OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS
**Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature**
*Abbriviate Tittle- Ind J Arts Lite*
ISSN *(Online)*- 2582-869X
Journal Homepage Link- https://indianapublications.com/Journals/IJHSS

INDIANA PUBLICATIONS
PRODUCTIVE AND QUALITY RESEARCH

**Research Article**

Volume-02|Issue-03|2021

# African Survival Strategies during the Second World War: Smuggling Among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria

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**Article History**
Received: 13.03.2021
Accepted: 25.03.2021
Published: 31.03.2021

**Citation**
Opata, C. C., & Apeh, A. A. (2021). African Survival Strategies during the Second World War: Smuggling Among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria. *Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature*, 2(3), 13-21.

**Abstract:** *Britain coerced Nigeria and her other colonial dependencies in Africa into the Second World War, and in their win-the-war efforts enacted several legislations to regulate and improve colonial economies. The legislations were strangulating to the domestic economies. The study examines British legislations in Nigeria during World War II and the various attempts made by local Igbo businessmen at circumventing them because they were at cross-purposes with Igbo businesses and resistance to them, although anti-establishment, was primary. It, thus, calls for academic inquiry as this line of thought has received little attention by the litany of literature on World War II. Using historical narrative, the study posits that in spite of the regulations, the number of domestic products traded within the period between areas not authorized by law exceeded the official quota, courtesy of the various survival mechanisms adopted.*

**Keywords:** Colonial, legislations, World War II, Smuggling, Nigeria, Igbo, businessmen.



## INTRODUCTION

The struggle for scarce resources has remained a nagging problem facing humanity. Some of such struggles bordered on physical strength, technological superiority or quest for economic advantage. Over time, such contests led to wars of varying dimensions. It is not an overstatement that Europe as a continent had a fair share of such crises and associated with the transfer of such to nations outside Europe through colonialism. The exploits of European kings such as how Phillip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander, used the Macedonian army to rake havoc in Europe, Asia and even Africa. The Europeans came to Africa with a mind-set that was questionable – their belief as a superior race. This superiority complex manifested in the type of government which they instituted in their colonies - the Crown Colony System. In Nigeria, the Crown Colony System became one of the major grievances of the nationalists. K.O. Dike (1960:38-9)[1], observes that after the amalgamation in 1914, "what the nationalists fought was the exclusiveness and racial basis of the Crown Colony system of government at the initial stage; the fight was not so much for self-government but for a measure of participation in the existing government". The Crown Colony System thrived under what was referred to as Indirect Rule. Temple (1918:30) defines indirect rule as a system of administration which leaves in existence the administrative machinery which had been created by the natives themselves, recognizes the existence of emirs, chiefs, native councils, native courts of justice, Muhammadan courts, pagan courts, police controlled by a native executive, as real living forces, and not as curious and interesting pageantry, by which European influence is brought to bear on natives indirectly through European officers[2]. This definition contrast what obtained in the Eastern Province of Nigeria that is predominantly Igbo. Olusanya (1973:14), citing Afigbo, observed that, in the Eastern Provinces where the institution of chieftaincy was not well developed, the British started with the false belief that chiefs existed and appointed as warrant chiefs men whom they considered to be natural leaders of the people. Unfortunately, enough care was not exercised in appointing these men and the result was that the overwhelming majority of the people appointed as warrant chiefs were rather 'scoundrels or ordinary young men of no special standing in the society'. Consequently, the people came to look upon the institution of the Warrant Chief System as a 'rape of their indigenous political institution'[3].

In spite of the untraditionally of the appointment of warrant chiefs, the next loudest complaint by the people was against corruption and deliberate perversion of justice under the system. The chiefs were appointed without recourse to

[1] K.O. Dike, *100 Years of British Rule in Nigeria*, (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Information, 1960), 38-39.
[2] C.L.Temple, *Native Races and Their Rulers*, (Cape Town: Argus Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, 1918), 30.
[3]. G.O, Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria, 1939-1953*, (Ibadan: Evans Brothers (Nigeria Publishers) Limited, 1973), 14.

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established traditional authorities. Never-do-wells who came in contact with colonial authorities were given warrants. In some cases, chiefs were appointed to administer societies outside their. One thing was important: these chiefs were appointed for the administrative convenience of Igbo societies. As a result of this, the chiefs were highhanded, corrupt, and pervasive in the dispensation of justice. They were hated with passion and when the time came, the people revolted against them in what has been dubbed in Igbo colonial history as the 'Aba women riots of 1929'. The riot could not happen at any other time but during the great depression, when Europe was recuperating from the effects of the First World War. Colonial demands on the colonies were much and the strain in the economy pushed the people to revolt. As the colonies were being bled by the authorities for the benefit of Europe, African farmers, transporters, and traders bore the brunt as their businesses became limited by series of colonial legislations. These legislations were to be heightened during the Second World War, but by then, the Igbo have devised mechanisms of circumventing them.

While the Igbo battled the 'rape of their indigenous political institutions' by colonialism, a dangerous and negative trend reared its' head in the economy. First, the Igbo were desirous of emerging as a business class in Nigeria. From indications, it was evident that the British might have made it difficult for such as class to emerge in Nigeria. Economic power was concentrated in the hands of Europeans since it was assumed that Nigerians did not possess the capital and the knowledge that was needed for effective competition in a free economic system, organized according to European models. Olusanya (1973) observes that in the 1930s, Nigerian/Overseas trade, both for export and for import, was concentrated wholly in the hands of the United Africa Company and other smaller European firms. The activities of these firms extended into the spheres of trade where Nigerians might have made good. For instance, they were involved extensively in semi-wholesale and retail trade in various cities in Nigeria. The other device used by the Europeans, especially the British, to suffocate the emergence of an indigenous business class in Nigeria was to offer very low prices for primary goods produced by Nigerians. In all, European businessmen were sole buyers of agricultural produce and therefore, determined the prices which were usually very low. These products bought at very cheap prices when turned into consumer goods were resold to Nigerians at much higher prices. The latter phenomenon caught the attention of Mr Herapath (a European member of the Legislative Council representing the Banking interest) that on June 12, 1934 he argued that:

> The Nigerian natives were being asked to continue his standard of living on the scale which had been encouraged by the colonial administration and to buy goods from Lancashire without the administration insisting that Lancashire should take Nigerian products at a price which would enable the Nigerians to pay for such goods (*Legislative Council Debates*, 1934:66)[4].

Even as this unfavourable condition of trade existed, Nigerian businessmen were hamstrung by lack of capital as the European banks were not inclined to honour their plea for credits. This contrasted the generous credits which they offered to Syrian and Lebanese traders as well as other European traders. In protest, Nigerians had to float the first indigenous bank, the National Bank of Nigeria in 1933[5]. To further aggravate grievances, the Europeans were reluctant to plough back the profits they made in Nigeria into the nations' economy. It was on the basis of these discriminatory and exploitative antecedents that the Igbo formed the notion that the British were out for business in Nigeria and had no morals governing their business exploits. This belief was eloquently enthused by one of the Igbo political heavy weights and early nationalist, Mbadiwe (1942:171-2) when he observed that,

> The economic history of Nigeria is a narration of shame and exploitation. It is the story of a handful of fortune seekers, with the blessing of England, coming to Africa under the guise of trusteeship only to strangle the goose that lays the golden egg. Instead of educating the people to stand on their own feet, the foreigners aim at economic deformity of the people[6].

Mbadiwe's argument is in tandem with that by V.I.Lenin who reasoned in his *Capitalism as the Highest Stage of Imperialism* that capitalist states would inevitably rush into imperial wars, while strengthening their monopolies and exploiting the working class at home (Nakamura Takafusa 1999:19-22)[7]. However, what Lenin could not predict was that the monopolies and extension of the capitalist would provoke reactions from those who were to bear the brunt of their imperial desires. The Igbo of southeastern Nigeria was one of such groups that felt the cold hands of capitalist monopolies and exploitation as was evident during the Second World War in Nigeria.

As though the Igbo forgot the past, when World War II began, their leader and most prominent nationalist in Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe used his *West African Pilot* to sway Igbo support for Britain. Azikiwe attacked the Germans and their attitude to black Africa. The German through the views expressed by Karlowa and Wilhelm von Alwurden (both German writers) averred that any African who believed in British or French democracy was a Bolshevik and must be annihilated. This implies that all Africans under the colonial tutelage of Britain and France were ear-marked for destruction

[4]*Legislative Council Debates*, June 12, 1934, 66.
[5]G.O, Olusanya, *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria…*, 19.
[6].K.O.Mbadiwe, *British and Axis Aims in Africa*, (New York: Wendell Malliet and Co., 1942), 171-2.
[7].V.I.Lenin, cited in Nakamura Takafusa, "The Japanese War Economy as a 'Planned Economy' in Erich Pauer (Ed.), *Japan's War Economy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 19-22.

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by the Germans. Incidentally, these two European nations had the largest number of colonies in Africa. Writing on 20 January 1939 in relation to Germans and their notions of Africa, Azikiwe surmised as follows: "read them and weep my fellow Africans, but don't keep weeping because we must resist this challenge by concerted action in collaboration with the Mother Country"(Olusanya 1973:42)[8]. That the Igbo and Nigeria heeded the call of Azikiwe and his likes could be attested to by the fact that they met all the targets set for them in the production of primary products like palm oil and kernel used in the effective prosecution of the war especially when the Allies lost their Far Eastern colonies. The target set for palm oil was 370,000 tons while that of palm kernel stood at 170,000 tons (Olusanya 1973:49)[9]. To make Nigerians meet these targets, the British had to enact some legislation which was to help in piloting the war-time economy to their advantage even when the Igbo and other Nigerians were not comfortable with such laws and their provisos.

**WAR-TIME LEGISLATIONS AND IGBO DISAFFECTION**

The British economic policy in Nigeria emphasized the production of export crops at the expense of food crops. This shift in emphasis on food crops introduced not only hunger in the rural communities but also in the emerging urban centres. Many Igbo traders and businessmen saw this development as a vent for them to test their entrepreneurial skills as most of them took to establishing trading bases in areas where the prices of food crops were higher while buying same from areas where prices were lower. They allied with transporters of Igbo extraction to attain this objective. To hamstring these businessmen, the British struck at the very artery that supplied blood to the business by enacting the 1939 Nigerian Defense Motor Transport Regulation[10]. This law not only imposed restrictions on the use of commercial vehicles for passenger services during the war, it also empowered the colonial government to intervene directly in the sale of new vehicles, tyres, tubes, spare parts, and petrol. It equally provided for petrol rationing among vehicle users even as it discriminated against vehicles used for passenger purposes and private cars but favoured those engaged in produce evacuation (*Nigeria Legislative Council Debate*, 4 December 1939, 51-2)[11]. The legislation had several effects on the people as demonstrated by the litany of petitions to the colonial government.[12]

Three main agricultural produce of the Igbo from where they earned a living that were seriously affected by the war-time legislations and control were cassava, yam, and palm produce. Cassava was in high demand during the war because cassava starch was needed to keep the military uniforms in good shape. To limit the trade in cassava product and stifle local consumption, the colonial authority introduced the Food Control Order of 1943.The Food Control Order placed restrictions on the trade on domestic products especially agricultural produce between districts, provinces and even between regions (Chuku, 2005: 98)[13]. As traders were not allowed to move freely with their goods, they complained to government hoping that changes that would be favourable to their trade would be made. Greater percentage of the complaints came from garri traders. In a petition to the Resident of Owerri Province, the Garri Traders Association of Aba registered their dismay over the quota system implemented by the District Officer of Aba with respect to the volume of garri that was allowed to exit the District. Cassava was of importance due to its domestic demand as a staple crop. A major product of cassava is garri and was needed by many Igbo people residing in cities in Northern Nigeria. The Jos tin mine, railway staff, industrial staff, traders and civil servants, all working in Northern Nigeria relied on daily intake of garri. The great demand for garri and other staples necessitated the South – North trade which boomed before our period. Meanwhile, there was no alternative staple for the garri consumers residing in Northern Nigeria and the Igbo traders down South. The wartime legislations came to scuttle this trade and were resisted in various ways.

The traders enthused that "the legislation will annihilate the garri trade, and undoubtedly impoverish the average trader involved and render life 'not worth living'"[14]. They also argued that "as free citizens of the British Empire, they had the right to live and that by that same right, they pray for an amendment to be effected in the method or system of control adopted in the railing of the commodity (garri) as advanced by the Aba District Officer (Nigeria National Archives Enugu (NNAE), (ABADIST), 14/1/873, File No.1646)[15].

**EXPORTED**

The complaints of the garri traders in Aba could be understood taking cognizance of the volume of garri export from Aba to Northern Nigeria before these legislations. The report of the Agriculture Department, Umuahia in 1943

[8]. *West African Pilot*, cited in G.O, Olusanya, The *Second World War and Politics in Nigeria,….*, 42.
[9]. For details of the target see page 49 of G.O, Olusanya, The *Second World War and Politics in Nigeria…*
[10] See Chima J. Korieh (ed.), *"Life Not Worth Living": Nigerian Petitions Reflecting an African Society's Experiences During World War II* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2014), for several petitions on the regulation.
[11].*Nigeria Legislative Council Debate*, December 4, 1939, 51-52, as cited in the works of Esse Uwakwe Oji Abiai, 'The Second World War and Resource Management in Eastern Nigeria" an unpublished M.A Dissertation, Department of History, University of Nigeria, 1977, and "Road Transport in Nigeria as a Private Enterprise among the Igbo, 1920-1999" an unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2005.
[12] Chima J. Korieh, *"Life Not Worth Living": Nigerian Petitions …*
[13].Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, 1900-1960*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 98.
[14] Chima J. Korieh ed., *"Life Not Worth Living": Nigerian Petitions …*
[15]. National Archives Enugu (NNAE), Aba District (ABADIST), 14/1/873, File No.1646, "A Resolution," Gari Traders Association, Aba to Resident, Owerri Province, 29th July, 1943.

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maintains that Aba was the chief centre from where garri was to the Northern Provinces. In 1938, 4,011 tons of garri was exported from Aba to the Northern Nigeria. This was to increase to 5, 428 tons in 1939 but was to drop to 4,000 tons in 1940. However, it was to increase to 6,000 tons in 1941 and to 21,000 tons in 1942 (Chuku 2005:109)[16]. Several factors accounted for the increase in 1942. These were not that the restrictions were relaxed, but because of the act of smuggling that became entrenched in the business.

The lamentations of traders of Igbo extraction who sold garri in Northern Nigeria during the following years show that the restrictions were in full force. For instance, a letter to the District Officer of Aba by J.O.Okorocha, a garri trader from Mbosi (Mbawsi), in 1943, protested the allocation of a merger quota of 10 bags of garri to him whereas he had exported 209 bags of garri to Northern Nigeria in 1942. He stated that "my quota is too poor considering my intensive trade last year". He pleaded as follows; "I beg of you to remedy the situation and award me what is due" (NNAE, ABADIST 14/1/872, File no.1646)[17]. The control imposed by these restrictions not only limited the income of traders but also introduced serious hunger in the urban centres where they originally sold the restricted goods. Scarcity led to competition for available commodities and this was to trigger off high prices in the purchase of such products. Garri became a black-market commodity and any trader who was able to smuggle it to Northern Nigeria benefitted. For instance, in June 1943, 2 cups of garri sold for 1d as against 10 to 15 cups for 1d prior to the government regulations and export to other regions of Nigeria. The dearth of garri in the Eastern Province to which the Igbo belonged, was such that between the months of November and December 1944, over 5,000 people (both men and women) in Ikot Ekpene District of Eastern Nigeria took to the streets to protest the scarcity of the commodity (Chuku 2005:109)[18]. Garri was to them what bread was to the French in 1789.

Even as there was scarcity of garri which is a major product of cassava and a major staple in Igboland, planting of yam was not encouraged as the colonial wartime legislation hampered yam production. Production of food crops was not encouraged and farmers were made to produce for export those commodities critical in the win-the-war effort of the British. Inter district, inter provinces and inter-regional trade were outlawed. This was evident in the petition written by Mr. Udeh in 1945 to the District Officer of Abakaliki Division. On 19 May 1945, he wrote as follows:

> I am still asking you about a permit which I will use in carrying yams to Nawfia Awka. The reason why I say very much about it is that the time of planting is passing… I beg your Honour that you may consider about it. In my first and second letters that I wrote you, I begged you to give a special permit to transport one trip of seed yam to Nawfia in Awka District. I told you that I have lived [in] Abakiliki for 25 years and I have not get any yam to plant in my town. Now this season of yam plantation is coming to an end. … Yam plantation remains not more than 20 days now (Udeh 1945). [19].

As it appeared to Mr Udeh, as official reaction to his plea delayed, he became persistent in his plea as indicated above. He was merely asking for a permit to transport his seed yams from Abakaliki District to Awka District in Eastern Region of Nigeria, but was refused. Even in the face of the restrictions, greater restriction was placed on transporters/motor vehicles who conveyed these traders to their places of business. Motor vehicles were monitored and rationed petrol not for passenger vehicles but for the conveyance of export goods that assist the British in their war efforts. From available archival records, it could be gleaned that governments' aim of controlling the transport industry in Nigeria during World War II was to facilitate produce evacuation by road to the railway stations and seaports. Lorries were made readily available when needed, as lorries owned by indigenous transport operators were commandeered and reserved for produce carrying, and for other essential war purposes (J.C.Drummond-Hay, July 1942)[20].

Passenger vehicles were snubbed in the allocation of petrol because people were not allowed to travel outside their districts but encouraged to remain where they were producing export commodities. This began in 1942 when the colonial authorities enacted the Oil Control Regulation Act of 1942 which was targeted at securing greater control of petrol consumption by private car owners and commercial vehicle operators engaged in passenger services as it limited the supply of fuel to indigenous transporters who preferred passenger services to produce evacuation. By this regulation, passenger vehicles were not classified as part of those providing service under the transportation sector of the economy that was essential for winning the war. It was made compulsory for commercial transport vehicles to engage in produce evacuation to receive rations of petrol. Through these measures, the colonial authorities literally cut the ground under the feet of traders. They reduced the income of the traders as epitomized in garri trade from Aba to Kano in 1941. At Aba during this time (1941), the price of a bag of garri was six shillings (6s) but traders had to pay a railway freight of seven shillings and six pence (7s 6d). They paid a sum of one shilling three pence (1s 3d) to transport a bag of garri from the market to the railway station. Additionally, the traders had to pay a shilling and six pence to obtain an empty bag with which to bag and

[16]Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern Nigeria, ….,* 109.
[17].NAE, ABADIST 14/1/872, File no.1646, Garri Control," J.O.Okorocha to District Officer, Aba, July 7, 1943.
[18] . Gloria Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation…*109.
[19] NNAE, AIDIST 2/1/433,450,"G.I.Udeh to District Officer Abakaliki", 19 May, 1945.
[20] NNAE, CSE 1/85/8612, Vol.1, Motor Transport Control Instructions issued Controller of Motor Transport, Mr. J.C.Drummond-Hay, July,1942

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package their wares (Oyemakinde 1973:413-33)[21].On the average, to take a bag of garri from Aba to Kano stood at 16s.3d but unfortunately due to price control and trade restrictions the maximum official selling price for a bag of garri at Kano was 16s[22]. This means that the trader lost 3d per bag. This loss did not take into account the pains of travelling on rough roads and the penalties paid to Traffic Control Officers if caught.

As it relates to trade in palm produce, the major articles of trade were palm oil and palm kernel. The Igbo prior to colonial rule and the war-time legislations and control, had established trade links on these goods with communities in Northern Nigeria. Palm produce production was not new to the Igbo; however, what colonialism did was to provide environment that encouraged production and creating a vent that consumed the surplus produce. The trade in palm oil predated colonialism as it went on, though in trickles side-by-side with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Even before this period, it went on from southern areas of modern Nigeria into Hausaland as article of the trans-Saharan trade. Palm oil was part of the peoples menu for a long period. In Northern Nigeria, Igbo traders on oil palm oil were referred to as *Mai Manja* by the Hausa. However, in 1942 following the loss of the Far Eastern Empires to the Axis Powers, the British noticed a shortage in their fat and oil supplies. The colonial authority bent on plugging the gap created by the deficit in fat and oil, encouraged the production of palm oil and palm kernel in greater quantity. They even devised mechanism to make palm oil and palm kernel lucrative. For instance, in 1943 at Oguta they increased the price of kernel from £5 8s 6d per ton to £7 8s 6d, from 8s10d to 12s 3d per bag and from 2s 5d per bushel to 3s 3d (NNAE, ABADIST 14/1/863, 14 May 1943)[23]. Palm oil and palm kernel attracted lucrative prices and many farmers became engaged in the production. This did not last long.

In 1944, the government sought to short-change the indigenous population through enacting the Control of Export Produce (Palm Oil) Prices Order of 1944. The Order fixed the prices of palm oil and palm kernel. Earlier in 1943, a Produce Control Board was established and was saddled with the responsibility of regulating the marketing of palm oil in Nigeria. The same year [1943], the Nigerian Defence Regulations, Food Controls (Removal of Palm Oil) Order, export of palm Oil to Northern parts of the country was restricted to few traders that were Licensed Buying Agents (LBAs) who were issued with specific quota. The rationale behind all these trade restrictions was to encourage greater export of the products to Europe, especially to Britain. Be that as it may, Igbo traders were able to circumvent the laws and still found ways of selling palm oil in Northern Nigerian markets.

Gloria Chuku while writing on the dynamics and mechanics of trade in produce during the wartime years observed that at Agbani, army agents were ready to pay 4s per four-gallon measure of palm oil, which contained less oil than the petrol tin even when the control price was3s 6d. In spite of the price control, Igbo traders even offered to pay as high as 5s to local producers and transport same to northern markets instead of selling to the army or government-buying agents in Igbo markets as they were sure to make greater profit by selling in markets in Northern Nigeria. She noted that when the police officers monitoring the implementation of the controlled prices were around the market, local traders paid the control price but later made up the balance when the officers were gone and many of them even resorted to going from house-to-house to buy the products from the producers at their homes to evade the control (Chuku 2005:100-1)[24]. However, evading control officers in the market does not translate to automatic access to markets outside the Igbo area. This was because they had to transport their goods to their trading bases. To convey a regulated article was risky as the government appointed Transport Control Officers (TCOs) for the three Regions of Nigeria. The Transport Control Officer for Eastern Region of Nigeria was Dr. A. J. G. Barnett.

The Transport Control Officer set up control posts and check-points along the roads. They equally established posts at motor parks from where vehicles were supposed to either take-off or disembark when it gets to a designated area. They also made use of mobile police patrol to track down offenders. More importantly, they reduced the number of vehicles that would have helped such traders in evacuating their wares to unauthorized locations through the introduction of the use of petrol coupons. The use of the coupons was to ensure "judicious" use of allotted petrol. Through the use of coupons, the entire South-eastern Nigeria was allocated a total of 375,300 gallons of petrol in 1944 as against 417,000 in 1943; a shortfall of 31,700 gallons representing a 10 per cent deficit in supply (Esse Abiai, 2005: 78)[25]. The Transport Control Officers also made sure that only transporters who had the permit-to-operate were allowed to ply the roads and each permit stipulated the area within which a motor vehicle could operate, the nature of load to be conveyed, and the number of passengers it was authorized to carry. Bicycles that would have provided an alternative means of evacuating produce by

[21].*West African Pilot,*16 October, 1941 cited in Wale Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1914-1947" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria,* Vol.VI, No.4, 1973,413-433.
[22] .Wale Oyemakinde, "The Pullen Marketing Scheme: A Trial in Food Price Control in Nigeria, 1914-1947" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria,* Vol.VI, No.4, 1973, 419.
[23]. NNAE, ABADIST 14/1/863, "Palm Produce Production", Agriculture Department Umuahia to Resident, Owerri Province, May 14, 1943.

[24].Gloria, Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic…,* 100-101.
[25]. Esse Uwakwe Oji Abiai, "Road Transport in Nigeria as a Private Enterprise among the Igbo, 1920-1999" an unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2005,78.

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these traders equally came under restriction in 1942 as government through the Nigerian Supply Board promulgated a law that reserved all new bicycles in the Eastern Provinces exclusively for the palm produce trade. In the face of such challenges and bent on making profit, most Igbo traders resorted to smuggling. This begs the question as to why the traders persisted in the business and how they conducted the trade and made their gains irrespective of these strangulating measures enacted by the colonial authorities.

**THE SMUGGLER AT WORK**

It is a truism that when two elephants fight the grass suffers. However, in some cases the "grass" devised a means of ensuring that it did not get consumed in the fight. This apothegm may have influenced the Igbo mindset during World War II with respect to the series of restrictions on the economy which forced them to adopt smuggling as a survival strategy. Scholars are not agreed on what should form a working definition of smuggling. However, most researchers are agreed on the view that smuggling could be classified as an underground business or economy. Tajul Ariffin, Afizar Amir and Haslindar Ibrahim (2011:107-110) while writing on smuggling in Malaysia with respect to the city of Penang, defined smuggling as the clandestine import of goods from one jurisdiction to another[26]. This definition lacks merit in the context of the present study since it favors import at the expense of export which dominated Igbo mindset during the period. Therefore, a more workable definition of smuggling that would embrace both import and export in a controlled and regulated economy should be sought after. Smuggling as construed in this paper refers to all illegal or unauthorized trade conducted between peoples of different backgrounds within their locality and in distant places in a manner that renders government control ineffective as was purposely designed to circumvent the existing regulations on trade.

The method the Igbo used in carrying out their business was first to explore the viability of using old trade routes that were not major roads but pathways. There are evidences of ancient trade routes that existed between the Igbo and the Igala, the Igala and Nupe, Nupe and Gwari, and so it continued into Northern Nigeria. These were pathways for pedestrians and were in good conditions to allow for the use of bicycles. As farmers, most of the communities on the Igbo borderland operated night markets. These markets opened at about 4pm daily, when the farming communities had returned from the farm. This stimulated another strategy by the traders who resorted to nocturnal trade to circumvent colonial authority officials. Opata (2012:42) noted that the art of smuggling was more pronounced in provincial border communities and he gave the example of Unadu community in present Igbo Eze South Local Government Area of Enugu State that belonged to the old Eastern Region. This community share borders with Akpanya, a community in Kogi State that is located in the Northern Region. He observes that Igbo traders in Unadu community used to take goods that were not allowed to be traded between regions to Akpanya via foot paths. The major article of trade was palm oil. What they did was to convey the goods through human porters at night. The human porter would keep the consignments in the bush very close to Orie Akpanya. There, the traders sold the palm oil in retail. The sales were made very early in the morning, between 6:00am and 7:30 am, before the officials would start the day's work. This system of trade, gave rise to a local saying among the people that, *Oyibo kwụrụ n'urua, Unyama gbagarụ*, (i.e. when the white masters are asleep, traders would trade)[27]. This type of transaction prevailed where the distance between the points of purchase and points of sale were close to each other relatively. This was characteristic of trade in the Northern Igboland towns of Nsukka, Enugu Ezike, Obollo, Eha Amufu, Ngbo, Ikem, where Igbo people lived in proximity with their Northern neighbours and attended the numerous borderland markets.

For smugglers whose businesses involved long distances, say from the Nsukka, Aba, Owerri, Enugu, and Abakaliki areas in the Eastern Region to places like Gboko, Jos, Zaria, and Kano in the Northern Region, they had different strategies. As vehicles, especially lorries, were commandeered for produce evacuation, the traders resorted to the use of bicycles to convey their goods to public parks where they were loaded for onward transmission to the railway stations. To facilitate the movement of their consignments, the traders colluded with some Igbo transporters. Such traders claimed to be buying agents of authorized produce. To make good their claims, they had the mark that the authorized agents used in identifying their goods boldly written on the bags of garri which they intended to move to these northern towns[28]. This was to confuse the control agencies and make them believe that the consignments were that of an authorized agent. However, the colour of the paint used by these smugglers differed with that of the authorized agents. On getting to the railway stations, they colluded with railway staff to get their wares loaded into the train. However, it was not without a price tag. For every bag of garri, the smuggler paid the railway staff 3d. At the Northern rail stations, another railway staff that was part of the smuggling syndicate separated the consignments which he then ensured were loaded into a vehicle of a driver that was part of the business chain[29]. The effect of the smuggling syndicate was attested to by the fact that in July 1944, government

[26].Tajul Ariffin Masron, Afizar Amir and Haslindar Ibrahim, "Underground Economy in Malaysia: Evidence From Smuggling Activities in Penang", *International Journal of Current Research, Vol.3. No.5, May 2011*, 107-110.

[27].Christian Chukwuma Opata, "Night-time Road Transportation in Nigeria As an Aspect of Igbo Entrepreneurship,1970-2000" an unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, July,2012,42.

[28]. Innocent Akwolu, C.62, son of Azukaeru Nwasogwa of Amankwo village, Lejja who was said to be one of the smugglers. In short his business escapades earned him the name Azukaeru, (Trading like the Aro). 12/6/2007.

[29].Evidence from Mazi Kalu Umahi, C.86, who was one of the trade assistant to Paul Umunna of Ekwulobia who was one of the traders (garri smugglers) based in Agbani area of Enugu during the period. Interviewed at Ntezi, Ebonyi State on July 7, 2004.

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observed that about 200 tons of garri was exported into the North in excess of the permitted quota under illegal conditions[30]. What is not clear from government records was whether the quantity of the excess garri that was supplied to the North came from Igboland alone or from other parts of Nigeria.

Another mechanism devised by Igbo smugglers during the period was to create trade allies in different districts and provinces. They made sure that their allies bought the commodities at relatively higher prices than was sold in Igboland. The prices of the commodities increased as the distance from the point of production widened. For instance, in Nsukka Division, traders involved in this clandestine business sold their articles in local markets within the Igala borderland, at Ejule, Akpanya, Idah, and Odoru in Igalaland. These communities were in the Northern Province whereas Nsukka from where they operated was in the Eastern Province of Nigeria. They adopted what might be termed a relay system of marketing. A bag of garri at Nkwo Ibagwa market went for as low as 2s but at Akpanya it sold for 2s.3d and at Ejule it was 2s .7d per bag. Under this system, they used their bicycles and made use of track roads and bush paths to get to their destination, circumventing colonial officials. An apprentice to one of the traders involved in this relay system of marketing of contraband goods enthused that all through Igboland, the system was in vogue as his master maintained that there were many other Igbo people not from Nsukka Division who had trade links with people from the Northern Region[31]. The pre-colonial trade routes that dotted the Igbo landscape was adequately made use of to dodge produce inspectors. Such people he said included those from Aba, Owerri, Onitsha and even Abor on the western bank of the River Niger. Another informant whose father engaged in the trade maintained that his father had business relationships with people from other parts of Igboland including one Mr. Muoma who he said had Aba as his buying and assembling station but had a trading post in Kano which was managed by his two sons, Ndubuizu and Molokwu[32]. Chief Ugwu Aniaku averred that because of the number of people involved in the business and the role played by bicycle in the trade, demand for bicycle increased in Igboland during the war[33].

His account appears credible. An archival record mentions the name of a certain Mr. O.O.Muoma who petitioned the District Officer of Aba protesting the deletion of his name from the list of traders permitted by the government to export garri to Northern Nigerian towns in 1943. In his petition he argued that "cutting him out of the garri trade deprived him of his livelihood and threatened the lives and subsistence of his two sons, who lived in the northern city of Kano"[34]. Also giving credence to Aniaku's account, Gloria Chuku citing archival records noted that as at 1942 it was estimated that there were a total of 20,000 bicycles in Owerri Province and 300 in Onitsha used for transporting palm produce and other goods. In the same year [1942] the colonial government through Nigerian Supply Board promulgated a law that reserved all new bicycles in the Eastern Province exclusively for palm produce trade and permit to buy new bicycles were limited to traders and producers engaged in the export economy. Even in the face of these restrictions, import of bicycles into Nigeria increased from 14,935 in 1945 to 75,675 in the early 1960s[35] . That there should be high demand for bicycles in Igboland during the war period is understandable as there were transport restrictions especially the use of cars and lorries which were subject to petrol rationing. What was worse, in the Nsukka District for instance, only 16 trucks were involved in produce evacuation in the early 1930s. Also in the Afikpo area, motor lorry began to replace bicycles as a means of transporting goods only in 1952 as only one regular lorry made a round trip to the Afikpo railway station on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays[36]. The situations show how imperative bicycles were to the economic well-being of the people.

For Igbo motor transport operators, they devised a secret strategy of obtaining petrol. One of the strategies were to collude with drivers who had petrol officially allocated to their vehicles sell part of the fuel they got from the Transport Control Officer to them in what came to be regarded as black market (stealth trade)[37].The second strategy was to bribe petrol attendants in the existing petrol stations then. The petrol attendant would collect the government approved price for petrol plus the excess amount used to induce him/her by the transporters. The attendant then smuggled the petrol in plastic cans to safe areas from where the drivers collected same. This appears to have been a precursor to black market business in the sale of petrol in Nigeria which is more rampant among the Igbo. In some instances, the petrol attendants charged up to 5d for a 10-liter gallon. To recoup the money paid to petrol attendants in excess of the official price of fuel, the transporters charged the traders higher fares. The traders were ready to pay because they knew that even their business is black market. For instance, before the war, passengers from Nsukka to Gboko, Zaria and Kano paid 3s, 7s and 9s

[30].NNAE, ABADIST 14/1/875," Export of garri to the North by garri traders will stop on 1st September", Nigerian Eastern Mail Press Representative to the District Officer, Aba, August 29,1944.
[31] Eze nwa Ugwu, 70, was apprentice trader to Odugu Eze Nwa Eya, a long distance trader, from Umuagama, Enugu Ezike. Interviewed in his house at Umuagama on 18 January 2007.
[32] . Chief Joseph Ugwu Aniaku, 61, is the son of Aniaku Nwonu of Ikpamodo, Enugu-Ezike who was one of such traders. Interviewed at Eke Ozzi, Enugu Ezike on January 23, 2007.
[33] The resolution of the Association of African Importers and Traders of Bicycle Spare Parts, Aba. NAE , CSE, 1/85/8614, Vol. III.
[34]. NNAE, ABADIST, 14/1/872, File no.1646, "Garri Control," O.O.Muoma to District Officer, Aba, 1 July 1943.
[35]. Gloria, Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic…,* 160-161.
[36]. Gloria, Chuku, *Igbo Women and Economic…,* 161.
[37] .Chief Joseph Ugwu Aniaku, interview cited.
[36]. Chief Joseph Ugwu Aniaku, interview cited.

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respectively. However, during the war, consequent on the legislations and the drivers bid to break even, the price rose to 5s, 8s 6d and £1 respectively[38]. In spite of these high fares, smuggling persisted as the smugglers were sure to make gains after every successful trip. In some instances, especially after 1943, when the British Officials became very watchful of the activities of smugglers, prices rose as many became afraid and disengaged from the act; it became a business of the hard-hearted, hence the expression, *egwu Onye okalu obi,* given to the hazards in the business of smuggling during the period under review. In February 1943 for instance, a gain of £1: 3s was made after the sale of a bag of garri that weighed 100kg in Kano[39]. As colonial measures became so stringent on the smugglers, many quitted the business, but those who remained had much to gain from it. It paid.

# CONCLUSION

For any imperialist, the greatest mistake is to feign ignorant of the need to find out ways and means to vie for the hearts and minds of those they subdue. This mistake was made by the British in Nigeria especially as it concerns the Igbo because their colonial apologists were draped in an ideological cloth- "civilizing mission". Through this ideology, the British officials saw themselves as models which native Nigerians must copy hook-line-and-sinker.. Where they failed to get compliance, they resorted to what they termed "wars of pacification". It was the almighty Britain that Cicero, writing to his friend Atticus noted their stupidity at a time in history. This was captured by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and cited by Okany as follows:

> in this connection, one should recollect that the ancient Briton at a certain period seemed to the Romans no less promising. In fact, Cicero writing to his friend Atticus, recommends him not to procure his slave from Britain because they are so stupid and utterly incapable of being taught, that they are unfit to form part of the household of Atticus[40].

In spite of their claims of coming to civilize, it is pertinent to observe as did Collins Moers that taken as a whole, the new ideologies of empire express the same contradictory combination of the retrogressive and modern: of civilizational clashes and democratic ideals; …of old-fashioned propaganda and newfangled forms of "soft power"; of torture and human rights[41]. At no point in the history of the Igbo did they experience retrogression in their economic and social life during the colonial period than during the Second World War. This was because during the war the British resorted to the old capitalist imperialism of justifying imperialism by means of theory of property, which stressed occupation of land and use to the economic advantage of the imperialist even without the consent of the local inhabitants of the occupied area. They went ahead to borrow leaf from John Locke's political theory in which the right of property was based on the productive and profitable use of property. Through this means, they applied some capitalist principles to Nigeria; that of competition, accumulation, intimidation and profit-maximization by means of increasing productivity for their own selfish ends. As Ellen Meiksins Wood observed, these capitalist principles and their application expressed a wholly new morality, in which exchange value took priority over all goods, making possible the justification of everything from exploitation and expropriation to ecological destruction-all in the name of freedom and equality[42]; this time hiding under the guise of fighting Hitler and what he stood for to pauperize the Igbo. As human nature would always resist all manners of perceived and real injustice, the Igbo in their true nature and in accordance with their philosophy of existence expressed in the anecdote: if one tries to tie other peoples' hands for one to eat what belongs to them; they would either die, or use all means to circumvent get one's wish. In this case, the Igbo did not choose to die as they did at Dunbar Creek in St. Simons Island, Georgia in what is today known as Ibo Landing in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade literatures[43], rather they chose to circumvent the regulations that were aimed at gagging their economic life. The regulations include those that restricted trade in agricultural produce like garri between districts, provinces and regions; the 1942 Oil Control Regulation which was targeted at securing greater control of petrol consumption by private car owners and commercial vehicle operators engaged in passenger services as it limited the supply of fuel to indigenous transporters who preferred passenger services to produce evacuation; control of the use of bicycles and the denial of right to purchase new one even when the money was available and a host of other war-time legislations which they considered inimical to their existence.

That the Igbo took to this line of action is understandable because if they had danced to the tune of the colonial masters, it meant that they did not desire their freedom. What was more, Bayard Rustin enthused that true freedom must be conceived in economic categories because the economy is the bone while the social institution is the skin which grows on that flesh and bone. Ultimately, all human freedoms are determined by the economic structure of the institution[44]. The

[39] Chief Joseph Ugwu Aniaku, interview cited.
[40]M.C.Okany, *The Role of Customary Court in Nigeria,* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd, 1984), 253.
[41] Colin Mooers, (Ed.) *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire,* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 2.
[42].Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Democracy As Ideology of Empire" in Colin Mooers, (Ed.) *The New Imperialists: Ideologies of Empire,* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2006), pp. 9-23.
[43].Douglas B Chambers, (Ed), *Enslaved Igbo and Ibibio in America: Runaway Slaves and Historical Descriptions, (*Enugu: Jemezie Associates, 2013), 3.
[44] .Bayard Rustin cited in Christian C Opata, " The United States War on Want: A Focus on World Food Security since 1941" in *African Journal of American Studies[AJAS],*Vol.1, No.1, 2004, 83-90.

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colonial institution in Nigeria seems to be oblivious of this truism and that brought them in confrontation with the Igbo. It would, therefore, be apposite to state that denying a people their basic comfort and primary means of sustenance in a war that ordinarily they should not be involved is not only an affront on their collective and individual sensibilities but also a mark of prejudice and selfishness. The price of selfishness on the part of the superior in his relationship with the minor is non-cooperation or outright sabotage of the superiors' plans. The British were bent on success but ignored a very essential component of what would give them full victory- the happiness of the local population that were used in the production of vital items needed in the war. This mistake on the part of the British, gave the Igbo room to engage in smuggling during the war to the frustration of the British colonial Officers. However, it would be pertinent to add that every injustice breeds and grooms those who destroy it unwillingly, for to remain a conformist after identifying the deficiencies in a polity, is to remain a coward and a failure and people bereft of courage is considered anathema among the Igbo.

What was considered a European war had serious ripple effects on Africans who were coerced into the war by the colonial masters. The Africans had no explanation from the Germans when they jumped into the war as their colonial masters used them as fodder in the war. Those who did not go to war physically, remained at home to be denied their very means of existence in terms of determining what they produced, what they traded on, and what they owned. This was made good via the litany of legislations. The Igbo, on the other hand, must survive. Although the rat knows that the owner of the house is not friendly; it was determined to remain and dodge his blows. The Igbo had to survive and the option available was to engage in smuggling. This they did during the period and it appears it has turned into a culture in modern Nigeria.

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