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The death of Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande brings to my mind the triumph of excellence in political leadership as well as rebellion against the political order.

A lot has been said about LKJ since he died yesterday and I hope only to contribute my perspective to enrich all said.

My emphasis with history has always been to draw out lessons relevant to the present, to show how trends repeat themselves and to show certain hypocritical contradictions within the present system.

Only few others qualify as well as LKJ to do all the three - I hope I do justice.

One area pundits have largely missed out in the Jakande story is the very beginning - both of his life and of his politics.

LKJ's parents were from Omu-Aran in present day Kwara State but he contributed more to Lagos than so many others - we will return to this subsequently.

LKJ was not originally a political ally of Awolowo - a number of elders were with Awo right from the very beginning but LKJ contributed politically to Awolowo at a crucial time of religious threat to the dominance of the Action Group (Awo's party) in the pre-Independence mid 50s.

A group had been formed in 1957 and named the National Muslim League headed by Alhaji R.A. Smith who had been very critical of Awolowo's AG as a Christian party and moved to align with the Northern People's Congress of Sir Ahmadu Bello.

The political threat to Awo was very real.

Awo initially dismissed the group but soon saw that the religious card was working.

He conceded ground and began to subsidise Muslim pilgrimages, appointing more Muslims into Western Region boards and agencies and openly attacking the NML which soon changed its name.

But although the NML soon became the National Emancipation League, their religious issues against Awo continued to be potent.

Awo therefore called on his own Muslim allies who were actually mostly non-political and got them to form a rival Muslim organisation.

The United Muslim Council was formed and its foundational members were the likes of S.O. Gbadamosi, Alhaji Inakoju who had also been a part of the NML and then Alhaji Lateef Jakande who had previously only been a journalist and had risen to become Editor in Chief of the Tribune.

The Tribune titles belong to Awolowo and he had found Jakande worthy to become the Editor in Chief in 1956 before drafting him into the politics that could have ruined his chances towards 1960.

Jakande stayed close to Awolowo afterwards politically and even went to jail for him.

Awolowo was charged with treason in 1962 by the Balewa Govt alongside Enahoro, Ikoku, Adebanjo, Olawoyin, J.S. Tarka, Onabanjo, Jakande and others.

Enahoro managed to escape the borders of Nigeria until the following year in 1963 but all the others suffered jail time.

The events of that period threw Nigeria led to the coup and counter-coups that ended the First Republic and it was not until 1979 that Democracy returned and Awo had sufficiently expanded his dominance of the SW political space enough to become a godfather who could dictate.

It is said that both Adeniran Ogunsanya and Samuel Onitiri had approached Awo for endorsement as Lagos Governor but he rebuffed them in favour of Jakande. Onitiri had also gone to jail for Awo in the Fiest Republic and felt sufficiently upset enough to join the NPP.

At this time, Awo's platform was the Unity Party of Nigeria and Jakande was his anointed for Governor.

Despite having been born in Epetedo, a lot of issue was made of his Kwara roots that Awo had to balance the ticket with Alhaji Rafiu Jafojo, an Awori indigenous Lagosian.

The likes of Ganiyu Dawodu who had been a Town Council Chairman and Commissioner previously in Lagos was overlooked, as were stalwarts like Pa Shonibare, Karimu Laka Orelope (father of a former Deputy Governor), Adeyinka Opeifa among others.

Jakande was the UPN flagbearer.

The only state where Awolowo could not impose was in Oyo where Bola Ige insisted on running against Pa Emmanuel Alayande and defeated him thrice in primary elections before Awo reluctantly conceded.

The stories of Ige and Jakande would soon collide but let's stay on LKJ for now.

The NPN presented Prince Ladega Adeniji-Adele to face LKJ on the UPN platform with the formidable Femi Okunnu as the NPN Chairman.

Adeniran Ogunsanya ran on the NPP platform which had Tunde Edu as State Chairman, also formidable.

Jakande/Jafojo defeated them overwhelmingly.

The Jafojo as running mate tactic worked very well because the man had been at the forefront of the agitation for indigenous Lagosians to govern Lagos. With his inclusion on the ticket and the clout of Awo in the SW, Lagos safely entered the UPN ranks of electoral victories.

In Govt, Jakande proved to be an astute and visionary Governor who proved that Government is not rocket science.

He understood that Lagos was a growing city and his focus was to configure Lagos to accommodate the large and likely to increase population; that was his joker.

In education, Jakande focused on building schools that were practical but not aesthetically pleasing - the goal was to educate in numbers.

Houses were built with space constraints in mind - 3 and 4 storey buildings with single and double bedrooms were his hallmark.

From Amuwo-Odofin to Badagry to Dolphin to Alaka to Iponri to Oke-Afa in Isolo to Abesan in Ipaja to Ikorodu and Epe, Jakande's low-cost houses remain a visionary standard for expanding populations that only Bola Tinubu (to be fair to him) has even attempted to emulate.

In the area of transportation, Jakande built roads like the Lekki-Epe expressway to open up new areas for habitation.

He built that very road that Fashola added one extra lane on both sides and proposed tollgates for, despite Lagos guaranteeing the funds used to build it.

Jakande however saw that motor vehicular transportation would not be sufficient for Lagos in the years to come and therefore got a consortium of about 19 French companies to agree to construct a Lagos Metro Line from Agege through Yaba to Tafawa Balewa Square in the first phase.

That the NPN Govt of Shagari agreed to guarantee the project through the CBN was good but the military coup of 1983 saw Buhari cancelling the project despite confirmation from the subsequent military administrator of Lagos thay the project was not only viable but visionary.

In the health sector, Jakande not only built General Hospitals like in Ikorodu and Gbagada but also constructed Health Centres all over Lagos to attend to basic healthcare needs of the growing masses.

Let us spare some praise for the men who governed Lagos alongside LKJ...

Hon. Muftau Hamzat was the Commissioner for Transport and had won elections into the LSHA before losing the Speakership to Hon. Oladosu Osinowo (Yes, you know their offspring).

Hamzat was then nominated by Pa Rafiu Ishola Solomon into the Lagos cabinet (Ganiyu Solomon's father).

Others in the cabinet included Pa Hundeyin, Pa Olorunfunmi Basorun, Olawale Idris, Ganiyu Dawodu, Afolabi Ege, P.O. Fagbeyiro, Hundeyin etc and a certain Prof. Femi Agbalajobi whose story also comes back to LKJ in a bit.

It was this visionary cabinet that helped LKJ to succeed.

Among the UPN Governors of the time, LKJ and Bola Ige were considered heirs to Awo's empire due to their fidelity to Awo's political ideals and also their governance.

While Jakande was called "Baba Kekere", Ige was called "Arole Awolowo" and were seen as rivals of sorts.

In terms of taking battles to Awo's political enemies and eulogising the man, Ige did it better than anyone.

But Jakande was a financial patron of Awo's political family, many of whom held no office and lived around Awolowo in Apapa; so they supported him and disliked Ige.

The military coup of 1983 ended the democratic administrations around Nigeria at the time and Jakande was jailed alongside many other Governors.

The charge was that the 28.5km Light Rail Lagos Metroline Project which was to convey about 40,000 commuters daily was 'corruption'.

It was said that the funds were being set aside to finance UPN activities and LKJ was jailed until the IBB regime where he again entered politics while Bola Ige tactically stood back, labelling SDP and NRC as two sides of a coin and proclaiming that IBB was not going to handover.

LKJ put forward Femi Agbalajobi as an aspirant for Governor in the SDP.

But some then young fellows in the party were having none of it and one of them was Bola Ahmed Tinubu - they put forward Dapo Sarumi against the establishment candidate of their elders and party leaders.

The young fellows rallied under the banner of a group called People Resolved Irrevocably to Maximise the Resources of the State for Excellence (PRIMROSE) with the likes of Muftau Hamzat, Basorun Olorunfunmi, Henry Ajomale, Ademola Adeniji-Adele and Yomi Edu as members.

Their slogan at the time was “no more ‘Baba s’ope’” and they derisively referred to anyone supporting Agbalajobi as "Ase" - signifying someone who merely carried out the will of the old men without hesitation, only saying "Ase" or "Amin", two synonymous words.

The campaign for the ticket of the SDP in Lagos was bitterly fought with diatribe, rhetorics, jingles and violence.

The primaries was to be direct with all party members across all wards in the state voting and much manipulation of membership was introduced.

In the primaries, Agbalajobi had about 115,000 votes to Sarumi’s about 114,000 votes while Yomi Edu who was drafted as a spoiler for Agbalajobi got about 20,00 votes.

Awolowo’s daughter, Tokunbo Dosunmu, got only 7,362 votes.

Sarumi protested the results bitterly.

Sarumi asked that six wards be cancelled which if done would have made him winner.

The LKJ group insisted Agbalajobi had won and both camps found no truce.

The regime through the electoral umpire intervened and disqualified both Agbalajobi and Sarumi from the race.

Interestingly, also disqualified at the time due to bitterly contested primaries were the likes of Atiku Abubakar and Bala Takaya in Adamawa, Sule Lamido and Yusuf Sanni in Jigawa, Joe Nwodo and Onuaguluchi in Enugu - men of dogged political aspirations.

But back to LKJ...

With Agbalajobi and Sarumi thrown out, Jakande picked Abiodun Ogunleye to run in his stead and the Primrose group picked Yomi Edu.

Edu won the SDP ticket and faced Michael Otedola of the NRC whom Jakande tactically and covertly supported against his own party - Otedola won.

The final phase of LKJ's political life was his service with the Abacha administration which I have no inclination to dwell upon in an open thread like this but to say that some say that MKO Abiola nominated him to join Abacha initially while some say it was not so.

I've written that part of my book and I reconstructed the events of those days with eye (and ear) witness accounts as well as political judgement of what's likely.

(This tweet is for those who will urge one to write a book: I've started it, will finish it this year insha Allah.)

To end this thread, I'll point out that Jakande was a shining star of the Awo political family but once he fell out with them during the Abacha regime, they took pains to remove his history totally from the history of SW politics.

Their politics was: "he who is not for us..."

LKJ was made and unmade by the same political family but his place in history was guaranteed mainly by his own actions in Government - historians will forever accord him a place of honour and even those who led the "no more 'Baba s'ope'" against him will pay him tribute in death.

Shakespeare said (and I paraphrase) that some humans are born great, others achieve greatness while some have greatness thrust upon them.

Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande had only an opportunity for greatness thrust upon him and then he achieved greatness with

his own hand and mind.

I pay tribute to him with this thread as he reunites with his mentor and compatriots in the afterlife.

We bid him to keep their company with news of events on this plane since the departure of the last of them and assure them all that we in our time will strive to outdo them.

May his spirit also be with the Lekki protesters tomorrow at the tollgate.

Jakande built that road out of a visionary heart and did not tax the road-users directly via tolls, not to talk of trying to use force to dislodge protesters from the tollgate leading to deaths.