but also with getting to term with failed relationships (*House Cleaning*) and, on a more philosophical level, with hope.

This review is basically going to focus on the aspects of the image, aroma, as mentioned in the title of book and the translation of the poems into German language. The

three short stories are only in German and therefore are not discussed here. It has to be mentioned, however, that they are rather weak in comparison to the poems which might be due to the translation.

Aroma and Smells

The colourful and nearly impressionistic intensity of smells into which the reader is thrown reminds us of the streaming of imaginists. The topic of exploration of aromas is introduced in the first poem of the collection *Safari* (dedicated to the writer and human rights activist Ogaga Ifowodo). When Adewale writes 'through the dust searching for your aroma/your safari heart, that curi-

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