

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES**

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While our goals and objectives of "development" have not been in doubt (F.R.N., 1970: 33; F.R.N., 1975: 29; and F.R.N., 1981: 37-38), the appropriate strategy (and structures) for achieving them continues to be a problematic issue even though it has been repeatedly but justifiably "over flogged" at many conferences, seminars, symposia, etc. Since the problem not only remains but has even become intensified, its continued discussion is justified. Additionally, it must be considered "topical" in the contexts of the current "debate" on the country's political future and the direction of the present Administration's policy-package (i.e. human-rights, economic-restructuring and return to civil rule).

### ***Socio-economic Development in Nigeria: An Assessment***

Socio-economic development means the improvement, on a continuous basis, of the quality of life of the overwhelming majority of the members of the society in all respects. In consonance with this, the following have been repeatedly declared since 1970 as Nigeria's development goals and objectives: just and egalitarian society; reduction of inequalities in inter-personal incomes; correction of defects in existing social relations in various spheres of production, distribution and exchange; minimization of existing inequalities in wealth, income and consumption standards; equitable spreading of the benefits of economic development; reduction in the level of unemployment and under employment; increased participation by citizens in the ownership and management of productive enterprises; balanced development between urban and rural areas; etc.

The extent to which these development goals and objectives have been achieved is another matter. Available evidence indicates that these sentiments have not been translated to concrete state policies. Two of such observations, made about ten years apart are in order here. In 1976, the former Director-General of N.I.S.E.R. (acknowledged by the government as the foremost social-science research institution- in the country) stated that despite whatever rate of growth<sup>1</sup>, there has been

"increasing rate of unemployment, especially in the cities, rural inertia, food shortages which have become sufficiently serious enough to render necessary the 'Operation Feed the Nation', a high rate of inflation against which policy measures have not been strikingly effective, even

larger economic inequalities among persons and groups and, most prominently, between the urban and rural sectors of the economy, worsening situation of poverty all around, escalating crime, and a general deterioration of the physical and social environment.

It is both significant and depressing that these problems have become more severe even in the context of the national and sub-national planning" (Onitiri, 1982: v).

And in 1985, a group of authors introducing their book on the Nigerian economic crisis observed as follows:

"Despite the huge amounts of domestic resources, both human and natural, which Nigeria is endowed with, the economy is still on the brink of collapse, and the poverty and suffering of the overwhelming majority of the people is intensifying.

Only two decades ago, Nigeria was able to produce substantial amounts of food to feed itself. Now, it has to import massive amounts. Huge foreign-exchange reserves of billions of dollars disappeared as fast as the groundnut pyramids did: leaving the country with nothing to show for it, except the repayment of dubious debts, annually draining away further billions of dollars. Unemployment, increasing poverty and hunger seem to be the fate of most Nigerians and the conditions which future generations are likely to meet, from the way the economy is going now" (Abba, et. al., 1985: 6).

*Accounting<sup>2</sup> for the State of Socio-economic Development in Nigeria/ Governmental Structures or Developmental Strategy*

Even though every society is 'organised' for the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services for its people, the 'type' of organisation varies with the basic principle or ideology that informs the organisation which may, broadly-speaking, be categorized as 'socialized' or 'individualized'. The type of organisation (i.e. social order) of the society in turn determines the type of strategy which the society employs for development which was hitherto conceptualized as the continuous improvement of the quality of life of the members of the society in all respects. And needless to say, the type of development strategy in turn determines the kind and emphasis of development plans and programmes as well as the mode and extent of success of their implementation.

Given that there are different types of social order/development strategy, it must be tennable to assume that the more valid or satisfactory way to make a judgment as to the most ideal or desirable type of social order/development strategy must be in terms' of the extent to which each particular type succeeds in creating, or fails to create, the conditions for the realization of a higher quality of social existence throughout the society and the extent to which such conditions are or are not equitably distributed. The implication here is that different types of social order/development strategy lead to different 'develop

ment outputs'. Furthermore, it means that societal types/development strategies may be broadly categorized on a continuum from 'development-enhancing' to 'development-inhibiting'.

In a 'development-enhancing' social order/development strategy, the 'development-output' is, generally-speaking, manifested in the meaningful and fulfilling participation of the overwhelming majority of the citizens in the economic, political and social life of the society; in improving levels of material well-being; in the people's feeling of psychological and social contentment and security; in interpersonal and intergroup harmony, peace and political stability; and in the people's observable commitment to the consolidation and continuity of the social order.

Contrariwise at the other end of the line, the 'development output' of a 'development-inhibiting' societal type/development strategy is, again generally speaking, predominated by an obsession with economic and physical growth whose gains are increasingly monopolized, legally and illegally, by a socially-alienated few; by the marginalization and consequent anomization of the overwhelming majority of the people regarding the economic, political and social life of the society; by the progressive deterioration of the material well-being of the majority vis-a-vis the material abundance of a few; *by* the people's feeling (based, on the hard realities of their existence) of economic, social and psychological insecurity; by interpersonal and intergroup strife and disharmony; by political and social instability; by the people's observable lack of commitment to, and detachment from, the society; and by structural, and therefore recurrent and recalcitrant, economic and social problems which further jeopardize the existing remnant of the quality of life.

Nigeria's societal type/development strategy is the development-inhibiting type and a sketch of its history, its major development inhibiting and problem-generating development output will suffice in this context. Before the advent of the white man and colonialism, the social organisation of the various societies that now constitute Nigeria was either 'communal\*' or 'socialized\*' in terms of production distribution, exchange and/or consumption of goods and services even where "theo-feudal" in rulership. In addition, the organisation was such that the societies were fairly self-sufficient, producing what was needed for consumption and consuming only what they could produce. It was that organisational type that was responsible for the relative economic security and social harmony in pre-colonial times. The introduction and establishment of the colonial administration and economy gradually but systematically changed the social organisation to the 'individualized' type, incorporated it into the imperialist and world capitalist system, thereby making it dependent on the latter by producing what it does not really need and consuming what it does not produce.

The basic principle or ideology of this 'individualized' type of social organisation is that each individual on his own must be allowed to seek his own good (through individual initiative and private profit) with the

rationale that if everybody is so allowed, the common good will be served. Having brought in this type of social organisation with its underpinning ideology, the British colonial administration correspondingly introduced a new legal order and system (laws, institutions, procedures, personnel, etc.) to reflect, maintain, protect, pursue and propagate the new type of social organisation and the colonial interests behind it.\*In this respect, one can safely argue that if "social change" is defined as "an alteration of stable patterns of social organisation and interaction, preceded or followed by changes in related values and norms" or "a persisting alteration in organisation (social structure) and meaning" (culture) . . ." (Duskin Publishing Group, 1974: 594), then Nigeria as a polity has experienced it only once to date: the one brought by colonization.

Cosmetic tinkering or adjustments here and there notwithstanding, things have been maintained and reinforced rather than overhauled, reflecting the vested interests of our post-independence and subsequent leaders (civilian and military) in perpetuating the "individualized" type of social organisation. Furthermore, it follows that the underpinning basic principle or ideology (i.e. individual initiative and private profit) has unceasingly dictated our development strategy, the Development Plans that flow from it as well as their implementation.

In any case, by the mid-seventies, the principle had taken deeper root (its actual realization and intensification aided by the procurement dimensions of the civil-war and the monetary-resource availability of the oil-boom) that in 1977-8, this hitherto 'silent' or unwritten principle was given constitutional legitimation as the status-quo in black and white: the 1979. Constitution emphatically guarantees and encourages the accumulation of 'private' property through 'individual' initiative and profit; emphatically, though cleverly, refuses to guarantee basic economic and social needs and rights for the people; and emphatically limits effective participation in the political process to a 'federation' of monied socioeconomic elites from the various ethnic groups and regions of the country—the N.L.C., its component unions, other non unionized occupational groups, lecturers/teachers/students, etc. were excluded from organised and direct participation in the political process.

And it is relevant and worthy of note that the socio-economic composition of the fifty-minus-one 'eminent' Nigerians (the CDC) who 'drafted that Constitution shows that they were individual's who had been seeking their own good; that the socio-economic composition of the Constituent Assembly which ratified the Draft with minor amendments was similar to that of the Constitution Drafting Committee; and that the ruling military which proclaimed the document 'official' was already part of the propertied minority. Furthermore, it is to be noted that over 90% of the members of the Constitution Drafting Committee, the Constituent Assembly and the pre-1979 ruling military elite were in business at the dawn of the Second Republic - as Ministers, Commissioners, Chairmen, Directors, highly placed political'

party functionaries and/or recipients of major governmental contracts-just as a good number of them were during the First Republic, the Civil War and after, and today. Not unexpectedly, however, the rationale for the 'individualized' type of social organisation (i.e. that if every individual is allowed to seek his own good, the result will serve the common good) has not been justified by the reality of our experiences. On the contrary, it appears to be a 'modern' or civilized' version of the Hobbesian 'state of nature' where every individual is for himself and nobody is for Nigeria. Being the basic foundation of our social order, the pursuit and accumulation of private or individualized profit and property, legally and illegally, have become the main motive for economic, political, social, cultural or whatever activity. And since the notion of 'survival of the fittest' - at any cost and by any means - is also implied in this 'individualized' type of social organisation, it means the majority cannot successfully seek their own good, let alone pursue and accumulate profit and property.

In reality, therefore, only a tiny fraction of our population, and mostly with the direct or indirect aid of the State (the generator and controller of most capital resources), has been 'able' to seek their own good; accumulate enough wealth and property to further appropriate State power and resources (in collaboration with foreign individuals, groups and their material interests) enough to exploit the labour and sweat of the majority unhampered as well as to ignore the laws, rules and procedures hypocritically established by themselves to moderate the so-called seeking of one's own good. One major consequence of this is the existence of such a lopsided distribution of the nation's wealth and property (in terms of the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and in terms of the satisfaction of human basic needs and the consumption of goods and services) which is manifested by grotesque material and other inequalities among both the contemporary generation of Nigerians and their off-springs (born and yet-unborn), the latter being potentially.

Consequently, our social order/development strategy cannot but be 'development inhibiting' in output. That is why even though the country continues to 'grow' physically and a tiny fraction of the population continues to be wealthier and wealthier via that "growth", our development output is anything but the goals and objectives repeatedly declared and stated since 1970. A social order/development strategy pivoted on the pursuit of 'individual' material and other interests cannot achieve the 'collective' interests implied by those stated lofty goals and objectives.

Within the framework of the foregoing explanation for the sorry state of our socio-economic development, governmental structures cannot be causally held accountable since they are themselves reflections (even "victims") of the social order and more instruments of its development strategy. Governmental structures, in my understanding, are mere forms of administration which serve to define the relationships

major office holders and units of the State and cannot be seen or assessed outside of the social order in which they exist.

And in this regard, it is instructive to note that our declared development goals and objectives have been pursued under parliamentary, prime-ministerial, executive-presidential, and military (ordinary and presidential) governmental structures; and that there has been no achievement or problem in our 26-year history which could not have been witnessed under any kind of governmental structure

This is not to deny the relevance or importance of governmental structures (at least as an intervening variable with regard to socioeconomic development or the fact that one type of governmental structure may be more efficient, effective and productive than another. Rather, it is to reiterate that the nature, character and disposition of any governmental structure, generally and with particular regard to development output, are inherently and largely a function of its social order and the principle or ideology underpinning the latter. Holding variables such as natural resources and population "constant", the point being made here may be exemplified by differentials in the governmental structures of the American and Swedish democracies, the Libyan and Egyptian Islamic republics, or the Bukinabe and Nigerian military governments: the differentials are a consequence of differences in social-order types and their underpinning principles /ideologies.

#### *Conclusion/ The Heart of the Matter*

The "individualized" mode of social organisation and its development strategy, particularly in a Third-World country like Nigeria, must qualify as a "crime" against the people in terms of the facts and consequences of its development-output. And within the explanatory framework outlined in the last section, the only meaningful remedy for our increasingly deteriorating socio-economic development-output is the purposeful initiation of "social change", as earlier defined, away from the colonially-introduced and indigenous-maintained "individualized" social order/development strategy to a "socialized" type. **THIS IS THE HEART OF THE MATTER.** That is, a true, genuine and substantial economic, political and social "democracy" (i.e. meaningful participation) that will initiate and ensure a significantly "socialized" ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the "socialized" consumption of the wealth, goods and services produced: generate structures and institutions that will guarantee the harmonization of individual and overall interests; and create the conditions (or the emergence of a new "moral order" and a new Nigerian personality based on that new order. This means that the basic principle or ideology of our social order should be changed from "each individual seeking his own good to allegedly serve the common good" to "all seeking the common good to serve each and every individual."

Again, obviously, the remedy just stated as a solution to Nigeria's problem is not new: it has been repeatedly offered, over and over again, by concerned Nigerians.

Besides, it is usually dismissed as unrealistic, general *one* vague and lacking in specifics by most beneficiaries of the status-quo. Further more, it amounts to naivety, even ignorance, to expect that any ruling elite would effect such a fundamental change and liquidate itself.

In response to these "objections", it should be stated that one should not be tired of repeating oneself if the problem occasioning the repetition not only persists but festers as well. One wisdom in this is not only that the deaf may miraculously lose his deafness when least expected, he may suddenly be replaced for lack of hearing: a Castro may emerge from our midst one day, effectively mobilize the people and see (to a) successful "struggle"; ditto for a Gaddafi, a Rawlings or a Sankara from the ranks of our armed forces. And in case of that eventuality, in addition to other reasons, the remedy needs to be cured of its alleged vagueness and the cure be made a matter for public record and awareness. And this has been done in detail (Odekunle, 1985: 15-28)<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the Report of the Political Bureau and its consideration by President Babangida and his AFRC may "miraculously" negate\* the naivety argument.

## NOTES

1. Even in the physical dimension of growth, it should be noted that even though monies are allocated and spent, post-plan assessments suggest that a good number of the initiated projects are usually "held up by a number of problems such as land, shortages of funds and poor performance of contractors" (F.R.N., 1981: 367). That is, even the so-called physical growth is marred by many uncompleted projects or badly-constructed projects.
2. This section is virtually a reproduction of a part of a recent paper (see below, Odekunle, 1985: pp. 5-12).
3. See also chap. 3 of the Report of the "Study Group on Law and Order", Cabinet Office, Lagos.

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