

## **Celebrating The Life of Prof. Adebayo Adedeji**

### **Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D.**

Arrived Odoşenlu, my country home yesterday July 5, 2018 with my wife, Prof. Ade Kukoyi and Retired Group Captain Gabriel Eşo. We had come to be part of the four-day celebration of the life of Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, that African icon on integration for development in Africa.

The ceremonies started with service of songs on Wednesday, Christian Wake Keeping yesterday and the burial today. At the Anglican Church conducted Wake Keeping service, I had the opportunity of saying a few words about who Prof. Adebayo Adedeji was.

At the funeral service today held at the Cathedral of Church of Our Saviour, Ita-Olowajoda, Ijebu-Ode, the retired Bishop Prof. Adebayo Akinde reviewed the achievements of Prof. Adedeji and asked the congregation to constantly consider what legacy they would leave behind when death comes calling like it did for Adebayo Adedeji on April 25, 2018.

The Church service was attended by the President of Namibia, H.E. Hage Geingob who reminisced about his first meeting with Adebayo Adedeji in 1975 and how he immediately, at the first meeting at the ECA took him home for lunch. He informed about Adebayo Adedeji's role in building the leadership cadre of Namibia and was solidly with the South-West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) on the Namibian liberation struggle. He was dressed in a beautifully cut Nigerian three-piece robe in white, which is the colour Yorubas, especially men, tend to wear for funerals.

The Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo started his brief remark by beautifully handling the local politics jovially well by implying his being Ijebu like the late sage Obafemi Awolowo and at the same time stating that Adedeji is actually Aşiwaju of Remoland. He recounted how Adebayo Adedeji was the cornerstone of the reconstruction in post civil war Nigeria under General (Dr.) Yakubu Gowon, including literally founding the National Youth Service Corps for integration in Nigeria through to founding of ECOWAS, for integration in Africa through to integration ideas that he implemented and built institutions for the same purpose in Africa.

I was not expecting the Vice President to announce that Nigeria would now sign the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement since Nigeria failed to do so in Mauritania, though it would have been fantastic if he had done so. It would have been a great acknowledgement of the pivotal role of Adebayo Adedeji in realising the Abuja Treaty. Well, maybe he would do so at the Symposium that the UN ECA is hosting in Lagos tomorrow to end the festivities in celebrating the great Ijebu of Africa, Adebayo Adedeji. I wonder why we shy away from leading in Africa. This time, my gut feeling is that the whole of Nigeria is kowtowing to the will of one same man who has been gouging the rest of us as beneficiary of protectionist policies that has been on for years. I am not persuaded that the non-signing is because of lack of consultations with Labour and the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria.

The former Presidents of Nigeria who valued education and earned Doctorate degrees after office, Dr. Yakubu Gowon and Dr. Olusegun Obasanjo were in attendance at the funeral service. Dr. Amos Sawyer, former President of Liberia and a collaborator of Prof. Adebayo Adedeji attended. Prof. Peter Anyang Nyong'o, also a former collaborator of Adebayo Adedeji and Governor of Kisumu County, Kenya was present. Prof Ibrahim Agboola Gambari, former Foreign Minister of Nigeria, Ambassador to the UN and Under-Secretary-General on many posts at the UN came to Ijebu-Ode for the first time to honour Prof. Adedeji. Prince Bola Ajib ola former Attorney-General of Nigeria and Minister of Justice as well as former Judge of the International Court of Justice was at Ijebu-Ode to bid the remains of courageous Adebayo

Adedeji farewell. Brigadier-General Kazaure, current D-G of the NYSC was also present with many of his staff members, including the State Coordinator for Lagos, Prince Momoh etc. Many other Nigerians like Prof. Adele Jinadu who taught me as an undergraduate student at the University of Lagos, Ambassador Ejeviome Otobo, retired Director at the UN, Prof. Adekeye Adebajo visiting home from South Africa, Dr. Said Adejumobi, Director at UNECA who I taught during my academic years at the University of Lagos, several Diplomats, including Ambassadors Akporode Clark, Olu Sanu, Korode Willoughby, Kunle Adeyemi and Oluşegun Akinsanya etc., were in attendance.

Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, the quintessential development expert who held sway at the UN Economic Commission for Africa died last night April 25, 2018 in Lagos. Before the UN, he had played the most significant role on post civil war reconstruction of Nigeria as well as development planning for the entire country as Federal Commissioner for Economic and Development Planning.

I spent well over a year trying to put together his biography with his full cooperation but I have failed to return to the project for almost 7 years.

His death marks the end of a great era for Africa. He was the epitome of the push for integration in Africa. His intellectual and physical effort resulted in the formation of ECOWAS, in spite of the French effort to award the status of father of that institution to someone else.

Little known to the African public at large, was the role Adedeji played with respect to the decolonisation of Southern Africa, in general and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in particular. As a man of integrity, he became a trusted conduit of funds and materiel to freedom fighters. For instance, from Siad Barre of Somalia and others, he delivered goodies for the onslaught against Rhodesia to Robert Mugabe in the bushes of Zambia.

Prof. Adedeji laboured with others towards building an independent economic growth and development for Africa. He challenged Bretton Woods orthodoxies. He provided the African alternative to the Western push for structural adjustment programmes. He gave intellectual great hope in Africa as Deng Tsiao Ping led on the transformation of China.

Alas, dependent globalisation order under corrupt leaders in Africa continues to radically chip away from the great efforts of the 1980s that Adebayo Adedeji led.

He was persuaded to retire from the UN and lead Nigeria as Babangida pretended that he really wanted to leave office. Not only did Babangida not want to leave office, Nigerian electorates, under the hold of decadent elites never support people with ideas for office. His quest for the Nigerian presidency was still born.

In retirement from the UN, he continued writing and was recognised as one of the world's best 50 minds on economic development. He equally played significant role in pushing the AU Peer Review Mechanism forward as well as the first effort on AU Reforms.

Locally, he served his community as Asiwaju of Ijebuland among other responsibilities in collaboration with Awujale, the Ijebu king. A good number of times, he tagged me along to the palace especially during the annual colourful Ojude-Oba festival.

He had planned his retirement into Ijebu-Ode. He overtime built the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), which was opened with a lot of gusto with several serving Heads of State from Africa, with revered Mwalimu Julius Nyerere in attendance. ACDESS put out a significant volume on Africa annually with scholars and practitioners providing knowledge on how to handle the problems in

many countries in Africa. I had joined others in contributing two chapters on Somalia and Kenya to the Monitor, 2006 edition that was devoted to "Africa Conflict, Peace and Governance. With demands on his time all over Africa, nay the world, the institutionalization of ACDESS suffered. On his 80th Birthday in 2010, attended by a number of former Presidents, some effort that was geared towards the revitalization of ACDESS was too feeble. A clear succession plan was not realised. He did his part. Others can move ACDESS forward to achieve his dreams of a roundedly developed Africa.

#Up-JOGS

Non-nobis-Domine.

May he RiP