SAMORA MACHEL

ROAPE readers will have learnt of the tragic death of President Samora Moises Machel on 19 October 1986. With profound sorrow, sadness and grief we mourn the loss of an outstanding son of Africa, the leader of the Mozambican revolution, and a committed and untiring fighter against colonialism, racism, apartheid and imperialism. Under his leadership, the Mozambican people defeated Portuguese colonialism. He was a symbol of unity, a source of great inspiration for all progressive humanity. His warm personality, his deep love for the people was a shining example. He was an outstanding teacher, who taught the Mozambican people to overcome the divisive problems of racism, tribalism, obscurantism, self-ambition, apathy, incompetence, corruption and ignorance. Under his leadership, the Mozambican people scored achievements in education, health and the construction of the national economy. He created conditions for the emergence of the Mozambican nation. Baba Samora was the synthesis of the Mozambican people's revolutionary gains.

We mourn Baba Samora because he was an outstanding internationalist, a great Marxist-Leninist and a fighter for the cause of freedom, peace and social progress. Under his leadership the Mozambican people worked in solidarity with the peoples
of Africa, Asia and Latin America for the cause of national and social liberation. In diplomacy, Baba Samora pursued the policy of peace and neutralised imperialist schemes to blockade and isolate Mozambique. He was the pillar of unity and regional co-operation among the Southern African countries in their struggle against their common enemy, the South African apartheid regime. It was in the course of the struggle for a common front against the destabilisation by the South African apartheid militarists and their local agents in the region that the beloved leader of the Mozambican revolution and friend of all progressive humanity met his tragic death.

Baba Samora, we shall miss you. In solidarity with the Mozambican people and the people of Southern Africa, the enemy’s schemes to extinguish the process of freedom, peace and social progress will never succeed.

Shubi Ishemo for the ROAPE Editorial Working Group

DEATH OF PRESIDENT SAMORA MACHEL: OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE

The following is the full text of the statement read to the Mozambican nation on the evening of 20 October by Frelimo Party Political Bureau member Marcelino dos Santos, in the name of the Political Bureau, the Standing Committee of the People’s Assembly (the Mozambican parliament), and the Council of Ministers (the cabinet).

Mozambican men and women,

It is with profound emotion and sorrow that the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Frelimo Party, the Standing Committee of the People’s Assembly, and the Council of Ministers of the People’s Republic of Mozambique communicate to the entire Mozambican people, from the Rovuma to Maputo, the tragic death of the President of the Frelimo Party, and President of the People’s Republic of Mozambique, Marshal Samora Moisés Machel.

This terrible event has plunged the Mozambican nation into mourning. It is an irreplaceable loss for our country, for our region, for Africa, and for all of humanity.

President Samora Moisés Machel, father of the nation and founder of our People’s Republic of Mozambique, is the symbol of the unity for the Mozambican people, of heroism and of grandeur. He was the best son of our people. His death occurred when the Presidential aircraft, travelling from Mbala, Zambia, when approaching Maputo airport crashed, under circumstances that are not yet clarified, in South African Territory, about five miles northwest of Namaacha.

President Samora Machel was returning from one more mission seeking the establishment of peace in Southern Africa and the development of regional cooperation. It was one more mission in support of freedom, justice, equality, peace
and progress, causes to which he dedicated his courage as a fighter and his talent as a statesman. President Samora Moisés was carrying out his task in the certainty that only through the elimination of armed banditry in Southern Africa would the peoples of the region be able to dedicate their efforts and energies to progress, development and social well-being.

The life of President Samora Moisés Machel is an example to all Mozambicans for its courage, coherence, dignity and total dedication to the cause of the Mozambican people, which was always his inspiration.

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Frelimo Party, the Standing Committee of the People's Assembly, and the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Mozambique understand the full gravity of the loss of their leader, and feel the immense sorrow of all Mozambicans, whether living in the country or abroad. This loss has occurred in a particularly difficult moment in our history and our lives, when the most reactionary of forces are ranged against our country in attempts to destroy our independence and the gains of the Mozambican revolution.

This is the second time that, under tragic circumstances, the Mozambican people have lost their top leader, the man who guaranteed their most just longings and aspirations. When we were fighting for the liberation of our country, colonialism and its agents assassinated President Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, in the hope that through this criminal act they could impede the development of the struggle for independence. In that moment of sorrow we were able to unite courageously around Frelimo, redouble our determination and continue the struggle.

The Mozambican people have a heroic tradition of always knowing how to resist the greatest tragedies that fall upon them. They have the heroic tradition of knowing how to transform their suffering and sorrow into new and greater energies and capacities in order to overcome adversity and map out new paths that may allow them to win the future of peace and prosperity to which they so greatly aspire.

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Frelimo Party, the Standing Committee of the People's Assembly, and the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Mozambique have complete trust in the patriotism of the Mozambican people. Let all of us, Mozambican men and women, transform this tragic death into a powerful catalyst of national unity. Let us redouble still further our commitment to destroy the banditry that assails our country and to ensure that all the manoeuvres under way to destroy our country result in failure.

Today, more than ever, our national independence requires the unity of all Mozambicans. Let us unite around our national flag, around the leadership of the party and state, in safeguarding the territorial integrity of the People's Republic of Mozambique, in sharpening our vigilance, in fighting without quarter against everything that may divide us, in the intransigent affirmation of our patriotism, in the defence of the revolution.

The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Frelimo Party, the Standing Committee of the People's Assembly and the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Mozambique present their feelings of deepest sorrow and profound condolences to the widow of our beloved President, Comrade Graca Machel, to his children, his brothers and all the bereaved family. We are experiencing this great sorrow with them with the same intensity. With them we will together build the future of the Mozambican motherland.
The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Frelimo Party, the Standing Committee of the People’s Assembly, and the Council of Ministers of the People’s Republic of Mozambique decree, in homage to the memory of President Samora Moisés Machel, Hero of the Republic, a period of sixty days of national mourning. During this period the national flag should be flown at half mast. As from today and until the holding of the funeral no recreational, sporting or cultural activities shall take place. Official information on the funeral arrangements will be given in due course.

A LUTA CONTINUA
(The Struggle continues)

AQUINO DE BRAGANCA

The shock and great sadness, followed by a sense of anger which greeted the death of Samora Moisés Machel, President of Mozambique, was reinforced by those who knew the thirty-three others who died in the plane crash with him. Among them was one old friend of the Review since its formation, Aquino de Braganca, Director of the Centre of African Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University. He was born in the Portuguese colony of Goa, on the Indian sub-continent, in the mid-1920s. At the age of thirteen, he left home to engage in anti-colonial politics, being particularly dissatisfied with the methods of Mahatma Gandhi. He gained a degree in physics, but scorned a safe career in favour of political activism, which took him from country to country, while he earned a living as a journalist. As a result he came to know many people who played an important role in African history, as well as enjoying the company of intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Satre.

He is reported to have ensured that Nelson Mandela met the Algerian FLN during Mandela’s celebrated tour of Africa, prior to his decision to support a policy of armed struggle against apartheid. Aquino certainly was the person who received the young Samora Machel when Machel left Mozambique for military training. While pursuing his journalistic activities, including being a founder member of the magazine *AfriqueAsie*, Aquino played an important role in the development of contact between students from the various Portuguese colonies. This process led up to the formation of the liberation movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. And in fact he was a key element in the combined umbrella body the movements set up, the Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies (CONCP). He was acquainted with Melo Antunes of the Armed Forces Movement, which organised the 25 April 1974 coup in Portugal that overthrew fascism and thus helped to shorten the anti-colonial wars.

At the time of the negotiations leading up to the Lusaka Accord of September 1974, under which Portugal recognised the independence of Mozambique governed by Frelimo, he was a key member of the negotiating team. After independence, he was acutely aware of the importance of building up Mozambique’s own research capacity in the social sciences. So instead of a career in government, he founded the
Centre of African Studies (CEA) named after the Centre in Portugal where important members of the liberation movements had studied. He asked his old friend Ruth First to be Research Director. The CEA soon began to engage in research aimed at dealing with the most acute problems of post-Independence Mozambique, and produced a series of reports at the request of various government or party agencies. These reports were often critical of the implementation of policy, but invariably produced constructive suggestions on ways of dealing with the difficulties which they analysed.

While Aquino remained fairly active academically, he was constantly on call from Frelimo to deal with diplomatic tasks. Thus while he co-edited a three-volume work on Africa with Immanuel Wallerstein, established the History Workshop in the Centre, and participated in field work in Cabo Delgado on the history of the Liberated Zones, he was also involved in, for example, the re-establishment of good relations with Portugal. In the process, he became acquainted with President Eanes of Portugal, who had been a general in Mozambique fighting against Frelimo. More often than not, his overseas visits were undertaken as part of a team accompanying President Machel, for example, on the visit to India for talks with Prime Minister Indira Ghandi, where Samora Machel took time to visit Aquino's mother. The charming photograph of that visit clearly show the friendship between the two men.

Several of his friends were assassinated, including Eduardo Mondlane, Amilcar Cabral and Ruth First. He served on the Commission of Inquiry in Cabral's death, where his intimate knowledge of the interconnections between the different liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies enabled him to write a lengthy report. In the case of Eduardo Mondlane, an interview which he had tape recorded two week's before Mondlane's death proved invaluable in 1982 in dispelling MNR lies concerning alleged differences of opinion between Mondlane and Machel. He was present in the room with Ruth First, together with Bridget O'Laughlin and Pallo Jordon, when the letter bomb that killed Ruth exploded. He was temporarily blinded by that bomb, but despite the discovery in hospital that he had heart problems, he fought his way back to health and to work in an amazingly short time. Within a few months he had reorganised the CEA into three fairly distinct parts, and was again engaged in diplomatic work.

His interest in academic work remained, however and he had wished to attend the inaugural conference of the Europe-Southern Africa Research Group (ESARG) held at Leeds University at the end of September 1986, and it was hoped he would go on from there to the ROAPE conference. He had to cancel the trip because President Machel had assigned him further diplomatic tasks. This was why he was accompanying the President on what proved to be their final visit to Zambia.

Aquino de Branganca was a legendary figure in Portuguese politics, yet his importance was not generally recognised in English speaking countries, with the exception of South Africa, which rightly feared his influence. His greatest wish was to live to see the end of apartheid. The full story of his contribution to the ending of Portuguese colonialism and the overthrow of Portuguese fascism may never be known, but from which is known, his contribution was considerable and at times, perhaps decisive. He will be remembered as a kind and generous friend, and a formidable diplomat. He was an integral part of a struggle which will continue.

Garry Littlejohn on behalf of the Editorial Working Group
Editorial: Nigeria: Oil, Debts and Democracy

Economic Crisis
Since our last special issue on Nigeria, ROAPE No. 13, numerous changes have taken place within the Nigerian political economy. Of particular importance are the collapse of the OPEC oil pricing structure and the huge increase in the indebtedness of the country. Nigeria is particularly susceptible to pressures emanating from the price collapse, because of its large population and its expensive development plans. But as Okogu argues in this issue, the good old days of the oil bonanza appear to be over for good. The question is not when the oil market will pick up again, but what alternative, source or sources of revenue will augment diminishing resources from oil as the basis of the fiscal structures fo the Nigerian State. That this calls for a major rethinking of the development strategy is not in doubt. What is not often emphasised, however, is that new approaches to development strategy cannot be neutral, in a society deeply divided along class and other lines. Neither can the state be seen as an independent arbiter, making rational choices between different proposals put forward. Thus, the intimate connection between the intensification of the crises of the political economy, and the political question, is one of the major themes of this issue.

Closely related to the collapse of the oil market, is the question of indebtedness, with its connected questions of debt servicing, availability of letters of credits from foreign financial institutions and the debate over the IMF. While the immediate origins of the debt can be traced to the unparalleled profligacy of the civilian governments between 1979 and 1983, it should not be forgotten that structural issues, such as the import-substitution industrialisation strategy of the country, and its heavy reliance on imported inputs, also contributed in no small measure in bringing the country to her knees financially. Whatever weight we may ascribe to different contributory factors that engendered the huge debt, which might be as high as US $23 billion, there can hardly be any disagreement on the painful consequences of the financial predicament for the countries, especially for her working peoples.

The nationalist zeal with which the Buhari/Idiagbon regime pursued the debt repayment problem, meant the adoption of a 'nationalist, lets use our internal resources' approach, which saw the debt service ratio well above 40%, with promises of further increases to come. The hardship wrought on the Nigerian people by that strategy was immense and it is not surprising that the high debt servicing ratio was one of the issues raised in justifying the Babangida palace coup against the two Generals.

Though the Babangida regime has indicated that it would not spend more than 30%
of its foreign earnings on debt servicing, the dislocations and problems caused by the debt crisis are yet to diminish. Of particular importance is the refusal of some western financial institutions to extend letters of credits to cover necessary imports of raw materials needed by Nigerian industries. Consequently, under-utilisation of installed capacity in industry, and inflation, continue to haunt the society. The oil and debt crises have brought to the fore, the questions of the value of the Naira, the mechanisms for import controls, the basis for the allocation of foreign exchange, and the question of near-permanent border closures. During the oil-boom years of the 1970s, the Naira appreciated considerably against other major currencies of international trade. This development was connected to the desires of the urban-based bourgeoisie and managerial classes who ran the economy to import goods and services from the capitalist West, in order to maintain a high level of profitability, and an equally high-spending life-style. An over-valued Naira also made it easier to import foreign food, largely wheat, rice, and day-old chicks, to feed a growing urban population in the face of an intensifying food crisis caused primarily by the neglect and sometimes, even disruption of peasant agriculture.

But how is the value of the Naira to be brought into line with economic realities? And what social and economic consequences will follow from such a move?

A related problem is that of import and exchange controls. Since the early 1960s, both mechanisms have been used in the management of the country's balance of payment position. After a spate of free spending and liberal import and exchange controls which characterised the latter part of the Gowon regime, the Obasanjo regime in the late 1970s, faced with the first signs of the current economic crises, imposed 'low-profile' austerity measures and tightened both import and exchange controls. With the coming of the Shagari regime 1979, the controls were eased again given the favourable oil market climate following on the Iranian Revolution. This attitude by the Shagari regime towards import and exchange controls was one of the high points of its profligacy as unnecessary consumer goods were allowed to flood the economy. With the Buhari/Idiagbon regime, the whole mechanisms of import and exchange control was tightened again, with the regime going as far as closing the country's borders for months.

These up and down movements in import and exchange control management have meant that the industrial and economic climate was characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, with most people living in fear or anticipation of budget speeches. Secondly, it has also meant a high degree of bureaucratisation, favouritism and inefficiency. The problem of the most efficient way of managing scarce foreign exchange resources is, thus, one of the crucial problems of the Nigerian fiscal crisis.

All these contentious issues found expression in the debate over the IMF loan, inaugurated by the Babangida regime in late 1985 under sustained public pressure. In the course of the debate, however, it became clear that Nigerian public opinion was heavily against the conditionalities which the Fund had handed down to Nigerian governments since 1983. Particularly resented were the conditionalities requiring a massive 60% devaluation of the Naira, removal of petroleum subsidies, and import liberalisation. Different groups and individuals took part in the heated debates, often forming a bewildering mosaic of contradictory interests as bedfellows, either for or against the taking of the loan.

Opposed to accepting the loan were trade unions, students' unions, and a large section of the intelligentsia. Their camp also boosted a few religious organisations
and some indigenous businessmen, who were resentful of the Buhari/Idiagbon concentration of business opportunities in the hands of ‘efficient’ and largely foreign-owned businesses. The IMF loan was perceived by this business group as a further entrenchment of foreign domination, hence their advocacy of a ‘nationalist’ solution, which would enhance their chances in the economy. This rejectionist bloc even included some top bureaucrats and bankers fervour.

For the IMF loan were, predictably, the leaders of multinational companies, top bank officials, government ministers in the Babangida administration, and top journalists and academics.

The debate that ensued caught the imagination of the public and in the final analysis, the government was obliged to announce that if was rejecting the loan in favour of an internal solution to the crisis. However, it would seem that all the government is doing, is the implementation of the rejected IMF conditionalities, but now under a nationalist garb.

Subsidies on petroleum products have been removed, continuing a process started in the last days of the Shargari administration, and escalating transport and food prices. Then there is the abolition of state-run commodity boards in the agricultural sector, to be replaced by private companies, which, it is alleged in some quarters, might turn out to be avenues for directing the country’s meagre foreign currency earnings into private hands. A similar programme of privatising other government parastatals is currently being worked out with some parastatals already slated for floatation on the Stock Exchange.

However, the most contentious economic decision taken to date, since the declaration of an economic state of emergency in October 1985, is that relating to the establishment of a second-tier foreign exchange market, SFEM. The idea is to maintain the current sliding value of the Naira for the servicing of the foreign debt, and the payment of the country’s obligations to international organisations; that being the first-tier. All else is to be serviced through the second-tier, with the Naira being allowed to float, and find its level according to the dictates of supply and demand. And the government is currently negotiating a World Bank loan to enable it service the SFEM within two years. What this means in effect, of course, is a massive and, continuous devaluation of the Naira.

The policy of allowing the Naira to slide gradually against other currencies can only be understood within the government’s ideology of monetarism. What is open to question is whether the SFEM will, or even could, achieve its objective of easing the present scarcity of foreign exchange since it cannot address the central problem of foreign exchange shortage, that Nigeria does not earn enough from current exports to pay for essential imports. If the government continues to licence imports, bureaucratic distortions and corrupt allocations will continue. The proposed transfer of control and allocation of foreign exchange to the rapidly multiplying number of commercial banks under the supervision of the Central Bank is not likely to eliminate these bottlenecks. Indeed, it may simply amount to the semi-privatisation of foreign exchange allocation process through a shift of direct control from state officials to private financiers and with it, a shift in the source of bureaucratic distortions and corruption. Profit-making in Nigeria has always been most lucrative for those able to manipulate export and import markets, whether through the cartels operated by foreign trading companies in the colonial period, or through access to state decision-makers in recent years. Powerful interests with
privileged sources of information, may be able to manipulate the foreign exchange auctions and corner the market. Critical sectors of the economy, such as health services, educational institutions and manufacturing firms may find themselves unable to afford essential imports.

**Political Crisis**

Some of these apprehensions are clearly discernable in the on-going political debate also inaugurated by the Babangida administration, and bring out clearly, the intimate connection between the economic crises and the political question in the current Nigerian debacle. As Ibrahim points out in this issue, the current climate in Nigeria can hardly be said to be conclusive to a democratic debate on the country's future. And this authoritarian tendency in the county also finds expression in some of the proposals put forward, such as the argument for a one-party state, or a triarchy, made up of an alliance of the military, civilians, and traditional rulers. It is his major argument that the commitment to bourgeois-democratic liberal philosophy, which informed the debate over the 1979 Constitution, has been greatly reduced. The emphasis now is control rather than mobilization, and the source of this orientation in the economic crises is brought out by an editorial in the influential *New Nigerian* on 29 July 1986, which sought to defend the preventive detention decree of the military; 'there is no country which has faced certain drastic problems or drastic times that has not resorted to drastic solutions. And no one can deny that these are extra-ordinary times'. (29.7.86). The situation if further compounded by the fact that the Babangida regime has been taking far-reaching political and economic decisions which tend to pre-empt the report of the Political Bureau it set up to conduct the debate on the country's political future. The impression is thus created that the Political Bureau is a mere talk-shop, diverting attention from the unfolding unfavourable economic and political climate in the country. This might explain the luke-warm attitude of the generality of Nigerians to the political debate.

In the final analysis, the struggle between authoritarianism and democracy is firmly on the agenda in Nigeria. As Bangura points out in this issue, the classes that dominate the state have been in search of a political arrangement which will guarantee them maximum control through increasingly coercive state policies, also aimed at weakening the capacity of popular organisations to resist obnoxious policies. It is further argued that this repressive strand also gave rise to intra-class squabbles and intrigues, culminating in the Babangida palace coup of 1985, and the subsequent adoption of a populist stance, premised on a 'human rights' policy. This stance is only the beginnings of an attempt to evolve a corporalist state in which the trade unions, students unions and other organisations are tied to the apron-strings of the regime. We are left to ponder whether a corporatist state can be an answer to the serious crisis of legitimacy which confronts the Nigerian state.

However, as Beckman points out in an accompanying piece in this issue, the vexing questions of strategy, legitimacy, and hegemony are not limited to the ruling class alone, for within the popular organisations in the country, and the Left tendencies, there are advocates of using the military as a Vanguard for the revolution. The advocacy of a military vanguard, is partly a reflection of a feeling of impotence and impatience; and also an indication of a lack of understanding of the role of the military under neo-colonialism in general, and the specific and peculiar case of Nigeria in particular.
As Abdulraheem and Olukoshi further point out, this military vanguardist position is only another specific example of an entrist orientation which has marked the Nigerian Left tendencies since the 1940s. It would seem that the basic strategic orientation of the left tendencies is to enter bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, or state political formation with the hope of carrying out a revolution from within, using state institutions or bourgeois organisational formations. The fact that this strategic orientation has led to a string of disasters for the Left is clearly brought out by the two authors. It is their view that there is a need for a new organisational and strategic orientation within the Left if they are to effectively intervene in the unfolding economic and political crises in the country.

Mustapha looks at some of the problems the left tendencies need to overcome before they can engage in a more effective intervention in the political process. Central to his argument is the need for a correct handling of the National Question. Specifically, he calls to question the theory of the Northern Oligarchy, which argues that the hegemonic and most dangerous segment of the Nigerian ruling classes, is the Northern Oligarchy, defined by blood ties, semi-feudal connections, and origins in the Native Authority system established by colonialism. This orientation, it is argued, misses the more important point that the northern faction of the Nigerian ruling class developed as a bureaucratic bourgeoisie, within a specific regional and political context, which differentiates it and some of its interests from the rest of the bourgeoisie, of which, it is essentially a part.

This failure to see both the differences and similarities of different factions of the bourgeoisie as progressive, and the northern one as 'feudal' and reactionary. It is thus argued that the theory of the Northern Oligarchy has led to a situation whereby the political and ideological forces of some northern left tendencies and the southern bourgeoisie converge around a reformist and pragmatic electoral platform. That this is a non-viable road for left politics is brought out by Abdulraheem and Olukoshi.

Our last special issue on Nigeria was characterised by the picture of a political economy marked by an oil-boom, and expanding economy, and a possible promise of the evolution of a democratic political process. In this issue, the background is set by a catastrophic collapse in oil prices, a debt crisis, and a general economic crisis which has taken a great toll in the country, and promises to do yet more damage. Such is the context of the contest between authoritarianism and democracy in Nigeria, as exemplified by current attempts to disorganise and weaken the NLC, ASUU, and NANS, following the nation-wide students crisis of May/June 1986 (see Briefing in ROAPE 36 and in this issue); a contest between the forces of imperialism, represented especially by the IMF and the local bourgeoisie, and the working peoples of the country, and their patriotic allies. It remains to be seen how this contest is resolved in the years to come. The outcome, no doubt, will have far-reaching repercussions both within and outside Nigeria.

T. Abdulraheem, A. Olukoshi, A. R. Mustapha and G. P. Williams
The Outlook for Nigerian Oil: 1985-2000: Four Scenarios

Bright Erakpoweri Okugu

Based on some recent forecasts of world oil demand and price in the years up to 2000, this paper looks at the probable demand for OPEC oil, Nigeria's market shares, and its revenues from oil. This is done under four scenarios: continued weak markets, optimistic, OPEC successfully defends 'its market share' and total breakdown in current market arrangements. The results point to continued difficulties, especially up to 1990, and probably beyond. This increases the potential for greater social conflict, as tighter austerity measures are introduced. The glut once again highlights the futility of total dependence on oil. Oil which had masked bad economic policies in the past, can no longer be relied upon to play this dubious role. Increased emphasis on agricultural production, and some adjustments in the operation of the Nation's Public Finance are suggested, among other policies, to cope with the transition to a post oil-boom Nigeria.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has been the subject of considerable research and commentary, both in terms of its nature, production and pricing policies, and the apparent puzzle of its longevity and continued survival. Friedman (1974), among others, has long predicted the 'imminent' demise of OPEC, based on the premise that the organisation was a cartel, and, as all cartels go, would soon collapse under the weight of mass chiselling and excessive production by members who are out to make quick extra profits. This has a sound foundation in economic theory. There is a large element of economic rent which individual members of a cartel are assumed to want to extract in increasing amounts of, and, in the process, they exceed the production quotas necessary to maintain the high price level in the first place (see Eckbo, 1976 Ch 3). There have been a plethora of other theories regarding the nature of OPEC. Among these have been the Pindyck (1978) type models which are based on Hotelling's (1931) theory of exhaustible resources. These models view OPEC as a monolithic body whose objective is the maximisation of the net present value of their oil assets over time. The efficient solution to this maximisation problem involves a gradually upward-sloping price trajectory with a slope equal to the rate of interest.

Another class of models, due to Ezzati (1976) and popularised by Teece (1982), views OPEC States as having a target revenue which, once attained, for example through an appropriately (presumably sustainable) high unit price, sets a ceiling to the oil output for that period. This model is predicated on the argument that most OPEC members have a low absorption capacity. Their economies can only take a certain amount of revenue (the target revenue) per period. Furthermore, investment of any surpluses in foreign (Western) capital markets are not regarded by these countries as an acceptable substitute for domestic investments.
These two classes of theories have not been very successful in explaining the actual behaviour of the oil market. The former was completely undermined by the sudden big price increases of 1979/81, while the latter is flawed by the empirical evidence. OPEC member States did continue to produce at high levels in the 1970s when they had substantial balance of payments surpluses, and these were invested largely in Western capital markets.

A third category of models: the Property Rights Model due to Mead (1979) and Johany (1980) was directed primarily at explaining the 1973/74 price increases, and although it does so successfully, provides no obvious explanation for the 1979/81 price rises.

Attention has now shifted to the question of the fate of OPEC in the next twenty-five years, in the face of new and destabilising parameters in the world energy scene. These new developments, some of which are extraneous to the Organisation, have given rise to serious tensions within OPEC. The policy response of individual members, and their ability to cope with these tensions will ultimately determine the shape of OPEC in the next few years. In particular, the serious financial crisis into which some member States have been plunged since about 1982 as a result of a combination of falling market shares and weakening prices, together with international debts contracted on the assumption of continuing high oil prices, have exacerbated these tensions — notably among the high-absorbing members such as Nigeria. Nigeria’s relative small oil revenue in relation to its population, despite its large absolute output, have made it the weakest link in the OPEC chain. This paper is an attempt to explore some possible future developments in the international oil market and how Nigeria’s market share and earnings from oil might be affected. These possible developments are studied under four scenarios. Some policy options to cope the reality of declining oil revenues are offered.

Recent Developments in the World Oil Market
Although OPEC was formed in 1960, it had very little or no impact on the world oil market before the early 1970s. Output and price decisions were taken by major oil companies who paid only taxes and royalties on their oil liftings. A typical barrel of crude oil in the 1960s commanded a price of about $1.80. The netback value from this barrel was worth over $30 in the final consumer markets. This value was shared in the following order: major oil companies (42%), governments of importing countries (52%) by way of profit and direct taxes, and producer governments a mere 6% in the form of royalties (Griffin and Teece, 1982). Thus, the surplus value from oil production up to the early 1970s was largely appropriated by the multinational oil conglomerates and their home governments. Following the Yom Kippur war of late 1973, OPEC member states seized the opportunity to take control of their oil fields through a combination of negotiation and arm-twisting. It must be stressed however, that the Middle East crisis of that year merely provided the trigger, as several individual countries, led by Libya had been introducing measures to acquire control since about 1967. The price of oil finally rose to about $10.50 per barrel in 1974. Between 1975 and 1978 oil prices were raised only very slightly, and in real terms fell by some 15%. OPEC has never had a unique and generally-accepted pricing policy. Saudi Arabia, along with one or two other countries, argued for very modest price increases and took appropriated steps (such as high production policy) to enforce their wish. This introduced some tension into the Organisation.

The second oil crisis came along just in time to take the lid off these new tensions.
The chances are that OPEC would have faced a serious crisis over these issues had the Iranian revolution not come when it did. This, along with the Gulf war, gave rise to uncertainty concerning future supplies. Huge price increases soon followed the resulting tight market conditions. The official price for the Saudi crude (called 34° API) which is the ‘marker’ around which the price of all other qualities are fixed, eventually settled at $34 per barrel in 1981. By spring 1982 however, it had become clear that the existing price structure was no longer sustainable. There was simply too much oil going round. An emergency meeting of OPEC in March 1982 decided for the first time in the Organisation’s history to introduce formal production quotas, with a view to restricting output in an attempt to defend the $34 price. Nigeria was allocated a quota of 1.3 million barrels per day (MBD or 7.43% of total OPEC output). This quota was a mere 53% of its peak output in January 1979. Even this reduced output was sold with some difficulty, as major consumers were able to switch to North Sea oil of similar quality, which was available at below the Nigerian official price. Three main factors can be identified as being responsible for the current oil glut:

1) The rapid price increases of 1973/74, coupled with the fear that it might happen again led Western consuming countries to introduce technical and fiscal policies designed to reduce dependence on OPEC oil. This included the removal of petroleum subsidies; the introduction of technical guidelines for fuel efficiency (such as smaller, low fuel consuming car models) and, especially in the case of the USA, fiscal concessions to encourage increased domestic exploration and production. It is common wisdom among Petroleum Economists that the long run supply and demand responses to the 1973/74 price increases are still working their way through. Following the two major price increases of the 1970s, there has been a structural change in world energy consumption, with some substitution away from oil towards other forms of energy, such as coal, hydro and nuclear power. In addition, there has been increased efficiency in energy use, as exemplified by the introduction of more energy-efficient capital equipment in the OECD area. Renshaw (1985), for example, points out that before the oil embargo of 1973, the average fuel efficiency of US passenger cars was only 13.1 miles per gallon (mpg); by 1982 it had risen to 16.3 mpg, with a target of 27.5 mpg envisaged for end 1985.

2) Even more importantly, the price increases meant that oil fields which were too costly to develop, suddenly became profitable from the point of view of long term investment. Thus, North Sea oil fields (shared by the UK and Norway), Mexico, the US-Alaska and a host of other areas became important sources of crude oil. OPEC’s share of the market declined accordingly, from about 31 MBD (53% of world production) in 1973 to an estimated 14.8 MBD (30% of world production) in August 1985 (Table 1). Although Mexico has tried to cooperate with OPEC since late 1984, its sacrifice of 6.6% production cut still leaves it at a production level of about 3 MBD (1984 figures).

3) Furthermore, the main consuming countries had built up large amounts of crude inventories to protect themselves against possible further disruptions following the events of 1979/80. Once the supply had stabilized, these stocks were released on to the market — further worsening the glut.

In March 1983, OPEC met in London and, for the first time in its history, decided to cut the crude marker price by $5, to $29 per barrel. A further price reduction (in the case of Nigeria and a few others) followed in October 1984, after Norway, followed by the UK, unilaterally cut North Sea crude oil prices. Nigeria is particularly
sensitive to North Sea oil prices because, not only do they produce identical quality oil, but they also have to compete in the same American markets.

The joint current account balance position of OPEC has declined from a peak of $105 billion surplus in 1980 to a deficit of $18.63 billion in 1983, having previously been in the black in all the years from 1974 to 1981. From a disaggregated perspective several of the countries have been in deficit for many years. Nigeria, for example, had a deficit in 1976-79 inclusive, a surplus in the following two years, and has been in deficit since 1983 (Table 2). Huge development Plans hatched in the 1970 have had to be revised downwards in several of the countries, and unpopular austerity measures introduced. In an attempt to cope with these difficult conditions, several individual members have resorted to unorthodox trading practices such as counter-trade, netback deals and direct discounting. All of these have had the effect of undermining the official price structure (Okogu, 1986). Worse still, a realisation that these trading practices have an adverse effect on the stability of the oil market, will not necessarily bring about an end to them. If anything, counter-trade and similar practices are likely to increase in the next several years — especially if non-OPEC producers continue with their present production and pricing policies. Counter-trade is seen by these countries as a means of competing for market shares and cushioning the adverse effects of the oil glut. After all, under the permanent income and life-cycle hypotheses, present consumption is downward-resistant when current income falls. OPEC States engaging in counter-trade are merely confirming these theories.

Table 1: Total world oil production, OPEC total, and selected countries: 1973-1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>OPEC</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>World Total</th>
<th>OPEC's Share (%)</th>
<th>OPEC’s Production Index 1973 = 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>58.11</td>
<td>53.35</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>30.73</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>58.21</td>
<td>52.79</td>
<td>99.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>55.24</td>
<td>49.22</td>
<td>87.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>30.74</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>59.70</td>
<td>51.49</td>
<td>99.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>31.27</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>61.94</td>
<td>50.48</td>
<td>100.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>29.81</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.100</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>63.38</td>
<td>47.03</td>
<td>96.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>30.93</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.600</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>65.78</td>
<td>47.02</td>
<td>99.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>26.88</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.650</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>42.67</td>
<td>86.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.840</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>59.30</td>
<td>37.93</td>
<td>72.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>2.120</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>56.06</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>57.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.360</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>56.46</td>
<td>30.10</td>
<td>56.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>17.34</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.570</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>57.67</td>
<td>30.07</td>
<td>55.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2.610</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>56.93</td>
<td>28.14</td>
<td>51.68</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Figures calculated from The Petroleum Economist, various issues.

Possible Developments in the Next Few Years
A common thread running through most recent forecasts of oil demand has been their eventual inaccuracy. This failure underscores the unpredictable nature of most of the variables which go into the forecasting exercise. The rate of growth of world economic activity, the real price level, the income and price elasticity effects (see Kouris 1983 for a discussion of recent Elasticity Estimates for industrial
countires), the pace of development of alternative energy sources and government policies that might affect these, are among the determinants of the eventual real consumption demand. Thus, the Workshop on Alternative Energy Strategies, WAES (1977) estimated oil demand in 1985 at between 58.4 MBD and 62.5 MBD of which OPEC was expected to supply 33-39 MBD, and between 73.1 and 92.6 MBD by the year 2000, with OPEC supplying some 56 MBD. Sheikh Yamani (1979) put expected demand for OPEC oil at 41.5 MBD and 45.6 MBD respectively by 1985 and 1987. At roughly 16 MBD today, these forecasts were widely off the mark. Some more recent forecasts (Clark Associates, for example) put 1990 OPEC at no more than 19.5 MBD (see below). We shall examine four possible scenarios of demand for OPEC oil, and how Nigeria’s market shares might be affected in each case. Before going into these scenarios however, it may be useful to say a few things about the underlying rate of economic activity on which these forecasts are based. The forecasters considered have generally used an economic growth rate of between 2.5 and 3.5 for the OECD area. Growth projections for non-industrial countries vary, but were generally expected to be relatively faster than for industrialised countries. It must be emphasised that the link between GNP and energy requirements has been weakening for some time now, and it is not yet certain how far this will go.

Table 2: OPEC Member Countries’ Estimated Current Account Balance (Million US Dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>-1,682</td>
<td>-904</td>
<td>-2,327</td>
<td>-3,558</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-239</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-377</td>
<td>-730</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>-51</td>
<td>-94</td>
<td>-33</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>-1,136</td>
<td>-923</td>
<td>-74</td>
<td>-1,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR Iran</td>
<td>12,299</td>
<td>4,725</td>
<td>4,737</td>
<td>5,090</td>
<td>1,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>2,855</td>
<td>2,971</td>
<td>2,627</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>3,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>9,066</td>
<td>6,722</td>
<td>7,152</td>
<td>5,440</td>
<td>6,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP Libyan AJ</td>
<td>2,769</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>2,989</td>
<td>2,861</td>
<td>1,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>4,905</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-363</td>
<td>-1,014</td>
<td>-3,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>1,720</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>1,165</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>24,040</td>
<td>17,512</td>
<td>17,683</td>
<td>15,897</td>
<td>1,689</td>
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<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>3,974</td>
<td>2,878</td>
<td>3,413</td>
<td>2,904</td>
<td>2,134</td>
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<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>5,824</td>
<td>2,201</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>-3,127</td>
<td>-5,699</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total OPEC</td>
<td>68,736</td>
<td>35,704</td>
<td>37,769</td>
<td>28,889</td>
<td>2,811</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>-1,639</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-171</td>
<td>-310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>-654</td>
<td>-672</td>
<td>-1,027</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>2,810</td>
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<td>IR Iran</td>
<td>6,110</td>
<td>-4,599</td>
<td>-2,737</td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>3,468</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
<td>10,823</td>
<td>11,548</td>
<td>-9,534</td>
<td>-13,679</td>
<td>-7,315</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
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<td>16,159</td>
<td>14,675</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,262</td>
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<td>8,285</td>
<td>-2,894</td>
<td>2,978</td>
<td>-650</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4,413</td>
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<td>-7,287</td>
<td>-927</td>
</tr>
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<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2,070</td>
<td>3,212</td>
<td>3,069</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>410</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>14,669</td>
<td>46,904</td>
<td>44,064</td>
<td>-1,100</td>
<td>-19,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>6,070</td>
<td>11,582</td>
<td>10,270</td>
<td>7,655</td>
<td>4,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>4,749</td>
<td>4,026</td>
<td>-4,222</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total OPEC</td>
<td>59,538</td>
<td>104,966</td>
<td>53,893</td>
<td>-11,804</td>
<td>-18,625</td>
</tr>
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The Scenarios

**Scenario A:** We take the Clark Associates' demand forecasts as the basis for our first scenario. They put the demand for OPEC oil in 1985 at no more than 19.5 MBD under a zero growth scenario, and a selling price of $17/b. The price was expected to rise to $27/b by 1990. With the benefit of hindsight, we modify their predictions in two ways. First, we assume that the market will remain weak until 1990, at which point in time, the demand for OPEC oil will be 16 MBD, with price at $17/b in the same year. This continued weak market could be the result of a combination of slow rate of economic recovery in the OECD area: non-cooperative oil policies by non-OPEC producers, continued energy savings and unorthodox trading practices within OPEC. OPEC's output under the August 1986 agreement is 16.8 MBD, and it may well fall further by 1990. By the year 2000, the same conditions could still be there except that non-OPEC output will have fallen. A further reason for modifying their forecasts is because the tailing-off of non-OPEC supply sources may not follow a smooth path. There are other potential sources currently being explored and which are likely to be successful. The actual OPEC market share may well be less, but we shall presume that Nigeria's share of OPEC output remains at the 7.43 or 8.3% level, and calculate the revenue accordingly. The second way we modify their forecasts is by letting the $17/b price reign, not in 1985, but by 1990. However, as a result of a rapid decline in the output of fringe producers in the 1990s, the price could rise to $25/b by 2000, as against the $27/b forecast by them for 1990.

**Scenario B:** Here we take an optimistic scenario constructed by taking an average of some recent forecasts of the demand for oil. We adopt Meloe's (1983) forecast as base case. This puts the demand for oil by the World Outside the Centrally-planned Economies in 1990 at 49.5 MBD, with OPEC supplying 22.9 MBD or 46.3%. This is very much in line with another forecast by the Petroleum Intelligence Weekly (13 May 1985) which puts the demand for OPEC oil in 1990 at 22-23 MBD. We then take 46.3% of the mean of five other world demand forecasts for the year 2000 (summarised in The Petroleum Economist, July and August 1983), on the assumption that the same proportionality holds. These five forecasts are: US Department of Energy (DOE), 42-52 MBD; Conoco, 54 MBD; Exxon, 55 MBD; Clark, 56.6 MBD; International Energy Agency (IEA), 58-74 MBD. This gives a mean of 55.4 MBD and an OPEC output of 25.9 MBD in the year 2000. With such market conditions, it may reasonably be expected that the price of crude oil may rise to $30 per barrel by 1990 in real terms and to $32 per barrel by the year 2000. These prices may appear low, considering the amount of demand increase involved. An increase of nearly 7 MBD by 1990 would normally be expected to result in a greater increase in price than our proposed $30/b. However our reason for keeping it at that level may be justified on the following grounds: a) the recent OPEC experience of raising the price of oil too high too quickly in 1979 only to be forced to reduce it again in 1983 has been an unpleasant one. The Organisation is likely to be more cautious in its pricing policies in the future should favourable market opportunities present themselves; b) the current official price structure is not being followed by members of OPEC anyway. Thus, in reality the actual price of oil is some way below the official level. Therefore taking a real price of $30 by 1990 and $32/b in 2000, may in fact mean a bigger increase than it appears to be.

Just before the second oil crisis of 1979, OPEC had a committee on pricing strategy which had recommended a pricing package which would have meant raising the price of oil by a combination of the following factors: the international exchange
value of the dollar, rate of inflation and the rate of growth in OECD. This recommendation was over-taken by events in Iran which precipitated the second big oil price increases in 1979. This scenario implicitly assumes no new major oil fields get discovered outside of OPEC areas during this period.

We examine Nigeria’s share of OPEC output under two assumptions. First, that it continues to produce 7.43% of total OPEC output, as was the case under the 1982 quota arrangement, and secondly, that it produces 8.3% of total OPEC output, this latter being its share after its quota was increased in 1984. It should be stressed however, that this is still hotly disputed, with Nigeria claiming 8.3% (1.45 MBD) and OPEC 7.43% (1.3 MBD). It is quite possible that other OPEC members with a genuine claim to hardship — especially Iran and Iraq when their war is over (these two countries, along with Ecuador, among others, have already put up claims) will become more persistent in their demands for increased quotas. If these demands were to increase in future, OPEC could become more insistent that Nigeria should revert to its 1982 quota level.

Scenario C: A third scenario is one where OPEC sticks to its new policy of defending its market share, as opposed to the price structure. At its December 1985 meeting in Geneva, the organisation resolved to 'secure and defend for itself a fair share in the world oil market'. This unprecedented move resulted in the oil price collapsing from $28 per barrel in 1985 to under $10 in July 1986. This price war adversely affected all producers. OPEC later reversed the December policy of flooding the market, with a view to reversing the downward price trend. Three un-named non-OPEC countries were said to have agreed to cooperate in stabilising the market. Prices immediately rose to about $15 per barrel.

It is believed that what OPEC considers to be a fair market share is in the region of 17.5-18 MBD (see, for example, *The Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*, 16 December 1985). We shall assume under this scenario that OPEC produces 18 MBD between now and the year 2000. We keep it steady at this level for 1990 and 2000 because the expected decline in North Sea production in the 1990s may be totally offset by a combination of further energy savings and possible new oil finds outside OPEC area (on which possibility, see Odell, 1983 and Odell and Rosing, 1985). *The Petroleum Economist* (August 1983), among others, has suggested that the elasticity effects of (supply and demand responses to) the 1979/81 price increases have probably yet to be experienced. It suggests that the conservation effects so far observed may be in response to the 1973/74 price increases. Similarly, a Shell study at the end of 1982 showed that energy requirements per unit of GNP in the OECD area have fallen by 27% between 1973 and 1982, and were expected to fall further to between 30 and 40% by 1986. Some of the energy savings and substitutions are almost certainly of a structural nature, and are probably irreversible. For instance, the world has gradually moved to more use of plastics in place of aluminium, the production of which from bauxite is very energy intensive. These factors could further eat into OPEC market shares, and make the 18 MBD target unsustainable.

There is no certainty whether this latest policy will succeed in stabilising the price, and at what level. The OECD December 1985 Economic outlook saw a price of £20/b as desirable and possible. It warned however, that a total price collapse would be dangerous, as it could have serious implications for the international financial system (see report in PIW issue of 23 December 1985). On the assumption that non-OPEC producers would take this warning seriously and help OPEC make a
success of its recent agreement, the price could settle at around $20/b. We thus assume under this scenario that OPEC has a market share of 18 MBD, and oil price stays at $20/b up to the end of the century. Recent events lend some credence to this position. OPEC’s apparent preparedness to flood the market if necessary to obtain the cooperation of non-OPEC producers may not guarantee market stability, but it gives some indication of their intention. On the basis of our 7.43% and 8.3% Nigerian market share, its production level would be 1.34 and 1.49 MBD. A word of caution is necessary here. The $20/b price must be seen as being at the top range of this scenario. It takes very little cheating by very few producers to send prices tumbling again. This would mean that the actual amount of revenue which Nigeria may expect to earn from oil in the next fifteen years may well be below what we estimate under this scenario. This amount should therefore be seen as a maximum, hinging as it does, on whether non-OPEC producers cooperate with OPEC.

**Scenario D:** A fourth scenario could involve a total breakdown of the current market structure, giving rise to a free-for-all. Such a development will result in a near perfectly-competitive market situation and price would be equal, or very near, the production costs. Crude oil production costs at the moment vary enormously—from an estimated $0.50 per barrel in the most prolific wells in the Arabian Gulf to $2-3 in Nigeria and anything up to $12-15 in the North Sea and parts of the United States. Under this scenario, Nigeria could regain some of its lost market shares from the UK and Norway, but at a much lower price than now—say $12 per barrel. Nigeria and OPEC will therefore be adopting a strategy of limit-pricing so as to force fringe producers out of the market and deter other potential entrants. It is worth pointing out that the exact level at which an optimum limit price will be set is not a straightforward matter. Although the production costs in the North Sea are generally put in the $12-15 range, there has been some suggestions that continued production from wells already developed in these fields could still be viable even at a price as low as $5/b (see *The Times*, 10 December 1985). This arises from the basic principle of ‘let bygones be bygones’. The capital expenditure in these fields have been irrevocably spent, and in many cases, already recouped in full. Thus it pays the owners to continue production even at such low price levels, so long as variable costs are covered. An all-out price war may therefore lower the price of oil to something like $5-7/b before non-OPEC sources are eliminated. For the purposes of this scenario, let us assume that price settles at about $10/b.

In Table 3, we show the probable market shares which Nigeria might expect to command under our four scenarios as well as the resulting oil revenues. It is important to point out that there are a whole variety of other possible scenarios, depending on one’s set of starting assumptions. For instance, Clark Associates have a scenario under which the price of OPEC marker crude could rise to $54/b by 1990 if another disruption of the 1973/74 or 1979/80 type were to occur. We have not considered a disruption scenario, but it should be said that such an event is unlikely to have as dramatic an effect on prices as the two previous disruptions—given the amount of excess capacity in today’s oil industry.

From the results in Table 3, the period 1985-1990 appears likely to be the most difficult. This is broadly in line with the prevailing view among oil economists that the present weak markets will probably persist at least up to 1990, i.e. as long as fringe oil production sources remain as prolific as they are now. Between 1990 and 2000, the influences are likely to be mixed, as a decline in North Sea production may
be offset by continued conservation and substitution efforts in the OECD area. The main area of growth in the future are likely to come from the developing regions of the world. For instance, between 1979 and 1984, OECD oil consumption fell by 17% while in the developing countries, it rose by 6.5%. However, the high and rising debt of LDCs generally could dampen this growth momentum.

Before the events of December 1985, when OPEC decided to defend market shares as against price, scenarios A and C looked equally likely, and we had argued this in the earlier version of this paper. With this unprecedented change of policy on the part of OPEC, scenarios C and D appear to be the only viable options left. This means that a price collapse of the type experienced since January 1986 will continue well into the 1990's (scenario D) unless some positive cooperation is forthcoming from non-OPEC producers, in which case, it may be possible to keep price in the $20/b range. This statement continues to hold even though prices are currently below the $20/b mark. Some production agreement between OPEC producers could restore prices to the $20/b level, if everyone recognises that there will be no winners in a price war. It must be emphasised however, that in spite of this realisation, non-OPEC cooperation in the future cannot be taken for granted.

The fourth scenario, D, will adversely affect every oil producer. The pound sterling is virtually a petro-currency now even though only about 7% of the UK GDP comes from the oil sector. Mexico with its huge debts, will find it that much more difficult to meet its obligations to its creditors if oil prices were to collapse dramatically. And this could have a knock-on effect on the debts of other third world countries. Incidentally, it is because this scenario is likely to be worse for OPEC and Nigeria, as well as other reasons, that some commentators including Akinbobola (1979), Nwankwo (1983), Onoh (1983) and Okogu (1985) have argued against a Nigerian withdrawal from the organisation, with the high probability of precipitating an OPEC collapse and a price war.

Implications for the Nigerian Economy

It is generally recognised that the petroleum sector is responsible for some 93% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and over 70% of government revenue. Hence the events in the petroleum sector are expected to determine the state of health of Nigerian economy for some time to come. On the basis of the current revenue allocation formula, state governments will continue to receive relatively small funds from the Central Revenue Pool if Scenarios A, C or D were to hold. Under the 65:35 formula of revenue allocation, they would receive an average maximum allocation of $171.7 million (N223.0m), $142.12 million (N184.6m) and $100.3 million (N130.3m) respectively under these three scenarios, using a conversion ratio, of N1 = $0.77 (August 1986 figures). Some states will get more and some less than this average, depending on population and other factors. This would leave the states in a situation where they would, at best, just manage to meet their recurrent expenditure (most are finding it difficult to pay salaries promptly) as most of them have been doing for a few years now and, at worst go into bankruptcy. With the exception of Lagos, and possible also Kano States, the state revenue base is very thin. Similarly of course, the Federal Government will be much less able to meet its usual commitments. Vital sectors such as agriculture (which has been neglected over the years) and industry will continue to suffer from a starvation of funds unless a re-ordering of priorities is done. A situation which promises no improvement on the current atmosphere of severe recession and retrenchment cannot endure for
very long. This is not to agree with the usual government explanation that the cause of the Nigerian economic crisis is purely the result of the oil glut. A number of other explanations have been offered recently. The military have tended to blame the crisis on mismanagement, indiscipline and corruption on the part of the politicians of the Second Republic. Usman's (1982) paper was a direct response to the thesis that the oil glut was responsible for the crisis which he sees as arising from the dubious role of middlemen, contractors and consultants ('contratocracy') who systematically milk the economy. Since then however, other more radical explanations such as Bangura's (1984) which see the crisis as a microcosm of the crisis of global capitalism have emerged.

As far as the external sector is concerned, Nigeria currently has a gross foreign debt commitment of $20.9 billion out of which $10.3 billion has been disbursed. The attitude of the Buhari Government towards the debt situation was one of liquidating it in the shortest possible time and almost at any cost to the nation. For instance, in the 1985 budget, N3.05 billion or about 38% of expected foreign exchange earnings was to go into the servicing and repayment of these debts. This was in line with his (and the previous) government's resistance to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions for loan assistance. A national debate called by the government of President Babangida to consider the IMF option was concluded in December 1985, with the government coming out ostensibly on the side of the anti-IMF lobby, and suspending talks with the Fund. The government has gone ahead however, to implement most of the policies required by the IMF. The effects of these policies on the Nigerian economy and society will become clearer in the coming years. What is clear is that the level of difficulties will increase. Nor is there clear evidence that these policies produce desirable economic effects in less developed economies (see Krugman and Taylor, 1978, and Porter and Ranney, 1982).

The optimistic scenario, B, if it were ever to happen, would be a bonus for Nigeria. A note of caution is however necessary. It has been the practice among Western energy forecasters to over-estimate the expected dependence on OPEC oil. They appear to favour this attitude, so as to keep their governments and peoples on guard against any actions which might lead to a repeat of 1973/74 and 1979/81. This strategy can be explained not only in economic but also in political terms. It is an attempt to break the political clout which oil power has conferred on OPEC member states in the last twelve years. Their action is totally rational, and it is left to oil-producing states like Nigeria to make their plans not on the basis of an over-optimistic scenario which may turn out to be groundless, but on a realistic basis.

There are definite social and political implications to be drawn from the grim picture of the future of Nigerian oil painted above. The next ten to fifteen years are likely to see a worsening of the economic crisis, and consequently, a heightening of the atmosphere of social conflict. The crisis is likely to take the form of increasing foreign debts, high debt-servicing ratio, further curtailment of imports, decline in industrial output and more retrenchment.

When President Babangida came to office in August 1985, he sought to project a populist image by abrogating some of the more repressive decrees of the previous administration. He portrayed his government as one that is willing to listen to popular views in the country, as shown by his calling for a national debate on the question of the IMF loan and the attached conditionalities, as well as appointing a Presidential Committee to examine the issue. The new climate of political tolerance and liberalism of the government would be tested to the limit in next several years.
as workers can be expected to continue to be resistant to the austere effects of these policies.

Successive Nigerian governments have in recent years introduced domestic deflationary policies in an attempt to cope with declining revenues. Having cancelled the negotiations with the IMF in December 1985, the government has introduced its own severe austerity measures. For instance, only in November 1985, the government announced wage and salary cuts ranging from 2.5 to 20% in both the private and public sectors of the economy up to the end of 1986. The reaction of organised labour and other sections of the population has been predictably hostile. Following the announcement of these wage cuts, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) gave the government a thirty-day ultimatum to repeal the policy. However, it backed down just before the ultimatum was to expire, to allow time for more consultation between both sides. One cannot rule out the possibility of further confrontations of this nature in the future, as the economic climate becomes tougher.

Table 3: Nigeria's oil output and revenue under four scenarios: 1985-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario A</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 8.30%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 8.30%</th>
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<th>Scenario B</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
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<th>Scenario C</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 8.30%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 8.30%</th>
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<tr>
<th>Scenario D</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
<th>Nigeria's market share (MBD) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Oil revenue* (1985m US$) @ 7.43%</th>
<th>Demand for OPEC output</th>
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Key:
Scenario C: OPEC defends its market share of 18 MBD. Price is $20/b to the year 2000.
Scenario D: Total Breakdown: OPEC output rises to 31 MBD, and oil price is $10 per barrel.

*Revenues calculated on the assumption that domestic consumption remains at 0.25 MBD, and with an average oil company equity share of 15%.

Policy Matters and Conclusions
It is pretty obvious that the next fifteen years will see Nigeria’s oil earnings continue to slide, as the oil market will continue to be over-supplied. The next five years will be the most critical, because non-OPEC production sources are expected to continue to be going strong. There is a broad consensus that sometime in the 1990s, the demand for OPEC oil would pick up again. However, continued substitution and
conservation are expected to dampen this gain somewhat. The oil boom era in Nigeria appears to be over for good. This is a fact which the country must come to terms with. Unfortunately, the oil wealth was not properly used to build either a viable agricultural sector or an industrial base.

The oil glut has spotlighted the fact that Nigeria has followed wrong economic policies in the past, and mismanaged its oil resources. It has become obvious that oil cannot be relied upon in the future to paper over bad economic policies. The following policy suggestions are offered as a way of coping with the reality of a declining oil sector in the next several years.

Greater attention must be paid to the agricultural sector with a view to making investments in that sector more cost-effective. In the past, much of the agricultural credit have gone to ‘overnight’ farmers in the guise of retired senior civil servants and army officers, rather than to serious real farmers. Clough and Williams (1983) have argued that ‘far from spearheading Nigeria’s green “revolution”, Nigeria’s agricultural development projects provide yet more examples of the ability of governments, supported by aid agencies, to waste money and their inability to improve agricultural production’. The potential to improve the agricultural sector is definitely there; before 1970, Nigeria was able to export crops and meet its own food needs from its own resources.

In the medium to long term, the long-planned petro-chemical projects which could have important linkages with other sectors of the economy must be carried through. There are important products of the petro-chemical industry which could be very useful for agriculture. Coupled with this, the construction of export-oriented refineries, and the bringing to fruition of the long-planned natural gas project could provide a competitive edge to the country’s oil industry, given the recent tendency on the part of many producers to move into the downstream end of the market.

On the public finance front, the present revenue allocation formula which gives some 65% of the federally-collected revenue to the central government should be revised, with a view to giving a greater share to the states. This is important because their activities bear a more direct relation to the day-to-day lives of Nigerians. This should be seen however as an immediate coping device only. In the long run, only an effective overall development and proper utilisation of the nation’s natural resources can be expected to provide a lasting solution. Similarly, Nigeria has moved from the extreme of the derivation principle to one where the oil producing areas are not getting enough assistance to cope with the ecological effects of oil production. Farmers and fishermen displaced from their lands by oil-producing activities must be helped to settle into alternative local industries.

Finally, in line the futuristic nature of this paper, one must look forward to the days when the constitution of the Third Republic gets drawn up. The cost of operation must be an important consideration in the new constitution, given that the revenue base is expected to be smaller and the population larger in the future.

The next fifteen years promise to be difficult ones; it is imperative that sensible policies which move the country towards becoming more self-reliant in an increasingly difficult world are followed.

**Bibliographic Note**

In alphabetical order the sources cited are:

*An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Oxford University Nigeria Society under the title 'Nigeria and OPEC: The Next Few years', and later to the international conference on 'Nigerian Economy and Society Since the Berlin conference: 1884-1985' held at the Ahmadu Bellow University, Zaria, Nigeria from November 11-15th, 1985.

I am grateful to the authorities of Hertford College, the Oxford University's George Webb Medley Fund and the Graduate studies Committee for research grant support. The encouragement and assistance of Mr Paul Idornigie, in preparing this paper are appreciated. The editors wish to point out that this paper was originally prepared in 1985, before the recent events leading to the collapse in the oil prices.
Structural Adjustment and the Political Question

Yusuf Bangura

The call for a national debate on the country's political future has so far generated a lukewarm response. However, several tendencies have appeared which have serious implications for the struggle for democracy. Coming in the wake of the debate about Nigeria's relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), one would have thought that the 'political debate' would have been informed by the specific problems the economy is experiencing and the concrete adjustment policies the state has persistently implemented since 1982. Even some of the radicals who ought to have drawn the correct lessons from the diversionary tactics of the state in the IMF debate have tended to proceed as if we are starting from a tabula rasa, without any concrete economic policies which inform the state's quest for a new political order. This partly explains the reason for the strange convergence which seems to be developing between some radicals and the bourgeoisie in the articulation of a new political formula.

The thrust of this paper is to discuss the link between the state's adjustment programme and the question of political power. We argue that the adjustment programme of contemporary monetarism, which reached its highest expression in the 1986 budget, throws up specific types of political regimes ranging from zero/one and controlled two party systems to military rule, civil/military diarchy and corporate representation. Against the background of the specific character of capitalist accumulation, with its monopolistic, anti-democratic and corrupt practices, the monetarist strategy of crisis-management pushes the state towards more authoritarian policies. Many contributors to the political debate have not grasped this point. The appropriate response to authoritarian rule should, therefore, focus on the struggle for democracy and the strengthening of the working class movement for socialist power instead of the strategy of co-determination which seeks to resolve the conflicting interests in the society under a unitary power structure that will accommodate the representatives of popular organisations.

Theoretical Issues: Structural Adjustment and Political Power

In this section, we emphasise the dictum that specific adjustment policies throw up specific types of politics and institutional structures. Capitalism has historically been distinguished by the 'freedom' it offers the wage workers in contracting their labour power which can be transferred from one employer to another; other pre-capitalist extra-economic forms of coercion give way to the 'dull compulsion of the economic system'. The 'fair exchange' which the market exhibits provides a very
powerful ideological prop by concealing the relations of exploitation between the workers and the employers, insisting that wages paid to the workers are equal to the total value produced by them, leaving profits as the legitimate earnings of the employers. The ideology of free exchange was historically buttressed by liberal democracy which guaranteed workers their right to earn a legitimate wage and improve upon their conditions of living through collective bargaining and the formation of independent trade unions and political parties. Bourgeois democracy protected the 'economic rights' of the workers as they were reproduced by the fundamentally lopsided capitalist system.

Gough has shown how, on the one hand, the working class in Western democracies has used these liberal institutions to extend the frontiers of democracy and working class power and, on the other, how these very institutions have checked the militancy of the working class in the struggle for socialist construction.

Liberal democracy has not made any major impact in the Less Developed Countries (LDCs) even though the capitalist mode remains dominant. Capitalism arrived in the LDCs at the monopoly stage of its development. 'The political superstructure of this new economy, of monopoly capitalism', Lenin observed, 'is the change from democracy to political reaction'. Force and superior monopoly power were used to impose authoritarian colonial rule. Initially, the emergent elites were strong advocates of liberal democracy, but their transformation into a segment of the ruling class has forced them to dispense with democratic practices since they now depend upon monopoly power and the misappropriation of public funds for their development. Such practices undoubtedly promote thuggery and authoritarian rule as the appropriate forms of political behaviour.

Unmistakeably, the underlying competitive and free contractual relations which characterised the classical capitalist system in the form of bourgeois democracy have not occurred in Nigeria and other LDCs. The bourgeois forces, local and foreign, are not primarily interested in democracy as it does not correspond with their current aspirations; and the opposing class forces are yet too weak to enforce it. The current global economic crisis has occurred within the context of this general authoritarian tendency in the developing countries.

Structural adjustment seeks to further weaken the limited strength of the working class and strengthen that of the bourgeoisie by its insistence on the market mechanism as the primary regulatory force for the allocation of resources. The current IMF-inspired monetarist package is an antidote to the earlier Keynesian structural adjustment strategy that followed the depression of the 1930s. The latter's major emphasis was on state intervention to regulate distortions and inequalities in the market. It was correctly assumed that the market mechanism, on its own, would not be able to create the proper equilibrium relationships to foster stability and growth. The current crisis, occurring in the midst of massive state intervention, has strengthened the hands of the monetarists who insist on a return to the classical free market philosophy. Overvalued third world currencies, inefficient state-run enterprises, disequilibria between income and expenditure, import controls and subsidies are all seen by the high priests of monetarism as obstacles to the market mechanism in correcting distortions in price and cost relationships and restoring a balance at the domestic and payments level.

The core of the strategy is to spend not more than the available national earnings, allow the currency to find its level and liberalise the economy. The logic is quite
straightforward and simple. If a country suffers from a balance of payments deficit it means that country's currency (in reality its commodities) is less in demand compared to the foreign currencies with which the country trades. The country can, therefore, correct its payments deficit by allowing the currency, ideally, to float until it finds its correct level, or to be devalued sufficiently enough to eliminate the distortion. This should discourage imports, promote more exports, attract more foreign investment to generate more production in the medium-to-long run to offset the short-run inflation. The country does not need to impose any controls on imports and exports as the market mechanism should do the job perfectly well. Once this fundamental logic is accepted the other fiscal measures fall in line, such as regulating the money supply to control public expenditure, removing subsidies and privatising the inefficiently-run public enterprises. The various social classes are then forced to return to the naked forces of the 'free market'.

Although the theory derives its strength from the supposedly free contractual relations between buyers and sellers at the factor and products market, it should be obvious that the aim is to weaken the organised power of the working class and strengthen that of the business class. Contemporary capitalism has demonstrated a strong tendency towards monopoly, assisted, by and large, by an interventionist state. Organised labour has responded by forming strong trade unions, enabling them to demand for high wages, welfare, allowances and bonuses outside the parameters of the free market which has ceased to exist. The monetarist strategy wants to break this limited political power of the working class without destroying the monopolistic power of the bourgeoisie. In fact, it seeks to consolidate and expand the latter's power.

Even though the working people have benefited from the expansion of public expenditure, they have done so within a subordinate position, with the monopoly firms reaping greater benefits in the supply of the inputs and commodities and the misappropriation of some of the allocated funds. Privatisation will only further enrich the monopolies, widen the gap between the rich and the poor, and force the workers to pay the new monopoly price of the goods and services. Also, devaluation will help the monopoly firms who will pass on the import cost to the final consumer. There are so many rigidities in the world market that there is no guarantee that foreign investment will respond adequately enough to promote local production and offset the short-run inflation. The cost of production will increase which the firms can only offset by price increases. The monopolistic control of the primary products make it difficult to realise any meaningful gains from devaluation. The market does not operate independently of primary products associations and transnational corporations. Even the non-primary products exports are not likely to take off the ground since they will, in the final analysis, depend upon the goodwill of the transnational firms and the highly protected markets of the Western governments.

No wonder this strategy has not been successful anywhere in tackling the problems of underdevelopment. All it has succeeded in doing is to depress the living conditions of the poor people by changing domestic incomes and prices and creating some balance in the domestic and external account at the expense of basic social services. It even requires a massive dose of the adjustment programme to get this far.

Such a programme has very serious implications for political relations. It requires authoritarian policies to check the inevitable popular opposition to the package.
Such policies have tended to vary from a zero/one/two party civilian dictatorship (Acheampong's Unigov scheme, Nigeria under the National Party of Nigeria government, 1983, Zambia, Senegal) to a military dictatorship (Buhari, Zaire) or a civil-military diarchy, (Liberia under Doe; a prototype in Sierra Leone), to a corporate system that will involve the co-optation of some of the leading members of popular organisations that will serve as rationalisers of the adjustment package (Rawlings' Ghana). Multi-party systems are considered to be inappropriate since they tend to allow for some level of democracy and opposition; except, of course, if these parties can be controlled in such a way that they do not threaten the adjustment programme.

In many cases civilian dictatorships fail to adequately respond to the issues at stake and compel the military to take over power. But the problems of developing a Bonapartist military state, alienating some sections of the bourgeoisie, necessitate some marriage between the civilians and the military (diarchy). In some cases the military is called in to head the government in a single party structure, with the civilians and some service chiefs serving as ministers and presidential advisers (currently in Liberia and Sierra Leone). But such authoritarian systems usually face unrelenting opposition from the generality of the people as the economic crisis deepens. The rulers are then forced to support another variant of authoritarianism, but one which claims to involve the people through their organisations. This is co-determination or corporate representation, involving the participation of trade union leaders, students leaders, religious leaders, farmer's leaders, chairpersons of employers organisations and other elite groups. This is what Rawlings has tried to implement in Ghana but it is currently facing very serious opposition from the working class and some of the corporate organisations themselves.

In a recession, the bourgeoisie is largely indifferent to a multi-party system, except if it can control it; it strongly supports a zero or one party or a military dictatorship to shore up the capitalist economy against popular opposition; it may also support a two party system if both parties are bourgeois-inclined or a diarchy that will institutionalise civil/military authoritarian rule if civil bourgeois rule has failed; it, in fact, prefers a diarchy to outright military rule; it will support corporate representation, if only to contain the militancy of the workers and other radical political groups. The Nigerian case has exhibited these tendencies.

The Empirical Context: Structural Adjustment and Authoritarian Rule

The Presidential System and the Single Party Dominant Tendency

Shagari's administration inherited a constitutional system that was tailored along the presidential model. Against the background of the failure of military rule under Gowon and the upsurge of popular demand for democratic rule, the architects of presidential civil rule, Murtala/Obasanjo, had hoped to bequeath to the Nigerian people a more lasting democratic system. The choice of the presidential system itself reflected the difficulties encountered with the loose parliamentary system in the 1960s, which was believed to have contributed to the collapse of the First Republic. The growing strength and fractious character of the bourgeoisie, demanded a much more centralised political system. Such a tendency towards centralisation had, in fact, already started in the late 1960s, and the first half of the 1970s, with the creation of states, changes in revenue allocation in favour of the centre and the establishment of various federal parastatals.

However, presidential civil rule was anything but democratic. Indeed, the
presidential system itself which was to usher in democracy had effectively disenfranchised organised labour by its insistence that trade unions cannot form or fund political parties. Even when proletarian parties emerged and sought registration, the state-controlled Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) refused to register them, and only conceded in the last minute to the registration of the Peoples' Redemption Party as a token concession to the Left.

Even before the economic crisis erupted, the political system demonstrated very strong authoritarian tendencies. Shortly after Shagari was sworn in, in 1979, the caucus of his party, the National Party of Nigeria, approached the Unity Party of Nigeria, the Nigerian Peoples Party, the Great Nigerian Peoples' Party and the PRP to form a government of national unity. It was when this policy failed that the NPN entered into an alliance with the NPP to bulldoze the president's bills through the House of Representatives and Senate. The other political parties responded by forming ad hoc alliances such as the meetings of the 'Progressive Governors' which were aimed at checking federal power, particularly in the allocation of resources. The increasing authoritarian rule of the NPN pushed these parties to form the Progressive Peoples' Alliance (PPA) and ultimately the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP), which comprised the NPP and factions of the PRP and GNPP. The NPN, acting through FEDECO, blocked the registration of the PPP, but instead registered the rather colourless and amorphous Nigerian Advanced Party (NAP) 'with the hope that it will be a serious nuisance to the UPN' (Ake Presidential Address NPSA).

Shagari's administration deepened the forces of import-substitution at the level of industry and agriculture, intensified corruption and squandered substantial resources. The economy was in crisis by 1981, requiring stringent adjustment measures and the consolidation of bourgeois political power. The April 1982 Economic Stabilisation Act was the logical outcome of the crisis. Among other things, it called for public expenditure cuts, a wage freeze, import controls and other demand management measures, using fiscal and monetary policies. The government also entered into negotiations with the IMF for a stabilisation loan of $2.56 billion and with the foreign creditors for debt rescheduling and the reopening of the credit lines.

Obviously, the programme was not on all fours with the classical monetarist package. It failed to remove subsidies from petroleum, fertilisers and rice, insisted on an over-valued naira and refused to liberalise the economy. The dominant business class, party stalwarts and sections of the elite had made fortunes out of the over-valued currency by transferring huge amounts of money abroad. Furthermore, some of the parastatals were a conduit pipe for siphoning public resources. These private forces also controlled the subsidies on rice, fertilisers and food. The Fund's package required a high level of bourgeois discipline which the regime could not provide. The deepening crisis, however, made it imperative for the government to push for far more authoritarian policies to retain control of the economy and impose its own solution on the crisis. The main obstacles were (a) the general popular opposition from the working class and its allies, as represented, in the main, by the Nigerian Labour Congress, the students movement and the academic unions; (b) the threats from the opposition political parties in the north, such as the PRP and GNPP, controlling large areas considered to be natural constituencies for the NPN, and (c) the fragmentation of the bourgeois forces themselves along regionalist lines.

The official plan which seemed to have been unfolding was to disorganise and
control the working class opposition, narrow the base of popular participation by
limiting the effective political parties to one or two, strengthen the repressive arm
of the state and impose some unity on the bourgeoisie. The NPN itself was a
coalition of various forces, representing, in the main, the surviving forces of the
NPC oligarchy; the rising petit-bourgeois Kaduna Mafia which had played a role in
the post-1966 period as the vanguard for the development of the northern
bourgeoisie; and a motley crowd of southern petit-bourgeois and bourgeois
elements that were anxious to either protect their businesses at the federal level or
felt the party offered them better opportunities to ward off local competitors.

The core of the Left forces remained fragmented, forming various splinter groups
and parties that were mainly active at the level of labour relations. The state, under
Obasanjo, had tried to arrest the Left's influence in the trade union movement by its
major labour restructuring programme of 1975/78. In demanding for a much more
centralised trade union congress and the purging of the more consistent radicals
from trade union activity, the state had hoped it could create a more pliable trade
union movement. The trade union decree 31, section 15 of 1973 had prevented
unions from funding or forming political parties, and the 1978 trade union act that
established the NLC had tried to promote an orientation of civil-service
professionalism in the running of the unions themselves with the hope that this
might steer the unions away from politics. The 1978 NLC elections, however,
recorded a resounding defeat for the state and its preferred candidates and a
confirmation of the Left's strength within the labour movement. A desperate
attempt was made by Shagari's administration in the elections of 1981 in Kano to
support the compromised candidacy of Ojeli, the president of the Civil Service
Workers' Union. It was the failure of such attempts that led to the strenuous and
intimidating moves by the NPN to repeal the trade union act of 1978 (which had
called for a single central labour organisation), to allow for the proliferation of
several labour organisations and weaken the militancy of the NLC. This was after
the NLC had demonstrated its organisational and leadership ability to defend
workers' interests in the national strike of 1981 that led to the N125 minimum wage.
Similar problems were encountered with the students movement and academic
staff unions. The regime was, however, unable to impose its will on these
organisations. Although the Left itself, acting through these bodies, checked some
of the excesses of the federal and state governments, it was not strong enough to
sustain the democratic programme and create a liberal atmosphere that will
eliminate the various anti-labour decrees and authoritarian practices.

The administration made considerable headway with regards to the other two
objectives, imposing bourgeois authoritarian unity and tackling the problems of the
opposition in the north. The NPN cashed in on the contradictions of the PRP by
encouraging splits within the party and siding with the more reactionary elements
against the radicals, thereby arresting the militant potentials of the party. This was
backed by a systematic campaign against the governorship of Balarabe Musa in
Kaduna State and his ultimate impeachment. By the eve of the 1983 elections, the
NPN had made considerable inroads into the PRP and GNPP by refusing to register
the PPP, promoting and exploiting splits within the PRP and GNPP and converting
the strong Mallam Aminu Kano faction in Kano, now under Bakin Zuwo, into an
NPN satellite. What remained was the flushing out of the PRP from executive power
in Kaduna, the GNPP from Gongola and Borno and the substantial penetration of
the UPN and NPP strongholds in the West and East respectively. The results of the
1983 elections with the NPN 'winning' seven of the ten northern states and Bendel,
Anambra, Oyo and Ondo apart from Rivers and Cross Rivers in the South confirmed the NPN’s drive for complete hegemony. The judiciary, the police and Fedeco were heavily compromised. The death of ‘democracy’ was imminent. The structures for a de facto dominant one party rule were being laid.

The regime did not, however, have any solutions to the crisis. The industrial scene remained very volatile as companies either closed down, resorted to compulsory leave or reduced the working days. Many workers, civil servants and teachers were owed large amounts of wages and salaries. This situation sparked off a series of strikes by the affected unions. There was also quite a lot of dissatisfaction from the companies with the import deposit scheme and the way in which import licences were allocated.

Military Dictatorship
The ineffectiveness and alienation of Shagari’s administration forced a military coup on 31 December 1983. The scale of adjustment which would have the intended effect on the income, price and cost structure required a much more disciplined regime. Notwithstanding its general authoritarian orientation, Shagari’s administration had shown a clear incapacity to provide political leadership to the bourgeoisie. Even members of its own northern constituency, the so-called Kaduna Mafia, made serious contacts with the UPN to ditch the NPN. The UPN was seen as a more disciplined and efficient party, given the fact that the core of its leadership and financiers were well connected with industry and commerce. Furthermore, the near de facto one party rule did not silence the growing popular opposition. The military solution therefore became imperative to save the political system from mass riots, prolonged uncertainty and stagnation.

Indeed Buhari’s regime demonstrated the type of discipline the adjustment strategy required. It was anxious to rationalise the domestic capitalist base, impose some discipline on Shagari’s austerity measures and push the adjustment programme a step further to encompass more public expenditure cuts, the curtailment of external borrowings, the imposition of a ceiling on domestic loans and the introduction of a package of other economic measures aimed at controlling local demand. A massive purge of the public service was executed, a wage freeze and various types of levies were imposed and a campaign against indiscipline was instituted.

The structures of repression were consolidated and deepened. There were the special decrees 1, 2 and 4 banning political party activities, giving unlimited powers to the Chief of Staff to detain without trial anybody considered to be a security risk, and the control of the investigative role of the press making it possible to detain journalists who publish information that was likely to embarrass a public officer, irrespective of the veracity of the story. Specific decrees were also passed aimed at legalising the state onslaught on the economic and political power of workers such as decrees 16 and 17 which prevented workers from seeking legal redress against retrenchment and discouraging automatic payment of all benefits when retrenched. There were also other obnoxious decrees carrying the death penalty or long prison terms for common crimes like cocaine trafficking. As the crisis deepened and the opposition intensified the government took another major step of banning all forms of political debate.

There was no question about the determination of the regime to use authoritarian measures to solve the economic crisis. However, even though the adjustment
programme was already causing a lot of hardship, it did not go far enough in meeting the IMF demands which were aimed not just at the use of the fiscal instrument to control public expenditure but also the comprehensive implementation of far-reaching measures that will completely eliminate distortions in domestic costs and prices. This required massive devaluation, removal of subsidies from petrol and fertilisers, privatisation and the liberalisation of the economy. A stalemate developed between the regime and the IMF. The principal creditors refused to open the credit lines, forcing the regime to experiment with counter-trade and to raise the debt service ratio to 44 per cent. The latter was mainly a carrot to the foreign bankers to open the credit lines and reschedule the debts.

Although the regime refused to swallow wholesale the IMF adjustment measures, it was more than prepared to defend the capitalist economy against local working class and radicalised petit bourgeois forces. The adjustment plan had put it on a course of confrontation with the students over fees and food subsidies in May 1984, the doctors in 1985 over conditions of work and resource allocation to the medical sector, and various other categories of workers whose standard of living had massively deteriorated, daily haunted by the spectre of retrenchment. The National Association of Nigerian Students, the Nigerian Medical Association, the National Association of Resident Doctors and the pilots' union were later banned for daring to challenge the government. Many workers, doctors, pilots, traders and road-side mechanics lost their jobs and a good number of students were expelled or rusticated from the Universities. A climate of fear gripped the workers unions, particularly the NLC whose internal contradictions intensified, rendering it ineffective in responding to the mass retrenchment. The authoritarian tendency of the regime increased with every victory over the popular organisations. The NSO had a field day; innocent people were arrested and kept in cells, tortured without inhibitions. The judiciary, the last bastion of bourgeois justice, was rendered impotent. The stage was actually set for a fascist dictatorship.

The government was, however, seriously alienated from all sections of the populace. Popular struggles continued, some overt, like those of the students, others covert like the biting cartoons of the journalists and some of the work of sections of the Left in explaining the fascist tendencies of the regime to the general public. What compounded the problem, moreover, was the failure to arrive at an agreement with the Fund, making it difficult to open the credit lines, reschedule the debts and reduce the burden on industry and the domestic economy generally. The economic crisis deepened under Buhari. Elements of the bourgeoisie and sections of the military were also alienated. Many people of property had been disgraced, jailed and had some of their assets seized after public probes. The national composition of the Supreme Military Council had also come under serious attacks from the Southern politicians and conservative sections of the petit-bourgeoisie, supported by calls for confederacy. Sections of the military within and outside the SMC were also alienated. Military dictatorship did not endear itself to most of the principal class combatants except, of course, the Kaduna Mafia which was accused of controlling the government. A new solution was needed. Buhari's regime had to go and it did on 27 August 1985.

The Quest for Diarchy and Corporate Representation

When Buhari's regime fell, sections of the Western press were confident that this was the first IMF coup in Africa. They were convinced that Buhari's intransigence in
implementing the full conditions of the IMF had necessitated a coup to end the stalemate and push the economy to the full rigours of the market mechanism. The decision to have a debate on the IMF beclouded the issues at the beginning. Some argued that the regime wanted to be guided by the advice of the public whilst others maintained that if the regime was actually anti-IMF it wouldn't have called for a debate in the first place. In any case, the government had appointed a technical team of orthodox pro-IMF economists, Kalu and Okongwu, to head the Finance and Planning ministries respectively. Subsequently developments showed that the pronouncements of the Western media were not actually far off the mark.

Even though the public was unequivocal in its opposition to the IMF, the government's 1986 budget pushed the adjustment programme to its logical monetarist conclusion. For the first time in the history of the crisis, a regime now exists which is ready to reason along the lines of the IMF in its details by insisting on the correlation between stringent fiscal measures and a comprehensive structural adjustment programme that will elevate the full forces of the 'free market' to a hegemonic position in the economy. The budget was unequivocal in its support for privatisation, removal of subsidies from petroleum, export promotion, an appropriate market level for the naira, cuts in salaries and wages and a commitment to future liberalization. Although the government has not accepted the IMF loan, a very good relationship now exists between it and the creditors. There are plans to even involve the IMF at the higher surveillance level to facilitate the rescheduling of the debts.

Now that the adjustment programme has been pushed this far, the policymakers are seriously concerned about establishing an appropriate political system to support the economic programme. This, I believe, is the major reason for the 'political debate' and the decision of the government to include the political questions in the 1986 budget. As we have seen, the concentration of power under civil rule, gravitating towards a de facto one party system has been tried under Shagari and found wanting; military dictatorship which exhibited the appropriate type of discipline has also been tried under Buhari without success. The political system remains unstable. Authoritarianism seems, however, to be a constant factor. Such a massive assault on the purchasing power and standard of living of the toiling people is not likely to go unchallenged. This explains why the core of the repressive Decrees, 1, 2, 16 and 17 have not been repealed and why the government has sought extra powers to reduce the wages and salaries of workers without reference to the contractual agreements.

However, the regime seems to have learnt a few lessons from the failure of the Buhari/Idiagbon military dictatorship by espousing human rights, exposing the NSO, appealing to the people to debate controversial issues, repealing decree 4 and lifting the ban on popular organisations. It has tried to cut the image of a populist government, making token concessions to an undefined rural mass by promising to provide feeder roads to the rural areas using the revenue accruing from the removal of subsidies, increasing the allocation of money to health and education, removing the tax on workers' gratuity and extending the pay cut to companies' and landlords' voluntary.

*The generalised students crisis of May/June 1986 has led to a new ban on NANS, the suspension of student unionism in all institutions of higher learning, the intimidation of the NLC and the promulgation of a new labour decree aimed at disaffiliating ASUU from the NLC and suspending the check-off for ASUU members. Future student unionism has also been made voluntary.*
profits and rents. All of this is supposed to be happening within the context of the most class-conscious Nigerian budget since 1960. This image of populism has been extended to the level of politics where the regime has tried to involve popular leaders and organisations in various areas of decision-making, and checking the so-called mafia domination of the SMC in the Armed Forces Ruling Council by giving some leverage to minority and southern elements who were dissatisfied with the ethnic composition of the Buhari regime. It has also tried to appease some of the disgraced politicians and businessmen by having their cases re-examined and releasing some of them from detention and prison.

There are strong indications that the state is keen on experimenting with the third variant of authoritarian rule — the institutionalisation of the military in politics (diarchy) and corporate representation which will involve the participation of a cross-section of the leaders of popular organisations in government. The government's pronouncements and some of its policies point to this direction even though corporate representation is not yet an official policy. Developments like the involvement of the leadership of the NLC to advise on how to extend the burden of economic recovery to other sectors of the economy in October 1985 when the NLC attempted to resist pay cuts, the experimentation with the 'People's Parliament' at Rivers State which involves consultations with local leaders of thought and selected individuals and the 'popular spread' of the Kuru conference held to chart a new foreign policy for the country and the resolution of that conference to form a 'broad-based' foreign relations council to monitor the administration of foreign policy provide some indications about this tendency to evolve a political system based on diarchy and corporate representation. Its implementation will actually require some changes in the organisation of state power to accommodate these new forces.

Corporate representation aims to buy off some of the leading sections of the popular organisations to legitimise government policy. Its objective is to smooth over the antagonistic class relations and prevent a radical, independent mass-based attack on the adjustment programme.

The current debate is already throwing some light on the political options of the ruling class. Most of them have bought the president's aversion for foreign ideologies which they interpret as socialism and have been calling for indigenous political systems that will allow the country to fall back on traditional African political systems which are alleged to be humanitarian and classless. It is against this background that triarchy (rule by traditional rulers, the military and civilians), diarchy (military and civilians), zero and one party systems have been advocated; there has also been a strong call to re-impose the centralised presidential system. The bourgeois option will not go beyond these authoritarian parameters.

**Petit-bourgeois Radical Nationalism and Corporate Representation**

Corporate representation has been given unqualified support by the radical section of the petit-bourgeoisie. Attention has been drawn to the political orientation of key members of the political bureau whose political views are similar to those of the PRP and the Progressive Peoples Alliance/Progressive Peoples Party of the Second Republic. Their populist orientation has been buttressed in the Academic Staff Union of Universities-sponsored political debate in Kano by sections of the progressive petit-bourgeoisie who have clear sympathies for the populism of the PRP in the Second Republic. Some of the contributions of the Left in the annual conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association on 'Alternative Political
Futures' also exhibited this tendency. The thrust of the proposal is to preserve a percentage of seats and offices in all decision making bodies for professional associations, workers unions and farmers organisations with the hope that this might check the predatory character of the ruling class and the manipulation of the popular electoral votes. Since the organisations of the common people are supposed to be in the majority, it is assumed that the Left will then be able to push for far more democratic policies as a first stage in the construction of socialism. But whereas some contributors maintain that this should be achieved within a one party structure, others insist on a two party or multi-party system. Undoubtedly, those who call for the implementation of corporate representation within a multi-party structure are actually trying to marry two irreconcilable party systems: the multi-party system of bourgeois democracy and the one party systems of socialist democracy and capitalist corporate representation. Corporate representation, it should be emphasised, is only practicable in a one party system since it involves the distribution of roles and responsibilities in a planned 'non-class' framework. In a capitalist system corporate representation seeks mainly to legitimise bourgeois rule, clip the wings of militants and blunt the fundamental class interests in the society. What is more, working class and petit bourgeois corporate organisations usually exhibit tendencies ranging from radicalism to technical professionalism and conservatism. There is the actual danger of these organisations gravitating towards economism or becoming tools of the bourgeoisie if they fall into the hands of the latter two tendencies. This is why corporate organisations, on their own, cannot be relied upon to create socialism. They take the existing relations of exploitation for granted. In any case, the appropriate policy to adopt towards popular organisations in this period of intensified repression is to promote their democratic activities and defend their independence from governmental control.

The political strategy of corporatism is rooted in the economic programme of some of the Left groups, on the Nigerian economic crisis: nationalisation of foreign trade and key industrial and financial enterprises; national economic integration; workers participation in the management and ownership of the factories etc. In short, state capitalism. There is no doubt about the progressive character of these positions. State capitalism, as Lenin observed, is a step forward in the transition to socialism. Once state capitalism is established, the struggle shifts to a higher level between state capitalism and socialism on the one hand and private capitalism and small scale proprietors (petit-bourgeoisie) on the other, with the petit-bourgeoisie becoming the principal enemy in the march towards socialism because of its petty but irritating profiteering, hoarding, stealing and other forms of economic sabotage. As the crisis pushes the bourgeoisie towards privatisation, it becomes imperative for socialists to defend state capitalism, within a 'revolutionary-democratic state' system. There is also the ideological need to combat the bogus free wheeling capitalism which the monetarist adjustment package seeks to impose on the populace. Finally, state capitalism is an important stage in the struggle against the imperialist domination of the national economy.

The problem, however, arises in properly handling the class contradictions involved in the organisation of state capitalist power and mobilising the appropriate political forces in smashing bourgeois power and establishing the national revolutionary democratic state.

Some of these positions on the class basis of the state have been well articulated in the Poulantzas-Miliband-Laclau-Picciotto debate particularly as it relates to the role
of individual representation and the structural imperatives of capitalist accumulation. At bottom, the class character of the state cannot be changed by simply swamping the state apparatus with the numerical strength of the working people. The capitalist state does not necessarily pursue popular policies by giving people of working class background even one hundred per cent representation in the state institutions. The issue goes beyond representation and involves the control of the major means of production and reconstituting the relations of production.

This tendency towards co-determination is also connected with the more backward aspects of underdevelopment and dependency theory which assumes that no development has taken place in the LDC economies, with the accumulation system geared towards the absolute transfer of the surplus or the wasting of the unremitted wealth locally. If all the assets are externally located it follows that the internal basis of bourgeois rule does not exist. Opposition to bourgeois rule does not, therefore, depend upon analysing the internal class structure and organising the working class and its class allies but in collaborating with an undefined classless mass which will simply outmatch the bourgeoisie by laying claims to honesty and patriotism. But the bourgeoisie is strong in Nigeria. The fact that it has a constitutional crisis should not be mistaken for the existence of a power vacuum. Furthermore, its foreign connections really puts it in a very formidable position, however shaky its legitimacy.

The radical petit-bourgeoisie is desperate for political power. It is undoubtedly driven by patriotic instincts but lacks the proper organisational discipline and ideological clarity to relate with the working class movement. In its fits of desperation it can even go for the military vanguardist solution by lining behind radical elements in the army to bring about a 'revolution' in the country. In such a case, it abandons its tenuous democratic line and pushes the nationalist position, further exposing the democratic and socialist forces to the commandist imperatives of the military.

Conclusion: An Alternative Political Future
The various strands of authoritarian rule and the monetarist adjustment package pose serious dangers to the struggle for democracy. Structural adjustment has reduced wages, allowances and bonuses and narrowed the employment opportunities, social services and purchasing power of the working class. It has eroded the seemingly democratic nature of the process of 'free exchange' embodied in classical bourgeois ideology. At the political level, various decrees and laws are in existence which affect the self determination of the working people such as the legal prohibition of workers appeals against retrenchment, non-payment of retrenchment benefits, the problems of forming workers parties, free collective bargaining, right of workers in 'strategic' industries to strike etc. There are also constraints on free political organisation and debate, the establishment of viable workers newspapers, an 'independent' judiciary, the rule of law and free and fair elections. These are immediate short-term problems which seriously affect the development of the working class. The long term problem is, of course, how to end wage-slavery which provides the motor for the sustenance of these undemocratic measures. This involves the struggle for socialism.

The struggle for socialism is linked with the struggle for democracy. Although 'the achievement of democracy is ... harder under imperialism there can be no talk of
democracy being unachievable' (Lenin). The democratic struggle involves the destruction of the imperialist domination of the national economy. Finance capital prevents the rapid, all-round development of the productive forces and the national integration of the economy and politics. Some of these problems are already being tackled by the bourgeoisie because of the objective limitations of import-substitution industrialisation leading to the local sourcing of raw materials and the imperatives of rationalising national production and generating a culture of efficiency. But these cannot be fully achieved under capitalism since the objective class interests of even the local bourgeoisie is to expand and collaborate with foreign capital. In any case, bourgeois rationalisation is likely to experience serious stop-gaps, depending on the orientation of the state authorities and the character and discipline of the adjustment programme. For instance, the current export drive which is supported by an array of state subsidies is likely to kill the budding incentive for local sourcing of raw materials since the budget does not contain any penalties for export industries that rely on foreign raw materials. Instead, it is likely to reproduce the problems of dependence at a new and higher level where the gains (if any) that will be derived from exports will be offset by the costs of importing the inputs.

What is more, a bourgeois-led self reliant economic restructuring programme holds great dangers for the working class in terms of employment and wages. Companies are likely to adopt new technology to save costs and will resort to compulsory leaves, reduced working days, forced savings and the curtailment of bonuses, allowances and other facilities which are now very common with many companies trying to remain afloat as the crisis deepens.

The struggle for democracy and economic self reliance has to be seriously taken up by the working class and their unions in terms of preventing the cost of the rationalisation programmes from being passed on to the workers while at the same time insisting on more effective ways of sourcing local raw materials and establishing appropriate technology. Local sourcing and appropriate technology should form part of the workers strategy of protecting jobs by insisting on the right to be informed about the total operations of the company and by being actively involved in determining the direction of the rationalisation programme.

The effective pursuit of these measures require a concerted struggle for the dismantling of the stringent adjustment measures of the budget. Pay cuts, levies, privatisation, removal of subsidies, public expenditure cuts, devaluation and liberalisation should be halted. They seriously weaken the capacity of the workers to struggle for a more humane social transformation programme. Such struggles at the level of the economy will be difficult to sustain without an open, democratic climate. One party rule, diarchy, corporate representation or military rule will not bring this about. They will only legitimise the authoritarian culture by brandishing those that operate outside of those structures as saboteurs. This is why the struggle for democracy is on the agenda.

In the current political debate the working class and its allies have the singular responsibility of advocating for a multi-party system to allow for a democratic culture to flower and the formation of a workers' party that will fight against the concentration of political power, defend the interests of the working people and lay the foundations for the struggle for socialism which is the only answer to mass poverty, continued retrenchment, inflation, debt-slavery, wage-cuts and authoritarian rule.
Bibliographic Note


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The Political Debate and the Struggle for Democracy in Nigeria

Jibrin Ibrahim

The cream of political scientist in Nigeria met in Lagos under the auspices of the Nigerian Political Science Association in May 1986 to discuss the theme, *Alternative Political Futures for Nigeria: 1990 and Beyond* as part of the debate towards a new political system. During the deliberations, one of the major issues that arose was whether there should be a recommendation that Nigeria should return to some form of liberal democratic arrangement in 1990. The Conference resolved not to make any such recommendation. What was important about that decision was that a sizable number of both right wing and left wing protagonists converged on the conclusion that political scientists had no business proposing a liberal democratic framework. For the right wing, the reasoning was straightforward. One of their representatives, Inno Ukaeje argued that if Nigeria wants to develop, it must develop a Garrison-Managerial State System which means that:

by 1990 the country should adopt a new form of government based mainly and purely on the rule of the armed forces and the police utilising coercion as the proper basis for securing the compliance of citizens with the laws of the polity. (emphasis in the original).

Many of the left wing protagonists at the Conference correctly identified the multiparty liberal democratic form of government as bourgeois but wrongly concluded that socialists had no business struggling for a 'bourgeois form'. Most of them argued that Nigeria should have a popular one party socialist system, some form of corporate system based on representation of popular organisations or at the very least a two party system with a conservative capitalist party face to face with a socialist revolutionary party. This situation they argued would simplify and bring to the fore the ideological struggle and thereby hasten the transition to socialism.

The views expressed at the Conference were fairly representative of the general tenor of the present political debate in which liberal democracy is no longer assumed to be part of the desired civic culture and in which authoritarian political forms are being openly propagated as inevitable or even desirable. This is a new development in the Nigerian political psyche that could be a harbinger of the new reassertion of fascism, spearheaded by the Americans and their institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank the world over, the policies and the world views of which are beginning to take root in this country. It is worthy of note that in the 1940s and 1950s, there was an unquestioned linkage between the acquisition of independence and the establishment of a Parliamentary form of bourgeois democracy. The debate that occurred concerned the structure around which this form was to be
organised. The crisis generated by the contradictions inherent in the structures and processes chosen led to a collapse of the whole system by 1966 and the entry of the military into politics.

The military were, however, seen and they saw themselves as a transitional team to steer the country until a new democratic form could be arrived at. This is why until the time of the handover of power to the Shagari regime in 1979, the desirability of some form of democratic government for the country was never seriously questioned. The political debate at that time was directed at solving some of the perceived constraints and contradictions of the previous democratic experiment. It is only in the present political debate that there is an orchestrated open campaign against liberal democracy and for some form of authoritarian government.

This new tendency started becoming clear in 1982 when the Nigerian ruling class began to articulate the necessity for control and coercion to resolve the country’s economic crisis. The inability of president Shehu Shagari and General Muhammadu Buhari to properly ‘manage’ this control and coercion played a major role in the inability of their regimes to survive. The Babangida administration is learning from their mistakes and striving to surpass them. It is thus not surprising that any political debate conducted under this atmosphere would reflect the state of the nation.

The central political question that arises at this point is that as much as the Nigerian ruling classes are being compelled to move towards fascism, liberals and socialists have a stake in combating that move. Their survival as well as their capacity to advance their politics might well depend upon being able to block the advance of fascism, hence the need for a liberal intervention in the current political debate. Against this background, left-wing authoritarianism tends to weaken the much needed anti-fascist solidarity of socialists and liberals.

Forms of Government
The well known statement by Alexander Pope that ‘For forms of Government let fools contest. Whatever is best administered is best’ seems to have become an article of faith for many Nigerians. It is frequently repeated that previous forms of government in the country did not fail. It was Nigerians that failed to operate them correctly. Few are focussing on the necessity to evolve a democratic system of government for the country.

This state of affairs produces two immediate problems which must be addressed if Nigerians are to initiate the building of a democratic political system out of the present conjuncture. The first problem is the belief that as long as we have a ‘return to civilian rule’, the question of political form is not very important. The fact that ‘civilian rule’ could assume autocratic or democratic forms is ignored. Futhermore, the fact that even within the ‘democratic’ forms, there are choices to be made relating to structural and institutional components within each form which narrows the scope for or expands the possibilities of democratic political practice has not even become a topic for discussion. The second immediate problem is that the Political Bureau has listed all the major problems and topics in Nigerian politics (such as rural and community development, national languages, creation of states, corruption etc.) as items for debate. By so doing, the whole debate is diffused and it
becomes difficult to focus on the critical and immediate political problems facing the country today.

The present Nigerian ruling class is the product of a sham transition from colonial rule to 'independence'. It is a class whose historic mission was to participate in the rapid exploitation of the resources and labour of the people as junior partners to the imperialist bourgeoisie. As it was a class whose initial capital was nil or very minimal, it had to depend on its control of the state machinery to engage in rapacious primitive accumulation to transform itself into a bourgeoisie. As control of state power became the decisive element in accumulation (rather than the appropriation of the surplus value of workers) the competition for its control became characterised by fraud, lawlessness, chicanery and all sorts of autocratic practices. The consequence of the loss of an election became the erosion of the material base of the fraction of the nascent bourgeoisie concerned. The stakes therefore became too high to be placed on the risky alter of democracy. Democratic political practice therefore never had the chance to blossom during the First Republic. It became clear to the ordinary Nigerian that independence had brought government by the 'men in agbada' rather than government 'of the people, by the people and for the people'. The contradictions generated by autocratic rule during the First Republic coupled with the fear that democratic political change was not possible created the conditions for the collapse of the regime and the entry of the military.

The military however did not deviate from the pattern of dependent capitalist development and rabid primitive accumulation set by the First Republicans. If anything they had more resources at their disposal. Like the class before them therefore, they could not meet the aspirations of the people for a peaceful and free atmosphere for people's oriented development. The critical problem facing the country therefore was that the aspirations of the Nigerian people for a post-colonial democratic freedom and for an improvement in the material conditions of their life had remained unfulfilled. It is therefore imperative that they be able to choose an ideology and pattern of development in consonance with their aspirations. If the masses are to decide and consequently take their future in their hands, they need a genuine democratic atmosphere in which the evolution of a democratic political system becomes the critical political question.

During the Murtala/Obasanjo transition period however, this aspiration was translated by the Nigerian ruling class to mean simply a call of return to civilian rule, rather than the commencement of democratic rule. No wonder they took the decision to establish a Presidential form of government for the country. The arguments for the Presidential form of government revolved around the fact that it enabled the concentration of power, decisive executive action without too many controls and a national constituency which gives the President the moral right for unhindered political intervention in any part of the country. The tragedy of the debate during that transition was that these features were seen as ideals to be pursued rather than structures that encourage autocratic political practice which should be avoided. During the current political debate therefore, it is necessary to replace the banner of a return to civilian rule with one of commencement of democratic rule if we are to avoid the spectre of fascism which characterised the Second Republic of Executive President Shehu Shagari.

This call for a democratic system is not predicated on the assumption that there exists a form of it which is universally acceptable as relevant. As has been pointed
out 'we cannot speak of "pure democracy" as long as different classes exist'. All democracies favour certain classes and serve mainly their interests. The political system that exists is always a function of the mode of production and the character and alignment of class forces in that society. There is however no one-to-one correspondence between the material base of a society and its political system because for each material base, a number of political forms could exist. A capitalist economic base for example could sustain a wide political spectrum ranging from outright fascism to a benevolent liberal democracy.

Although even the most liberal of liberal democracies is in reality a class dictatorship, it does provide conditions favourable to the oppressed and exploited classes. Lenin (Collected Works 1976: 246), for example, has explained that:

Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the formal equality proclaimed by the 'democracy' of the capitalists and the thousands of real limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into wage-slaves. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and protagonists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people in order to prepare them for revolution.

This is possible because, unlike in pre-existing forms of class dictatorship, as Hunt (1980: 9) argues, 'bourgeois democracy's precise significance is the inclusion within the democratic framework of the dominated classes'.

The Struggle for Democracy
The task before the workers and peasants of this country as well as their allies, is to popularise the struggle for socialism. The contention being made is that this task is facilitated by a democratic political atmosphere. Of course the bourgeoisie is always ready to destroy democratic rights and privileges whenever it feels its class interests are under threat. In such situations the masses might have been lulled into a false sense of security and the resort to blatant repression could have disastrous consequences for the ability of the working class and democratic forces to reorganise and continue the struggle for their emancipation. What is important about the struggle for democratic rights and the gains therefrom, is not however, only the realisation of the importance of these rights for the human person, but also the necessity to fight for them when they are threatened or lost. And as these struggles reveal to the oppressed and exploited classes that their ultimate redemption lies in a revolutionary struggle to overthrow the existing ruling class, it becomes a propelling force for revolutionary struggle and the subsequent establishment of a people's democracy.

The struggle for liberal democracy is important because it allows the oppressed classes to put the question of alternative ideologies on the agenda. It also allows them the chance to campaign and contest for these ideologies. Of course the permission is more formal than real, and the material base for fully utilising them are bound to be weak. What is important however is the existence of possibilities to extend and widen the arena of struggle. The specific issues regarding this shall be raised in the concluding section.

The Political Debate
On the 3rd of February 1986, the Chairman of the Political Bureau launched the political debate and called on the public to come forth and contribute especially at the grassroot level. The response to the debate has, however, been rather
lukewarm. Even in a state as politically active and volatile as Kano, only thirteen memoranda were received after two months of the establishment of monitoring offices (Guardian 14 May 1986). This poor response is not unconnected with the shrewd calculation that the mass of the people have made that the Nigerian ruling class is not yet ready for a debate about democracy. It is becoming increasingly clear that the choices being offered are between different forms of autocracy rather than between autocracy and democracy. Thus the people have little at stake in terms of the outcome of the debate. It should be recalled that the recently concluded IMF debate in the country generated very active and emotional participation because people realised they had a direct stake in its outcome. Accepting the IMF conditionality meant massive retrenchment, unbridled inflation, collapse of purchasing power of the workers while rejecting it meant maintaining the status quo.

In terms of the political debate, however, the issues have not been put so bluntly. First of all between the end of the civil war in 1970 and 1975 the unfulfilled promise of Gowon to hand over power had wetted the appetite of the people for democracy and when he declared in 1974 that 1976 was no longer to be the year for democracy his own regime had to be overthrown. The subsequent Murtala/Obasanjo regime therefore had no choice but to organise the transition. The subsequent Presidential system that emerged under Shehu Shagari did not satisfy the craving need for democracy despite the long wait. The Shagari regime was high handed and relied on brutalising the people with the police, especially the infamous 'kill and go' riot police, for its survival. The judiciary became completely partisan and partial and even winning elections depended more on outright rigging than votes case.

A second problem militating against a successful debate is the insistence of the Government for an apolitical political debate. The decree banning political activities remains. In fact even in the universities which are supposed to be centres for the generation of ideas, the order banning the use of auditoria and assembly halls for 'subversive' political activities imposed by the Buhari regime has been reaffirmed to be still in force by the Babangida regime (Concord 31 October 1985). In addition, two politicians Sola Saraki and Tanko Yakasai have been detained for allegedly being involved in political activities. The case of Tanko Yakasai is not likely to be unconnected with his announcement that 'plans were currently underway to mobilise all bona-fide NEPU members to come together in preparation for 1990' (The Triumph 10 March 1986). Contrary to the belief of government, there cannot be a non-political debate especially when it is about a return to open political competition. How can parties emerge in 1990 if the preliminary contacts and plans are not already in motion? Politics is by definition a collective activity and democratic politics are based upon the widest level of discussions, consultations, mobilisation and propaganda. There can be no movement towards a democratic political system without political mobilisation, political propaganda and political meetings. The present lukewarm attitude of Nigerians to the political debate is a message from the people to the government that they are calling for a political debate and at the same time preventing it from taking place.

Rather than Government taking the cue however, it is persisting on its mistaken path by the recent extension of Decree Two. This notorious decree was used by the then Chief of Staff of Supreme Headquarters, General Idiagbon and his cohorts for arbitrary arrests and intimidation of citizens. There had been a general demand for the abrogation of this decree because it negates the principle of the rule of law by
allowing the detention of people without trial for up to three months. Instead of abrogating it the Government has decided to extend its competence to both the Chief of General Staff as well as the Inspector General of Police as well as elongate its span from three months to six months. With this threat hanging over their heads, the Nigerian people have the right to be skeptical over the intentions of Government vis-a-vis the transition to democratic government.

The general political situation in the country is therefore very unfavourable for a genuine debate for democratic rule. This is not accidental. It is the result of a deeply rooted fear of democracy manifested by the Nigerian ruling class. This fear is based on the fact that they cannot afford public scrutiny of their activities. They need ignorance to be able to sustain their power. This is because their method of the acquisition of political power as well as their patterns of accumulation are fraudulent, unjust and immoral. A military regime or an autocratic civilian regime might be able to hide most of its atrocities from the wrath of the people. A democratic regime cannot. In fact, in spite of the autocratic practices of the Shagari regime, its multi-party political form allowed for a certain level of public scrutiny of public affairs. Ordinary workers and peasants started hearing details about 10 per cent, 15 per cent and even 20 per cent kickback deals organised by 'their' representatives. The masses saw a state Governor being impeached simply because he had removed the burden of poll and cattle taxes from them and was calling for a development strategy that was people oriented. The link between politics and the political economy was becoming as clear as daylight. The Second Republic was four years of rich political education.

Institutionalising Autocracy: The Case of Diarchy and Triarchy
A major impediment to the struggle for democracy now unfolding in the country is the manner in which what little debate that is being done is revolving around choosing among autocratic political forms such as diarchy, triarchy, one party system or two party system.

The argument that is being made for diarchy is a purely pragmatic one. 'Events unfolding since independence had shown that civilians could not realistically exclude the military from political participation' *(The Punch 10 February 1986).* Since it is assumed that the military cannot be kept out, then the compromise that arises is for the civilians and military to govern together. The protagonists for diarchy focus on the necessity for stability rather than the desired good of governments to be based on the people's mandate. If one evil (military autocracy) is not enough add another one (civilian autocracy) to it. Two wrongs can however never make a right for autocracy is logically against the interests of the vast majority who are being oppressed by the autocrat. Stability is not an end in itself that must be pursued, but could be used for oppression or for people's oriented development. Even the presumption that institutionalising military participation in the next political arrangement would favour a stable government is not necessarily true. The facts of contemporary Nigerian history are clear. Even pure military regimes have been unable to prevent coups and counter coups or even civil war and mass civil disobedience.

As if the calls for diarchy are not bad enough, H.O. Davies and his followers have further compounded the situation by calling for the institutionalisation of traditional rulers in addition to the military within the body politic of our future political arrangement. At this point the question posed by Tanko Yakasai is worth
citing. 'Are the apologists of indigenous political system arguing that, in this 20th
century of age, we should go back to feudal autocracy, feudal dictatorship and
feudal absolutism? Anyone who demands these is senseless' (*The Triumph* 3
February 1986). There is no doubt that a substantial fraction of the Nigerian
bourgeoisie is proposing this return to absolutism. This demand however does not
reflect senselessness but a genuine concern to preserve their fraudulently acquired
wealth as well as guarantee their continued access to sources of this wealth in
terms of their control of the state.

The demands for diarchy and tirachy must therefore be opposed as attempts to
perpetuate non democratic forms of government on the people.

**Institutionalising an Autocratic Party System**

Another strand of the Nigerian bourgeoisie has been advocating the establishment
of an autocratic party system in which there will be a restriction imposed on the
number of parties. The most vicious suggestion within this strand is that for a one
party system. Professor Nwabueze for example has advocated a one party system
because it has 'the advantage of eliminating party rivalry, party funds and excessive
expenditure by political parties during elections' (*The Punch* 22 February 1986).
For Brigadier M.B. Jibril, a one party system is necessary because: 'Our traditional
leadership culture does not experience opposition and does not tolerate it' (*New
Nigerian* 13 March 1986). Governor Chris Garuba of Bauchi State takes the cake for
he wants an 'indigenous' (sic) combination to be fashioned out of a one party
system constituted by a diarchy of military and civilian leaders under a president.
He further argued 'that because the military was the basis of power in the country,
its concept should be instilled in the people' (*New Nigerian* 19 March 1986). The
people are no longer the basis of power in society.

In the logic of the advocacy of the one party system, a number of important
democratic principles are aimed for destruction: the existence of a plurality of
views, interests and classes in capitalist society and their right to articulate their
positions; the necessity for open political competition in order that the most
popular could emerge; that although the most popular or the majority should rule,
the less popular or the minority must be guaranteed his right to differ and to be in
opposition; the fourth and the most important democratic principle threatened by
these advocates is that of the source of power itself. Power flows from the mandate
of the people rather than a monopoly of the means of violence. The advocacy for a
one party system is aimed at securing for the Nigerian bourgeoisie a fettered and
unquestioning people for unhindered exploitation.

A second strand in the restricted party system syndrome is the call for a two party
system. The basis for this suggestion is the admiration a certain section of the
Nigerian ruling class has for some of the two party systems operating in certain
advanced liberal democracies. They would want a situation in which two bourgeois
parties with the same ideological orientation but a few formal and unimportant
differences to exist. In each election therefore, they would have the pleasure of
watching the masses organising and struggling for any one side of the bourgeois
coin. What they fail to realise is that even in these societies, arrival at the two party
system is not by administrative fiat but by the democratic process itself. That is to
say over time, two parties tend to emerge as the dominant ones. In those societies
there are no legal restrictions on the number of parties that can be established and
that can canvass for support. Additional parties could also emerge to join the line up
of dominant parties as has happened in Great Britain. The second problem with the
two party advocacy is that it is normally based in a society in which a large degree of
ideological hegemony has been established by the ruling class. The two parties are
then supposed to reflect the two major strands within that established ideological
spectrum. Nigeria is a country in which the ruling class has failed to establish not
even a clear political and ideological platform not to talk of a consensus. The field
on which to establish this should therefore be left open to all contenders.

Another proposal that has been made is that of a three party system. The
assumption or justification for this system is that each party would represent one of
the major ideological strands, i.e. conservative capitalist, middle of the road social
democratic or socialist and Marxist-Leninist communism. This proposal is fraught
with danger as in the last analysis, it is the capitalist state that would decide which
party represents what strand. In the decision making process, genuine and serious
parties that represent strands opposed to capitalist interests are bound to be
refused registration while fake and treacherous 'representatives' of the strands are
granted official recognition. The fundamental principle is that any system of
restriction of parties is dangerous.

A similar proposal to the above, but cast in a different format has been made by
Professor Nnoli at a conference in March 1986. Taking off from the premise that 'the
army-in-politics is the greatest danger now facing the country' he advocates that we
should 'help the reactionary classes out of their political confusion in the
understanding that such confusion imposes more suffering on the masses than is
warranted by a more viable rule of the petty-bourgeois and the compradors'. He
then proposes an interim political arrangement in which the Political Bureau will
identify the ten most crucial clusters of issues affecting Nigeria's cultural, social
and economic life and parties that correctly represent these clusters. The interim
period in this arrangement is to be supervised by the military. The least that could
be said about this proposal is that it is naive to identify the military as the problem
and expect them to supervise an arrangement that would threaten their interests.
More importantly however, the correct way for these clusters to emerge is through
the democratic process itself when people define their problems and programmes,
form parties on that basis and engage in political campaigns and electioneering to
establish their positions. A hundred flowers must be allowed to blossom in an all-
comers multi-party democracy.

Institutionalising Corporate Autocracy and the Zero Party Option
The zero party options is another proposal that is being articulated today. The usual
argument that is made to support it is to trace all of Nigeria's political problems to
the existence of the party system. Itodo Ojobo (New Nigerian 28 April 1986) for
example has argued that:

It was the introduction of party politics by colonial administration that set off the fire of ethnic
conflicts in Nigeria. . . . It is party politics that causes discrimination, victimisation of political
opponents. Parties train, arm and finance thugs to eliminate, harass and intimidate both
political opponents and ordinary citizens alike. Rather than act as vehicles for social
mobilisation, political education, cohesion, integration and good government, parties in
Nigeria have been instruments of coercion, exploitation and oppression of the innocent
citizens of Nigeria.

All the problems generated by the absence of a genuine democratic political system
are attributed to the presence of a party system by these advocates. This
substitution is the basic flaw in this proposal. Modern democracies are necessarily
representative democracies which cannot function properly without a party system.

There is however an additional danger with the zero-party option. It is usually proposed within the context of some form of corporate representation. Professor E.C. Amucheazi (The Guardian 16 May 1986) for example defines the zero party system as 'a system whereby people are chosen proportionately from interest groups such as doctors, lawyers, academics, students, workers and farmers who would use their collective will and experience to set Nigeria on the right path'.

This is also the prescription offered by Tukur and Darah at the conclusion of ASUU National Conference on the Political Debate where they argued that:

Types of government (parliamentary, presidential, confederation, diarchy, triarchy) and number of parties (zero party, one party, two party, multi-party) which are being suggested will not of themselves guarantee democratic representation of the masses. In order to ensure a truely democratic system, popular and mass organisations (labour unions, peasant associations, youth and student organisations, women organisations, market women and traders associations, professional bodies, the unemployed) should represent themselves directly in decision-making bodies and assemblies. This method of representation will be a new and better approach to politics in Nigeria, an approach which will eliminate professional politicians who practice politics as profit making business. The system of direct representation can be best realised in a multi-party Federal Structure.

While it is not clear how the mix between the direct representation of corporate bodies and the multi-party system would work, the proposed system has inherent dangers vis-a-vis the promotion of democracy.

The direct representation of workers and peasants through their bodies can only lead to their having effective control if they already control state power. In that case, the state (the proletarian state) would ensure that the structural and institutional mechanisms for decision making is in their control. The parameters for decision making as well as the agenda would then be set by the workers and peasants through their state.

The situation is different in a capitalist state such as Nigeria. The ruling class might allow representatives of the oppressed classes into decision making bodies. It does so, however, only on the condition that they are a minority and the agenda is set by the capitalist state or one of its agencies. The danger of this arrangement for the oppressed classes is that their (minority) opinion is expressed not in the open forum of political contest where it could play a role in political agitation and mobilisation but within the institutions of the capitalist state. The verdict that comes out of these institutions are necessarily in favour of the capitalist state — although they come out with the stamp of the participation and approval of the oppressed classes.

A clear illustration of this is the so-called workers participation and approval in the formulation of the 1986 budget. In his May Day address to the nation (New Nigerian 9 May 1986), President Babangida praised his regime for making

A break with bureaucratic tradition in drawing up national budgets when we invited your leaders in the Nigerian Labour Congress to participate in the formulation of the 1986 budget. I wish to pay particular tribute to their valuable suggestions in the exercise of setting our new economic policies, which you have all welcomed. I also commend the maturity of your response to our call for cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Private sector in working out an acceptable distribution of the levies and sacrifices involved in our economic emergency. All of us have accepted that such an emergency while it lasts is bound to be harsh.
The circumstances leading to this situation should be recalled. The Nigerian Labour Congress had on 6 November 1985, given a 21 days ultimatum to the Government to rescind its decision to implement pay cuts or face a national strike. The response of the Government was to set up a Tripartite Committee composed of Labour, the Private Sector and Government to discuss the issue. When the NLC withdrew its ultimatum and participated in the work of the committee, the agenda they were confronted with was how to extend the measures to the other 'social partners' to ensure that it is not only workers who would suffer. Although they disagreed with all the decisions taken, they could not in the end dissociate themselves from them because 'they had been consulted and were part of the decision making process'.

The role of the capitalist state in the episode is quite revealing. Section 5 of the Labour Act 1974 as amended by the Labour (Amendment) Act 1978, stipulated that 'workers salary could only be cut with their express permission', was suspended by a new decree — the National Economic Emergency Powers Decree. By incorporating the workers in its decision making process, the capitalist state was able to have its way.

Nigerians should beware of these proposals for corporate representation for another reason. It appears as if one of the lines along which the present regime is thinking about perpetuating its rule is by bringing in the people to 'participate' in government. Already in Rivers State, there is a rotating 300 member 'People's Parliament' composed of 100 people representing the 10 local governments, 150 people representing the general public and 50 people representing interest groups such as 'trade unions, workers, students, farmers, contractors, traditional rulers, chambers of commerce' (Newswatch, 24 March 1986). These 'representatives' of the people are chosen by Government after they have submitted 'questions and topics for discussion in advance to the secretariat of the parliament' (ibid). The process of governmental control and manipulation is thereby facilitated. It is worth noting that Governor Chris Garuba of Bauchi State has also announced plans for a 'people's durbar' to enable him consult the people 'in an informal atmosphere devoid of officialdom' (The Punch, 10 February 1986).

The various forms of corporate representation are therefore susceptible to be used by the state to legitimise its class policies and actions. It is better for the oppressed classes to propagate their worldview in the open political area where the possibilities for galvanising the masses towards revolutionary change are better.

Conclusion and Recommendations

An analysis of the current political debate reveals that the character of the debate has degenerated in comparison to the debate leading to the Second Republic or even the debate and struggles leading to the First Republic. This degeneration reflects a shift away from an agreement that the Nigerian nation should be built through some form of multi-party liberal democracy, to increasing calls for a formalised autocratic political system such as diarchy or one party rule. This new shift reflects the lack of confidence of the Nigerian bourgeoisie in its ability to maintain its class rule as it becomes confronted by increased combativeness from workers, peasants and other oppressed segments of the Nigerian society. This is the
basic reason for its perceived need for more and stronger instruments of control and coercion.

The minimum response of progressive forces must be to struggle for the establishment of a genuine liberal democracy for the country. This is the best atmosphere in which they can mobilise and organise the masses for more fundamental social and economic transformation of the country. It is important to realise that although liberal democracy is associated with capitalism, its provisions are never willingly granted by the ruling class. Democratic gains are always the result of class struggle in society. The struggle for democracy in Nigeria would be advanced if the following recommendations are fought for and obtained.

- The establishment of a multi-party system in which ALL parties are registered without restrictions or conditions,
- The guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom of the press including the right of all individuals or corporate bodies to establish and use without licence organs such as newspapers, radio and television stations,
- The guarantee of the freedom of association including the right to hold public or private meetings, processions and peaceful public demonstrations without police permission,
- The guarantee of the right of the working class either in their unions or as workers to form political parties, participate openly in political parties as well as to fund political parties. This must include the right to contest election without resigning from one's job.

Bibliographic Note

The Military as Revolutionary Vanguard: a Critique

Bjorn Beckman

The crisis of Nigerian ruling class politics in the wake of a collapsing oil economy has made sections of the Left pin their hopes to a left military intervention. This essay is a critique of such positions. It is particularly concerned with recent attempts to offer scientific justification for attributing a leading revolutionary role to the military. The essay also discusses the theoretical backing provided by soviet writers for such ‘military vanguardism’. Beckman argues that the left-militarists fail to identify the social and political forces and conditions that can sustain such revolutionary military role. There is a neglect of class analysis and an incorrect identification of contradictions in society. There is an idealist understanding of the state and the basis of political power. There is a deficient grasp of the nature of imperialist domination and the extent to which antagonistic class relations have been firmly entrenched. Politically, Beckman argues, military vanguard theories divert attention from the primary task of building democratic political organisations capable of giving a democratic content and direction to the national revolutionary process. Not only are they diversionary, they pose a direct threat to that critical task. Despite protestations of the contrary, military vanguardism invites adventurism, for which the left as a whole may have to pay dearly. The present disarray of the Ghanaian left and the suppression of democratic organisations in that country is a case in point.

The Coming of Captain (Comrade) Sanusi: the Context of Debate

The scene is Bakolori Italian Club. The contract has just been signed. The ancestral lands of the peasants have been sold by the Emir to an Italian businessman. The deal is mediated by a corrupt ex-Brigadier. The Inspector of Police has executed some poor peasants who resisted the deal. Suddenly, a group of soldiers, poor farmers, workers, students and released political prisoners march into the club, led by Captain Sanusi. The scene concludes Tunde Fatunde’s play No Food No Country. It was first staged in Ilorin in May 1985, five years after the massacre of peasants at Bakolori. It depicts the recklessness and viciousness of the Nigerian ruling class and its foreign paymasters and the oppression suffered by the Nigerian people. I quote it because of the leading role given to Captian Sanusi in the political solution of the drama. One is struck by his towering figure, comradely, yet almighty. He alone appoints the ministers in the new revolutionary government. He decides which members of the ruling class shall be liquidated and who shall be spared.

What is the likelihood that the military will play a leading role in the revolutionary transformation of Nigeria? What are the theoretical premises for such possibility
and what is the historical evidence that may offer support? It is only of recent that
the Nigerian left has started to ask such questions in a serious manner, as distinct
from fits of messianism and indulgence in myth making. Messianism is the hope in
the emergence of a powerful leader that will offer redemption. There is a distinct
left military variety of this myth in Nigeria, from Major Nzeogwu (1966) to General
Murtala (1975) and Major Umar (1985). However, the deepening economic crisis
and the crisis of bourgeois state power have placed the left military option on the
agenda of scholarly debate. Experiences elsewhere, in particular in Ghana, Burkina
Faso, Ethiopia and Libya have attracted much interest.

Nigerian and Soviet Arguments
Let me first draw attention to some recent Nigerian contributions. Edwin
Madunagu, a leading socialist intellectual, in a two-part article in the Guardian
(Lagos) discusses 'The Army as a Political Party' (9 and 16 January 1986). Although
he emphasises the basic bourgeois character of the army, he maintains the
possibility of a revolutionary military administration which can overcome the anti-
democratic nature of the army and turn it into 'an armed detachment of the people
in the struggle for progress'. Such an army may then assume the role of the vanguard
'in the absence of an organised political vanguard'. Yet this role is temporary. 'A
vanguard party has to emerge' before the new army solidifies. If not the entire
revolutionary project is to be endangered.

The last chapter of Tolin Falola’s and Julius Ihonvbere’s recent book The Rise and
Fall of Nigeria’s Second Republic (1985) is devoted to the role of the military in
Nigerian politics, including a discussion of general theoretical positions. To them
military coups can be understood ‘as part of the strategy of the dominant class to
retain control of the social formation in times of crisis resulting from challenges to
the weak or pseudo-hegemony imposed by the dominant classes’ (p.238). Yet, they
recognise that progressive forces may use the military, either as part of a larger
social movement or in isolation. They see the possibility for ‘revolutionary forces to
infiltrate the army and use it in the overthrow of the social order’ (p.248). They
speculate that the Buhari coup of 1983 was motivated in part by the need to forestall
a left-wing coup by junior officers:

The intervention by the bourgeois fraction of the armed forces (generals, brigadiers and
colonels), also checked (even if temporarily) the political hopes of radical (even if nationalist)
fractions within its ranks (Falola and Ihonvbere 1985:259).

A three part contribution on ‘The Army in Politics’ in the Marxist monthly New
Horizon (1985-6) by its Editor in Chief Dapo Fatogun is particularly noteworthy
because of the influence of the Fatogun group in the Nigerian Labour Congress.
Writing in the aftermath of the Babangida coup of 1985 he raises the question
whether the new leader ‘can use his enormous goodwill to change once and for all
times the bourgeois class character of military rule’. Fatogun seems to think that
this is a real possibility. The chances of success, he says, are even greater than in
Ethiopia. ‘Nigerian soldiers are a progressive clan’ and the Army is now ‘well aware
that our most recent economic plight calls for a revolutionary renovation’. Although
most third world armies may be pro-capitalist and anti-socialist some may become
‘the peoples’ army’. He concludes:

The Nigerian army, seems to me to be undergoing this progressive change. And the signs are
the new breed of younger officers who today take an open position with socialism, (Fatogun,
February 1986).
The wider significance of Fatogun's position is enhanced by its theoretical backing in Soviet writings on the military in the third world. I shall discuss Yevgeny and Dolgopolov's *The Army and the Revolutionary Transformation of Society* (1981). As a Progress Publication it has the imprint of officially sanctioned theory. It has been widely circulated in Nigeria. The book seeks to explain why revolutionary military regimes come to power and it attributes a leading role to the army in revolutionary transformation.

**Tyoden's Revolutionary Vanguard**

The most immediate point of departure, however, is a recent argument presented by Sonni Tyoden, a Jos political scientist, in a paper, 'the Military and the Prospect for Socialist Construction in the Third World' (1985). It can be seen as a response to another Jos scholar, Iyorchia Ayu's *To Smash Imperialism in Africa: Militarism and the Crisis* (1985). Ayu takes a 'classical' Marxist position: the military must be understood as the repressive apparatus of the state and the ruling class. Its role is therefore primarily counter-revolutionary. In the current African context this means, according to Ayu, that the military intervenes either to dislodge regimes that threaten to move to the left (e.g. Nkrumah, Modibo Keita) or to prop up dependent capitalism in crisis. Ayu is dismissive of certain currents on the left that 'either out of frustration with the lack of momentum of revolutionary ferment or for organisational inaction, believe, or seek consolation in militarist solutions'. He argues that such solutions 'can not substitute for an organised and ideologically disciplined revolutionary movement':

> For, inspite of the few African armies which have jumped on the revolutionary truck, the terrain is still populated heavily with counter-revolutionary militarism. And probabilistically speaking, the promise is that future intervention will continue to follow the dominant pattern — taking the side of reaction (Ayu 1985:5).

According to Tyoden, on the other hand, there is nothing to prevent a socialist fraction within the Nigerian military from taking control of state power. Tyoden's position should be seriously examined. It is an attempt to develop a scientific argument rooted in the tradition of Marxism. According to Tyoden, the deepening crisis of global capitalism, the peculiar form that this crisis takes in a neo-colonial society, and the type of 'critical social forces' which emerge in such a situation are all factors which contribute to raising the possibility of the military acting as 'a vanguard for the socialist transformation of Africa' It is even a possibility 'that stares us in the face'. He agrees with Ayu that the military in Nigeria has so far 'been nothing but an extension of the bourgeoisie in uniform'. But things are changing:

> Not only is such socialist take-over a possibility, according to Tyoden, but it is the way that socialist transformation will begin in this country. Not only that: it is the hope for deliverance from neo-colonial misery! Tyoden builds his own position on a critique of 'the dogmatic and unscientific intellectual tendency that dominates Marxist discussions of the military in the politics of Third World states' In the Marxist theory of the capitalist state, the military, according to Tyoden, is seen as the repressive arm of the state apparatus. Yet, an inflexible application of this position to all societies in all times goes against the very spirit of Marxism. Marx's
own analysis referred to advanced capitalist societies with fully developed class forces. Marx warned against his own sketch of the rise of capitalism in Western Europe being taken as a theory of the 'general path every people is fated to thread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself' (Marx' rejoinder to Mikhailovsky as quoted by Tyoden). It is therefore necessary, according to Tyoden, to consider the forms and possibilities for socialist transformation that can be realised in a specific historical conjuncture with its specific constellation of class forces.

This sounds as an admirable methodological position. The problem however is that Tyoden fails to offer such an analysis of concrete conjunctures and social forces. He is therefore left with a theoretical non-position as his ultimate defence: It is wrong, he claims, to exclude the possibility. This is not good enough for a scientific argument which is supposed to offer support for political positions. There is a wide gap between Tyoden’s theoretical and political positions. On the one hand, he wishes merely to 'expose us (even if only theoretically), to the possibility of the military being a vanguard of socialist transformation'. He argues that it is unscientific and un-Marxist to exclude such a possibility. This theoretical modesty contrasts, on the other hand, with the extravagant conclusion that there is nothing that prevents this theoretical possibility from being realised in Nigeria right now. The first position merely suggests a theoretical possibility, however small; the latter suggests that the probability is high. There is no need to disagree with the first position. It is indeed wrong (theoretically) to exclude possibilities, even if they are unlikely. However, such a position does not offer much of a basis for political analysis. We are interested in probabilities, not theoretical possibilities. It does not mean that we are only interested in what is most probable. Also lesser probabilities are important as they may be affected by political struggles.

This is, by the way, a point where Ayu errs. He is wrong to be dismissive of the experience of left-wing military coups in Africa on the basis of right-wing ones being more probable. Even if this is so, we are still interested in the probability of left-wing coups, as long as it is not negligible, because they as well will have implication for political developments and left strategies (See the quote from Ayu on above). But not just that. Ayu’s own position becomes seriously undermined if he fails to also allow for the deviant cases. It is no good claiming that military coups are 'counter-revolutionary' if there are cases who do not fit this pattern. We need to understand the basis for the deviation and how it affects the theory.

Tyoden, however, has little to offer in support of the probability of a socialist military take-over in Nigeria, either theoretically or empirically. His argument is limited to passing references to the global capitalist crisis and its neo-colonial manifestation. There is no attempt to discuss what there is in a neo-colonial society in crisis that produces socialist forces within the military capable of taking over state power. Why for instance, is it not more likely that the military is prompted by the crisis to intervene on behalf of the threatened bourgeoise, as suggested by Ayu? If both tendencies are there, what is the nature of the social and political forces, within the military and outside, that allows to evaluate probabilities, high and low? Tyoden’s military revolutionary vanguard remains elusive. Little scientific reasoning underlies the ideas about how the first steps towards the socialist transformation of Nigeria will become a reality. The idealism contrasts glaringly with the professed commitment to a materialist method in the 'spirit of Marxism'.
Soviet Theory: the Army as Motive Force

Tyoden indicts Marxism for its dogmatic views on the military. The indictment seems particularly unwarranted if we look at contemporary Soviet theories. In fact, we find here what is absent in Tyoden, an attempt to offer a theoretical and historical explanation of the revolutionary role of the military in the third world. We find no 'inflexible attachment' to an 'anti-militarist view' (Tyoden 1985:4).

In the past the armies under the antagonistic system were as a rule, a dependable support for reaction and conservatism; today, on the contrary, patriotic tendencies in the army have become prevalent and are exerting a major impact on developments in a number of countries (Dolgopolov 1981:5).

Dolgopolov does not speak of ‘vanguard’ as do Tyoden and Madunagu, but his choice of words is equally strong. He speaks of democratic and patriotic army sections as motive force and even the motive force of national liberation and democratic revolutions (p.6). The armies of the liberated countries, that is, the ex-colonies, differ radically, he says, from those of the imperialist states which are instuments of class oppression. They differ because they are born in the struggle for independence and therefore ‘largely anti-imperialist in nature’. They set themselves national tasks and ‘serve as the mainstay for a national resurgence and social progress’ (p.40). This is the general tendency, although great variations exist between socialist-oriented regimes at one end and right-wing ones, at the other. Part of the explanation of the revolutionary potential lies in the social origin of the officers. In the (advanced) capitalist armies, the upper echelons have close class, business, family and other ties with big business (p.58). In many armies of Asia and Africa, on the other hand, officers come mostly from the petty-bourgeoisie:

Their ties with the bourgeois-land lord circles are generally weak and they are close to the people. They not only, therefore oppose imperialist and feudal oppression; they also under certain conditions and to certain extent, oppose capitalist relations, too (Dolgopolov 1981:45).

This difference in social composition is in turn related to differences in levels of development. In Tropical Africa, for instance, ‘the classes of modern society have only just begun to take shape’ (p.44). Lower levels of class development also means lower levels of class antagonism. This is reflected in a greater ‘community of interest of officers and men, and the overwhelming majority of the nation in their fight to free themselves from foreign oppression’ (p.22).

The opposition to imperialist domination leads to the politicization of the army: the struggle over the choice of development course takes place also within its ranks. It opens up the possibility of a broad democratic front in the fight for economic independence and the eradication of backwardness and poverty (p.39). In Africa, the leading role of the army becomes particularly important because ‘the class structure is amorphous and the political parties, if any, are not strong enough. In this situation the army is ‘the most organised social force’ (p.39).

The Soviet argument centres on two related aspects: the low development of class forces, on the one hand, and the primacy of imperialist domination in shaping contradictions in society, on the other. How far does the theory help us to explain developments in individual cases of non-capitalist or socialist orientation? Dolgopolov refers primarily to Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Yemen (PDR), Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Benin and Madagascar. He notes that they represent a diversity of conditions but that in all of them 'revolutionary-democratic representatives of the armed forces lead the implementation of the progressive changes that are bringing
about socialist orientation’ (pp.55-6). He does not attempt to show how the movement in the direction of socialist orientation in each case can be explained with the help of the theory.

How far do these cases support a theory of the military as revolutionary vanguard? The problem is not so much the varying fit of the individual cases. The theory can be interpreted as to be wide enough to accommodate them. The problem is rather that it is so wide that it ends-up explaining very little. Third world societies, virtually by definition, exhibit a relative low level of development of class forces. Also by definition, most of them are dominated by imperialism. Yet, antagonistic class relations have developed almost everywhere. So what will be more decisive in influencing the military? To what point will the 'unity of the army and the people' on an anti-imperialist platform prevail?

In particular, how do we take account of the dominant pattern of right-wing military regimes in the third world, e.g. Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Nigeria, Egypt, Zaire, Sudan, only to mention some of the major ones during recent times? We must be able to relate different tendencies of military involvement in third world politics to one theoretical framework that is capable of explaining the differences.

In what sense could we be justified in talking of a 'general tendency'? We could do so even if the right-wing cases are numerically dominant, as long as the theory makes it plausible that the left-wing ones are on the increase. It seems, however, as if the basic assumption about the low development of class forces suggests the opposite: that it is a theory with a declining territory as these forces continue to develop and solidify. The theory seems in fact to highlight an essentially transitional political conjuncture in the passage from colonialism to independence. It does not address itself to the regrouping and formation of capitalist oriented class forces, internal and external, that take place in the neo-colonial situation.

**How Does Nigeria Fit?**

The Soviet theory speaks of a general tendency towards progressive army involvement, but it also recognises countries where the armed forces have developed features 'typical of bourgeois armies' (Dolgopolov 1981:40). So which one is Nigeria?

It is difficult to see Nigeria as a society where antagonistic social relations and classes have not developed or where class contradictions have not affected the armed forces. The anti-imperialist tendencies within the petty bourgeoisie, including the army, may well be there. But there are also strong links between the officer corps and the propertied classes that benefit from the present social order. It is difficult to imagine Dolgopolov's 'community of interest' and unity within the armed forces on a national platform. The nationalism of the dominant classes differs from that of the dominated ones. The army itself has served as a powerful vehicle of bourgeois class formation, with a growing number of senior officers establishing themselves in business, either along side their army careers or on early retirement. Many serve as managers in state enterprises or as members of boards of directors, both in the private and public sector. Defence contracts have created avenues for dealing profitably with transnational companies, not just in arms but in communication technology and in the more mundane requirements of the armed forces, such as cement for army barracks. The petty-bourgeois origins of perhaps a
majority of these officers is of little consequence for their distinctly bourgeois class careers.

Whatever opening there may be for socialist oriented elements within the Nigerian armed forces, it seems closer at hand to see it as a function of the intensification of antagonistic relations in Nigerian society, rather than, as the Soviet theory suggests, in their absence or low level of development.

The substantive orientation of competing elements, inside and outside the armed forces will have to be located in relation to the general development of social and political forces in society. Tyoden acknowledges this: ‘we have to situate the military concretely’, he says, ‘within the interstices of on-going socio-political processes and the context of class struggle in society’. Unfortunately, Tyoden fails to do so himself.

Dolgopolov also suggests that the class composition of the army reflects the nature of the state and is therefore in the final count ‘determined by the class relations existing in the country’ (p.8). He does not, however, make use of this theoretical insight in his analysis. Instead, we meet, just as in Tyoden’s case, a strong element of idealism.

Idealism, Class Suicide and Relative Autonomy

By idealism in this case, I refer to the tendency to stop at the level of people’s preferences (ideologies etc) when explaining why they act (for instance, make revolutions). This is in contrast to the attempt to identify determinants of people’s choices and the range of options open to them at a material level, that is, in relation to the configuration of power in society as determined ultimately at the level of production and manifested in class formation, class struggles, and political organisation.

Let me illustrate with Tyoden’s references to the prospects for socialist transformation in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. The only reason he quotes in support of his own positive evaluation of these prospects is the commitment of the three regimes to the establishment of socialist society (p.6). So what are the material social forces capable of translating such commitments into socialist transformation? If we take the case of Ghana, Tyoden is aware that all may not be well in that country. He suggests that what is happening is the ‘mellowing down of the revolutionary fervour as a result of both internal and external pressures and contradictions’. The formula suggests a process that is being interrupted. But what was the basis of revolutionary transformation in the first place? Is it not more realistic to see the current disarray of the ‘revolutionary process’ as reflecting the nature of the social forces behind Rawlings’ ‘revolution’? To speak of the decline in ‘revolutionary fervour’ obscures political analysis and opens up to idealist speculation. This is seen in Tyoden’s suggestions that there is the possibility (of which he is optimistic) that the regimes in the three countries are able to ‘transcend their current limitations and contradictions and address themselves to the abolition of capitalist property relations...’ (p.7).

Tyoden speaks of the possibility of the military fraction of the bourgeoisie committing ‘class suicide’, that is, abandoning its class interests in favour of the oppressed classes. We meet similar suggestions in Dolgopolov’s work: patriotic and democratically minded officers are expected to ‘renounce the role of an instrument of the exploitative upper crust’ (p.112). There is a tendency to see the struggles
within the army as one between different ideological orientations ('opposite social
trends'). It obscures the extent to which social forces impress themselves on the
class orientation of different segments of the armed forces.

This is linked to a theory of petty-bourgeois politics that emphasises ideological
vacillation and lack of class determination (cf. Williams 1976). In explaining, for
instance, the abandonment of the non-capitalist road in Egypt, Dolgopolov speaks
of 'some petty bourgeois sections shifting to pro-capitalist positions and taking up
conservative and reactionary views'. (p.47) This does not explain anything. What
was it that made such sections shift to the right? What was the underlying balance of
class forces in society that gave direction to petty-bourgeois vacillation? It is also
suggested that Nasser failed to remove off-springs of rich bourgeois families from
military command posts which 'largely predetermined the victory of the pro-
capitalist trends in the country' (p.58). Was this failure an oversight? Should it not be
seen as reflecting the actual character (and limitations) of Nasser's revolution, as
well as the very real strength of the bourgeoisie?

Instead of social forces with materially determined class orientations, we meet
ideological class categories, left-wing and right-wing groups, competing for power.
Armies, we are told, develop features typical of bourgeois armies 'where power has
been captured by the right-wing' (Dolgopolov p.40). As an explanation this is
circular. The army is spoken of as an 'arena' for contestation between different
tendencies. It obscures the fact that the arena itself is materially determined, and so
are the rules of the game under which such contestation takes place. The 'relative
independence' attributed to army politics in Soviet theory (p.42) is part of a view of
the class character of the state that informs the theory of non-capitalist
development: a low level of class determination, due to the lack of strong bourgeois
or proletarian class forces, which creates an opening for ideological struggles
within the petty bourgeoisie that holds positions of state (military) power. There
are strong similarities with theories of the 'relative autonomy' of the post-colonial
state, at least in the manner in which these have been applied to Africa (see
Goulborne 1979). Here the state apparatus is inherited from colonialism, rather
than emerging from the development of classes within the social formation itself.
This is supposed to enhance the relative autonomy of the state vis-a-vis local
classes.

It is only in the African context, that this 'relative autonomy' argument has been
linked to the 'freedom' of the petty-bourgeoisie to choose between socialism and
capitalism. In its original formulation by Hamza Alavi (1972) in relation to Pakistan,
there was no doubt about the bourgeois class character of the state.

The concept of relative autonomy, whether applied to state or the army, is unhelpful
in so far as it offers exemption from a substantive analysis of the social
determinants of political options. Once it is realised that the range of options is
itself materially determined, the usefulness of the concepts becomes limited.

Imperialism and the Ruling Class
Central to the Soviet argument as well as to much of the left analysis in Nigeria is the
notion of a dominant national contradiction between the people and imperialism. It
is this that is expected to give an anti-imperialist and thus potentially socialist
orientation to alternative regimes despite the absence of a politically significant
working class. It is the basis of the broad national unity that is expected to sustain
the left forces within the military when embarking on their road to socialist transformation.

The problem with such identification of contradictions is that it underestimates the extent to which imperialist domination is incorporated in the social formation. The advancement of local bourgeois class forces, for instance, is closely linked to world market relations as mediated by foreign firms. While there is competition of business opportunities, the contradiction between foreign and domestic capital is not antagonistic (Beckman 1981, 1982, 1985). Even in situations where the domestic bourgeoisie is still weak (which is not the case in Nigeria), a broad range of bourgeois-oriented commercial classes, including importers-exporters, distributors, contractors, cash-crop producing farmers etc., are critically dependent on and anxious to maintain the imperial link. They are certain to resist any drastic policy of de-linking. They can not be reduced to a compradorial element that can be easily isolated and eliminated. They occupy a critical role in the social formation, mediating relations between imperialism and all social classes in the circulation of commodities.

These strong commercial links also penetrate the state apparatus including the armed forces. Public institutions are central in circulation and accumulation. Any attempt to challenge the imperialist domination of the society is therefore likely to lead to confrontation with these broad and politically important commercial strata.

Far from being a source of national unity, imperialist domination is the hub of bourgeois class formation and the development of antagonistic social relations. Imperialist domination has a decisive influence on the class orientation of state power but in a rather different way than suggested by the theories discussed here. While it may give rise to anti-imperialist tendencies in society, the primary function of imperialist domination is to reinforce pro-imperialist state power. It is not the absence or low development of capitalist class contradictions, therefore, which will generate a basis for anti-imperialist politics, it is the intensification of such contradictions.

Furthermore, the theories underestimate the extent to which imperialist domination is translated into external support for faltering capitalist-oriented regimes as well as the obstruction of pro-socialist break-away attempts. The successful break-aways are few and their survival is threatened by imperialist-sponsored destabilisation and counter-revolution. Even when such threats can be contained with support from the socialist countries they subject the revolutionary process to extreme strains that undermine both its material achievements and its democratic foundations. The external threat underscores the critical role of firmly rooted democratic organisations capable of sustaining the process and protecting its democratic content.

Underestimating imperialism also means underestimating the ruling class. This is why Tyoden sees nothing that prevents a socialist military take-over in Nigeria. It borders on a world view without ruling classes where power is a question of a free-for-all struggle between ideological tendencies, left, right and centre. In Dolgopolov's study the nature of ruling class power is obscured by expressions such as the exploitative or reactionary 'upper curst', 'upper echelons' or 'upper stratum' (pp.6,22,65,112). Such metaphors help to separate ruling class power from the general structure of power relations in society, including its imperialist backbone. As a consequence, the political effort necessary to achieve a broad unity,
behind a national revolutionary programme and the removal of such ‘upper crust’ is underestimated.

The ease by which regimes are toppled in Africa has given the erroneous impression of a ‘power vacuum’, only waiting to be filled by determined left forces. Such ideas draw support from arguments which point to the failure of bourgeois regimes to establish hegemonic power. This makes them unstable and prone to be overthrown by the military (Falola and Ihonvbere 1985:258-9). Their inability to achieve hegemony is in turn explained by their dependence on imperialism which obstructs the development of capitalism (same p.261). Acheampong’s overthrow of Busia and Rawlings’ overthrow of Limann met with very little resistance, despite the fact that both regimes could claim a recent parliamentary mandate. In Nigeria, many have therefore seen revolutionary openings in the present deepening crisis of the bourgeoisie, as evidenced both by the collapse of the Shagari regime and subsequent fractional manoeuvring within the armed forces.

But crisis at the level of political regimes cannot be equated with a crises of ruling class power. Lack of consolidation, fractionalism, failure to solve questions of succession by constitutional methods etc. do not necessarily threaten ruling class power. That power is entrenched both in the economy and in the state apparatus, irrespective of the coming and going of regimes. Moreover, the weakness or strength of the ruling class can only be assessed in relation to non-ruling class forces. The weakness of the former only creates revolutionary openings if the latter are strong enough to sustain alternative state power. The ‘power vacuum’ that seems to be created by political crisis may therefore be deceptive.

In the case of Ghana, it may be argued that non-ruling class forces were strong enough to block, at least temporarily, direct rule by the political organisations of the bourgeoisie. But they were not strong enough to introduce and sustain class strategies of their own. As a result, the Rawlings regime finds itself engaged in the administrations of the same type of policies that the Limann government was prevented from pursuing by popular resistance, including the deal with the IMF.

A similar scenario is not implausible for Nigeria, although with the difference that bourgeois forces are much stronger in Nigeria and that the imperialist interests at stake are much higher. It is therefore less likely that the Nigerian ruling class will allow itself to be messed about by Rawlings-type revolutionaries. On the other hand, non-ruling class forces in Nigeria may also gather enough strength to block ruling class strategies, if only temporarily. A similar stalemate may therefore arise, though at a higher level.

**Political Implications: Adventurism and Democracy**

Despite protestations to the contrary (for instance Tyoden p.7), military vanguardism is an invitation to adventurism. By this I mean a tendency to commit political forces in support of left-military bids for power in situations where the prospects of succeeding are small. It is a gamble with high stakes. While such bids may succeed in temporarily installing a left-wing regime, its ability to contribute meaningfully to social transformation is obstructed by the weakness of its organised political base and the resilience of ruling class forces entrenched in production and the state apparatus.

The attempt to rally left forces around such a project exposes them to the prospects of right-wing repression when the project collapses. It may shatter existing
organisational efforts and eliminate scarce cadres. But repression may also come from the left-military regime itself. Precisely because its weak organised democratic base and its susceptibility to 'counter-revolutionary' subversion, such a regime will tend to be highly insecure and intolerant with opposition also within its own camp. The experience of existing socialist-oriented military regimes in this respect points to this danger.

Left-wing organisations may also seriously discredit themselves in the eyes of the people if they rally behind regimes, whose misjudgment of the balance of social forces, makes them end up administering ruling class policies. In the case of Ghana, the agreement with the IMF may have been inevitable, but it is hardly in the interest of the left to preside over a programme of neo-colonial restoration.

The militarist tendency encourages the neglect of political organisation. The military is made to substitute for the missing political vanguard. There is a remarkable contrast in this respect between Dolgopolov's account of the experience of the Russian Revolution and his views on the contemporary third world situation. In the Russian case, he demonstrated the decisive role of political control of the armed forces at each successive stage in the revolutionary process. The experience highlights the primacy of the political party. He makes frequent references to Lenin to buttress his position (pp.16-17,22-30).

In discussing the role of the military in third world revolutions, however, the primacy of political organisation has been forgotten. There is a conspicuous absence of references to the relationship between the military and the rest of society except in general formula as the 'unity of the army and the people' and the necessity of 'the participation of the broad population' (p.7) We are left ignorant about who is to direct the revolutionary process and ensure its democratic content.

We have seen how military vanguardists take the organisational weakness of the left as an alibi for military substitutionism. A more relevant response to this weakness would be to give highest priority to organisation including the struggle against state repression, the strengthening of internal democracy, and struggles in defense of popular interests as to earn the confidence of the people.

In Nigeria, we may only look at the difficulties faced by the trade unions, the weakness of their democratic structure, the low level of effective unionisation (partly concealed by the check-off system), their vulnerability to state repression, and their powerlessness in face of the crisis policies imposed by the state. In such a context, the military vanguardist project is diversionary.

The neglect of democratic organisation by the military vanguardists throws some doubts on the class nature of their revolutionary project. For what revolutionary forces is the military supposed to provide the vanguard? The emphasis on the national unity on an anti-imperialist platform and low levels of class antagonism suggest a revolution that is more national than democratic. This impression is reinforced by the way in which the revolutionary regime is seen as substituting for a missing 'national bourgeoisie' in the task of emancipating the nation. There is a common view within the Nigerian left, that the first stage of any national democratic revolution must seek the broadest possible alliance of forces on a national, anti-imperialist platform. This does not mean that the class content of the national democratic project can be left to a later stage. What will ensure that the benefits of the national revolution reaches the people?
The national democratic movement therefore need to be firmly committed to democracy: to the establishment of the most favourable conditions possible for the development of democratic organisations.

The experience of Afro-Asian countries is one more confirmation of Lenin’s thesis that the proletariat and all the working people must pass through the hard school of struggle for democracy as the essential condition of successful struggle for the socialist transformation of society (Ulyanovsky 1980:144).

Military vanguardist are perturbed by what they consider as the excessive emphasis placed by ‘vulgar anti-militarists’ on the political form of regimes, ‘pushing the main thing — its class essence and social goals — into the background’ (Dolgopolov p.69). Tyoden has a similar formulation. According to him, the dogmatic anti-militarists refuse to see that type of regimes does not matter. The importance is whether they address themselves ‘to the needs and aspirations of the mass of the people’ (p.4). This obscures the basic relationship between political form and political content. The popular democratic content of a regime (whether military or civilian) will reflect the strength of popular democratic forces in society and their ability to impress themselves on the administration of State Power. The organised democratic basis of a regime is a central aspect of its political form. As this tends to be neglected by the military vanguardists, the democratic content itself is endangered.

**How to Relate to the Military Left**

The rejection of military vanguardism is not to deny the vital role of patriotic and democratic elements within the armed forces. What is criticised is ‘substitutionism’, the tendency to assign the military a leading role, in the absence of organised democratic forces. The positions of a national democratic front would have to be energetically pursued also within the armed forces. There is no case for vulgar anti-militarism. The strong anti-democratic traditions within the armed forces, their self-appointed role as arbiters in politics, and the authoritarianism of the military command system make it the more necessary that a democratic orientation should be developed within the ranks. Democratic and patriotic officers and soldiers could then increasingly come to define their role as part of the national democratic movement and be responsive to democratic leadership and direction. Nor does the rejection of military vanguardism preclude relating constructively to left military intervention in politics if and when it happens. The Ghanaian experience illustrates the complex choices faced by left organisations with the second coming of Jerry Rawlings. Many who joined were no doubt full of illusions about the nature of the regime and the prospects for revolutionary transformation. Others may have had a more realistic assessment of the situation, its limitations and dangers but decided to join in an attempt to pursue limited objectives. Others decided to stay out because they felt little could be achieved. Yao Graham, a leading activist who remained with Rawlings longer than most, has suggested that:

Even those who disagree with coups as a mechanism for initiating revolutionary transformation on the basis of theoretical principle and the lessons of history have to start from reality in their attitudes to historical events. What was the objective impact of December 31? What possibilities did it open up, what dangers to revolution did it highten. This is more complex than simply throwing up our arms and saying ’they should not have done it’ (Graham 1984:25).

Graham invokes Le Duan, the great Vietnamese leader, in a call for ‘revolutionary creativity’ in finding correct methods of work in each concrete situation. The issue,
of course, was not just one of staying out or joining but more fundamentally one of the platform on which to relate. Also, the left itself must take part of the responsibility for encouraging a Rawlings type solution. Left military intervention is not a natural force. It is a response to the political tendencies prevalent within the wider left movement. The Ghanaian experience suggests that the theoretical and organisational basis for encouraging and joining Rawlings' intervention was weak. Without such organised guidance revolutionary creativity may not help much. Activists are easily swept away on the waves of populist adventurism, only to be shattered against the hard rocks of ruling class power.

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Bibliographic Note

The Left in Nigerian Politics and the Struggle for Socialism: 1945-1985

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This paper is a brief historical overview of certain aspects of radical, Left-wing politics in Nigeria in the 40 years between 1945 and 1985. It traces the origins, growth and nature of the radical struggle for some form of socialist transformation in the country and attempts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of some of the organisations that were established at various times since 1945 for the attainment of this goal. The myth that there is as yet no Left politics in Nigeria is false. By the end of the Second World War, when the nationalist struggle for independence attained its peak, radical activism both within and outside the trade union movement had started in earnest and has been growing since then, taking various forms, as the contradictions of the capitalist development process in Nigeria deepen. As politicians of all shades begin to gear themselves in readiness for the proposed transfer of power from the military government to civilians in 1990, the Nigerian Left can look back to a heritage, with both positive and negative aspects, which we attempt to pin-point in the course of our discussion. The crucial question is how the positive aspects of that heritage can be harnessed and extended in order to advance the struggle for socialism and how the errors of the past are to be avoided in the run-up to 1990.

Radical Politics and the Nationalist Struggle: 1945-1960

Prior to 1945, nationalist politics in Nigeria was dominated by the activities of Lagos-based and Western-educated elites organised around the Nigerian National Democratic Party whose monopoly was broken in the 1930s by the broader-based Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). However, it was not until the formation of the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the national tour of its leaders in 1944 that some form of militant nationalist politics encompassing the whole country began in earnest, expressing its highest articulation in the Zikist Movement. Although the Zikist Movement was affiliated to the NCNC, the two organisations were relatively distinct in practice, differing in their political and ideological outlook. It was the charismatic personality of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (popularly called Zik) that provided the main link between the two nationalist groups. While Azikiwe was the first Secretary General of the NCNC and later its national President, he was also an important political focus from whom the Zikists drew part of their philosophical inspiration to sustain their activism. Indeed, the Zikist Movement was formed in 1946 partly in response to Azikiwe’s appeal to Nigerians to ‘defend’ him against his ‘colonialist attackers’ and join him in the propagation of anti-colonial ideals. Azikiwe’s newspapers — the West African Pilot and the Daily Comet — had been banned by the colonial government because of their open support for the
Michael Imoudu-led workers strike of 22 June 1945. It was against this background and the growing conviction among a cross-section of Nigerians, especially the youth, of the need to fight the colonial state’s repressive policies more forcefully that the Zikist Movement was formed, first as an unregistered students society at Yaba Higher College in 1945 and later launched as a national organisation on 16 February 1946 at Tinubu Methodist High School, where 200 people from all over Nigeria and Ghana assembled for the purpose. Kola Balogun was elected its first President while M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu become General Secretary. Other founding members included Nduka Eze, a radical trade union activist who later became the leader of the biggest workers union in the country at that time, Abiodun Aloba, Raji Abdallah, Fred Anyiam.

The ideological and political outlook of the Movement was defined by the founding members as containing the anti-colonial ideas of the late Ghanaian Bishop Aggrey who coined the slogan ‘I am proud of my colour’, the anti-colonial speeches and ideas of Azikiwe and the philosophical form given to ‘Zikism’ by Nwafor Orizu (see Without Bitterness, reprinted 1980). But perhaps their most radical political demand was the call for the immediate liquidation of colonial rule in West Africa as a first step towards the formation of a West African Union in the hope that it would lay the basis for African continental unity along ‘socialist’ lines. This programme represented a significant advance over previous nationalist demands in the country which had been dominated by requests for the gradual incremental devolution of power and responsibility to the educated elite, equal pay for equal work and educational qualifications, self-government within the commonwealth and other limited bourgeois demands. The main strength of the Zikist Movement was its ability to broaden nationalist political consciousness in the country especially through its strong linkages with the labour movement through Nduka Eze and other radical labour leaders. Owing to the enlarged popular participation of the working people in the nationalist agitation against colonialism, the Zikists were able to make serious attempts to redefine the form and content of the anti-colonial struggle and in several instances succeeded in putting working class demands on the political agenda in close concert with the trade union movement. This is evidenced by the series of protest demonstrations and rallies which the Zikists organised to denounce the Iva Valley Massacre that followed the Enugu Coal Miners’ Strike of 1949. Similar demonstrations were organised by the Movement to protest against racial discrimination at the Bristol Hotel in Lagos. The most advanced section of the Zikists also carried out political education work among the working people. The Movement was the first organisation to openly espouse ‘socialism’ as a goal of the national liberation struggle against British imperialism. Its cadres were able to organise on a national scale across the length and breadth of the country, though it was better established in the metropolitan centres like Lagos, Enugu, Onitsha, Kano and others. It was perhaps a mark of its power of mobilisation and the political threat it posed to the bourgeois nationalist parties, especially the NCNC, that its leading activists were found ‘guilty’ by the NCNC leadership of organizing a party within a party.

From the outset, the goals and methods of the Zikist Movement in the anti-colonial struggle were bound to lead it into a confrontation with the established nationalist organisations, especially the NCNC to which it was affiliated. The NCNC and the Zikist Movement would work in harmony only so long as the latter did not threaten the basis of operation of the former whose agitation remained within the established constitutional framework. As it was, the militancy of the most advanced
section of the Zikists became a source of profound insecurity for the leadership of the NCNC, especially Azikiwe who felt that his chances of participating effectively in the decolonisation process from a position of advantage as the leader of the single biggest nationalist party and a 'responsible' nationalist were being jeopardised by the young radicals of the Movement. The Zikist Movement had confronted the colonial state, but they did not reckon with the hostility of the nationalist parties and Azikiwe's eclecticism and opportunism. A major weakness of the Movement was its failure to march separately from the outset in the nationalist anti-colonial struggle. Its quest for a radical type of anti-colonialism was incompatible with the NCNC's whole strategy which was built solely on a campaign for the eventual inheritance of political power form the colonialists without any commitment to altering the class basis of the economy.

The organisational weakness of the Zikists was compounded by the dominant philosophical outlook in the Movement. The ideology of 'Zikism' was little more than a philosophy of blackism in the context of the nationalist struggle. Furthermore, although there was a significant minority of socialists in the Movement, most of the membership consisted of blackists and Azikiwe die-hards who were awed by the charisma of the man and were unconditionally loyal to him. This was brought out sharply in the Movement's last convention held in Kaduna in December 1949 before it was banned. The socialists in the Movement who at the time held its key leadership positions attempted, in the face of the growing hostility of the NCNC, to change the name of the organisation but the motion, sponsored by Mokwugo Okoye, was defeated. Furthermore, although a motion calling for the relaunching of 'positive action' was carried by the convention, some of the Zikists backed out of it because it was against Azikiwe's wishes. Clearly the Movement's structure and composition as a pot pourri of disparate groups contributed in no small measure to weakening it.

In order to convince the British Colonial Office of 'their readiness to 'assume responsibility', the leading nationalists in the country were quite prepared to repudiate all forms of militant nationalism and radicalism. Following the imposition of a regionalist structure of power as spelt out in the Macpherson constitution of 1951, the NCNC abandoned its initial opposition to regionalism and assumed government office in the Eastern Region while nursing ambitions of winning in the West and also controlling federal power in Lagos. Both Azikiwe and the NCNC therefore repudiated the Zikists as their price for 'responsibility' and collaborated with the colonial state in crushing the Movement. Many activists of the Movement, including Nduka Eze, Unasu Amosu, Osita Agwuna, Raji Abdallah, Ogedegbe Macaulay, J.J. Odufuwa and others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for sedition, libel or treason. Neither Azikiwe nor the NCNC defended them against incarceration. Those of them who were not in jail were being tried, and many were later expelled, by the NCNC for alleged 'anti-party activities'. Thus although the Zikists were very useful in mobilising a broad section of Nigerians for anti-colonial agitations, strikes, lockouts and demonstrations, actions which accelerated the decolonisation process, they were easily crushed through the dual hostility of the emerging Nigerian bourgeoisie and the colonial state using its repressive organs.

But in a historical context, the experience of the Zikist Movement and its contribution to militant politics in Nigeria can not be written off as totally irrelevant to socialists. For many of them stood up, at great personal peril in their widely
sustained campaign, both independently and through the NCNC, against the 1946 Richards constitution which first laid the groundwork for regionalism and against ‘the four obnoxious ordinances’ passed by the colonial state covering land and mineral rights. The activism of the Movement was reflected in the many pamphlets it published and circulated such as the Zimo Newsletter, A call for Revolution, Worker of Nigeria Revolt and What satyagraha means to us and the organisation of boycott actions against foreign companies and picketing activities during workers’ strikes [Okoye, 1981]. Although their blueprint for a national guerilla liberation war sounded somewhat idealistic, even naive, not based on any suggestion that the requisite conditions to support it existed in the country at the time, it was a clear indication of the degree of their commitment to the anti-colonial struggle. However, their eventual defeat and collapse was also a salutary lesson on the dangers of political entryism in whatever guise. Their betrayal by Azikiwe underlines the importance of separating issues from personality in any form of radical struggle and a patent warning on the dangers of hero-worshipping. The experience of the Zikist Movement was the first clear indicator of the need for the working people of Nigeria to organise independently in their own political organization in the struggle for socialism.

The regionalisation of politics in Nigeria through the Richards and Macpherson constitutions of 1946 and 1951 respectively and the consequent institutionalisation of ethnicity in the body politic represented a severe setback for the country in its quest for nationhood. For the emerging Left, it meant, in effect, a setback in the struggle for social transformation on a national scale as effective power was devolved to the powerful regions in the run-up to independence. Most Left struggles outside the trade union movement became focused within the regions. The Northern (later Nigerian) Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) emerged as one of the most radical political organisations built around a populist ideology that entailed a selective acceptance of various aspects of marxism. NEPU’s political orientation, outlook and origins cannot be divorced from the uneven nature of capitalist penetration and development in Nigeria and the resultant difference in the forms of socio-economic and political development among regions, sections and groups in the country. In the Northern Region, the aristocracy, local titled officials and their clients continued to wield considerable political power as provided by the Lugardian Indirect Rule system which enabled the emirs to exercise autocratic power while at the same time subordinating them to the British colonial state. NEPU was established in 1949 as a political response in the North to the problems of a poor agrarian society dominated by foreign, largely mercantile capital, extortionate taxes and the repressive rule of the Anglo-Fulani Native Authorities. It was a movement of petty traders, peasants, artisans and destitutes led by a populist intelligentsia that appealed to ‘the masses’ to effect political change by resisting the aristocracy and foreign exploitation.

NEPU’s main political programme was geared towards the establishment of a ‘people-oriented’ state under the banner of the Sawaba (Freedom) Declaration. This was a significant political demand for which NEPU activists paid dearly in fines, extortions, heavy taxation, exile, imprisonment and even and sacking of a whole village by the dominant Sarauta (aristocracy) and their clients and agents. NEPU’s political strength was its ability to put broadly democratic demands on the agenda and to introduce political awareness among peasants. In NEPU, the peasantry and urban poor had a vehicle through which they could say ‘NO’ to their oppression. NEPU’s activities reduced the scope of the extortionate practices by
which the aristocracy exploited the peasantry — until the NPC consolidated their power sufficiently, by 1961, to impose their ways again. It was also the first organisation to put the issue of gender oppression and the rights of political minorities at the centre of political mobilisation. But the major source of NEPU’s strength in the North was also a source of its weakness in terms of mobilising oppressed classes on a national scale especially in the south. For its ideological appeal of populist ‘anti-feudalism’ in the North struck no similar chord to give it mass followership in Western and Eastern Nigeria.

Apart from NEPU, many of the Left individuals in the country sought avenues for political struggle by joining the Action Group (A.G.) which formed the government of the Western Region and, to a lesser extent, the NCNC which was in power in the East. Their strategy was to seek to effect change by manoeuvring within these bourgeois political parties. In the West, many of the radicals during this period tended to confuse the A.G.’s limited welfarist policies, such as free education, as evidence either of the ‘socialist’ intentions of the party’s leadership or of the possibility of steering it towards socialism by infiltrating its structure. But this entryism met with dismal failure. A good number of the radical politicians in the Western and Eastern Regions were particularly influenced by the activities of Fabians in the U.K. during this period. Their outlook was shaped by the ideas propagated by the Fabian colonial bureaux, especially their influential magazine *The Spectrum* as well as the writings of Webbs and Laski. The Fabian Society, with its tremendous influence on the post-war Colonial Office in London, and its ‘developmentalist’ ethos, was of particular influence during the various constitutional conferences before independence and many of its members served as unofficial advisers to some of the delegations to these conferences. The Fabians had a vision of building socialism world-wide through the various colonised elites of broad left-wing persuasion. Thus, they maintained strong links with individuals like Awolowo, Aminu Kano, Fred Anyam and others. H.O. Davies, A. Enahoro and Bamisaie were among other numerous individual nationalists who had come in contact with the Fabians and organised so-called ‘socialist discussion circles’ for the propagation of ‘socialism’ among the youth, workers, journalists and other groups in and around Lagos. It was in keeping with the Fabian tradition that many radical individuals felt that they could only build ‘socialism’ by cornering influential government and party positions.

**Radical Politics in the First Republic: 1960-1966**

The regionalist structure created by the Macpherson constitution provided the basis for the attainment of Nigeria’s independence in 1960. With the Zikist Movement defeated, NEPU remained the leading radical organization among all the political groupings in the country. The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) and numerous ethnic and sectional irredentist political organisations which proliferated all over the country in response to widespread discontent and oppression of minorities did not make any pretension to offer a radical resolution of the problems that give rise to them. NEPU defined the struggle in Northern Nigeria in anti-feudal terms and saw the parties of the Southern bourgeoisie as ‘progressive’ allies in the struggle against the NPC. Yet for the oppressed classes of the South, there was nothing progressive about their bourgeoisie. NEPU’s first alliance was with the NCNC in 1956. It then allied with the NCNC, AG and UMUC in the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) in 1963/64 with the aim of defeating the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) which linked the NPC with Akintola’s unpopular
NNDP government in the West and other minor parties. But UPGA politics was dominated by the weight of the NCNC and the AG, with NEPU as a subordinated partner overwhelmed by the struggle of the various fractions of the emerging bourgeoisie for control of federal power.

As to the Leftists in the A.G., their activities continued to be defined within the framework of the electoral strategy, factional rivalries and the fortunes and misfortunes of its leadership. The leadership of the party, in particular Awolowo, had always maintained a platonic relationship with individual socialists, using them to staff the party bureaucracy, propaganda offices and research departments. The A.G. had declared 'socialism' as its goal. The 'socialist' programmes of the party were articulated in elaborate style by the Leftists attached to the Secretariat. During periods of crisis, such as the 1962/63 intra-party feud, Awolowo had been only too willing to tolerate these Leftists, including some avowed marxists as part of his own scheme to dislodge his rivals in the Akintola faction and win credibility for himself among the populace. This way, Awolowo has been able to retain the confidence of some Nigerian Leftists who hold an illusion of him as a 'progressive' bourgeois politician who can be used to build the 'revolution'. But while the A.G. Leftists were busy organising for the 'revolution' in the party Secretariat, the Right, which included rich merchants, lawyers and accountants, big contractors and budding industrialists continued to appropriate public resources for their own class advancement. The greatest legacy of the A.G. Leftists are the heaps of papers on proceedings of the various annual summer schools in which party cardres were lectured on subjects as diverse as the meaning of dialectical materialism and the necessity of value politics. The Leftists were paper tigers in a party which was the vehicle of the rapidly rising Yoruba bourgeoisie. In the end, the activities of the A.G. Leftists did less to advance the interests of the working people of the Western Region and more to reinforce the grip of the bourgeoisie and Awolowo on the populace.

In the Eastern Region, after the purge of the Zikists, it was left to Chike Obi's Nigerian Dynamic Party (NDP) to make pretentious claims to radicalism. In fact, Obi's ideological outlook rested on advocacy of populist authoritarianism as was practised by his hero, Kemal Ataturk of Turkey. The NDP had little electoral success.

Much of the burden for the defence of the rights of workers on a national scale continued to be borne by the radical sections of the labour movement organised in the Nigerian Trade Union Congress, and the Nigerian Youth Congress (NYC), led by Otegbeye, Wahab Goodluck, Kunle Oyero, Eskor Toyo, Ola Oni, Baba Omojola, Olu Adebayo among others. the NYC became an important vehicle for the flowering of progressive opinion in the country, working in close concert with the National Union of Nigerian students (NUNS) which was established in 1956 and the radical section of the trade unions. Together, the NYC, NUNS and the militant labour groups organised a host of joint activities including orchestrated demonstrations against the 1958 Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact which finally led to the revocation of the Pact. They also organised protest marches over issues such as better living conditions for workers and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. Perhaps the greatest demonstration of radical initiative in this period was the successful organisation and prosecution of the general strike of 1964 which brought the waring factions of the labour movement together. It was this manifestation of general discontent which the dominant groups in UPGA sought to exploit for their own
advantage. Otegbeye and radical trade unionists like Wahab Goodluck tried to organise a working peoples' party which they called the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party (SWAFP) which announced a programme of scientific socialism. At about the same time, the veteran Michael Imonudu, along with Baba Omojola, Ola Oni, J.O.B. Omotosho, Kolagbodi and Khayam also formed the Nigerian Labour Party (NLP) with the declared aim of fighting for socialism in the country. Both groups attracted activists from the NYC. However, these parties were still trying to find a footing when the crisis of federalism began to take dangerous dimensions. The state began to totter towards a precipice which finally came with the overthrow of the First Republic in January 1966. Although the events leading up to the crisis, including the total distrust of bourgeois politics and the erosion of the legitimacy of state power did present opportunities for revolutionary politics, it was a mark of the organisational weakness of the Left that it could not take advantage of the situation.

The Left and the Crisis of Federalism 1966-1970
In one respect, the roots of the crisis of state power that finally culminated in a three-year civil war between 1967 and 1970 could be traced to the regionalisation of the country and the institutionalisation of ethno-regional politics through the Macpherson constitution in the context of a dependent capitalist economy. By the early 1960s the nationalists who assumed post-colonial state power were unable to deliver the 'goods and services' which they promised independence would bring to the working people. The balance of payments crisis of 1964-1966 further eroded the living standards of the oppressed and exploited classes. Corruption, graft, clientelism and patronage were perpetrated by politicians and civil servants as the Foster-Sutton, Coker and Jodah commissions of enquiry reports into the activities of the governing parties and state economic institutions (marketing boards and development corporations) in each region showed clearly. The 1964 federal elections were characterised by widespread gerrymandering and electoral malpractices. The UPGA electoral boycott only showed the failure of constitutional politics to resolve the political crisis, and was only settled by accommodating the interests of politicians without attention to issues of policy or the interests of the public. The 1965 elections in the West were decided by widespread vote-rigging and violence. Even more violence was to follow after Akintola was declared winner. The anarchical situation in the West provided the immediate background for the military intervention of January 1966.

The Majors' coup attempt, led by Major Nzeogwu Kaduna was initially popular with the majority of Nigerians. However, because it was not guided by a popular working peoples' organization or anchored directly on their aspirations, its popularity was soon eroded by the dynamics of the increasingly bitter intra-bourgeois feud as well as by ethnic and regional contradictions in the polity. There was no doubt that the officers had good intentions about the need to alter the nature of Nigerian politics and held strong patriotic sentiments, in spite of what some conspiratorial theorists on the Right and Left would like us to believe. Rather than view the defeat of the Majors and the eventual ascension to power of General Ironsi as part of an initial and deliberate so-called 'Igbo conspiracy' at national hegemony, it is our view that they were victims of their own incorrect strategy. As Ademoyega's first-hand account shows, they wished to replace a system of ethnic and regional preferment with a meritocratic system. They expected to solve problems for the working people and to win their support but had no direct contact with them. Their particular version of 'authoritarian populism' did not require organizational
groundwork among workers and farmers. Consequently, their putsch became little more than a misadventure. The experience of the Majors raises the issue, which is being debated among Nigerian Leftists today, of whether the military can be a vanguard for the liberation of Nigeria and its socialist transformation [see Beckman in this issue]. Is it possible for military officers whether junior, senior or recruits to transcend their narrow conception of patriotism and nationalism as an institution? The experience of the Majors would seem to suggest that it is neither a possible, desireable or prudent path to be envisaged by any serious marxist interested in working towards a genuine social transformation. Not only is the military a crucial part of the coercive apparatus of bourgeois state power, its ethos tends to be anti-democratic and the structural imperatives of a capitalist social order set the limits for its action. The disastrous consequences of the Majors' coup should serve as a lesson of dangers inherent in a reliance on some military interventionist path to 'socialism'. The hero-and-crowd approach which it entails can only be a recipe for autocracy.

The failure of the Majors' coup attempt and the deepening crisis of state power accelerated the prospects of a civil war which finally broke out in 1967 when Ojukwu announced the establishment of the 'independent Republic of Biafra' and the secession from the federation of Nigeria. The crisis itself led to intense divisions on the Left with two broad groups emerging — the so-called federal Left and the so-called Biafran Left. Two broad tendencies could be identified within the federal Left. First there were those who started from the premise of an alleged Igbo conspiracy to seize power failing which an attempt was made to break-up the Nigerian state in collusion with western imperialist interests. This rather chauvinistic interpretation of the crisis ignores the fact that the 'federalist' and secessionist bourgeoisies were both equally responsible for the events that led to the outbreak of the war, and the reasons why, after the massacres of May, and September/October 1966, most Igbos supported the secession which was led and directed by the Igbo bourgeoisie. The second group of federal Leftists took a more sober view, generally condemning the carnage on both sides, condemning the war as an intrabourgeois feud but also vehemently opposed secession and campaigned against the formation of Biafra. Significantly, among this second group of socialists were Ikoku, Eskor Toyo, Mokwugo Okoye and others of eastern Nigerian origin. But because there was no powerful working class organisation in the country, the views of the second school could not be converted into concerted independent action. Moreover, by the time the hostilities started, the pre-war Left had been deeply divided into mutually suspicious camps.

The core of Left activists from the old Eastern Region were solidly behind the secession. Activists of the clandestine Biafran Communist Party (BCP) felt that the war situation could be used to lay the basis for a possible socialist transformation. According to Nzimiro, these Leftists saw the secession as a test of their claim to being marxists. Nzimiro himself noted that 'when the [Ojukwu] regime ran out of ideology, when it became evident that the call for... aid [from] the Free World was an illusion, when the slogans against feudalism were no longer enough to hold the masses whose morale was dwindling in the face of corruption and treachery of the bourgeoisie, they acquiesced to suggestion [from the Leftists] that a new orientation was necessary' [Nzimiro, 1983]. Ojukwu summoned individual Leftists to draft a programme which could be sold to Europe in order to win their support for the secessionist cause. Nzimiro and his comrades therefore decided to use the opportunity to penetrate the State House and the Foreign Office as well as other
Biafran state organs. They also ran several propaganda missions abroad on behalf of the regime and maintained what Nzimiro claims was an elaborate but clandestine party structure on all fronts [Nzimiro, 1983]. Yet, it would seem from his account that Ojukwu continued to be the dog that wagged the socialist tail for his own tactical reasons. Ojukwu, whose disdain for marxism is legendary, tolerated and used these Leftists for his purposes without losing the agenda to them just as Awolowo effectively used A.G. Leftists for his own ends.

At the outset of the war, a radical element on the Biafran side, including Nzeogwu Kaduna, Victor Banjo and others involved in the original January 1966 coup, sought to turn the war into a struggle to unite Nigeria under the control of 'progressive' forces. They hoped that the invasion of the Mid-West would enable them to win control of the West, with the help of sympathisers there. This rather contradictory programme of going through secession to unity collapsed with the retreat of Biafran forces from the Mid-West and the subsequent execution by Ojukwu of Banjo and his associates.

There were also others like Isaac Boro and his partisans who resisted the government of Ojukwu vehemently because of the fear of the minority nationalities of the old Eastern Region at the prospect of Igbo domination if the secession succeeded. By 1970, the secessionist effort had been defeated by federal troops and the civil war ended with the country’s geographical boundaries intact.

Military Rule, Oil Boom and Radical Politics between 1970-1979
The immediate post-war period was an era of a new wave of nationalist upsurge in Nigeria resting on the fact that the country had survived dismemberment. The new nationalism was given a material basis by the huge windfall of revenues generated from the petroleum boom in the early 1970s, especially after the OPEC oil price revolution of 1973. The war also strengthened the ideological hold of the bourgeoisie on the country as it gave the ruling class more confidence in its ability to hold Nigeria together. It was often said, with some patriotic zeal, that the federal government fought the war without significant foreign assistance and relying exclusively on internal finances. The state and the bourgeoisie made a fresh attempt at unity as enshrined in the slogan of the three 'Rs' — Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. While aiming at bourgeois unity within the context of continuing capitalist expansion, the state made renewed attempts to break the power of the radical section of the trade union movement through a variety of decrees and eventually a ban on such socialist labour leaders as Goodluck, Bassey and Imoudu from further participation in the activities of the labour movement. Although the state successfully created its own centralised labour union, the surviving radicals managed to capture key posts in the elections to the Executive council of the new Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), thereby dealing a severe setback to the state's effort at creating a docile labour force and a bureaucratised centralised union.

The oil boom era also opened up possibilities as well as dangers for the Left. The flowering of marxist ideas in universities and other institutions of higher learning reached a new height in the face of the growing polarisation of society emanating out of the oil boom. Numerous study groups, discussion classes and reading circles on marxism sprang up across the country, especially in higher institutions of learning. They involved academics, students and sometimes workers. Such organizations include the Movement for a Progressive Nigerian (MPN); Marxist-
Leninist Movement of Nigeria (MLMN); Nigerian Democratic Movement (NDM); Alliance for Progress (AFP); African Anti-Apartheid Youth Front (AAYF); Youth Solidarity on Southern Africa (YUSSA); National Council for National Awareness (NCNA) etc. Some of these organisations carried out adult and workers' education classes sometimes in co-operation with unions. Many of them also had regular bulletins, newsletters, magazines and newspapers such as *The Patriot*, *The comrade*, *The Vanguard*, *Struggle*, *Forward*, *Onward*, *The Ife dialogue*, *Nigerian Socialist*, *Nsukka Scope*, *Theory and Practice*, *The Peoples' cause* and *The Lagoon Echo* through which they articulated views on the contradictions of capitalism in Nigeria and the struggle for a socialist transformation. The flowering of Leftist ideas in the 1970s benefited from a degree of state tolerance arising out of the support for the federal government by the Soviet Union and East European States during the war. It was also an outcome of the struggles of democratic organisations like the radical trade unions within the country for freedom of thought and association. After the war, the host of friendship associations with individual socialist countries proliferated — the Nigeria-Cuba Friendship Association; Nigeria-Soviet Association etc. Trade Unionists, students and other activists used these associations to bring in progressive literature and to visit East bloc countries, often on scholarship, to study. In many universities, intellectual battles raged as marxist intellectuals made ebullient critiques of received western bourgeois paradigms, especially the modernisation/behavioural school. In many cases, radical academics reversed the dominance of bourgeois intellectualism and in others, the latter were put on the defensive. The peak of this came with the highly successful international conference commemorating the centenary of the death of Karl Marx held in March 1983 at the Ahmadu Bello University, whose progressive intellectuals initiated and organised it. By the time the conference took place, a radical women's organisation, Women In Nigeria (WIN) was already functioning, bringing together feminists, womanists and marxists in the independent struggle for women's rights and challenging the hegemony of the National Council for Nigerian Women which brought together the wives of leading bourgeois elements in the country.

If the 1970s could be rightly described as a dynamic decade for the flowering of radical ideas, it also brought with it the problems of sectarianism and dogmatism among marxists. The dominant paradigm for capturing the processes accelerated by the 'oil boom' among Leftists remained orthodox Underdevelopment and Dependency Theory (UDT). In this tradition, many progressive intellectuals came to characterise the Nigerian domestic bourgeoisie as merely a band of incompetent puppets of imperialism unable to manage the political economy properly and remaining a mere caricature of its foreign masters. The class enemy was also dismissed as lazy, unimaginative and uncreative. From this premise, some Leftists addressed secret memos to state officials, served on government commissions, took up secret and open advisory posts, and sought to build influence with the powers that be, preferring advice on how the system could be made to work better, and all in a bid to be seen to be relevant and not just 'armchair theoreticians'. In this way, reformism became a way of life among many and 'pragmatism' became an alibi for opportunism, anti-theory and anti-organization.

In 1975, Murtala Ramat Mohammed replaced General Yakubu Gowen's government in a coup. Murtala's brief but eventful rule captured the popular imagination of many Nigerians for six months before he was struck down by an assassin's bullet in an abortive coup attempt on 13 February 1976. There were debates on the Left on what to make of his rule, the most popular in Nigeria's contemporary history. The
debates raised questions about the relationship between scientific socialism, nationalism, patriotism and populism. The so-called 'Ramatists' saw the rise of Murtala as opening up an opportunity for the establishment of a progressive socialist military government, sometimes compared to what Mengistu was trying to do in Ethiopia at about the same time. Several of them joined the government in different advisory capacities, formal and informal, on the basis of this conviction. As evidence, they point to the anti-imperialist foreign policy of the government, especially the role Murtala played in getting the OAU to recognise the MPLA as the sole legitimate representative of the Angolan people during the civil war and the struggle against the South African invasion in 1976. At the domestic level, his anti-corruption drive and attempt to rationalise the civil service through mass purges are also pointed to his government's programme to subdue the labour movement through the creation of the NLC is often ignored. In retrospect, it would seem that Murtala's was a bold effort at rationalising, not over-turning, the capitalista order in Nigeria in order to put it on a more efficient footing. It was not a bid to undermine capitalism or the bourgeoisie, local and foreign, but rather an attempt to imbue the system with a greater sense of direction. This goal was pursued within the framework of a dynamic kind of nationalism but one which was not anchored on any working peoples organization or aspiration. The Murtala era was therefore not an effort at socialism. It is quite possible to be nationalistic, patriotic and populist without being socialist and even while holding rabidly anti-marxist views.

There is still a vaguely populist and statist tendency among some Leftists in which emphasis is put on the need for a good, patriotic and honest leader who can stand up for Nigeria, as if the country is homogenous without antagonistic classes, and nationalise foreign assets, which is not exactly the same as socialisation. This statist tendency often entails a disdain for independent workers' organisational efforts and rests on the hero-and-crowd approach — if you think the masses will obstruct the revolution, leave them out. The loss of the dynamism of the Murtala administration after the assassination of February 1976 shows just how unrealistic it is to put premium on an individual, however honest or patriotic, in the struggle for social change. A true revolutionary process does not die with its leader.

Murtala's major commitment after coming to power in 1975 was to return the country to civilian rule by 1979. The military-supervised process was set in motion in 1976 when the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was established by Murtala to work out a new framework for party politics. There was no established organisation to articulate the collective class interests of the working people and place them on the agenda. Rather what obtained was the co-option of two leading radicals, Usman and Osoba, into the 50-member CDC, as individuals and not as representatives of working peoples' organisation. This way, the state attempted to create the impression among the working people that their aspiration could be pursued and realised within the existing bourgeois framework. Predictably, Usman and Osoba were unable to agree with the draft constitutional proposals put forward by the majority of the members of the CDC. They therefore submitted their own alternative proposals which came to be known as the Minority Report. The Report made far-reaching suggestions on all aspects of the Nigerian political economy, including a comprehensive attempt to re-define citizenship and indigeneity as a means of depoliticising ethnicity. But when the Constituent Assembly was created to debate, amend and ratify the work of the CDC, only the Majority Report was presented before it, with the Usman-Osoba submission conveniently jettisoned as though it never existed. In retrospect, the Minority Report was a monument to
radical individual effort and intelligence in the constitution-making process and evidence of the falsity of a statist approach to the socialist struggle, which seeks to use the bourgeois state against itself.

Left Politics in the Second Republic: 1979-1983

Through the CDC and the Constituent Assembly, the Nigerian ruling class attempted to lay the basis for its domination of political process in the Second Republic by banning trade unions from forming or affiliating to political parties. Student organizations were similarly banned and academics as well as civil servants were required to resign their posts if they wanted to partake in party politics. There was of course no provision requiring businessmen and women, industrialists, contractors and merchants to resign from their businesses before they could join or form a party. The state sought to neutralise the Left by balkanising its elements behind ruling class parties of the 'men of timbre and calibre' who could garner the enormous financial resources required for operating party offices and meet the cost of electioneering. As various bourgeois forces were re-grouping themselves in preparation for the hand-over of power by the military government, discussions were also started on the Left about the prospects of presenting a united front. These consultations culminated in the First All-Nigeria Socialist Conference held in Zaria in 1977. One of the main questions before the delegates was whether the situation was ripe for a socialist party in the country. Two broad positions emerged. First there were those who felt the situation was not yet ripe and suggested the alignment of socialists with the most 'progressive' bourgeois party. At the forefront of this entryist strategy was Ikoku, doyen of A.G. radicals, who based his stand on a two-stage theory of national liberation consisting of the national democratic revolution led by the bourgeoisie and then the socialist revolution of the working people against the bourgeoisie. The immediate task for 1979 was therefore to support the national democratic revolution. The second position rejected this, calling instead for the immediate formation of an independent working peoples' party whose activities need not be reduced to that of an electioneering machine but whose cadres should establish linkages with trade unions, student groups and the peasantry for the defence and advancement of democratic rights. Some elements in this group argued that the starting point for the socialist struggle should be at the point of the working peoples' daily struggle as a necessary means of advancing socialist consciousness. In the end, the conference split up following a walk out staged by Ikoku and his supporters. Those delegates who remained behind agreed on a broad range of issues relating to the democratic rights of the working people. They called their communiqué the 'Zaria Declaration of 1977'.

After the military government lifted the ban on politics, a number of Left-wing parties were formed and in their bid to get recognition from the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) attempted to present a united front. Among them were Ola Oni's Socialist Party of Workers, Youths and Farmers (SPWYF) and M.O. Idirisu's Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) but their papers were rejected by FEDECO. Many of these radicals therefore went into the registered parties especially the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) led by Aminu Kano and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) of Obafemi Awolowo. Thus Sidi Ali Sirajo and others joined Ikoku, Chukumerije, Aminu Kano and Balarabe Musa in the PRP while Ola Oni had a brief escapade with the UPN before returning to his SPWYF. In the UPN secretariat there were a number of radicals playing a similar role as the A.G. radicals did in the First Republic as shown earlier above. Among them were Ebenezer Babatope, the old Zikist M.C.K.
Ajuluchukwu, Otegbeye and younger activists like Ofeimun who laboured to give the UPN one of the most powerful party structures but, like everything else, were subordinated to Awolowo's ambition, exercising no influence independent of his charisma. What again emerged was not a case of these radicals using Awolowo to advance the interests of the working people but rather Awolowo using them to advance his ambitions. In return for their loyalty and hard work, they had his trust in their ability. It was a paternalistic relationship.

Of the five parties which FEDECO registered to contest the 1979 elections, the PRP no doubt had the most advanced programme. Its credentials were strengthened by its NEPU heritage. Its clarion call, like NEPU's revolved around the redemption of the 'masses' from 'feudalism' and domination by the 'Northern oligarchy', this in spite of the profound socio-politico-economic changes that had taken place in the north of Nigeria, including the weakening of the hold of the aristocracy on the political economy relative to the bureaucrats and businessmen and the expansion of import-substitution industrialisation as the capitalist commoditisation process gathered pace. Its ideology of fighting 'feudalism' was therefore behind reality. However, many radicals went into the party on a variety of grounds, some of them, like Bene and Eddie Madunagu (1982), going so far as to claim that it was the vanguard party at the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. Others, like Toyo, joined the party because they believed that through it, they could mobilise the masses against the Nigerian bourgeoisie and avoid political isolation in the Second Republic. A third position put forward by Mustapha and others, advocated greater caution in assessing the limits and capabilities of PRP given its internal composition and the dynamics of electoral politics. While rejecting any suggestion that the PRP was the vanguard, they insisted that the Left could not at the same time afford a 'we/they' attitude to the party, arguing that it does have general democratic aspects to it to which the Left ought to relate creatively.

The party was a wish-fulfilment organization which meant different things to the different groups that made up its membership. Its general programme promised to redeem the 'masses' and hand over power to the 'people' who it described as the 'salt of the earth' and defined to include '...the workers, peasants, fishermen, craftsmen, youths, traders, small businessmen, self-employed persons as well as progressive professionals, academicians, big businessmen and traditional rulers with a conscience.' The party's new social order promised to give everybody a chance. Necessarily therefore, the party became a basket of interests which were often contradictory, which proved to be a fertile source of factionalism. Thus although the PRP did have progressive aspects to it, there was no question of it rising to become the 'vanguard' of the Nigerian revolution, the more so as its appeal was geographically limited in part because of its ideological platform of 'anti-feudalism' which, as Mustapha argues, was too narrow in the context of the Nigeria of the 1970s.

The same PRP, bearing its NEPU heritage, which gave rise to Bararabe Musa in Kaduna as the most advanced tendency within the party built around intellectuals, urban interests and the rural poor also gave rise to Sabo Bakin Zuwo in Kano, organised around urban and rural lumpen elements sustained on cheap populist demogouery of the most reactionary kind. In between these two tendencies was a third one epitomised by Muhammed Abubakar Rimi and his cohorts whose priority was to capture and retain governmental power through whatever means and alliance necessary. It rested on an appeal to charismatic personality, built on an
elaborate network of patronage, very paternalistic with a potential for authoritarian populism which it shared with Bakin Zuwo's variant, differing only in its sophistication from Zuwo's crude absurdity. By 1982, the PRP was engulfed in a crisis which pitted the followers of Balarabe Musa and Abubakar Rimi against the supporters of Aminu Kano, Ikoku and Bakin Zuwo who favoured a more conciliatory policy towards the National Party of Nigeria which controlled the federal government. It culminated in the expulsion of Rimi, Balarabe and their leading supporters from the party. The expelled radicals attempted to regroup in the 'Imoudu-PRP' but their bid to win recognition as the legitimate PRP was sabotaged by the courts and FEDECO. Crisis of survival, electoralism and conflicts of strategy and orientation in the Imoudu PRP soon led to divisions with the Balarabe group first seeking alliance with Awolowo's UPN which eventually rejected them in preference for the 'Kaduna Mafia' elements that had been making gestures to it. Awolowo saw alignment with the 'Mafia' as his real chance of winning the presidency and opted for it. He was not to realise his ambition. The Balarabe group therefore started to retrace its footsteps back to the Aminu Kano faction of the PRP, especially after the death of Aminu himself. By the time of this 'reconciliation', the Aminu faction had been effectively put under the control of Sabo Bakin Zuwo who transformed it into a virtual extension of the NPN. This probably explains why the Balarabe faction gave electoral support to the UPN, especially to Awolowo's presidential ambitions by campaigning for him. The Abubakar Rimi faction of the Imoudu PRP first attempted to merge with elements from the Azikiwe-led Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) through the formation of the of the Peoples Progressive party (PPP). When this was not registered by FEDECO, the Rimi faction totally renounced its membership of the PRP and declared for the NPP, again in order to be able to contest the 1983 elections. A grand but persistently tottering alliance, the Peoples Progressive Alliance (PPA) grouping the NPP, with its new ex-PRP converts and the UPN was formed as a broad strategy of unseating the NPN from federal power. The PPA was however unable to agree on a single presidential candidate, let alone forge a united front and the NPN easily defeated it.

Political and Economic Crises, Military Intervention and the March to 1990

By 1983, the Nigerian economic crisis had started in earnest. The political situation was also worsening with the police and the courts growing increasingly more repressive. The deepening economic and political crises led to considerable disillusionment in the society. The opposition's unconvincing attempt to take advantage of this was roundly defeated by the NPN which, through its control of FEDECO and the Police, was best placed to manipulate the electoral facade of 1983 to its advantage. It took for itself direct control of 13 out of Nigeria's 19 states and gave itself a large governing majority in the Senate and Federal House of Representatives in a bid to establish its untrammelled political hegemony. This created deep political tension within the ruling class not dissimilar to that of 1964-1966. It also led to the alienation of the working people. The state was losing its legitimacy, the politicians were highly discredited. This provided the background for the coup of 31 December 1983 in which the government of Shehu Shagari was overthrown by senior military officers led by Major-General Muhammad Buhari. If many ordinary Nigerians saw the coup as a welcome relief and demonstrated their support for it on the streets, their jubilation was to prove short-lived and unfounded as the Buhari administration showed itself to be one of the most bourgeois class conscious in the country's history. The high-handed authoritarianism of the
government and its repressiveness knew no bounds. Several prominent Leftists, including Oni, Iyayi, Darah, Jeyifo were arrested without charge and detained without trial for varying lengths of time. Balarabe Musa was held in prison with politicians from all parties. Journalists were arrested for publishing things the regime did not like. Haroun Adamu, Rufai Ibrahim and T. Solarin were among those who were imprisoned. The Left was placed under siege by the government. The NLC was threatened with dissolution if there was a national strike. Soon the regime was tightening the noose on virtually all sectors of civil society including medical doctors whose strike was brutally repressed. If there was still anybody who believed in the myth that a bourgeois dictatorship would never be possible in Nigeria, the Buhari administration proved them wrong. On the other hand, guru professors of benevolent dictatorship like Chike Obi got what they wanted and more, as some of them fell foul of the regime’s sledge hammer.

On 27 August 1985 Major-General Babangida, the Chief of Army staff, staged a palace coup against the Buhari-Idiagbon faction of the previous Supreme Military council. To legitimise itself, the Babangida administration necessarily had to wear a human rights face given the high handedness of its predecessor. It further sought to legitimise itself and the highly draconian economic crisis management package it had in store by appeasing some sectors of civil society that had been bruised by the Buhari government — lawyers, journalists and doctors. Further it adopted the old tactic of co-opting prominent Leftists into governmental positions or committees as a way of winning greater credibility. Thus, Nzimiro holds an advisory position at Dodan Barracks, seat of the military President while a number of others, including Madunagu are serving on the Political Bureau (sic) that is to co-ordinate a national debate on the return to civil rule in 1990. However in the face of the country’s deepening economic crisis and the ineffectiveness of the government’s palliatives, and it must be said that Babangida has pushed through the most draconian crisis management measures, including a cut in wages, the human rights facade which the state is wearing is daily being torn apart. This is evidenced by the massacre of students in Zaria and Kaduna, the closure of all universities that followed the carnage, the detention of NLC leaders for attempting to organise a solidarity demonstration with the students, and the efforts to weaken and disorganise the Nigerian Labour Congress and the National Association of Nigerian students, in part by undermining their financial base and therefore their organisational capacity. Meanwhile, the security apparatus of the state, including a re-organised secret intelligence service, is being reinforced to deal with dissent. The inherently repressive nature of a bourgeois state faced with an economic crisis cannot be hidden for long. The Left cannot afford to be complacent about the situation, for there are real dangers ahead.

As the political debate on the country’s future continues, what strategy should the Nigerian Left be working towards? From our discussion so far, it is clear that although the Nigerian Left, in all its diversity, does not have any rosy good old days to look back to, it does have a heritage with positive and negative dimensions to it. It would seem to us that the challenge before the Left today is how the positive aspects of this heritage can be harnessed into an independent working peoples’ organisation which can mobilise the exploited classes on principles and programmes for the defence and advancement of their democratic rights and towards building a Peoples’ Democratic State controlled by the organised power of the working class and the peasantry. Some of the positive aspects of its heritage which can be usefully re-kindled include the activist spirit of the most advanced
section of the Zikists, the rich tradition and experience of the radical trade union movement, the radical political legacy of NEPU among the peasantry and rural poor, the work of the relatively new WIN in the struggle for the emancipation of women from gender oppression and the pool of progressive opinion among radical intellectuals, youths and the student movement which can be harnessed into a national organization with a national appeal. As with Mustapha (1984), we believe that...

the principal political task in contemporary times is for the Nigerian Left to build up its own fighting organisation, ideologically and organizationally unstained by opportunistic considerations. From this position, the Left could politically support all democratic struggles while it sharpens and consolidates its organisation. In which case, the left should aspire, not only to learn from the working peoples, but also to teach; not only to help in the organization of resistance to all oppression, but also to learn to organize itself in the same process.

This is the challenge of 1990.

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The National Question and Radical Politics in Nigeria

Abdul Raufu Mustapha

In his introduction to Billy Dudley's posthumous book (1982:8), A.D. Yahaya stated that:

The political future of the country as one indivisible nation is resolved with the end of the civil war . . . It is therefore not conceivable for the present generation of Nigerians who were so much part of the struggle for the survival of the federation to resuscitate the unity of the country as a political issue. The major political issue today is, therefore, not the unity of the country.

It would seem, however, that events in Nigeria since 1983, such as the No Nation! No Destiny! broadcast of the FRCN Kaduna; the acrimonious and chauvinistic campaigns associated with the 1983 elections; the incessant disputes over the question of Federal Character; and the debacle over Nigeria's affiliation to the Organisation of Islamic Countries, tend to suggest that the unity of the country cannot be taken for granted. The Civil War did not resolve the National Question in Nigeria. What is true is that the Nigerian state was able to overcome a specific challenge to its integrity. This does not, however, mean that no future challenges are probable, or that the state would always have the capacity to overcome such challenges. The emergence of Anya Anya II in the Sudan is a case in point. The unity of the country cannot, therefore, be necessarily guaranteed by the state as currently constituted.

This paper is an attempt at examining some of the theoretical and political issues relating to the resolution of the National Question in contemporary Nigeria. The first section attempts a definition of the problematic, while the second looks at the specific manifestations of the National Question within the Nigerian political economy. The third section examines the solutions put forward for resolving the National Question within mainstream Nigerian politics; while the fourth considers the relationship between radical politics and the National Question. The final section attempts a summary of the entire discourse.

Defining the Question
Humanity has not always been organised in nations. The nation arose as a consequence of the intensification of commodity production, and the rise of capitalism. It was a product of the quest of the rising bourgeoisie to acquire a home market, rationalise economic life, and promote national culture. Before the French Revolution of 1789, humanity had been organised around such concepts as tribes, nationalities, peoples, states, and dynastic states. When the national movement arose with the French Revolution, it defined the National Question as 'the relationship of the nation to the state' (Renner). The aim of the national movement
in this epoch of West European history, was the creation of uniform nation-states, which would overcome the fragmentation caused by feudal disunity.

This identification of the rise of nations with the rise of capitalism has been disputed by some scholars, prominent amongst whom is Samir Amin, who argues that while the rise of nations coincided with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe, the same cannot be said for other parts of the world, especially for such areas as China and Egypt where ancient civilizations had prospered even before the rise of capitalist Europe. It would seem that the problem is one of definition. For Amin, the major determinant of a nation, is the high degree of centralisation of the economic surplus of that society in a state structure. Using this criterion, Amin (1980:2) argues that nations appeared historically under two distinct processes:

the nation clearly appears in (1) complete tributary societies (China, Egypt) where the tribute was centralized by the state and the tributary class was a state class, in contrast to incomplete tributary societies (like European feudal societies) where tribute collection was not centralized, and (2) capitalism, where the competition among capitals ... and the mobility of labor are controlled by the state through legislation, the monetary system, and state economic policy. I explained that the European situation — the absence of nations during the feudal era, the concurrent birth of the nation and of capitalism — accounts for the West-centered distortion of the concept of nation. This distortion appears not only in the works of Stalin but also in those of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

It would seem however that Amin's definition ignores a crucial aspect of the National Question — i.e., the question of democracy. It is often emphasised by Marxists like Lenin that the National Question is a democratic question, closely connected with the participation of broad sections of the masses in national life, and the creation of democratic national institutions. Thus, there is a qualitative difference between a nation based on the democratic ideals borne of the bourgeois democratic revolutions, starting with the French Revolution, and the ancient Chinese or Egyptian 'nations' as defined by Amin.

In Africa today, the challenge of nationhood is not just in the task of centralising the energies and surpluses of the various nation-states, but also in the task of liberating these states from imperialist stranglehold, and of democratising their internal institutions. Thus a relevant definition of the National Question in contemporary Africa ought to emphasise the question of democracy. This approach, it would seem, is closer to the original Marxist proposition than to Amin's qualification of that position.

The National Question in Nigeria
A number of historical studies make it possible for us to comment on the communities of the Nigerian region before the imposition of colonial rule. It is the case in contemporary Nigeria, that the communities that make up the country, now and in the past, are seen in essentially linguistic and cultural terms. For instance, there is talk of Hausa language, culture and political institutions in an ossified and ahistorical manner. This tends to create the totally mistaken impression that linguistic groups have been the determinant units of Nigerian social organisation from time immemorial.

The historical studies under discussion, prove that the people of the Nigerian region had developed clans, tribes and nationalities, before the imposition of colonial rule. This meant that in many instances, the organising principles of society were not blood ties and linguistic affinity, but such criteria as territoriality, and occupation; and the attendant processes of class differentiation and state formation. Another
critical element was the affiliation to a polity, whether or not it took the form of a state. There are historical studies documenting this process for Katsina, Tivland, and Ile-Ife.

Thus, it would be wrong, as people are wont to do, to use language as the determinant criteria of the political evolution of Nigeria's peoples. As Usman (1980) points out:

People speaking the Hausa language, for example, have lived not only under different sovereign states, but even different political systems, extending from the feudal kingdoms like Kebbi and Kano, to the patriarchal city states like Zoma, Washa and Auyo, down to the sovereign village communities of the Tarka, and the Gwandara. These sovereign village communities in which some Hausa-speaking people lived had social, political and economic systems must closer to those of some of the Ibo-speaking peoples than to the patriarchal city states and feudal Kingdoms in which other Hausa-speaking people lived.

It was thus against a background of societies whose functional units were polities such as clans, peoples, and nationalities, and sometimes united in states such as the Caliphate and the Alafinate, that British imperialism was imposed over the Nigerian peoples. Imperialist encroachment and the imposition of formal colonial rule halted the historical process of the autonomous transformation of the economies of these societies. This situation ensured that none of the nationalities could then develop into nation-states. Furthermore, the exploitation of the material and human resources of the peoples of Nigeria, posed the profound question of the contradiction between all Nigerian nationalities and clans on the one hand, and British imperialism on the other.

Thus, in Nigeria, the National Question is conditioned by the different pre-colonial units: by imperialist oppression and exploitation, now under the guise of neo-colonialism, and by the administrative and political history of the country since its assemblage in 1914.

Taking the above into account, we have a situation in which the National Question in Nigeria manifests itself in a series of eight contradictions: Nigeria versus imperialism; the contradiction between the majority nationalities, i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba; the North-South divide; between the three major nationalities on the one hand, and the smaller nationalities on the other; inter-state rivalry between the current nineteen states of the federation; inter-ethnic rivalries in a mixed state, for instance between the Nupes and Hausas in Niger State; inter-sectional rivalries within an ethnic group of nationality, as between Kano and Sokoto, or the Egba and the Ijebu; and finally, inter-clan rivalries within a province or district, as is often common in the southeastern part of the country (Toyo). Thus the National Question in Nigeria is of two dimensions: it deals with the relationship between Nigeria and world imperialism, and the relationship between the various nationalities and administrative-cum-political units that have historically characterised the Nigerian society.

Much of this analysis is concerned with the first four sets of contradictions, which sometimes overlap.

The Specific Manifestations of the National Question in Nigeria

Apart from the contradiction between Nigeria and imperialism, those between the Northern and the Southern parts of the country, and those between the majority nationalities, have been politically the most decisive. Specifically, these contradictions have manifested themselves in a series of inequalities which have
assumed a logic of their own, and today inform much of the dynamics of the politics of the National Question. While the internal dimension of the National Question might be expressed in linguistic, cultural or regionalist terms, its objective basis lies in these material and political inequalities, and an understanding of their evolution is vital for their transcendence.

Educational Inequalities
One of the most hotly contested issues in the National Question in Nigeria today, is that of the access to educational facilities by the different nationalities and regional groups in the country, and the access to bureaucratic posts and resources which educational qualifications make possible.

The wide gap in the educational fortunes of the Northern and Southern parts of the country is essentially a product of British imperialism in its pursuit of the strategy of divide and rule. It was Lugard’s view that in the Southern parts of the country which were the first points of colonial contact:

...education seems to have produced discontent, impatience of any control and an unjustified assumption of self-importance in the individual... The local press, inspired by a...misdirected education, is...doing much grievous harm...by...its invective against all Government action.

In colonial Northern Nigeria, therefore, the British did everything possible to prevent the emergence of an educational system which might later pose a threat to British domination as had developed in the South. Lugard’s educational policy in Northern Nigeria had five stated goals, the first of which was the strengthening of government control (Graham). Thus, a paternalistic educational system was evolved for Northern Nigeria, which divided the region into three educational zones and restricted missionary activities to the Middle Belt areas of the region.

Christian Missions were the major agency for the advancement of western education in Southern Nigeria, and their exclusion from much of the moslem North was ostensibly in keeping with British promises not to tamper with the religious life of the people at the time of the colonial conquest. It does seem however, that there was much more to the issue, for the British could have made a distinction between western education and christianisation, as Edward Wilmot Blyden had suggested. In any case, Lugard himself had pointed out that colonial government subsidy was being used to run three moslem schools in Lagos. Furthermore, the colonial administration made no efforts whatsoever to rationalise or modernise the Koranic schools which had formed the basis of the pre-colonial educational system of Northern Nigeria. Even when the colonial administration finally introduced an educational system of its own into Northern Nigeria, that system was aimed at the sons of the pre-colonial aristocracy and its main objective was social control.

The wanton disregard of the British for the educational advancement of Northern Nigeria is also illustrated by the fact that the colonial administration went as far as to reject a substantial offer of financial assistance for the purpose of building an Islamiyya school in Northern Nigeria, after the fashion of Gordon College, Khartoum (Graham). This imperialist design by the British had the blessing of the emirate aristocracy, who had a stake in maintaining an ignorant and superstitious populace, and was also facilitated by the religious and cultural prejudices of the bulk of the population. As a consequence, Northern Nigeria rapidly fell behind the South, in terms of the development of western education, as shown by Table One.
**Table One: Secondary School Output in Northern and Southern Nigeria, 1906-1965**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Pupils in Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1,305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adamu 1973:51.*

The few educational opportunities in the Northern Region were skewed in favour of the Middle Belt areas. Furthermore, the quality was generally poor. As Adamu writes:

... until 1931, the most important aspect of Northern education was obedience and respect. In Katsina College, it was good character and not academic achievement that was considered in awarding certificates. There was no examination.

This disparity in the educational fortunes of the Northern and Southern parts of the country has not only continued to widen, but has also been reflected at other levels of the educational system. For example, in the 1969-70 academic year, during the Civil War, an examination of the geographical distribution of students in Nigerian universities showed that while the then Western State, now three states, alone had 48% of all the students, the then six Northern states, now ten, had only 19%, with Kwara State alone contributing almost half of the Northern total (National Universities Commission, cited New Nigerian 2.2.1974). Similar figures for the 1974-75 academic year were 24.04% for the then 6 Northern states, and 74.30% for the then 6 Southern states (National Universities Commission 1978:14).

The dynamics of this inequality in education is such that some Nigerian patriots of northern origin have come to the ahistorical conclusion that the educational gap is unbridgeable (Adamu, 1969). More important, however, is the numerical disparity of people from different parts of the country within the various public and private enterprise bureaucracies in the country. This disparity is itself a reflection of the extant educational disparity, and since the 1940s, has been a source of serious and endless squabbles within the ranks of the Nigerian bourgeoisie and the middle classes, split along the lines of region or nationality. Since these bureaucracies play a crucial role in regulating the exercise of state power and in the economic life of the country, it is quite understandable that they have become the targets of factional infighting within the ranks of the Nigerian ruling classes. This has tended to exacerbate the National Question in Nigeria.

**Economic Inequalities**

Lenin has argued that unevenness of economic and political development within a social formation is an inherent law of capitalist development. This law of capitalist development, coupled with differences in regional raw material and human resources and governmental policy, has always created a situation in which one region of a country developed at the expense of another. In Nigeria, the southern parts of the country have been developing economically at the expense of the northern parts. The head-start of the south was basically due to historical and
geographical factors. However, the situation was further aggravated by discriminatory governmental policies (Mustapha, 1977).

An indication of the skewed nature of the pattern of development or underdevelopment that ensued can be glimpsed by examining the regional location of the industrial labour force in 1948. Out of a total of 247,077 workers throughout the country in that year who worked in enterprises employing 10 or more people, only 80,918 were located in the Northern Region. This is hardly surprising, given the pattern of transport and trade developed during the colonial period. A substantial number of those workers in the North must have been of southern origins as the colonial education system did not equip northerners with the necessary skills needed for such jobs in sufficient numbers (H.M.G. 1948). Another subsequent indicator of the disparity in economic and social development between the northern and southern parts of the country was the regional distribution of newspapers and periodicals in the country in 1959. Of the 49 newspapers and periodicals in English and in Nigerian languages, only 7 were published in the Northern Region (Daily Times Year Book 1959).

Even in the southern parts of the country, the bulk of the social infrastructure and economic activity was concentrated in the western parts. And though attempts were made after political independence in 1960 to disperse industries to the Northern and Eastern Regions, the western part of the country has retained a disproportionate share of the nation’s industrial and economic concerns. In 1971, for instance, Lagos State alone had 32% of all of the country’s industries. Similar figures for the then East Central State was 17% and 14% for the then Western State. On the other hand, the 6 Northern States put together had a share of 21% (Teriba, cited Nnoli). In the same year, the share of Lagos State in the country’s industrial labour force was 47%, while that of the six northern states put together was 28%.

Other figures can be adduced to show the tendency of combined and uneven development within the Nigerian economy, which works out in favour of Lagos particularly and of the southern states of the country. This inequality in the economic life of the country had had a profound effect on the development of the National Question in Nigeria. Nnoli has traced the genesis of the internal dimension of the National Question to struggles over the allocation of scarce economic resources in the late 1920s. Economic inequality leads to resentment, and this in turn informs political action. For example, just before the Civil War the Current Issues Society, a front organisation of the Kaduna Mafia had this view of the Ibo trader:

Having cornered most of the strategic places commercially, the Ibo trader indulged in what was the most perverted form of monopoly in petty trade. He gave money to northern farmers in villages and towns in advance for their unripe produce, and even unladen eggs.

**Political Inequality**

The State is a crucial institution in the class formation process going on in most Third World societies. This is so because it facilitates the process of primitive accumulation and regulates general economic life. Consequently, the control of the state and its various institutions and bureaucracies, is one of the spheres of society in which the factional infighting between different factions of the ruling class is fiercest.

Political inequality within the Nigerian context revolved around the relationship
between the population of an area, its registered voters, and the actual number of voters. The net result of the course of the political development in the country was that votes cast in different parts of the country ended up having unequal political significance, as shown by Table Two.

Table Two: Results of the 1959 General Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>North Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>West Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>East Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Nigeria Seats</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.P.C.</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,922,179</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C.N.C.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2,594,577</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.E.P.U.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>509,050</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.G.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1,992,364</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169,627</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>7,187,797</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The inequality revealed by the NPC’s share of the seats in the Federal House of Representatives, relative to its share of the votes, was to cause some acrimony within the political system, and was itself partly related to the refusal of the N.P.C. leadership to allow women to vote in the Northern Region. The regionalisation of politics in the First Republic, created a situation in which each region was controlled by a regionally-based party. And the readiness of all the parties to resort to undemocratic electoral methods, meant that the N.P.C. could always win most of the seats in the north, and consequently form a government in Lagos. This was despite the fact that it tended to have less actual votes than any of its other two regionalist rivals.

With the advent of military regimes in the country, the Civil War, and all subsequent developments within the Nigerian Army, the preponderance of northern political personalities in the Federal governments has tended to continue. The creation of states from the former regions has not redressed the imbalance which has persisted.

Inequalities and the National Question
The objective basis of the National Question lies in the educational, economic and political inequalities of the Nigerian society. However, these inequalities in themselves would not be too problematic except when seen within the context of the class dynamics of Nigerian society. It is the class nature of Nigerian society that gives these inequalities their specific meaning within the context of the National Question. The inequalities are an objective difference between various component parts of Nigeria. Any specific interpretation given to them is class-determined.

Eradicating these inequalities in the society is thus a necessary but not sufficient measure for resolving the National Question. So long as the predatory class relations of Nigerian society remain, the various factions of the ruling class will find it necessary to divide the people. They can always find all sorts of differences between the various nationalities, which will form the basis for propagating diversionary sectional and ethnic ideologies. It is to the relationship between the National Question and class politics in Nigeria, that I now turn.
Ruling Class Solutions to the National Question
The Nigerian ruling class has an ambivalent orientation towards the National Question. On the one hand, all its factions depend on the cultivation of divisive ethnic, regional or communal bases. Even the military is not immune to this tendency. On the other hand, there is the realisation of the necessity to maintain the territorial integrity of the country for their collective economic and political advancement. Until the 1983 elections, what passed for Nigerian democracy was a careful blend of these two tendencies, often expressed in various bewildering alliances.

Thus, the propagation of chauvinistic prejudices is a common occurrence in Nigerian public life while at the same time, attempts are made to contain the centrifugal forces unleashed in the course of the politics of the National Question. Essentially, these attempts involve the building of a strong State, capable of meeting all challenges to its authority (Mustapha, 1983). Equally important, are reforms of the organisation of the State in response to pressures deriving from the National Question. The creation of states from the old regions and the acceptance and implementation of the Federal Character principle, are two of such reforms.

In the terminal colonial period, an alliance of the three major political parties in the country, and British imperialism working through the Willink Commission, prevented the realisation of the just demands of minority nationalities for states of their own. As a consequence, Nigeria attained political independence with a grossly imbalanced federation in which the Northern Region alone was, in terms of both population and area, more than the sum total of all the other regions put together.

The suppression of the legitimate demand of minority nationalities for administrative units of their own, and the rampant discriminatory and chauvinistic policies of the different regional governments, were the main ingredients that gave force to the Tiv Uprisings in the old Northern Region, the COR state movement in the Eastern Region, and the creation of the Mid-West Region from the Western Region.

Thus the creation of states has had the positive effect of correcting the built-in structural imbalance in the country while at the same time conceding to some of the legitimate demands of some minority nationalities. However, since the late 1970s, the question of state creation has fallen prey to the machinations of ambitious factions of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes, who capitalise on real or imagined grievances to make obviously frivolous demands on behalf of what they call their people. For this reason, state creation in Nigeria has become a vehicle for realising unfulfilled political and material ambitions of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes, rather than a tool for ensuring a democratic and harmonious relationship between the various nationalities in the country. It is the realisation of the class content of the state creation movement that prompted Tafa Adeoye the leader of the Agbe-Ko-'Ya Peasant Uprising of the late 1960s to reject the whole idea of state creation in Nigeria:

What we want is farmers' control of farmers' life. Creation of states or no state is not the concern of farmers. The question is the power of the farmers... We are not fighting for a new state or a new Kingdom. All we are concerned with is this: The so-called educated people who sit down on us, they receive all our benefits and confine it to themselves... It is a good thing and we all welcome it to have independence. But the people who ruled us after this independence have been cheating us.
State creation has since become part of the National Question, rather than a solution to it.

Another reform which the ruling class is using in tackling the National Question in Nigeria, is the Federal Character principle, which seeks to ensure that all principal organs and institutions of the governments of the Federation reflect the ethnic composition of their various areas of authority. This is so especially at the Federal Government level.

In principle, the Federal Character position is correct and is in the overall interest of the country, for no lasting unity can be expected from a situation in which one half of the country, in this instance the South, has a large, disproportionate share in the numerous bureaucracies of the country and the social power derivable therefrom. Secondly, the process of ensuring a more balanced national complexion for the country's institutions cannot be left to the spontaneity of free-market forces. The personal and collective prices which the southern middle classes, who predominate in the governmental machinery, have to pay by way of foregone promotions and opportunities should be seen as one of the prices to be paid for national development.

However it is foolhardy to harbour illusions that the Federal Character principle, on its own, will resolve the National Question in Nigeria. To redress the inequalities in the Nigerian system, a process of profound social change will be necessary to mobilise the resources needed to educate millions of people in a short span of time and expand and build other social infrastructure. Such a process is bound to call into question the current pattern of allocating political and material values in Nigerian society. The class nature and dynamics of Nigerian society cannot therefore be unaffected by such a process. But those who push the Federal Character argument from the northern states have not put forward any programme of social change that even appears to address the basic questions about the inequalities in education, social life and the economy. They tend to imagine that by promoting their own bourgeois and middle class fortunes in national institutions, they have solved the problem of the education and other inequalities which confront the northern masses. They mistake their class aspirations for more share of state power, prestige and greater access for accumulation as the interests of the northern peoples. It may even be the case that these northern bourgeois and middle class forces will resist any serious attempts at social change in the northern states in any efforts to bridge the serious educational and social gaps between the north and the south. They want to bridge only those gaps in governmental institutions which advance their narrow class interests and which they mask as in the interest of their various nationalities.

Secondly, the Federal Character position in the north is a possible haven for northern chauvinism. It will be recalled that in the 1940s and 1950s, the Northern Regional Government embarked on a Northernisation policy in the regional service. This was in response to the de facto regionalisation of the western and eastern administrations, despite the fact that those other governments did not have to make policy statements on the issue. It was also as a result of the desires of the regional government to have a bureaucracy it could trust in the regionalist minefield that was Nigerian politics in those days. However, understandable as the Northernisation programme was, it did not escape the hegemonic and chauvinistic tendencies of the northern ruling classes. These tendencies were clearly brought out in the Sardauna's claim that the Northernisation programme was a policy which
aimed to have 'Northerners gain control of everything in this country' (Northern House of Chiefs Debates, 1958, cited Dudley). A similar orientation is discernable amongst some of those advocating the Federal Character position and can only lead to greater disunity, not unity.

Another reason why the Federal Character position cannot solve the National Question in Nigeria relates to the interests of the southern bourgeoisie and middle classes. These forces, as I have tried to argue, are in immediate control of a disproportionate share of the nation's educational, social and economic resources relative to their northern counterparts. And from the public positions taken by the southern bourgeoisie and middle classes, it does seem that they want to continue their hegemonic hold on these spheres of Nigerian public life. By putting forward arguments for merit as the main criteria for recruitment into governmental institutions, they conveniently avoid the fact that public life is a social issue, for even the best qualified and best managed bureaucracy would be completely useless if it did not enjoy the confidence of the mass of its subjects. In Nigeria, there is a case about the ethnic complexion of many governmental institutions. The answer lies in conscious social engineering of which the Federal Character principle is one. In any case, for the southern ruling classes, merit has little to do with ability and much to do with paper qualifications.

Thus we can see that both those for and against the Federal Character position within mainstream Nigerian politics, and some of their more radical ideological bed-fellows, are only trying to promote or defend their narrow class interests. The southern faction of the ruling classes is yet to address itself to the question of the desirability or consequence of the gross inequalities in the Nigerian system. As for the northern faction of the ruling classes, they acknowledge the problem, only to substitute their class interest as the solution to a much more fundamental problem. No unity can be achieved through such intra-class wranglings and the mobilisation of the masses of the people along divisive lines. Similar situations of the dilemma of Federal Character have been observed in Zambia (Molteno).

Finally, to the extent that Federal Character as is practised now only involves a tiny minority within the middle classes and the bourgeoisie, it ignores the fundamental fact that national and regional inequalities affect the daily lives of millions of ordinary people. An acknowledgement of this fundamental social reality dictates that we advocate for Federal Character along with a programme of fundamental social change. To do otherwise, is either to posit what amounts to an opportunist solution to the National Question, or to engage in an exercise in self-deception, by trying to paper over deep social cracks.

From the problems associated with the issue of state creation and Federal Character, we can see that mainstream Nigerian politics has proved incapable of solving the National Question. Given the situation of backward, Third World capitalism, the solution to the National Question is impossible, except accompanied by fundamental social changes which will necessarily put the question of the social revolution on the nation's agenda (Habte Selassie).

**Radical Politics and the National Question**

The National Question, seen both as the contradictions between Nigeria and imperialism, or as the relationship of the various nationalities to each other and to the state, cannot be resolved except against a background of a fundamental social change or social revolution. This is why radical mass organisations, trade unions,
the student's movement, radical politicians and progressive intellectuals can be expected to make very useful contributions. This is especially so, since mainstream Nigerian politics has proved incapable of transcending its narrow class interests when dealing with the National Question.

The trade unions played a prominent role in the anti-colonialist struggle against imperialism, while radical politicians like Aminu Kano, Mokwugo Okoye, and Michael Imoudu, have at one time or the other distinguished themselves and their organisations in the struggle for democratic rights in the country. Similarly, in the contemporary era of economic crisis and IMF-inspired austerity measures, coupled with increased repression, the mass organisations have been the most consistent defenders of the interests of the country against imperialist tutelage. As for the internal dimension of the National Question, a host of radical theoreticians (Adamu, Nnoli, Toyo, Usman) have thrown illuminating light on various aspects of the problem.

However, while acknowledging these and other contributions, I think that the cause of socialism and Nigerian nationalism will best be served by taking a critical look at areas of weaknesses which might hinder future positive contributions. Criticism and self-criticism in these matters will add grist to the mill of progress. In this respect, I intend to examine the attitude of Nigerian radicals to the Civil War and Biafra, how they conceive of the relationship between nationality, class analysis and class politics, and finally, their organisational principles.

The Case of Biafra

The challenge posed by the secessionists of Biafra and the consequent Civil War remains the sharpest illustration of the consequences of not tackling the National Question in a correct manner. The tragic incidents were basically the handiwork of different blocks of the ruling classes. However, the manner in which Nigerian radicals have reacted to the experience of Biafra shows that chauvinistic feelings may still be rife within radical circles. This situation must be transcended if the radicals are to continue to contribute to the cause of Nigerian unity and progress.

There are two interrelated issues in examining the Biafran case. The first is the characterisation of the January 1966 coup; the second is the position the radicals ought to have taken in the face of the Civil War.

It is conventional wisdom on the Federal side of the Civil War to see the January 1966 coup as an Igbo coup:

By the cold-blooded murders in January of political and army leaders of Northern, Western, and Mid-western Nigeria origins, a new and tragic chapter was opened in our history through the vicious machinations of the Ibos of Nigeria (Current Issues Society, 1966).

It has even been suggested that the coup was only the first shot in a series of four planned coups through which the Igbos hoped to eliminate all the leadership of the other Nigerian nationalities (Muffett). The important point, of course, is that no socio-political analysis is made to warrant these conclusions. Instead, we are asked to have faith in the conspiracy theory, whose results we cannot verify. Such omissions are understandable, since those who make them are essentially concerned to justify the July 1966 counter-coup while at the same time explaining away the series of pogroms perpetuated against innocent Igbo civilians in the cities of the northern states.
Thus, one would have expected that the analysis of the coup in radical circles will not only raise issues about the ethnic origins of the various actors in the drama, but also draw attention to the deep social and political forces that underlie the process. This is hardly done. Instead we have confusing analyses which tend to reinforce ruling class prejudices on the subject (see Usman, 1983; Mustapha, 1985 a.b).

On the Biafran side, we find Nigerian patriots of Igbo origin lining up behind the secessionist bid of the Igbo bourgeoisie and performing the role of ideologues;

When the regime ran out of ideology, when it became evident that the call for the aid of the Free World was an illusion, when the slogan against feudalism were (sic) no longer enough to hold the masses whose morale was dwindling in the face of the corruption and treachery of the bourgeoisie, they acquired (sic) the suggestion that a new orientation was necessary ... That is, we moved in to take up the creation of an ideology for Biafra when there was a vacuum. They needed a new ideology (Nzimiro).

This rather bewildering task which the radicals of the Biafran Communist Party undertook raises basically two questions. Are Nigerian radicals expected to forsake their nationalities? If not, should they not join their nationalities when the bourgeoisie of such nationalities lead them into confrontation against the common interests of all Nigerian peoples?

It is clear that radicals should take great pride in their nationalities, and should generally make themselves relevant to the lives of their communities. They ought not be nihilists with respect to the cultures and general development of their various communities and nationalities. However, it should also be borne in mind, that the rights of nations and nationalities to self-determination is not an unconditional right. Where the rights of nationalities clashed with the overall progress of society, the interests of society should take precedence.

In the case of Biafra, it is a fact that it was heavily supported by French, Israeli, Portuguese, and Vatican imperialisms, all aimed against the general interests of African peoples. The radicals in Biafra, by placing an emphasis on the pogroms in the northern states while at the same time ignoring the machinations of the various interests at work, willingly played into the hands of enemies of the African peoples.

The position of southern Sudanese progressives in a similar situation is quite instructive. Southern Sudan suffers from economic neglect and in the late 1960s, had no cabinet minister in the central government, no representative in the foreign services, national defence, civil service or national corporations, and a civil war had been raging for more than ten years between the north and south of Sudan (Garang, 1970 in ROAPE 26). Yet the southern Sudanese progressives renounced secession, because according to them, to make such a demand is to aid imperialism:

The paramount question is that of the unity of all the masses in the entire country for the purpose of liquidating the remnants of colonialism in all fields ... and the advances to progress and socialism. The golden test, therefore, is — does the movement of a given people advance or retard the cause of social change? If the answer is positive then progressives should support that movement. If not they should oppose. The national question is secondary to the question of progress (Garang).

Within this context the radicals in Biafra fell far short of legitimate expectations.

**Nationality, Class Analysis and Class Politics**

It is in the conceptualisation of the complex relationship between class, nationality and politics, that we come across the worst banalities in the Nigerian radical
movement. I shall concentrate on the response of some radicals to the Federal Character principle; then examine the Northern Oligarchy thesis and finally draw attention to some political practices as they relate to the National Question.

The Federal Character principle, as at present practised by the Nigerian state with respect to the distribution of jobs, contracts and university places, has received the unqualified support of some northern radicals (Bala Mohammed Memorial Committee, 1983, Usman, 1982). It would seem that there is a desire to find an allegedly practical and truly patriotic answer to the inequalities in Nigeria by recourse to an unqualified support for the schemes of the ruling class. Some of these positions now propagated are a step backwards, when compared to earlier positions on the same issues in northern Nigeria.

Let us begin this historical examination by assessing the views of two of the leaders of northern opinion in the 1940s cited by Adamu. According to Mallam Nuhu Bayero, it was vital for the north to bridge the educational gap with the south. However he realises that far-reaching radical changes were necessary in northern Nigeria if an honest effort was to be made at bridging the gap. Thus, he called for measures which involved changes in the legal system, conscription of teachers, public collections of monies and compulsory attendance at schools. Though he could not be said to have been a radical, he saw the promotion of education in the north as a war, and spoke of it in such a language. Another view on the same matter was expressed by the early leader of radical northern populism, Mallam Saadu Zungur in his poem, The North: Republicanism or Monarchy. In it, he advocated bridging the gap with the south via a critical over-hauling of the whole gamut of northern life. That was indeed a radical and relevant response to the inequalities in the Nigerian system, quite superior to recent infatuations with Federal Character, which merely call to mind the observation made by the southern Sudanese progressives:

For years many politicians have raved, cried, shouted and threatened about inequalities between North and South. But they never understood that these inequalities cannot be overcome except by the economic and social development of the Southern Provinces and the lifting of the Southern masses out of centuries old backwardness and superstition. These leaders drew up plans which would satisfy the interests of the small intellectual elite but not once did they demand social change . . .

The struggle is led by the intellectual petty-bourgeoisie who rally their people behind them. Naturally these petty-bourgeois intellectuals mistake their own aspirations for power and prestige as the interest of the masses of their national grouping. It is not surprising, therefore, that this petty-bourgeois leadership does not raise the issue of economic and social development of their area nor problems of raising the standard of living of their own people. They raise only the problem of their own share in power and in the state apparatus (Garang).

The same thing can be said today for those Nigerian radicals in the north who cry for Federal Character, while ignoring the fundamental dimensions of the inequalities of the Nigerian system. Let us consider the theory of the Northern Oligarchy. It has been stated by some northern radicals that:

It is our view that in order to work out a political strategy, one needs to identify various sections of the ruling class and within the Nigerian ruling class there exists a section that is bound by family ties from among the bourgeoisie in the North whose cohesion is based on feudal and semi-feudal relations and this is distinct (Abba et.al.).

Furthermore, it is argued that these northern feudalists, otherwise known as the Northern Oligarchy, are the single most serious threat to the well-being of the country (Rimi, 1983). It poses the danger of imposing a hegemony over the country
and the southern bourgeoisie, or sections of it and are seen merely as the oligarchy’s bootlickers. It would seem that the primary political task in Nigeria today is the battle against the Northern Oligarchy and in this battle, even the southern bourgeoisie, or sections of it, are welcome!

To start with, the existence of feudalism as an economic and social organism in any part of contemporary Nigeria is yet to be proved. Though many pre-capitalist structures and processes abound, some still with considerable social power, we should never forget the complete subordination of these structures by, first the colonial state, and later, by the neo-colonialist state. For instance, in looking at the relationship between colonialism and the pre-colonial feudal structures in northern Nigeria as articulated by the Native Authority System, Usman (1977) states quite correctly that:

The main organs of this system are the offices of govenor, commissioner, residents and district officers who ruled through a hierarchy of subordinate officials of emir, district head and village heads mostly drawn from the old aristocratic families. They were essentially tax-collectors and policemen of the colonial government.

They had no control over the economy at all. The economy was controlled by the British. The British received the taxes, they decided the building of towns and roads. But because of the myth that has been built up under colonial rule and because of it’s perpetuation, you have this system called Indirect Rule and even somebody going as far as saying that what existed was what they called the Anglo-Nigerian Government. There is no evidence for all these in the sources available to us.

How then could feudalism, in the sense in which it is used in the argument for the Northern Oligarchy, have survived five decades of this sort of colonial capitalism? Sometimes there is a shift of ground and an argument is made for the Northern Oligarchy by referring to the political subordination of the peasantry by semi-feudal institutions (Bala Mohammed Memorial Committee). Important as this point may be, the radicals fail to tell us the specific nature and contemporary social weight of these feudal relics, and above all, their relationship to other class forces and formations of the Nigerian ruling classes. Or are they to be seen as an historical given? And with respect to their political role, which state power do they exercise? A feudal or semi-feudal state? Or a dependant capitalist state, dominated mainly by the local and foreign bourgeoisies?

While it is obvious that there is a distinctly northern faction of the Nigerian ruling class, the bureaucratic bourgeois group called the Kaduna Mafia, it is by no means defined by any non-existent feudalism, neither is it any more oligarchic than it’s competitors in other parts of Nigeria, even if it is the most politically powerful of the lot (Yahaya).

The political strategy of focusing on the Northern Oligarchy creates the illusion that the southern bourgeoisie is any more progressive. This outlook might make sense, if the northern radicals were engaged in an essentially anti-feudal struggle. But that is not the case: a bourgeoisie is always a bourgeoisie, especially in the prevailing circumstances in Nigeria. And to the extent that the Northern Oligarchy thesis justifies an alliance with the southern bourgeoisie or a militarist faction within the army, it is injurious to the radical cause. In the final analysis, the thesis, by placing the major emphasis on the aristocratic Fulani, and feudal origins of the northern faction of the Nigerian ruling class, rather than on its source of social power as a bureaucratic bourgeoisie in a neo-colonial state structure amounts only to another variant of the ideology of 'Upgaism' (i.e. of the UPGA electoral alliance of 1964),
with which the southern bourgeoisie has always attacked their northern rivals as feudalist and reactionary, whilst reserving for themselves the role of modernisers and progressives.

Finally, the point ought to be made that the politics of some radicals in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. The best example of this is the position of a commissioner in the PRP government in Kano when faced with a strike by the workers of the government-owned (WRECA). The workers had not been paid their entitlements and had gone on strike, a consequence of which the water supply to the urban population of Kano was disrupted. This was an embarrassment to the state government which prided itself as a government of the people.

In response to the strike the state government undertook some punitive actions against the strike leaders. More relevant to this discussion, however, was the fact that the State Commissioner responsible for WRECA went on the air on Radio Kano to blame the strike on the leadership of the workers by an Okene man. He added that the Okene man, being from Kwara State, was jealous of Kano, because Ilorin, the Kwara State capital, had no taxis and could only boast of a few dusty streets. He then concluded by stressing that for him to regard WRECA as a Kano-owned company, the worker's union must be led by a Hausaman. Such crude chauvinism is certainly unbecoming of a government which prides itself on its progressive credentials. The fact that it was directed against workers, makes it even worse.

Organisational Issues
The National Question has also found expression within the organisational perspectives of Nigerian radicals. The situation is best captured by a statement by Aminu Kano in which he argued that Nigeria is like a market at which everybody assembles during the day. At night, he said, everybody knows his father's house! This attitude of zoning out the country, not due to any tactical considerations, but out of an ingrained, narrow, petty-bourgeoisie feeling of micro-nationalist exclusiveness, is only comparable to the position of the Jewish Bund within the All-Russia Social Democratic Labour Party!

Conclusion
The National Question is real in Nigeria, and poses a challenge to the common interests of all Nigerian peoples. It is also obvious that the Nigerian ruling classes have proved incapable of tackling the issue, while the radicals have shown some promise. The radicals themselves, however, are not immune to prejudices, and consequently have made a number of avoidable mistakes.

The task of the movement is to address these errors in a frontal manner, for just as the National Question cannot be resolved except within the context of a social revolution in Nigeria; a social revolution is impossible except correct solutions to the National Question are advanced to tackle both the internal and the internationalist aspects of the problem.

Bibliographic Note
THE AFTERMATH OF THE AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ CRISIS OF MAY 1986
A.S. Mohammed*

The students’ crisis which erupted at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria (ABU) on 22nd and 23rd May, 1986 culminated in a national confrontation between the state and popular forces. The purpose of this briefing is to spell out some implications for the various sections of Nigerian society.

First a brief resumé of the causes of the crisis that broke out in Black Africa’s biggest university and one of the most radical on the continent. Immediate causes are connected with the militant tradition of student unionism in Ahmadu Bello University. Underlying causes are related to the wider social, economic and political ferment in Nigerian society as reflected in the universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Militant unionism in Ahmadu Bello University has always set the students on a collision course with the authorities. For instance in 1978 the Student Union participated in a nation-wide student demonstration against tuition fees in the universities. This resulted in the killing of seven students in Ahmadu Bello University by the Nigerian Army. The revolt shook the Government of General Obasanjo to its foundations. In 1981, the Student Union revolted against the corruption of the university authorities, which led to poor feeding and accommodation facilities, was met by the expulsion of 30 students and the rustication of 165 others. Similarly in 1984-85 the Student Union of ABU came out boldly to support the nation-wide strike of the Nigerian Medical Association for a radical improvement in the health care delivery system of the country. This led to the expulsion of three students and the rustication of four others. Invariably the victimised students are Student Union leaders. The attempts to contain student militancy led to the intermittent closures of the university and the suspension of student unionism.

Hence the latest crunch of May 1986 came in the wake of a series of militant student activities.

(1) In the middle of April 1986 the students condemned the American attack against Libya and organised a demonstration at Kaduna (a distance of 80 kilometres from the campus) in order to protest to the American Consul. The American flag

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was burnt and they declared their solidarity with the government and people of the Libyan Socialist Jamahiriyya. This attracted a press attack from the American Consul against the students and lecturers of ABU. The government indicated its displeasure.

(2) On 21 April 1986, the students carried out a rally and procession on the campus to commemorate the 1978 students' revolt which led to the death of seven students in ABU. The commemoration was nation-wide as directed by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). The procession passed through all the hostels on the campus including the female hostel. The university authorities used this as a cover for victimising the students' leaders. They claimed that the entry of male students into female hostels was a breach of university regulations.

(3) On 1 May 1986, the students went to Kaduna, the State Capital to participate in the celebrations of the May Day Centenary organised by the Kaduna State Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress. The students took part in the march along with the industrial unions in Kaduna State. They carried banners and placards condemning the policies of the government, e.g. flirtation with the IMF, retrenchment of workers, cuts in workers' salaries, imposition of obnoxious levies and 'graduate unemployment'. This militant action did not go down well with the university authorities.

(4) The outcome of the elections in Students Union sharpened the conflict. Candidates sponsored by the authorities were roundly defeated by the militant students.

As the university authorities hit back at the radical students' leaders over the issue of entrance into the female hostel, the students embarked on a boycott of lectures on 22 May 1986. The Nigeria police was invited to put down the peaceful protest. The following morning on 23 May 1986, the campus was again invaded by the dreaded commando-trained men of the Mobile Police Force. Their assault on the campus resulted in the killing of at least five persons, and in the maiming, raping and assault of several others.

The underlying causes of the crisis had to do with the policies of the military regime which were making life unbearable for the poor masses. The implementation of the IMF conditionalities has led to an increase in the prices of petroleum products snow-ball effects on other prices. Reduction in subsidies on social services has brought about the introduction of school fees and hospital fees. Massive retrenchment of workers, cuts of salaries and wages, increased cost of municipal services such as electricity supply, water and transportation had all combined to degrade living conditions.

These neo-colonial policies were paradoxically accompanied by rising annual profits for the leading multinational corporations. The Government is planning to pursue a policy of privatisation of public corporations and has introduced a Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market which shall have the serious implications of a runaway inflation.

Obnoxious decrees such as Decree No.2 (detention without trial), Decree No.9 (denial of freedom of association), Decree No.16 (retrenchment of workers without any justifiable reasons), Decree No.17 (denial of retirement benefits and pension rights to workers), etc., have been maintained.

In education the crisis has expressed itself in the near collapse of institutions of
learning. Primary and secondary schools lack the most basic equipment. Teachers have been dismissed en masse and those still in employment have been demoralised with the late or non-payment of salaries. Parents have been overburdened with educational levies and development taxes.

In the universities we find very undemocratic structures, shortages of accommodation, lecture halls, furniture, equipment, and laboratory materials. New feeding arrangements which involve private contractors have caused exorbitant price increases. The prospect of unemployment on graduation is a frightening cause for concern for most students.

Thus when the massacre of the ABU students took place on 23 May 1986 the simmering crisis of the educational system exploded all over the country. All the universities (about 20) and an equal number of Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, etc. all revolted in indignation against the carnage. The eruption was manifested in boycott of lectures, the burning of police stations and attacks on government property. The police retaliated with violent attacks on the students with more deaths and injuries at the Kaduna Polytechnic, University of Benin and University of Lagos. The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) led the nation-wide protest. It spread to secondary schools and in some places even the primary schools.

The Nigeria Labour Congress, (NLC), religious organisations, professional associations and women's associations condemned the police vandalism and the high-handedness of the ABU authorities. The nation was ablaze with resentment. The Federal Military Government set up the Abisoye Commission to investigate the crisis in ABU. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and the National Executive Council of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) boycotted the sittings of the tribunal unless the ABU Vice Chancellor and the Kaduna Police Commissioner were immediately suspended. An independent private enquiry was initiated by these organisations, but the boycott of the Government panel was broken by the local (ABU) branch. The recommendations of the Abisoye panel and the decisions of the Government on them have clearly come out to defend the status quo and dish out 'justice' according to the dictates and interests of the ruling class.

The crisis culminated over the countrywide demonstration of 4 June 1984 planned by the NLC. It was aborted by a naked show of force by the Babangida military junta. It unmasked the true identity of the regime as a 'dictatorship of soldiers', pure and simple. The planned demonstration of 4 June in solidarity with the ABU students was a 'vote of no confidence' in the economic policies and contradictory 'human rights posture' of the regime. The Government saw it as a challenge to its legitimacy and charged the NLC leaders with subversion!

The reaction confrontation showed the weak basis of the regime, and the potential power of the popular forces. After unsuccessful attempts to persuade the NLC to call off the planned march, the Military Government declared a de facto state of emergency in the country. The Inspector-General of Police seized the powers of the university senates and closed down many of the tertiary institutions to forestall further protests.

On the eve of 4 June 1986, officials of the NLC, ASUU and students were arrested and detained all over the country. NLC offices were occupied by the police in all state capitals.
The highest organs of state, namely the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Council of State (comprising of all state military Governors), Divisional Commanders of the Army, Commissioners of Police of all states, were called in. On 4 June, all members of the armed forces were placed on the alert with the order to shoot demonstrators.

The crisis exposed the commitment of the State to the use of violent repression of opposition. The Abisoye panel recommended that ‘in the event of inviting the police to the universities they must not be armed with live ammunition. The panel recommended that the Mobile Police Force (popularly called “Kill-and-Go”, because of their immunity from the law) should not be used to disperse demonstrating students inside their campuses’. In fact, more importantly, the panel suggested that the ‘instrument establishing the Nigeria Police Mobile Force should be repealed’. The Federal Military Government rejected these recommendations. The message is that the ruling class shall always use all the resources of violence at its disposal to defend its interests.

Implications for Student Unionism
The students experienced loss of lives, injuries, rape, loss of property and detention in police cells. They stood up to their reputation as the ‘conscience of the nation’ and as part of the vanguard of the struggle for the improvement of Nigerian society. The student movement provided the nation with a rallying force for waging resistance against the anti-people’s policies of a neo-colonial regime. Campuses and society shall never be the same again. Political awareness and resistance to repression have been reinforced.

The ruling class has tried to clip the wings of the student movement. The decision to ban NANS has always been the cheapest tactic of the Government. From the colonial days to the civilian and military regimes, student unionism has been banned at the slightest expression of dissent. But the student movement has outlived many rulers. Its capacity for resistance and survival remains high.

All student unions have been dissolved. The regime has ordered that student unionism from now on shall be voluntary. This is meant to balkanise the movement. In order to cripple its financial base the Government has ordered that university authorities should no longer collect union fees from students on behalf of the unions. The authorities have been empowered to prescribe ‘leadership qualities’ and to set out conditions for student unionism. The Government has banned congress meetings of student unions which all students attend. The congress provides the whole of the student body of a campus with the opportunity to meet. It is the highest decision making body of the students’ union. The ban denies the students the freedom of association and the right of peaceful assembly.

Implications of the Crisis for the University System
At the time of the crisis the universities had no Governing Councils since the inception of the Babangida administration. Hence there was a power vacuum which the Minister of Education and the Vice-Chancellors exploited. The crisis exposed the dictatorial tendencies of the Vice-Chancellor and the laws of the university which concentrated a lot of powers in the hands of the VC. The committee system has been destroyed. Instead of reversing this trend the Government has empowered VCs in case of emergency to close down the institutions without prior consultation.

On the Vice-Chancellor Professor Ango Abdullahi, the panel found him ‘blameless’
in the discharge of his duties throughout the crisis but recommended that 'because of the possible hang-over effects of this unfortunate and tragic event, and in the interest of peace for all, it is advised that the VC should be reassigned forthwith'. The Government accepted this recommendation and relieved him of his office.

The main target of attack for the university authorities, police and the Government, apart from the students, was the Academic Staff Union of the Universities (ASUU). This trade union has been in the forefront in challenging undemocratic policies both within the university system and the larger society. ASUU has come to be identified as the defender of the oppressed. Its decision to affiliate to the Nigeria Labour Congress did not endear it to the ruling class and the university authorities.

The Abisoye panel stated that,

It was alleged that some teachers who are members of ASUU in ABU and other universities are not teaching what they are paid to teach. The commission recommends that the Government should critically look into this, and if their role is inimical to the stability of Government, these teachers should be flushed out of the universities (my emphasis).

The Government accepted the recommendation and directed the Minister of Education to take appropriate action. The ASUU had gone to court to challenge this directive. The courts have granted an interim injunction restraining the Minister from sacking any teacher on the grounds that there are no contractual relations between him and the teachers. It is the university councils which are the employers.

The Government has amended the decree which set up the NLC in order to nullify the affiliation of ASUU and also to paralyse its financial base by obstructing the deduction of union dues from the salaries by employers. These divide and rule tactics is meant to balkanise the NLC and to block the role of ASUU in raising political consciousness in the labour movement.

Amidst rumours that a list of radical lecturers to be sacked has been compiled, the Government established the Akanbi Judicial Commission charged with investigating 'the role of student unionism and leadership in creating the disturbance' and to look into 'the effect and influence, if any, of the university staff and other individuals and organisations in promoting the crisis'. At the time of writing, the panel was going round the universities putting the ASUU, student unionism and 'Marxists' on trial!

The Minister of Education has also come out with a policy of 'rationalisation of the university system' which is a euphemism for sacking university teachers and tailoring the teaching programme of the universities to suit the interests of the neo-colonial ruling class. The military junta of Babangida has directed that 'the curricula of the institutions of higher learning should be modified to teach subjects in such a way as to reduce the prevailing culture of violence and to enhance stability'.

The big blow to university autonomy has been struck by the Minister of Education with Decree No.16 of 1986. Under this Inspectors shall come into universities to inspect not only their finances but also course contents!

**Implications of the Crisis for the Struggle for Democracy in Nigeria**

The most important lesson of the crisis for the progressive forces is the foundation which the events of May-June 1986 has laid for the continued struggle for democracy and social justice. The alliance of the NLC-NANS-ASUU, with the
support of the sections of the press and professional bodies and democratic organisations has strengthened opposition to the neo-colonial policies of the military dictatorship and the brutality of the agents of the bourgeois state against innocent citizens. It provides a basis for future struggles for the democratisation and a socialist alternative.

The bourgeois ruling class has demonstrated its fear of this grand alliance as expressed in the panicky measures in the White paper on the Abisoye panel. The panel insisted that ‘student union is not a trade union and, therefore, should not get involved in trade unionism’. The Government noted that ‘it is regrettable that the NLC is giving succour to student militancy’ (my emphasis). The panel also maintained that ‘trade unions should not interfere in student unionism’. The Government warned the NLC not to interfere with union activities!

The rapid development of the Nigerian press in terms of quantity and quality has brought to the fore a core of well educated and politically conscious journalists many of whom are siding with the oppressed and exploited. By simply giving factual accounts of events and issues in the country they expose the excesses of the ruling class.

The White Paper on the Abisoye Panel noted with much regret,

the very adverse role played by some sections of the press, particularly some newspapers, in escalating the crisis through exaggerated and even outright false reports. The Government appeals to the press to exercise their freedom with utmost caution and discretion and not to take the liberal Human Rights stand for granted.

The demands by the students and the university teachers for the democratisation of the university system and the defence of its autonomy have intensified. The threat to the existence of the NANS and ASUU is resisted. These two associations have a major role to play along with trade unions, women's organisations and professional bodies in the struggle in defence of civil liberties and the interests of the oppressed classes.

The recent launching of ‘the working class position’ by the NLC in the ongoing national political debate on the future of Nigeria is a welcome development in view of some of the bold decisions that the labour movement has taken. The NLC has asserted that:

Labour in politics would broaden genuine political participation; it would halt the use of tribalism, statism and religious differences as instruments for manipulating people; it would be mass oriented and above all, forge a truly united nation behind a definite political posture — WHICH SHALL BE SOCIALISM. For the realisation of this objective, workers and other DEMOCRATIC GROUPS and PROGRESSIVE individuals must pick up the gauntlet (my emphasis).

With regards to the instrument for the mobilisation of the workers and realisation of a socialist society the NLC has declared that:

The working class deserves a legitimate party of its own, organised and funded by it. Labour has a vanguard role in the political education and mobilisation of workers and will encourage them to belong to their party and enhance their political consciousness.

Meanwhile we should keep our fingers crossed to await the outcome of Akanbi panel and the visitation panels to the various universities along with the decisions of the government on their reports. The reactions of the students and university teachers to the outcome will set the tone of resistance and opposition to the military
junta in view of the likely disastrous consequences of the Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market which are likely to engulf the whole of the Nigerian society in another outrage.

WIN: A MILITANT APPROACH TO THE MOBILISATION OF WOMEN
Altine Mohammed and Bene Madunagu

Women in Nigeria is an organisation which originated from the enthusiasm and interest evoked initially by the First Annual Women in Nigeria Conference, held in 1982. It was at this conference that a group of dedicated women and men from all over Nigeria committed themselves to the task of establishing an organisation which would work unceasingly for an improvement in the condition of Nigerian women.

The founding group believed, and the organisation still maintains, that the liberation of women cannot be fully achieved outside the context of the liberation of the oppressed and poor majority of the people of Nigeria. However, there are aspects of women's oppression that we can work to alleviate.

Therefore women must organise and fight for their full social and economic rights in the family, in the workplace and in society in general as a necessary part of the continuing struggle to create and develop a just society for all.

In order to do this we must know clearly and concretely how women's and men's lives are structured by the socio-economic and political conditions in which they live. Thus research, policy-making dissemination of information and action are all parts of the organisations objectives.

Why WIN? Why in Nigeria
It may be asked why an organisation such as Women in Nigeria is necessary at all and in Nigeria in particular. What is so special about WIN and what makes her necessary in view of the long history of women's resistance, activism and associations in Nigeria?

Indeed, there are fore-running women's organisations in Nigeria just as there are traditions of resistance and activism which go back to pre-colonial times. It needs to be stressed that there were indigenous 'feminisms' prior to our contact with Europe just as there were indigenous modes of rebellion and resistance in the mythified African past. Therefore 'feminism' or the fight for women's rights and women's interests is not the result of 'contamination' by the west or a simple imitation as divisive opponents like to charge. One of the most recurrent charges made to and about Third World women is that of being blind copy-cats of Western European feminists. Many Third World feminists, in awareness of the 'divide-and-rule' tactics of their accusers, have replied perceptively that the accusers' play is consciously conceived and maintained to confuse women, to bind to them their respective men and male systems and to prevent a dangerous comparing of notes and a potentially dangerous unity. The truth is that there has always been in every culture, indigenous forms of feminism which may take various forms as it does in Nigeria—
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social harassment and ostracism of males as in the Igbo 'sitting on a man' practice; witchcraft, occultism and magic; the exploitation of the wives of sexuality and plain stubbornness. Sometimes, resistance takes the form of different types of anti-social behaviour including withdrawal into madness. One of our tasks is to find out more about these indigenous forms of feminist resistance.

WIN follows in the long tradition of organised women's associations and movements. Previously, we have had associations of women, social political activists and plain strugglers who in their daily living have tried to raise the status of women in the society and the home through various ways — through cult groups, women's councils, the market system, the church, the school, social clubs and family groupings. What is unique about WIN is that it is one of the few organisations, if not the only one, which is consciously organised around a political ideology. WIN is unique in being conscious of the importance of both class and gender systems in the struggle to see that women enjoy their fundamental human rights.

WIN is aware that the majority of women, like the majority of men, suffer from the exploitative and oppressive character of Nigerian society; that women suffer additional forms of exploitation and oppression; that women, therefore, suffer double oppression and exploitation — as members of subordinate classes and as women. WIN feels it necessary to fight both class exploitation and sex subordination together. Such convictions give WIN its special character. Emerging from the class perspective on women's oppression is the decision to have both male and female membership, another unique characteristic. We have both female and male members, while we work, and are willing to work, actively with other women's organisations.

Notwithstanding the youthful age of the organisation it has achieved some successes with all the constraints that it is facing. The Annual Conferences of WIN which rotate around the country come up with very stimulating themes and fundamental resolutions and demands for improving the conditions of women from year to year. After the inaugural conference in 1982 where WIN was founded at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the organisation has held the following conferences:

1983 — on 'Women and the Family in Nigeria', held in Zaria (proceedings have been published as Women and the Family CODESRIA/WIN 1986).
1984 — on 'Women and Education in Nigeria', held in Port Harcourt.
1985 — on 'Women in the Rural Area of Nigeria', held in Ilorin.
1986 — on 'Women and Political Development: Awareness and Mobilisation', held in Benin City.

It is the resolve of WIN to publish the proceedings of all its conferences. So far three have been published.

WIN's Contribution to the Political Debate
There is currently an ongoing debate on the political future of Nigeria and Women in Nigeria (WIN) has organised zonal seminars involving grass roots women and women's organisations all over the country. In an effort to create a forum for their active participation in the debate, the deliberations of the various zones were presented and discussed at a National Conference which took place in Benin City.
from 22-23 July 1986. The conference came out with a communique which articulated the views of WIN on a number of national issues. Highlights of this communique include the call for the extension of democracy to include the grassroots majority and the elimination of all forms of exploitation, oppression and subordination. The various conditions necessary for women’s active participation were also outlined as major demands.

**ROAPE Conference on ‘Popular Struggles in Africa’**

The fourth ROAPE Conference on the theme of POPULAR STRUGGLES IN AFRICA was organised in collaboration with the Centre of African Studies at the University of Liverpool and was held on the 26-28 September 1986 in Liverpool. More than 200 people attended and almost 70 papers and presentations were delivered. The most striking feature of the conference, which was a major factor in its success, was the large number of Africans who attended. In part this was made possible by a generous grant from SAREC in Sweden and additional financial support by the British Council and OXFAM.

A full report will appear in the next issue, but a summary of the proceedings is included here.

In the opening plenary, addresses were given by Altine Mohammed on behalf of the Women in Nigeria (WIN) group, Basil Davidson and Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu. All of Saturday was spent in workshop sessions on the themes of liberation movements, working class action and urban struggles, the left in Africa, environment and development, peasant movements, democracy and popular struggles, revolutionary strategies and South Africa. Workshop sessions continued in the first part of Sunday morning when two highly successful groups met on women’s struggles along with a number of spontaneous workshops organised by the participants themselves. The final plenary was addressed by Hadipo Hamutenya, Director of Information, SWAPO, who had come from Luanda and by individual members of the African National Congress. It is a measure of the difficult situation existing in South Africa under the state of emergency that the invited representatives of the UDF and COSATU were unable to attend. The official ANC delegate was also unable to come from Lusaka as he was denied a visa by the British Government. However, the debate in the workshops and the plenary sessions on South Africa was greatly enriched by the participation of those with first hand information on the current resistance taking place against the apartheid regime.

The volume compiled from papers presented at the last ROAPE conference held at the University of Keele was also launched at the Liverpool meeting. It is edited by Peter Lawrence and is entitled *World Recession and the Food Crisis in Africa*. It is published by ROAPE in collaboration with James Currey and is available to ROAPE readers for £8.50/$15 (see order form).

As a practical finale to the Conference, an informal gathering of the many African participants, convened by Abdul Rahman Mohammed Babu, had a long discussion about the value of such forms of inter-African contact at a non-governmental level. They called for actions, reinforcing similar initiatives coming from within the continent, for the resurrection of the All African People’s Organisation as a means of generating contact, of comparing experiences of popular struggles and building effective solidarity.
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Debates

* Piotr Dutkiewicz and Robert Shenton

The debate over the nature of the state in capitalist society has been both lengthy and broad. The portion of this debate with which we are here concerned has taken place within a broadly Marxian or neo-Marxian framework. In what has usually been seen as the 'classical' Marxist theory the state is characterised as an 'instrument' in the hands of a ruling class and used in opposition to other social classes. In addition to this 'classical' position there are two main Marxist positions. The first of these, associated with the work of Althusser, emphasises the distinctive position of the state (and politics) within the 'structure' of a social formation and thus the possibility of a study of this 'region' (the 'political'). It is clearly an arena of competition, yet in Althusser's formulation appears separate from economic competition in the marketplace. The second, or 'relational' theory of the state, associated with such writers as Corrigan et al. (and less clearly Poulantzas and Therborn), focuses on an image of the state as the social and political concentration or crystallisation of the various class and intra-class struggles in society. For these writers the state is one of the relations of capitalist society which are constitutive of class relations.

The debate over the nature of the state in the third world, and in Africa in particular, has followed a very different course to that which has concerned itself with the issue in regard to advanced capitalist states. One key difference is that in the African context the question of the nature of the ruling class(es) is seen as central to an understanding of the state. In this sense, from Alavi on, the debate on the nature of the state in Africa, and much of the rest of the third world, has echoed an older debate within Marxist theory as to whether what was seen as the ruling class(es) in the third world constituted a 'historically progressive' bourgeoisie or alternatively a reactionary 'comprador' class allied with imperialist interests.

Beckman (*ROAPE* 23, p.50) has reviewed the evidence, primarily with regard to Nigeria, for both positions. He concludes:

... the state is an organ of international capital ... because of the way in which international, world-market-orientated accumulation has been internalised into the Nigerian political economy. The state plays a crucial role in this process and attempts to overcome the resistance facing it from workers and petty commodity producers.

On the other hand, the Nigerian state is not a comprador state in the sense that it is primarily an agent of social forces external to society. These forces have been internalised. Nor is it a 'national' state in the sense of being a carrier of resistance to foreign domination. The relations of domination originating from outside have been built into the fabric of domestic class relations.

* Centre for Developing Countries and Department of Geography, University of Warsaw.
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However it is a state of imperialism . . . This is a new phase of imperialist domination . . . Provisionally we may call this state the "state of internationally subordinate state monopoly capitalism" . . . State capital and state intervention perform strategic functions in organising production, class formation and class alliances. The essence of its form of domination is monopolistic: state power is used to generate conditions for monopoly profits, including the suppression of anti-monopoly social and political forces.

There can be little doubt that the nature of the colonial states in Africa had a formative influence on their post-colonial successors (Tiagunienko). It was upon the basis of this inheritance that the post-colonial state evolved. In order to understand its evolution it is necessary to trace the coeval development of the post-colonial political economy with special reference to the growing role of the state in it and the way in which the collective consciousness of those who have held political power has shaped and has been shaped by that political economy. These developments can only be sketched schematically in the present work.

Our starting point is the decisive role which the state played in the colonial economy in Africa from its inception. In the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, as the contradictions of the colonial economy and polity became more acute, state intervention was massively expanded to include marketing, 'development' and other activities. During this period imperial governments first attempted through the use of currency controls, import quotas, and controls over the prices of export and import goods to manage the colonial economy directly.

The 'Ruling Elite' State

In the immediate post-independence period Africa's ruling elites were spawned from diverse sectors and strata. Aristocracies where they had survived colonial rule, merchants who had prospered in the colonial economy, members of the colonial bureaucracies, armies and educational establishments all had their representatives in the ruling elites of the post-colonial state. The principal political resources available to these new ruling elites were those inherited from the colonial state. Marketing boards, financial institutions, development plans, government contracts, import licenses, and most crucially the appointment of state functionaries all formed a part of the battlefield of intra-ruling elite political struggle.

As a whole this ruling elite shared certain common behavioural characteristics. They attempted to monopolize existing state resources cultivating strong personal links with one another on the basis of common kin, clan, religious, linguistic and/or educational links and tended toward secret decision making and the centralisation of political power (Dutkiewicz, 1980). Many African leaders of this era articulated new, or new sounding, ideologies such as 'African socialism' or 'negritude', while newly invented cultural practices were used to justify state policy and/or corruption. Constitutional and much other law was most often honoured in the breach while organised or unorganised armed force became increasingly important in resolving political disputes. Political victory came to be seen as only having been achieved with the abolition or total surrender of political opposition. In general, ruling elite members lacked any long-term economic or political strategy for the management or direction of society as a whole.

During this period, success in business depended not only on the capacity to organise the production or exchange of commodities, nor on the entrepreneurial skills of businessmen but on access to and control over government decisions.
Corruption which tended to become the main source of business success for politicians and their associates tended to be 'contractual' in nature involving the more or less clearly defined exchange of illegally appropriated public goods, money and information. Not only politicians but many others as well felt threatened by changes in governments which deprived them of access to decision makers.

As control over the distribution of state resources penetrated all other forms of economic activity, 'politics' became, not simply an instrument of class interests, but the crucial means of ruling class formation through which politicians and their clients acquired the economic resources to establish themselves as a social class. In such a situation the expansion of the 'state sector' of the economy followed logically as the primary means to expand ruling elite resources necessary for the maintenance of political power. State owned enterprises, for example, served as a primary means of financing political parties, while the effectiveness of political patronage and thus control was enhanced by the multiplication of managerial positions in such enterprises. Planning, supposedly concerned with the economic development of the nation, when it was not simply a means of 'outdoor relief for economists and other superfluous university graduates, became a means of redistributing the gross national product for political ends.

The 'Ruling Group' State
The quantitative expansion of the state sector, in and of itself, began to lead in the second decade of independence to a qualitatively different set of conditions within which the social reproduction of Africa's ruling elites was to take place. Although there can be no sharp and clear divide between the two periods, we will argue that the period where the state was dominated by what we call a 'ruling group' was significantly different from the earlier period of the 'ruling elite state' (Sledziewsky).

Obviously, the origins of the ruling group in various African states lay in the ruling elites of the immediate post-independence period. However, the political positions and potential political resources which were most effectively used by the ruling group differed in emphasis from those which their predecessors exploited. Thus, during this phase, key positions in the state apparatus such as party leaderships, professional or 'expert' statuses, permanent secretariats, and especially those positions which gave direct access to control over state-owned means of production and exchange such as state financial institutions, and state — or partly state-financed factories designed for import substitution became more important than positions as spokesman for ethnic groups in regional structures. Those who had failed to use their ethnic political bases to gain access to state economic institutions and official positions ran the risk of becoming political anachronisms.

Positions in the mass media or the educational establishments were increasingly of secondary importance, while the relative importance of those who controlled the means of direct coercion varied from nation to nation depending on the intensity of conflict surrounding the attempt by would-be ruling group members to create the social basis for their own reproduction as a class. Such conflicts could overturn the political tables and open the door to the armed forces. However, military rulers rapidly found themselves dependent upon and gradually assimilated by the ruling group through the simple logic of remaining in power. Indeed periods of military rule sometimes provided the breathing space necessary for the ruling group to stabilise itself after a particularly bitter period of intra-group struggle. In some
cases, they concentrated power in the hands of the upper levels of the civil service and hastened the transition from ‘political’ to ‘administrative’ government. ‘Decentralisation' was often no more than a strategy for the weakening of local or regional power structures in the interest of enhanced central control. Moreover, where centralisation provoked regional or ethnic resistance, such resistance itself became a further justification for increased centralisation.

The expansion of the state sector subordinated other sectors of the economy to its own logic of development. At the same time it provided an expanding base for the reproduction of the ruling group — one which permitted it to lead an increasingly autonomous existence from ethnic and regional political bases of support. In the process, the ruling group gradually became increasingly aware of its own collective interests regardless of ethnic or regional origin. The availability of state funds, manipulations of price structures, exchange rates and import and foreign exchange controls, and control over development programmes, increasingly came to mean an ever narrower ruling group controlling state property. In this sense, state property, and increasingly the state itself, became ‘reprivatised' by the ruling group.

The nature of corruption changed from 'contractual' corruption to ‘revindicational' corruption. Corruption in this latter sense implied the claim of ruling group ownership, the tendency to treat state property as subject to the rules of private ownership.

Like corruption, inefficiency in establishing and managing state enterprises, financial institutions, import and exchange rate policies, and development projects, rather than preventing the social reproduction of this ruling group, was an absolute prerequisite for it. The ruling groups' social reproduction required an ever-expanding number of parastatals to be created and development projects to be begun. The completion, or, in a rational capitalistic sense, the efficient operation of such parastatals or development projects was antithetical to the social reproduction of the ruling group. This was true simply because the efficient operation of such firms and projects would have obviated the need to generate further plans and projects to achieve the ends which their predecessors failed to do. In this sense inefficiency was ‘efficient', efficient for the expanded reproduction of the ruling group. One result of this was the geometric expansion of a poorly skilled and corrupt lower level bureaucracy incapable of fulfilling even its few professional obligations, itself fuelled by academics and others who saw the solution to every problem in the creation of yet another position or agency to deal with it and to employ more of their own number. By generating a never-ending series of parastatals and development projects the ruling group provided employment and no matter how small, inadvertent or fleeting, an amelioration of the conditions of life and a share of state resources for at least some members of the underclasses. In doing so the conditions of the social reproduction of the ruling group increasingly penetrated and reshaped the conditions for the reproduction of society as a whole.

By the end of the second decade of independence the post-colonial state came to be characterised by a politics of controlled shortage. Increasingly, political power was wielded through the allocation of foreign currency, import licenses and other advantages. The strength of such tools clearly depended on the continuity of an economy in which shortages were deliberately created and controlled. As the political needs of the ruling group increasingly dominated economic decision making, the diminished, rather than the expanded, reproduction of public capital
became the decisive consequence of the ruling group's behaviour bringing it into ever greater conflict with the needs of capital accumulation in general.

If, as we have argued, the ruling group has played a key role in generating the structure of the post-colonial state in Africa and has succeeded in establishing the bases of its own social reproduction in that state, a number of conclusions follow. First, the ruling group by establishing the bases of its own social reproduction is well on its way to becoming a class in its own right. Second, the oft remarked 'relative autonomy' of the state in post-colonial Africa is a direct reflection of the autonomous basis of social reproduction of this ruling group. Third, although the ruling group has depended for the creation and expansion of the basis for its own social reproduction on a combination of foreign capital and surpluses extracted from its own domestic underclasses, it interests, consciousness, and logic of reproduction are synonymous with neither. Indeed, they are in diametric opposition to both. It is to this opposition, which is central to an understanding of the current phases of the crises of the post-colonial political economy of Africa, which we now turn.

The Crises and the Peasantry
The massive scale of the agrarian element of the current round of the crisis of Africa's political economy is not in doubt. However, the current crises of food availability and/or agricultural production are only the most recent, if the most severe, manifestations of a long series of ever more intense crises of Africa's political economy characterised by indebtedness, infrastructural collapse, falling productivity, rising import dependence and diminished import capacity and consequent social and political upheaval.

In a recent work Goran Hyden, an official of the Ford Foundation in Nairobi, Kenya, has located the source of Africa's current development woes in terms common in much of the 'disaster' literature of the early 1970s. This view holds that the victims of the African agrarian debacle are, however unwittingly, the authors of their own plight. Hyden's own variant is couched in the following terms: 'By and large the African personality is full and wholesome in a sense which does not tally with the demands of systematic rationality' (Hyden, 1983, p.50). The cause of the irrationality which Hyden sees as inherent in the 'African personality' is the result, in Hyden's analysis, of what he calls 'the economy of affection'. At the heart of this 'economy of affection' is to be found the family and the household. Because of the existence of this 'economy of affection' African states are 'corrupt', and, as a result, development agencies have been unable to go about their business efficiently.

It is unnecessary to pursue the absurdity of characterising the behaviour of the inhabitants of an entire continent as irrational. What is important in Hyden's analysis is that, like much other recent development literature, it sees the functioning of the household and family in Africa as an ahistorical and unintelligible datum. This concern with family and household is a preoccupation of recent development literature and of development practice as well. Anthropologists are, in repetition of an earlier day, once more in demand on the African continent. In the face of the failure of development agencies, particularly those concerned with agriculture, to have their new seeds, crops and techniques adopted by African cultivators, the anthropologist is rapidly being ascribed a position equivalent to that of a shaman. This shamanism on the part of the development bureaucracy is the
direct result of the belief that this particular branch of social science can break the
code of peasant household and family behaviour.

This characterisation of peasant household and family behaviour as 'pre-capitalist',
irrational or incomprehensible cannot be permitted to stand without challenge. We
are well aware of the contentiousness of the terms 'household' and 'family'. The
primary reason for this unease regarding the concepts of family and household in
the context of peasant societies seems to lie in the multiplicity and the fluidity of the
empirically found families and households. This very fluidity and multiplicity of
families and households may in large measure be the result of historic
reconstitutions of these units in the face of market opportunities and pressures.

It is the inability to see this process of reconstitution which lies at the heart of the
ahistoric and unempirical manner in which these concepts have been used by the
'development experts'. Worse Still, in the case of Hyden, this metaphysical family
becomes the explanation for the failures of the developers themselves.

We seek here to raise the question of the relationship between the transformation of
families and households in large parts of Africa and the current crises of African
agricultural production. The efflorescence of cash crop export production in Africa
was rooted in a particularly crucial way to the existence of a particular set of family
and household relations, one that was able to realise a particular differential rent
and comparative advantage in agricultural production, but also one that was to be
transformed, by reason of its own success.

The single most important element common to the social structure and political
economy of family/household units which were responsible for the efflorescence of
export crop production in some parts of Africa during the period 1860-1960 was
their ability to use for the reproduction of labour both labour and goods (especially
food) obtained either directly as use-values or as commodities sold below their
market prices in restricted local circuits of exchange while taking advantage of the
cheapening of the costs of imported consumer goods, notably cotton cloth.
Consequently, the price obtainable for agricultural exports on the world market did
not have to cover the market cost of the reproduction of that labour which
produced them. The ability of a household head to draw on non-commoditised food
and labour as inputs in the production of agricultural exports was made possible by
an ideology and practise of household and/or family economy which governed the
control of household resources.

The process of commoditisation was largely irreversible. When the price of
agricultural exports increased, producer output tended to increase as might be
expected. When, however, prices fell, output tended to continue to increase as
producers attempted to maintain a stable cash income (for evidence of the
coincidence of falling prices and rising export production in inter-war Nigeria see
Helleiner, 1966, App. Tables Ila and Iib, and Williams, 1980, Table 1.). Such a
response tended to accelerate the commitment to agricultural production for the
export market. The rural household increasingly became vulnerable to periodic
capitalist crises in a manner explained by Bernstein in his discussion in ROAPE 10
of the 'simple reproduction crisis'.

Periods of crises of simple household reproduction generated by market or 'natural'
causes occurred frequently during the period of colonial rule and continued under
independent African governments. The weaker households and their members
were literally thrown off the countryside — having become, in the words of Polly
Hill, 'too poor to farm'. Many of these former agricultural producers ended up in the increasingly overcrowded urban centres of Africa as food consumers living a precarious hand to mouth existence in slums and shantys.

The expanded scope of commoditisation of social relations, providing greater access to sons, and to wives and daughters, to their own sources of income weakened the capacity of household heads to direct the labour of household members of their own terms. Larger households tended to break up into more nuclear family units. The very success of rural households in expanding production for the market, despite low prices, undermined the conditions which made such expansion possible in the first place. From the Second World War, the household/family based agricultural sector served as a milk cow for 'development'. It was exploited to meet the needs of the post-war imperial economy and then to finance the expanding claims of their rulers. In this way, it created new economic opportunities outside the rural and agricultural economy, on which those new sectors continued to depend for their reproduction. Agricultural production offered worse returns, and household heads commanded relatively fewer resources, than were now available to their members elsewhere.

The post-colonial states of Africa and the ruling groups which govern them are not, as Hyden maintains, outgrowths of the family or household and its 'economy of affection'. Rather they have come into direct and intensifying contradictions with the family/household based units of agricultural production which provided the wherewithal to finance the activities of those states and ruling groups. In doing so, the ruling groups diminished the productive capacity of their own sources of social reproduction.

The Crises and International Capital

Perhaps the most important response of international capital to the current phase of the crises is typified by that of the 'Berg Report' of the World Bank. The Berg Report, stripped of its 'devspeak', emphasises three main recommendations. First, African nations must endeavour to increase their market share of 'traditional' export crops. Second, although the report recognises that there will have to be a successful transformation of the means and relations of production in agriculture at some point in the not too distant future, it is expected that the initial increase in export crop production will have to come from family/household units of production. Third, the report maintains that the prerequisite for such an increase must be a lessening of 'state intervention', or more clearly, if less politely expressed, that Africa's ruling groups will have to forgo a portion of the surplus which they extract from their rural populations.

What these recommendations amount to is no less than a project for raising the rate of profit of international capital invested in African economies through a reduction in the ruling group's ability to appropriate state resources for its own ends. As such the chief failing of the Berg Report is that it virtually invites the ruling groups of Africa's states to commit political suicide by depriving them of their social bases of reproduction and primary instruments of political control.

On one level this is not surprising. 'Development', from its inception during the colonial period, has always been fraught with the contradiction between maintaining a politically stable environment and the transformation of the means and relations of production. Since the colonial state came into existence there has always been a marked tension between the aims of capital and the aims of the
various nation states which guaranteed the security of the spheres of capital's endeavours. The price necessary for such political security, always seen as a deduction from potential profits, was paid only grudgingly. From the crisis of colonialism in the late 1930s on, the price which it was necessary for capital to pay for such security began to increase steadily. With the inheritance of the institutions of 'development' by Africa's post-colonial rulers the price became steadily higher still, and the means of paying it less readily available.

What prognosis can we offer, in the light of this analysis, for the majority of African states. Some states which are either of geo-political importance or within whose boundaries there is to be found a particularly strategic resource which will continue to be propped up, thus giving the ruling group a renewed, if tenuous, lease on life. States without such a position will be faced with two choices. Either they will have to reorder their legal, economic and political systems massively so as to permit a new basis of capitalist accumulation to be created or they will become the international equivalent of the long-term 'structurally unemployed' populations which now haunt most advanced capitalist economies. In either of the latter two cases, the bases of the social reproduction of the ruling group will of necessity be undercut. It is to the question of the political results of such an action that further analysis must turn.

Bibliographic Note

In this paper, we refer to 'ruling elites' and/or 'ruling groups' rather than 'ruling classes' in Africa. This is not because we are allergic to Marxist terminology but because we see African states and the collective character of their rulers as evolving together. It would predetermine the argument to speak of a 'ruling class' at the onset of the post-colonial period. Those who inherited state office at independence adapted the structure which shaped their own social evolution — eventually an evolution into a ruling class. These points are developed in M.A. Czeszkow Kritika przedstawieni prawiaszczich grup w razwijajuszczichsia stranach (Critique of Characterisations of Ruling Groups in Developing Countries) (Moscow, 1979), especially pp. 192-209, J. W. Sledziewsky, Nigerija — Sovremienny etap razvitija (Nigeria — Contemporary Stage of Development — Trends and Prospects) (Moscow, 1976), especially pp. 47-56. and P. Duliewicz's doctoral thesis, Ewolutsia prawiaszczich grup w Nigeriji, 1960-1970 (Evolution of the Ruling Groups in Nigeria, 1960-1979) (Moscow, 1980), especially pp. 16-24. See also the volume translated from Russian into Polish, W. Tiagunienko (ed.) Kraje rozwijajace sie, Tendencje, Perspektywy (Developing Countries — Trends and Prospects) (Warsaw, 1976), especially pp. 205-222.


Previous versions of this paper were presented in papers to 'South-South' a conference of the Canadian Associations of Latin American and Caribbean and of African Studies, Montreal, 1985, and at the Regional Conference fo Geographers, Barcelona, 1986. We are grateful to Gavin Williams for criticisms and comments on earlier versions of this paper.
Reviews


This book is a study of the process through which the contradictory nature of imperialist exploitation between 1900-1939 laid the basis for the genesis of the current agrarian crisis in northern Nigeria. The central question which Robert Shenton sets out to investigate is how it was possible that northern Nigerian society was integrated into the world capitalist system and yet failed to develop the vastly augmented forces of production integral to the development of capitalism in the West. In seeking to answer this question and explain why northern Nigeria underwent a process of social transformation which undermined its ability even to reproduce itself in a manner consistent with its own continued survival, Shenton adopts Geoffrey Kay's theoretical model as articulated in the latter's Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis. Shenton's study is therefore also an effort at a concrete historical application and elucidation of Kay's thesis to the effect that '... capitalism has created underdevelopment not simply because it has exploited the underdeveloped countries but because it has not exploited them enough'.

According to Shenton, if Northern Nigeria has been faced with an acute crisis of development brought out by its inability to feed itself any longer, it is precisely because merchant capital was the crucial agent and agency for its incorporation into world capitalism. Merchant capital, given its parasitic nature, sought to batten on to the pre-existing forms of surplus extraction in pre-colonial, pre-capitalist northern Nigeria. In this way, merchant capital worked in a profoundly conservative manner to preserve rather than transform the pre-existing forces and social relations of production in northern Nigeria. The outcome of the impact of merchant capital on the political economy was to reinforce and intensify the age-old vulnerability of northern Nigeria to famine while at the same time exposing it to the new threat of capitalist crisis.

Throughout its existence, the colonial state bore the marks of merchant capital with the consequence that it too had little interest in transforming either the relations of production or the nature of pre-colonial state power in northern Nigeria. For instance, the colonial state's Land Proclamation Act of 1910 had the effect of halting and eliminating the prospect for the development of private property in land, a development which had already started to gather pace in the area prior to the colonial conquest. This had enormous consequences for the socio-economic development of northern Nigeria. First, the possibility of the development of a private landlord class was blocked. Secondly, the rural producers of the region
were transformed into a peasantry rather than a wage-earning agricultural proletariat. Thirdly, the chances of the creation of some of the plantation agriculture financed by foreign capital was eliminated. Finally, state control over land and a substantial part of the surplus appropriated from it blocked the development of indigenous accumulation of capital through the mechanism of ground rent. The state's land policy therefore helped merchant capital to guarantee its position in the political economy of northern Nigeria. This position was strengthened even further with the arrival of the railway in northern Nigeria. Colonial state intervention on behalf of merchant capital went hand in hand with an effort to guarantee the position of the pre-colonial caliphal aristocracy of the Soloto Caliphate within the new dispensation.

The primary form of capitalist accumulation in northern Nigeria was characterized by the appropriation of the absolute surplus labour or product of the region's agricultural producers. This form of surplus appropriation involved little or no technical change or even a conscious re-organisation of the social relations of production. Increases in the level of surplus appropriated emanated out of the greater commitment of individual peasants to the production of cash crops, an extension of the geographical area involved and the lengthening of the agricultural season through the utilisation of migrant labour. For the peasantry, increased production of primary commodities like groundnuts and cotton even in the face of adversities such as famines and dwindling prices arose out of the necessity to earn cash in order to pay colonial taxes and off-set debts to local moneylenders and speculators. But the world capitalist crisis of the 1930s exposed the weaknesses inherent in an economy in which commercial expansion was based on the extraction of an increasing level of surplus in a context where physical output per unit of labour was stagnant. The crisis in state finances triggered by the precipitous fall in the world market prices of Nigeria's exports combined with the impact of the Second World War to compel the colonial government to embark consciously on a scheme to develop agriculture in northern Nigeria seriously. This entailed the introduction of co-operatives and state control of agricultural produce marketing through the marketing board system. But the establishment of state marketing boards only succeeded in entrenching the position of the merchant companies through their appointment as Licensed Buying Agents (LBAs). The state's entry into the marketing of cash crops did what merchant capital had been unable to do over almost a century of activity in the produce trade, namely the stabilization of prices, regulation of profits and termination of inter-firm cut-throat competition. Post-war state interventionism was conducted within the context of a resurgence in the ideology of development which culminated in the establishment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts of 1940 and 1945. But in time, the fiscal crisis of the state soon became a political crisis of colonialism itself as the nationalist struggle for independence gathered pace.

Yet in spite of itself and in contradiction to its own objectives, merchant capital in northern Nigeria served as a powerful catalyst of social transformation which saw the alteration of the manner in which the society was able to reproduce itself. The mechanism of this transformation was the increase and redirection of the agricultural surplus product in a manner which altered the self-sufficiency of the regional, village and household political economy. The social relations of household production and reproduction which existed in the pre-colonial period collapsed. The household was dissolved as a unit of production while the nuclear family took the place of extended family. Rural life became increasingly polarized
between the many debtors and the few creditors. The commoditization of agricultural production in northern Nigeria therefore reproduced rural society in a fundamentally different way and gave birth to the agricultural crisis Nigeria now faces.

Shenton's study is undoubtedly an important addition to the growing body of literature on the political economy of colonialism in the north of Nigeria. The book is highly readable and well documented with copious references to archival sources. In the context of the debate on Nigerian, and indeed Third World capitalism, not all will agree with Shenton's account of the consequence of the activities of foreign merchant capital and the colonial State, especially as it relates to his claim that they merely sought to perpetuate pre-existing social relations of production and productive forces. It would seem that the author has put excessive premium on the elements of continuity in the colony without adequately situating them in the process of change unleashed by the forces of capitalism. Also, the references in the book to the role of merchant capital and the state in, on the one hand, preserving pre-capitalist relations of production and, on the other hand, transforming them, in one simultaneous process will need to be further clarified theoretically. For instance, in the dialectic of conservation/dissolution, which of the two was the primary force? Furthermore, although he explicitly rejects the instrumentalist approach to the study of the State, in almost invariably reducing all the actions of the State to the needs and interests of merchant capital, the author appears to slide into this very instrumentalism. In the end, Shenton's and, ultimately Kay's, explanation of underdevelopment in terms of the reactionary role of merchant capital remains open to debate, especially as that form of capital had lost its independent status in the world economy by the time of the colonial conquest and was no longer acting on its own behalf per se but in the interest of industrial capital to which it had become subordinated. These comments should not however distract from the fact that Shenton's book is a work of significance that fully deserves the attention of all those interested in the consequences of colonial capitalism in northern Nigeria.

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<td>State and Society in Nigeria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrean Journey</td>
<td>£2.00/$3.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

Cheques (US Dollars, on US Banks, International M.O. or Sterling cheques) payable to ROAPE, Regency House, 75-77 St. Mary's Road, Sheffield S2 4AN England.

Phone (0742) 752671. GIRO account no. 64 960 4008.

**Name** .................................................................

**Address** ......................................................................