

TO: NAIJANET Network  
MAY 7, 1995 FROM : PROFESSOR WOLE SOYINKA

SUBJECT: Disinformation Materials to Mr. Randall Robinson, TRANSAFRICA

I am an intruder, not being a NAIJANET subscriber. I don't even know how these networks operate and, from this first, albeit indirect, encounter with this discussion and information exchange, I think it is something over-extended people like myself should avoid, if only to conserve precious time and necessary equilibrium for a positive contribution to real issues. My intervention (this once only, I hope) is quite fortuitous.

A thick dossier accompanying a letter to Mr. Randall Robinson, Director of TRANSAFRICA, has just provided my first contact with NAIJANET, to which reference was made in the letter, and of which I have heard some remarks in the past. It is apparently the product of a student - which is what I find singularly shocking. From the mercenaries and propaganda machinery of General Sani Abacha, one would consider this as routine, but what has a serious-minded student got to do with such venal proceeding? Opinions, even where debatable, and analysis, even where faulty, are the legitimate province of the student, but what place has a deliberate concoction of falsehood got in a student's mind?

I read this tract with dismay, albeit, ironically, with some illumination. I had been encountering, in recent times, some sturdily held distortions of the truth of events in Nigeria in astute minds which would normally discountenance the predictable lies of government functionaries. Coming from supposed students or independent professionals, who are trained to respect facts, however, I begin to understand why such blatant lies actually obtain a hold in their thinking. NAIJANET obviously has some perverse entities in its midst and, considering the crisis of our times, I feel that I must use this instance to affirm their self-exposure to members of NAIJANET and their correspondents.

This particular dossier (the reprobate writer's name shall remain undignified) also happens to be of Goebellian proportions, indicating that he may be a planted mercenary after all, and not even a genuine student. If it turns out that I am wrong, in that specific proposition, let me simply state that Nigerian, like other universities, have also admitted and taught bona fide students who turned out, in the end, to be nothing but government spies, secret police, and even torturers of their own mentors. I refer any sceptics to my introduction to the latest edition of THE MAN DIED, where I recount the episode of Dr. Seinde Arigbede, who found himself being tortured and interrogated by an N.S.O. officer that turned out to have been one of his own former students at the then University of Ife.

On virtually every page of the writer's letter to Randall Robinson, plus accompanying "proofs" and "supporting documentation" of his allegations, it is the easiest task in the world to identify at least two outright lies, half-truths, contextual distortions, deliberate calumnies and malicious insinuations. It provides one of the most studied confections of disinformation that I have encountered in recent times, leaving one with no option but to regard it as the work of a professional, following in the disreputable trail of the Chukwumerijes in the last desperate years of Ibrahim Babangida. Most of the allegations are simply beneath contempt, and I confine myself to citing two or three random

examples only to utilize them as cautionary tale for those who still doubt that such species as the writer actually exist under student cover in institutions of learning.

This reprobate claims that Chief Abiola encouraged Babangida to enroll Nigeria into membership of the Organization of Islamic Council. I happen to have investigated this dangerous gambit at the time and can assert that Abiola had nothing to do with it. The main culprit was the then Minister of Petroleum, Alhaji Lukman, aided by Chief Sodeinde of Lagos. I doubt very much if the latter fully understood the implications of what he had been dragged into supporting, as he was then quite old and not very mentally robust. No matter, he did accompany Lukman to the meeting with Babangida, a meeting that was deliberately timed for the absence of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Profesoor Bolaji Akinyemi, and must be held equally culpable.

Even more instructive is the accusation that Chief Abiola "built police stations and donated them to the military junta so they could coercively contain mass and poplular protests." A very typical distortion, long perfected by the world's regimes of oppression. The truth of course is that Rotary Clubs, Lion Clubs, Community and Professional associations, etc. etc. plus individual philanthropists did build and donate police stations in response to popular pleas for community security. The nation was (still is) virtually under siege by armed robbers and the police complained of lack of facilities to combat them. Vehicles were similarly donated, even uniforms and boots.

Let me use an insignificant reference to myself in the letter as a third and final illustration of this crude methodology. When Babangida took power and threw open the prison gates, among the beneficiaries were certain highly placed individuals implicated in a well publicised case of drug trafficking. Indeed, just as expected, the indiscriminate releases did put paid to any further interest in what was building up to be the drug scandal of the decade. Instead, there were mysterious deaths and disappearances of prinicipal witnesses. In his dossier, the compiler cited my criticism of that blanket release to suggest that I favoured the release of some political prisoners, but not others, in short, that I approve of arbitrary detention without trial. The writer would prefer that I applaud opportunism of this populist gesture which saw fighters against Buhari's fascism sharing the same cloak of amnesty with drug trafficking police commissioners and powerful barons.

And so on, and so forth ad nauseam. Those who have the time and the inclination will find dozens of other easily repudiated lies in this tract that is merely part of a long-running campaign of calumny against M.K.O. Abiola and all who uphold the mandate of June 12, 1993. The President-elect is of course no angel, but neither was Shehu Shagari nor is President Clinton. They all share the achievement of passing the test of elections however, while General Abacha is yet to pass even an examination in his entire military career. This is the creature in whose hands people like the writer proposes that we place the destiny of our nation.

I am taking the trouble to copy this to Mr. Randall Robinson, with whom I had a conversation on this very theme only last week, plus a number of authentic pro-democracy movements both at home and abroad, purely as a reminder of what the entire movement must guard against. The writer, whoever he is, is of miniscule significance to me as an individual, and should normally remain beneath the notice of those dedicated to the liberation of Nigeria from a vicious tyranny. The discreditable cause that he espouses with such outrageous mendacity however demands that no

opportunity, however distasteful, should be lost to illustrate the methodology of its agents, and to put their posturing to the most stringent tests of truth.

Let us hope that your "information highway" succeeds in cleansing itself from the debris of this and other misfirings of Abacha's toxic capsules.

Signed:

Wole Soyinka

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