

A Thematic Treatment of Violence in Jeremiah Essien's *In the Shadow of Death* and Adewale Ademoyega's *Why We Struck*

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Abstract

The geographical entity called Nigeria was borne out of the amalgamation of the Northern, Southern Protectorates and the Lagos colony by Frederick Lord Lugard in 1914. Three major groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were given prominence over other tribes tagged as minorities. The dissenting views of the populace and extreme flamboyance of the First Republic political class and riot in the then Western Region led to the first military coup d'état in Nigeria on January 15, 1966, a counter coup on July 29, 1966, of all which culminated into a full-blown Civil War which was waged for 30 months between July 1967 and January 1970. These themes form the kernel of punishment which was meted out to the coup conspirators of January 15, 1966 and undue sufferings of some minority groups in the Biafran enclave. Both books are memoirs written in the first person narrative technique after the Biafran War

Keywords: *thematic treatment, violence, torture, imprisonment, murder.*

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria as a geographical entity was borne out of the fusion of the Lagos colony and Southern Protectorate in 1906 as well as the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 by Frederick Lord Lugard (Omolewa, 2005). The amalgamation was as a result of high mortality rate of Europeans due to malaria. With the few surviving Europeans refusing to fill vacant positions, Lugard decided to amalgamate the protectorates, a phenomenon now regarded as “the mistake of 1914 (Siollun, 2021). Owing to the high death rate due to malaria and refusal of other Europeans to fill vacant posts gave impetus to the amalgamation. The amalgamation divided the country along ethnic lines but the three major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, were given prominence while other tribes were regarded as minority group. The three major ethnic groups were not, as a matter of fact, living peaceably. Pre-independence constitution conferences were attended by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nmandi Azikiwe, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello and host of others. The delegates were unison in convincing the Britons about relinquishing power to the Nigerian natives, while, ethnic bigotry and religious inclinations soon destroyed what they had fought rigorously to earn.

Prior to Nigeria's independence and shortly afterwards, the political class lived affluent lifestyles with rumour mongering which in no little way overshoot their deeds. However, it got to a climax when in 1962; there was the general elections and of which Chief Obafemi

Awolowo threw his hat into the race at the federal level. Since there is no vacuum in government, the Deputy Premier of Western Region, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola was sworn in as the Premier but upon Chief Obafemi Awolowo's loss for the Prime Minister's post, Chief Obafemi Awolowo requested Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola to hand over power to him but the latter declined. Its aftermath was the popular Operation Wet "e" which translates to as 'wet it with petrol.' Buildings, property and investments went up in flames. In order to curb the menace, soldiers were drafted from various barracks so as to avert further burning, arson and looting

METHODS

This research was prepared using a qualitative approach and the research design was in the form of a case study. The location of this research is Nigeria as a geographical entity that was born from the combination of the Lagos colony and the Southern Protectorate in 1906 and the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 by Frederick Lord Lugard. The phenomenon that occurred, namely the error in 1914 due to the high death rate due to malaria and the refusal of Europeans to fill vacant positions, provided the impetus for the merger.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the trauma theory which was developed as a corollary of the catastrophic events of the 20th century in particular World War 1. Trauma theory attempts to understand the different ways by which traumatic occurrences are demonstrated, processed, exposed, and repressed throughout a variety of literary and historical texts. The theory viewed trauma as an event that fragments consciousness and prevents direct linguistic representation. It draws attention to the severity of suffering by suggesting the traumatic experience irrevocably damages the psyche of its victims as experienced, for instance, by the Jewish population in Nazi Germany (Economist, 1968).

The experience of the Igbos during the Nigerian Civil War was similar to the Jewish experience in Nazi Germany as evident in the blockade, aerial bombardment of some locations, imprisonment, torture, hunger, death, malnutrition, massacre, economic starvation and so on which were meted out to the people within the Biafran territory (Guardian, 2004). The adoption of trauma theory is justified against the backdrop of both – Essien's *In the Shadow of Death* and Ademoyega's *Why we Struck* containing narrations depicting kernels of punishment that are traumatic as experienced in the build-up, during and after the Biafra War which was waged between July 6, 1967 and January 15, 1970 (Ademoyega, 2012).

In the Shadow of Death

Jeremiah Essien's **In the Shadow of Death** is a memoir drawn from the perspective of what obtained in the war-torn Biafra Region during the Nigerian Civil War. The most reflective themes of the book range from torture, imprisonment, murder, to the undue sufferings of the people (Essien, 2007).

Torture

After the September 1966 killings, life became very rough for the minority groups. Those Igbos returned from the North, brought stories that the Ibibio man was favoured during the killings because he always announced to Northerners that he was 'Calabar' and not Igbo. This was a fact of life which the 'Calabar man' resorted to, to save his skin during the atrocities of 1966 in the North. But this claim of ethnic distinction angered the Igbos greatly. However, some Ibibio people were also killed erroneously in the North, but the venom, as it is widely believed, was not against the 'minority elements' resident in the North but against the Igbo (p.15).

The much anticipated trip to Umuahia and Umuopara school premises to be precise was reached. Nigerian soldiers captured at war front were on the first floor as the camp was notorious

for its cruelty to detainees and shooting of detainees was a mere sport. The author sent letters to a few people known in Umuahia. Although, it was a grievous offence to write letters to people outside Biafra but some soldiers assisted in posting the letters. The author was taken to Umudike but not interrogated there; he and others were taken back to Umuopara school premises but transferred to another cell which was a medium-sized primary school classroom filled to capacity with stinking detainees. A bucket was placed for urine, the stench of human body and smell of urine combined to make the room worse than a cesspool (p. 122).

At Obowo, Jeremiah Essien previously held a premonition of being freed but what was in the offing obviously differed from his perceived expectation. As the writer puts it thus: “The policeman who accompanied us detainees group from Umuopara to ‘Obowo’ had given us a hope of instant release at our destination when he ushered us into the lorry. As soon as we were discharged from the lorry which conveyed us to ‘Obowo’ hell broke loose as the officials, both ordinary and military policemen, descended on us with whips as they put us on another drill exercise” (pp. 124-125) (Essien, 2007).

The detainees were mostly from Ibibio mainland with about two hundred and fifty in their dormitory. Some of them who sat did so with their knees raised as it was not permissible to stretch their legs owing to the large number of the detainees in a dormitory without partition measuring some sixty feet in length and some thirty feet in width. All discussions as peculiar to other cells were done with whispering. There was general roll call which lasted for about thirty minutes after which the living inmates were counted and the dead were also counted, coupled the dragging of the dead bodies by the military policemen along the verandah for future transfer to their resting places. The detainees had meagre meals, which were remnants of the soldiers’ soup stretched with water. Water intake was seemingly insufficient due to being supplied twice daily on good days. As a result of not having enough water, the detainees’ urine was coloured.

In the war-torn Biafran territory, the Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) made his stand that the region had been flooded with transmitters, to the extent that those with car radios or even torch light were classified as ‘enemy collaborators’ or having been guilty of ‘a crime against the State’ (p. 131). Those with transmitters were tagged as being informants to the Nigerian war planes under the cover of darkness to military targets.

The author, at Obowo camp was later placed in an open detention with the privilege of ordering the type of food needed and even managed to send someone to Aba to withdraw money from the banks. Considering the liberty, a detainee fled the camp but was caught by the natives outside the camp. He was beaten all over his body and even on his private parts but slumped and was still breathing when the officer in charge ordered him to be buried alive. Some other detainees were also buried in similar circumstances in Obowo camp. It took the efforts of late Chief D.J. Edoho to secure Jeremiah Essien’s release following the former’s visit to secure the release of a woman accused of supplying Nigerian troops with petrol. The interrogator looked into Jeremiah Essien’s file but wanted a bribe of 50 pounds which would hasten his release. The go-between was the self-styled Ghana Boy who was a detainee but remained in the premises of the DMI after his release (Essien, 2007).

Murder

In effect, the Igbos also carried out reprisal attacks by murdering Northerners in the East. The Igbos had to avenge for the deaths of their kinsmen who were murdered in cold blood in the North. The killings in the North were horrible and despicable as their government did nothing to stop or put a halt to the killings. Conversely, the Eastern Region Government had no hand in the killing of Northerners in Port Harcourt.

Following a wide consultation, the then Military Governor of Eastern State, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, proclaimed the territorial border comprising the then Eastern Region of the Federation of Nigeria, as the Republic of Biafra. On the other side, the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon refused to acknowledge the secession of Biafra and invaded the Biafran territory in a brutal manner that led to a 30-month war. As succinctly put by Korieh

(2013), the Biafrans suffered severe persecution and massacre in various parts of the country and within the territories of the Igbos as the war raged on thereby claiming between 500,000 and two million lives of Igbo and other Easterners.

Few weeks after the war raged on, Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu Kaduna was trapped in an ambush close to Nsukka during a night exploration to obtain information about the Nigerian side and their activities which was specifically against Captain Muhammed Inuwa Wushishi's 21st battalion. He (Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu Kaduna) was killed and his corpse mutilated, while, his eyes were gouged out. Although, a contrary narration by his sister adjudged that he killed himself to avoid being humiliated by the Nigerian troops (Obasanjo, 1987); (Wikipedia, 2022).

The federal forces arrived in Asaba in early October 1967 with Murtala Muhammed-Chief Commander (GOC) Division Two and his lieutenants, including Colonel Ibrahim Haruna feeling humiliated by the Biafran Mid-Western offensive (Achebe, 2012). The GOC was issued direct orders to retake the occupied areas at all costs, this division rounded up and shot many defenceless Igbo men and boys as they could find (Achebe, 2012). Reports had it that the death toll ranged from five hundred to one thousand. The Asaba Massacre victims' bodies were disposed recklessly in mass graves without giving regard to the wishes of families of the victims or town's ancient traditions. A survivor of Asaba massacre, Mr Okwudiafor recalls: "Our way home was littered with corpses of people who had been shot and we saw women and children carrying the corpses of their husbands and relations from the dancing ground to their homes for burial. Some corpses that had nobody to identify them were buried in mass graves at Ogbe Osowe where the ghastly incident took place. I lost 11 people in my family during the incident. Rev. Fr. P. Ugnoko lost not less than sixty of his closest relations. There was hardly any family in Asaba that was not touched" (Okocha, 2004)

Corroborating the afore, an emissary sent by Pope Paul IV, Monsignor George Rocheau on a fact-finding mission to Nigeria during the Biafra War spoke to the French Newspaper *Le Monde* said: "There has been genocide, for example on the occasion of the 1966 massacres... Two areas have suffered badly (from the fighting). Firstly, the region between the towns of Benin and Asaba where only widows and orphans remain, Federal troops having for unknown reasons massacred all men."

The liberation of Gakem and Ogoja in the then South-Eastern State and Nsukka in the Central-Eastern State, later called East Central State in quick succession was a great morale booster for the people of Uyo (p. 75). There was concealed jubilation concerning the news of the initial success of the federal troops which was believed as a sign or indication of ultimate victory around the corner. Soon afterwards, some villagers began making due arrangements to receive the federal troops on arrival, but as usual in war situations, rebel collaborators would leak the information to rebel soldiers of which consequences were always grim. The chiefs and prominent individuals of Uyo were detained while some were shot dead.

The fall of Calabar into the hands of the Federal troops meant a great relief for the people of the then South-Eastern State, many of whom were still within the territory. But the fall prompted the hostility of the rebels against Uyo people. As put forward by a woman who returned to Uyo weeping that: "Her brother, a police constable, who joined the exodus from Calabar when the town fell, was made to dig his own grave by zealous rebel soldiers and civilians, ordered to lie in it and was then shot (p. 79)."

The afore cited crime against humanity became an atrocity which was perpetuated by the rebels as the war raged on. This is quite different from the gravedigger's scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where the eponymous character asks the gravedigger "whose grave he digs and the gravedigger replies mine sir but later reverts that since he is digging it, the grave belongs to no man or woman, due to the fact that men and women are living things and the occupant of the grave will be the dead (*Hamlet*, Act V, Scene 1, lines 46-47).

Imprisonment

There was witch-hunting among the staffers of Government TTC, Uyo. Recalcitrant members of staff wanted their boss in trouble and that singular act prompted soldiers, who wished to arrest Jeremiah Essien due to being lied against. Biafran soldiers and the militia were treating Uyo people badly by arresting and detaining the ordinary folks on flimsy charges. The intimidation was not limited to those in the remotest villages all under the guise of making them fall in line with the rest of the East and thereby, chant a messiah praise to Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu as the redeemer of the formerly oppressed and marginalised region of Nigeria.

The author of the memoir titled “In the Shadow of Death” Jeremiah Essien was arrested on Saturday, March 23, 1968 with reasons behind his purported arrest not made clear to him. A 1st lieutenant of the militia group took charge of him once he was in their grip. Some minutes later, the Provincial Secretary had come and gone, the lieutenant enquired about packing the college property, he replied in the negative that he was on his way to collect the college’s lorry. The lorry arrived and necessary things were packed into it. Jeremiah Essien was driven to Owerri. On arrival at Owerri, the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Inspector of Education were not in their offices (Essien, 2007).

Many of his known friends who were jovial with him and then under arrest by the army were regarded as assured enemies of the rebel regime (p. 109). Jeremiah Essien was commanded by a militia boy who walked to him and ordered him to pull off his dresses and left only pants on. He handed over his short sleeved white porous nylon shirt, sleeveless underwear, a pair of trousers, wristwatch, cheque book and the pound notes in his pocket and was marched off to a dark cell, down the side of the office.

Jeremiah Essien’s travail in custody began in a cell built of mud and thatched roof. The cell was dark but the whisperings gave an indication that many people were held there. As usual in times of difficulties and trial, the author started praying and repeating all Psalms he had learnt in life. He slept off soon afterwards but was woken by a loud bang on the door and all were ordered out at about 11pm. They all trooped out and two men matched them off to the main hall of Christ the King’s School where two senior officers were seated and looking over papers. That was the author’s first time of seeing other inmates who looked a miserable lot, ragged, some clumsy looking, mostly farmers and fishermen. Some ten or more names were called and asked by the guards to step on one side, while, others were marched into a new cell. Those who were asked to step on one side were later confirmed from the lieutenant that they were shot dead that night.

At about 9am the following day, yam porridge was brought in a basin and was the remainder of the food eaten by the militia men. About thirty detainees clambered for the food with dirty hands. Jeremiah Essien could not get near enough to reach the basin, nor was inclined to eat such food. The detainees devoured the food in a few seconds, went back to their respective places and they licked their fingers much longer than usual (Essien, 2007)essie. About an hour after the porridge meal, a young Ibibio man was pushed into the cell by the lieutenant who arrested the author. The newly detained man of about twenty-three years of age was a Biafran soldier stationed at Itu. He wanted to travel to Uyo but could not find transport to bring him down. Fortunately, he saw a gentleman on a motorcycle and they both agreed that he could take the motorcycle to Uyo and return to Itu but the motorcycle owner dashed to Uyo after him and reported that a soldier took the vehicle from him by force. He was, thereafter arrested for maltreating a civilian and seizing his vehicle from him by force. The lieutenant’s version contradicts the arrested soldier’s narration and the punishment for an act of robbing a civilian was death. He was shot dead that afternoon.

Jeremiah Essien was not informed about reasons behind being detained until he went out from the cell to find shelter when the door of the cell was open at the time. He had his white short-sleeved shirt and in a rush for shelter, he had forgotten to take it off. After dashing out of the cell, he crawled on his knees into a classroom and out into the back of it, resuming the crawling position, and moving towards the foot of a pear tree, a sergeant-major shouted that ‘hold that man,

he is a security risk' (p. 114). He crawled to the sergeant-major where he stood, the sergeant-major told the author to thank his God that he ought to have been shot the previous night, in fact, a grave was dug for his corpse but one of those shot dead took his grave (Essien, 2007). He was later informed that he would be taken to Umuahia for investigation. His personal belongings were given to him in anticipation of being driven to Umuahia for his fate to be ascertained.

The author was in the Umuopara stinking cell for four days, he kept sending letters secretly to people in Umuahia and his boss at Owerri. The fifth day saw them being summoned but they were glad to see and feel the sun again. By and large, the author was given permission to see the doctor who visited occasionally to conduct a clinic. They were afterwards stood in double line and a policeman marched them off to a waiting lorry. They were given false information about being freed. The detainees were at first jubilant but landed at Obowo. In place of the envisaged freedom at Obowo, they transferred to another destination camp.

Why We Struck

Why We Struck is a memoir, in the non-fictional category of the prose genre which is based on the historical antecedents of the Nigerian State, reasons behind the first military coup d'état, how the coup d'état was foiled, steps taken by General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi, the imprisonment of the coup perpetrators, events leading to the assassination of the coup plotters, incarceration and other associated events. It also highlights the problems facing Nigeria which coincidentally obstruct its way to greatness. The memoir is also written using the first-person narrative technique with pictures accompanying the narration.

Imprisonment

The coup conspirators of January 15, 1966 – Majors Chukwuma Nzeogwu Kaduna, Adewale Ademoyega, Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Don Okafor and Humphrey Chukwuka, Timothy Onwuategwu and Chris Anuforo were all arrested and imprisoned at Kirikiri Prison, Apapa, Lagos State but prior to the counter coup of July 29, 1966, Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu Kaduna was detained in the Eastern Region alongside Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna; Majors Chris Anuforo and Don Okafor were detained in the West and Major Adewale Ademoyega was detained in Warri, in the then Mid-West Region. Majors Chris Anuforo and Don Okafor, who were detained in the West, were killed in a most brutal way when mutineers broke into the prison during the July 29, 1966 counter coup led by Colonel Theophilus Yakubu Danjuma (Ademoyega, 2012).

The German philosopher, Clausewitz, once said that each war has within it the seed of another. One may add that no sooner is one political problem solved than another begins. The coup introduced much bitterness in the minds of the Hausa who lost their much-loved leaders – Sir Ahmadu Bello and Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The circumstances of their death brought even a greater grief as stories were told of how they were shot dead or led away in the bush. The Igbo living in the north were reported to be jubilant and they began to give impression that they were in control (Omolewa, 2005).

Major Adewale Ademoyega was detained in Warri and by fate was the only one left in detention was safe far away in the Mid-West Region when the putsch raged on. The main motive behind the counter coup of July 29, 1966 as succinctly put according to Lord Stonham, "Were nothing but 'vicious pretexts' merely put forward to justify 'evil intentions/motives'" (Korieh, 2013).

Major Adewale Ademoyega was caught between two machine guns; they were observing him without knowing. He knew full well that the Biafran forces did not have machine-guns in their formation. He was in the ranges. His batman (personal servant) was sent ahead of him but did not join Major Adewale Ademoyega afterwards. Major Adewale Ademoyega returned to the headquarters in Agbor where Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwuka was with him and treated to a sumptuous meal but Major Achuzia and another officer, both in uniform, walked straight to the dining table and both pointed their guns at him and said, "You are under arrest, hands up, or we shall fire" (p. 238). It took the effort of Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwuka to mediate between Major

Achuzia, his officer and Major Adewale Ademoyega. Major Achuzia later said he had not come to arrest Major Adewale Ademoyega but summoned to see Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. On arrival at the state house in Enugu, a gentleman dressed in police uniform but wearing a Lieutenant-Colonel rank came for him and requested he followed in a waiting car and driven to the prison gate. "He is one of them," said by the gentleman to the superintendent. His second travail into prison started in Enugu, which inadvertently was exactly forty-four days since leaving Warri Prison (Ademoyega, 2012).

Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu needed scape goats for his lack of preparation for the war and his failure to find means of supporting the soldiers in the field (p. 244). The execution of Major Ifeajuna, Philip Alale, Sam Agbam and Colonel Victor Banjo seemingly destroyed the only articulate and independent group who could have acted promptly to put an end to the fierce, murderous, wasteful and unnecessary war between Nigeria and Biafra. When Umuahia fell into the hands of the Nigerian army, the detainees were transferred to Ntueke and Achina Prisons. Major Adewale Ademoyega was in the latter but starvation started as a result of lack of food supply. It was in the midst of starvation at Achina Prison that news was in the air that the war had come to an end on January, 13, 1970. Major General Philip Effiong, the then Chief of Staff of the Biafran Army took over reins of power after Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu fled to Cote De Voire to seek an end to the needless sufferings of the Biafrans and its inhabitants by officially surrendering to the Nigerian government at Dodan Barracks, Ikoyi, Lagos on January 15, 1970.

Barely three months after the release of Major Adewale Ademoyega, was he re-detained in Lagos and partly in Owerri. Due to General Yakubu Gowon's 'No winner, no vanquished' assertion, Major Adewale Ademoyega was dismayed about his imprisonment after the war. He thereafter wrote a letter in a friendly tone informing the Head of State about his resignation from the Nigerian Army and requested his release. He wrote another letter the second year by questioning the rationale for keeping him and others behind the bars (Ademoyega, 2012).

Also, he cited instances about Northerners included in the January 15, 1966 coup d'état who were not arrested and the perpetrators of the counter coup of July 29, 1966 were not detained (p. 260). No response was received about the letters except that the young officer through whom letters was sent was reprimanded. Major Adewale Ademoyega was eventually released from prison on October 16, 1974. On arrival to Lagos from Kaduna, some few patriotic Nigerians led by Dr. Tai Solarin, some university lecturers and a host of Nigerian students had staged massive demonstrations for their release. Major Adewale Ademoyega and other living revolutionaries were dismissed without benefits from the Armed forces on October 24, 1974 (Ademoyega, 2012).

Murder

At Enugu Prison, Major Ifeajuna was seen in another cell. Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Colonel Victor Banjo, Philip Alale and Sam Agbam had been condemned to death for intending to overthrow Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (p. 241). Major Adewale Ademoyega was asked to leave Major Ifeajuna's cell to take his bath but his last words to him was "Look after my wife and children" (p. 241). Soon after returning from the bathroom, Major Ademoyega held on to an iron door located at the approach to the main door of the building which was strategic at viewing vividly those approaching or leaving the building. Around midday, heads of four men were seen, first was Major Ifeajuna, then Philip Alale, Sam Agbam and lastly Colonel Victor Banjo. Major Adewale Ademoyega could not speak with them and that was the last time he saw them before they were executed by firing squad on September 22, 1967 (Ademoyega, 2012).

According to Ekwe-Ekwe (Undated) Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, was a notoriously gruesome commander, who saw no wrongdoing in boasting about the goal of his horrendous mission when in August 1968 granted a press conference which was well attended by journalists where he said: "We shoot at anything that moves, and when our forces march into the centre of Igbo territory, we shoot at everything, even at things that do not move" (Ekwe-Ekwe, n.d.)

No doubt, Colonel Benjamin Adekunle (also known as Black Scorpion) was a ready source of news about the turn of events while commanding the Third Marine Commando during the Biafra War as press men sought for him in order to have adequate reportage of the war situations. The American Jewish Congress Reports (1968) had it that Colonel Benjamin Adekunle told a Dutch Newspaper that “I want to see no Red Cross, no Caritas, no World Council of Churches, no Pope, no missionary, and no UN delegation. I want to prevent even one Igbo having one piece to eat before their capitulation.” (Economist, 1968) Colonel Benjamin Adekunle, outside the media glare became a source of embarrassment for the Gowon’s wartime cabinet due to his statement which reads “Biafran aid is misguided humanitarian rubbish... if the children must die first, then that is too bad.” Unknown to General Benjamin Adekunle, a retirement was in the offing for causing international uproar which the federal government had to apologise for (Achebe, 2012).

An ICRC airplane en route to Biafra stocked with relief materials was shot down by a Nigerian MIG. Two of the crew were reported to have parachuted and in the custody of the Nigerian military at Uyo in the present day Akwa Ibom. Four crew were aboard with the fate of two of them unknown. The downing of the plane made ICRC suspend relief flights for the night of June 6 to June 7, 1969 (Report, 1969). General Alabi Isama’s book entitled “The Tragedy of Victory” published in 2013 has it that the downing of the ICRC airplane led to the killing of three relief workers after which the Nigerian government demanded that all relief flights be under their control (Alabi-Isama, 2013).

CONCLUSION

In the *Shadow of Death* and *Why We Struck* are thematically relevant to the history of our country, Nigeria, which the vast majority of the people can recognise. The first being a memoir about discrimination against minority groups in the Biafran enclave, written by a former principal at a teachers’ training college, while the latter was written by one of the five Majors who planned the first military coup d’état in Nigeria. The diction is simple but engaging, and should make a reader have the innate desire to read through to the end and see how it all ends. Should literary works like these be read, our history would not be conjured and misconstrued.

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