

# The Analyst

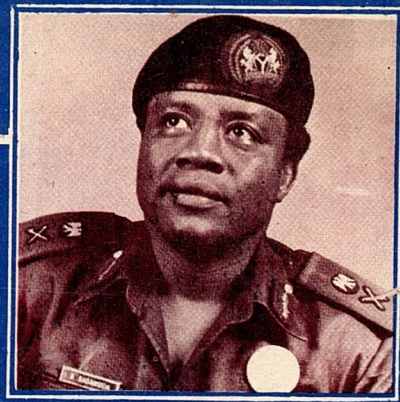
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The Ban:  
How  
Principled?

Vol 2 No 6

1987

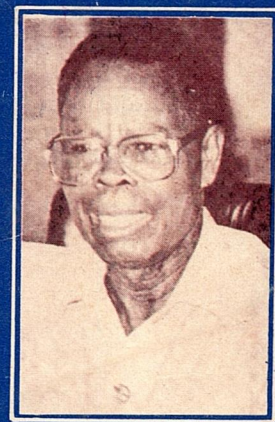
## L.G. Elections



President Babangida

# THE MONEY AND POWER

## at Stake



Professor Awa, NEC boss

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## GRAPHICS:

Adamu S. Yashim

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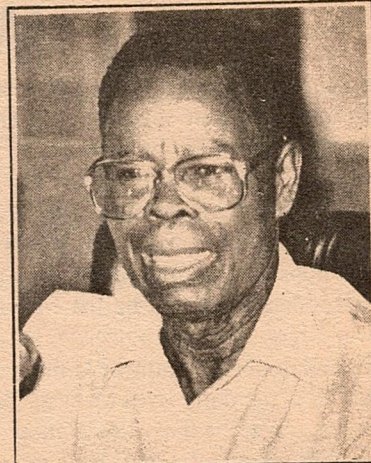
Office Assistant:

J.S. Bosh

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## In this issue

As Nigerians prepare for the December local government polls, the political fever in the country is running pitch high. But what really is at stake, and how can the people organise to take over control of the councils?... Page 7



President Babangida last month announced to a stunned nation a "blanket" ban on all former high public office holders to facilitate "the emergence of a new political leadership". But how principled is the ban?... Page 24.

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### What is at Stake?

The decision by the government that the forthcoming local government elections scheduled for December 12 be held on non-party basis - without the noise of party politics - will rob the exercise of most of its drama. But the meetings, manoeuvres and feverish preparations that have been going on, in all parts of the country, are clear evidence that Nigerians still see the elections as very important. Important, not just because the December polls will be the first local government elections in Nigeria in over a decade, but also because, when all is said and done, government at the local level is the one that most affects the daily lives of most Nigerians. From the cradle to the grave, the daily life of most Nigerians comes under the local government. Land, markets, education, health, security, and even cemeteries and all such needs of Nigeria's vast majority fall, for the most part, under the actual control of local governments.

This apart, there is the important matter of the money, and the power, at stake in these elections. The Nigerian people who come into daily contact with local governments know just how powerful this level of government is. But only a few Nigerians have a good idea of how much money goes to the local governments. In fact, the conventional wisdom in the country is that local governments are not living up to expectations, principally because they are being starved of funds. This is rubbish! Such thinking is far from the reality on the ground.

Consider this fact: between 1979 and 1986, N8.3 billion was disbursed to the local governments by the federal and the state governments. N8.3 billion is, by any stretch of the imagination, a lot of money. It is more than the yearly budgets of several African countries put together, and certainly enough to significantly transform basic services in rural and urban Nigeria. But today there is hardly anything to show for these billions, except the fat cheeks, fat bellies, fat bank accounts, and the 'fat' limousines and palatial mansions of the feudal, bureaucratic and military elements who control the local governments and misuse and embezzle most of the billions. As a result, there has only been impoverishment and not improvement in the lives of Nigeria's teeming millions. In the rural and urban areas alike, conditions have only been worsening and things falling apart. As usual, the billions have only gone to enrich a few people, as countless probes into the affairs of local governments, in various parts of the country, have shown, and as we bring out in our cover story.

Important and welcome as they are, however, the December polls have some very serious limitations. It takes little or no effort to see, for instance, that the dice is heavily loaded

against the toiling people of Nigeria - the peasants, workers, artisans, petty-traders, progressive professionals and intellectuals. Besides the ban on party politics, there are the repressive decrees, the high deposit that candidates have to pay, and the unfair requirement that those working must resign in order to contest the election. If these conditions favour anyone, it is certainly not the ordinary farmer or the worker, but the tycoons, the contractors, the middle-men, feudal elements and such other parasites; the same people who have been using the local government structures to exploit and oppress the Nigerian people.

But even more seriously, there is the terrible condition of the ordinary people vis-a-vis their oppressors and exploiters. The former are not only poor, insecure and unemployed, but are also powerless, and have no control over land, markets, police, judiciary, the media, or even the cemeteries where they bury their dead. All power is in the hands of their exploiters. With all this, and the fact that those who are known to have organised massive election rigging in the past are still very much in powerful positions and control a lot of money, the people of Nigeria are indeed terribly dis-advantaged.

The dice is even more heavily loaded against them because it appears that some rich and powerful elements are being allowed to use official positions and official media to peddle religious, regional and ethnic sectionalism in order to get their candidates elected.

Many Nigerians fear that, because of the ominous silence over the elections to the Constituent Assembly to be convened early next year, and the possibility that it may be indirectly elected from local government councils, these rich and powerful elements are determined to control these councils at any cost. How far the National Electoral Commission can stand up to these anti-democratic, divisive and sinister forces remains to be seen.

We of *The Analyst* believe that the Constituent Assembly can only have the legitimacy to do its work if it is democratically and directly elected from territorial constituencies and popular organisations.

We believe that there is massive support among Nigerians for free, fair, direct and democratic elections. Such elections are an elementary requirement for a stable and progressive future for this country. The people of Nigeria are clearly ready to come out and ensure this. This, they have to do. For, what is at stake in these elections is not just their billions of naira looted and wasted for decades. What is at stake is their right to begin to assert people's power to control their daily lives, their communities, and their nation. ♦



## LETTERS

### Looters Indeed

I WAS impressed with the cover design and cartoon in your issue on Emirs and Chiefs. They show how the so-called Emirs and Chiefs have been sucking their subjects and feeding and enjoying themselves at the people's expense.

Through the write-ups in the magazine we now know the dubious activities of our so-called chiefs and emirs. We, the supposed subjects of these emirs and chiefs are tired of the monstrous injustice we have been suffering, being deprived of our properties, our animals, our lands, women etc by a pack of good-for-nothings who call themselves emirs and chiefs.

It has now become clear from the pages of your magazine that these emirs and chiefs are our real enemies. Remove these emirs and chiefs and the system that sustains them, and the earth will become a heaven for all the masses. The products of our labour on which they feed would then be our own.

But we should not fold our arms and expect miracles. I am calling upon the masses to wake up and fight these looters, for nothing will change if we do not participate in the struggle to effect the change.

And among us, the masses, let there be true unity and comradeship in our struggle. All emirs, chiefs, village heads, ward heads etc are birds of the same feather. But please also try and expose the activities of chiefs of smaller nationalities like the Kilbas, the Angas, the Bachamas, the Gbagyis, the Mumuyawas, the Mayahs, the Madas, the Ynadangs etc.

In addition, I must commend you for the PHOTOSPEAK also in the last issue. When I saw the picture of this sophisticated communications equipment and read the caption story, I nearly went mad. Which Nigerian owns this disc and what is it used for? We the masses of Nigeria would like to know the name of the owner of this disc - for our own information and necessary action. Please oblige us.

James D. Kwafara,  
Numan

### Content, not Gloss

I HAVE been reading with interest, many letters written to you by people of all walks of life and published in the magazine. My observation is that the complaints have been mostly that of paper quality improvement in its printing.

I hereby wish to draw the attention of *The Analyst* fans that what we need is content and not paper quality. It's of no use if the outer and inner parts of a cup are clean while the content is impure.

As a communication student my research on production shows that the higher the paper quality, the more customers are charged in order to cover up the cost price. And if this should happen, *The Analyst* will be out of the reach of the masses which will defeat the goal of the magazine.

The difference between *The Analyst* and other magazines is very clear. Nothing matters but contents, and that's how a magazine is known.

Among all the secular magazines I know of, *The Analyst* is the cheapest. And I am calling upon the publishers to invent more effective ways of producing the magazine at still cheaper costs.

Adams Jagaba Nduya  
Jos

### Two-Party System For Nigeria?

I READ with distaste the suggestion of a section of the Political Bureau on the future political setting for Nigeria.

The suggestion is another attempt by our so-called intelligensia or elites to land this country in a state of chaos and disunity.

If not, why should a two-party system be recommended for a country that is increasingly shaken by the question of North/South dichotomy and the politics of religion?

Do they not know that their provi-

### SAP and the suffering Nigerians

THE write up in your Vol. 2 No. 4 titled, "Political programme and political economy", gives a very clear description of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The piece said that: "a policy the government has been pursuing as part of the IMF-dictated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) - a programme which, since its inception in 1984, has brought untold suffering to the majority of Nigerians, leading to mass retrenchment, sharp fall in living standards, increased break-up of families, acute misery of the population, and a sharp rise in the number of deaths among both children and adults in the population."

This is quite true. In Nigeria today, things are becoming unbearable. Yet the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is being pursued vigorously and there is even talk of consolidating it next year. The DFRR is always in the news saying that hundreds of kilometres of roads had been completed here and there, but when you go to those particular areas you find out that the roads were only graded with ordinary sand, which can be washed away by the first rains, thereby making the roads worse. It is high time Nigerian leaders think of more reasonable policies to help Nigerians.

Jonathan Bature Dung  
BiLadi, Plateau State

sion for a two party system is an attempt to further perpetuate the existing disunity in Nigeria?

Once again, our so-called intellectuals have failed us; but this time, woefully. However, much blame should go to the government or the decision makers (A.F.R.C.) for adopting such an absurd suggestion without, it seems, giving much thought to its implications.

Abou-Sadiq Ahmed Zuru  
Sokoto

## Readers Write on DFRRRI

### DFRRRI And Marama

Marama in Biu Local Government area of Borno State is blessed with a good climatic conditions, fertile soil and a sound educational background. But today in spite of DFRRRI's noise it is the most neglected part of the state. It has noise, no good road, no good source of drinking water, no rural electrification and no good health care services.

The untarred road that stretched the length of the Bura communities from Yimirshika to Kubo in Shani District is as old as the early coming of the missionaries (1931), who discovered the potentials of that area. There was no effort for major repairs and it is

now allowed to go fallow by the Government.

Now, if the DFRRRI was created with a view to bring to light the dark unfortunate rural areas, Marama should at least benefit under this scheme although its demands are higher than the directorate could cope with.

We in Marama are yet to identify any of those (phases) I heard DFRRRI officials talking about. We need urgently, good road (even untarred) seeds, a good laboratory in our Health Centre and, of course good drinking water).

(ANDREW U. MALGWI)  
VOM, JOS

### DFRRRI's Presence Not Felt Here

I am in a serious doubt about the presence of DFRRRI in Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government area in Imo State. Perhaps the Directorate is yet to be launched in Imo State by either the Federal or State government. But the general claim that this Directorate has its presence or programmes in all the States of the federation is, to say the least, a false one. We only hear the name DFRRRI on the radios, TVs or read about it on the pages of newspapers. Even, when we hear its name on these hotlines, my LGA is not mentioned, as if to say we do not need it.

In Ahiazu Mbaise, I cannot point to any project or programme being undertaken by the DFRRRI since its inception. Since 1982 when some feeder roads were constructed by the then civilian administration, no attempt has been made to construct other new roads or even rehabilitate the existing ones by the appropriate authorities.

Right now, most of these feeder roads are worn out due to the constant menace of erosion in the area. For instance, the Ikeduru-Obohia-Afor-Ogbe road is in a state of disrepair. Also the

road from Mbaino-Ahaizu-Abor Mbaise to Okpala is a write-off. Other roads, though untarred and full of water-logs, which link Amuzi and Obodo to Ahiazu Headquarter do not even receive the attention of the local authorities.



DFRRRI, if it exists at all, should come to this local government and see things for itself. Let the Directorate take the pain of repairing these roads because the people there are in dear need of good roads, good drinking water, and a health centre among others like their counterparts in other states.

Okpuruka Francis  
Kaduna.

### Only Rhetorics In Kano State

Although it is a year now since the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure was established with billions of Naira made available for its rural integration projects and Mass mobilisation in a nation with 80:20 rural - urban ratio, such a programme is not being felt in the most populous state in Nigeria: Kano.

Not only is the impact of DFRRRI in the state not felt. But what DFRRRI is all about is not even known in the state.

It is an understatement to say that the condition of rural settlers in Kano state is appalling. Apart from the absence of rural electricity and pipe-borne water which causes untold hardship, the rural dwellers are also saddled with problems of lack of, 'Health care services', roads to link them with the urban centres, and literacy programmes.

Unless and until all or some of these problems are solved, the rural dwellers in Kano State would never say there is anything like DFRRRI in Nigeria no matter what noise is made by DFRRRI officials.

H. S. Zubair,  
Gumel, Kano State.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

The letters published here are only a few of the many we've been getting from readers across the country in response to our invitation, contained in our Vol.2, No. 3 issue, for people to write to us on how DFRRRI is doing in their locality.

Don't be left out. Write NOW to us and share your views and observations with others on DFRRRI's performance, or lack of it, in your locality

-Editor

# LG ELECTIONS: The Money and Power at Stake



*Riding the tiger?*

In about five weeks from now, Nigerians will be trooping to the polls to elect men and women who would, hopefully, be representing their interests in all the 301 Local Government Councils scattered throughout the length and breadth of this great country. But even before the 'E' day (election day), the entire nation is in the grip of an electoral fever. Promises are being made left, right and centre. Politicians in and out of uniform are busy trekking the vast expanses of the land. Secret as well as open meetings are being organized on a daily basis.

Why all this fuss? Why the galivanting? What chances are there that the heap of promises that are being made will be fulfilled? How does one identify the crooks from the true representatives of the people.

It is, of course, not too difficult to understand the reasons for this scramble. Elections to local government councils have always been a matter of great interest and concern for all the social forces in the society. They are more so today after four years of enforced ban on overt political activities and after more than a decade without any form of election at all into representative bodies at the grass-root level.

But this is not all. Under the present circumstances, the forthcoming local polls, even in their limited form of a non-partisan platform, are seen by all as a sort of testing ground, a dress rehearsal of the political battles ahead. Hence the energy and the interest which have been generated.

But, perhaps, even more important than all these are the huge material benefits and private fortunes at stake. For example, no matter what the relevant laws may say, day-to-

day control over land is essentially a local affair, a local affair in which the local government officials have considerable say. As with land so with markets, primary schools, with health, crime control; and justice.

Indeed, the amount of money that, has been pumped into the Local Government system in the past couple of years, for which little tangible results are evident, is shattering. For instance, between April and October 1983, a period of just six months, a total of N545,362,439.08 (Five hundred and forty-five million three hundred and sixty-two thousand and four hundred and thirty nine naira, eight kobo) was actually disbursed by the Federal Government to the Local Governments through the Central Bank.

From November 1982 to March 1983, a period of just four months, N1,296,162,099.38 (One billion two hundred and ninety-six million, one hundred and sixty thousand and ninety nine naira, thirty eight kobo) was disbursed to the Local Governments. Between October 1979 to September 1982 a whopping N2,508,622,310.37 (Two billion, five hundred and eight million, six hundred and twenty two thousand, three hundred and ten naira, thirty seven kobo) was also disbursed to the Local Governments.

And in a paper presented in 1983 at a conference in Zaria Alhaji Shehu Musa, former Secretary to the Federal Government disclosed that between 1979 and 1980 the Federal Government made an additional total ad hoc grants to the local governments of N800 million. Indeed, the total federal and state funds disbursed to the local governments in 1979-86 was N8,357 billion.

All this money excludes the revenue internally generated by the Local Governments themselves. A few examples of these will suffice. In the 1971 - 72 financial year, the Kano Municipal Local Government Council collected a total revenue of N3.029 million. By the 1976 - 77 fiscal year, this had gone up to N5.536 million. The bulk of this revenue was squeezed out not from the resources of the rich and powerful, not from property rates or tenement rates but from the *Haraji* (Poll tax) and *Jangali* (cattle tax) imposed on the talakawa. In the 1971 - 72 fiscal year for instance, *Haraji* accounted for 84.5% of the entire revenue for that year followed by Cattle tax which accounted for 4.7%. Again in the 1976/77 financial year, poll tax (*Haraji*) accounted for 83% of the total revenue for that year.

But the accumulation of huge resources at the disposal of those in control of the local government is not a recent phenomenon. Even under British colonial rule the Native

## COVER STORY

Authorities (N.A.s) sat on huge resources. The Zaria N.A's revenue for instance, rose from £9,456: 10: 10 in 1907/08 to £36,785: 12:11 in 1911/12. Similarly, the Kano N.A. made a total surplus of £33,276:7 :4 between 1909 and 1911; most of which was expatriated to London. All these do not take into account the substantial amount swallowed by the emirs and chiefs and their agents.

With these resources, and the power and influence that are give at stake, elections into local governments must be of intense interest and concern to all.

But if Local Governments have at their disposal enormous resources, these have invariably been used not for the improvement of the quality of life of the people but rather for the private accumulation of a tiny minority. This in itself is not surprising, because since colonial imposition, and even before that, administration at the local level was deliberately organised to serve two functions: to subjugate the people and to extract their resources. The colonial native administrations for instance, were primarily used to "pacify" the "natives",

hence their name "Native Authorities", and to subordinate the economy to British imperialism. Thus, the main functions of these N.A's was the assessment and collection of taxes in British Currency. Their job was also to conscript labour for the mines, for the construction railways, water ways, prisons, and roads; and for the cultivation of cash crops and other infrastructures for the extraction of resources for export and the greater glory of British Imperialism as well as the comfort of British Colonial officers and their agents.

This comfort of the Colonial officers was in direct opposition to the abject misery of the rest of the people of Nigeria. The neglect by these N.A's of the well being of their people, is graphically brought home by the numerous famines which took place in the colonial era. It is also illustrated by the total neglect, by these N.A's, of the education, health and other basic needs of the people. For example, the health services provided by these N.A's began and ended with the establishment of colonies for lepers to live out what was left of their miserable lives. Similarly, up to

For concerning itself with the welfare of the electorate, the Ilorin Municipal Council got dissolved by the N.P.C-controlled Northern Nigerian Government in Kaduna which accused it (Ilorin council) of "bad manners" and "rudeness" to traditional chiefs and colonial administrative officers, and in its place a new council, unelected and dominated by traditional title holders, was constituted.

the end of 1914, there were only 4 (four) elementary Schools established by these N.A's in the entire northern provinces. And because of the callous neglect of the health needs of the people by these native administrations, about 84,518 died in Borno Province alone in 1914 while another 57,794 emigrated out of the Province in the same year out of whom 24,915 left Nigeria altogether. This neglect has continued up to the present day.

The reasons for this are obvious enough. Even in the 1975-76 reforms, popular participation in an organized purposeful and concrete sense, has never been introduced. In the N.A. Councils all the officials were either chiefs and traditional title holders or ex-officio members all of whom retained their positions at the pleasure of the Colonial officials. Even when attempts were made to introduce the elective principle in the second half of the colonial period, this was subverted by the provision for indirect elections, through electoral colleges; by the denial of suffrage to women; by the introduction of tax and property qualifications for participation in elections; by the "injection principle" which permitted the N.A's to nominate 10% of the candidates at the final stages of the elections; and by the entire autocratic and 'family compact' nature of the N.A. establishment.

Perhaps, the classic example of the way in which the

Table 1  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S SHARE OF STATE GOVERNMENT'S INTERNALLY GENERATED REVENUE IN MILLIONS OF NAIRA (1979-86)

|      |   |           |
|------|---|-----------|
| 1979 | — | ₦28.36    |
| 1980 | — | ₦132.77   |
| 1981 | — | ₦104.92   |
| 1982 | — | ₦131.58   |
| 1983 | — | ₦137.09   |
| 1984 | — | ₦170.41   |
| 1985 | — | ₦223.86   |
| 1986 | — | ₦158.74   |
|      |   | ₦1,087.73 |

Table 2  
STATUTORY ALLOCATION OF REVENUE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FROM THE FEDERATION ACCOUNT, IN MILLIONS OF NAIRA (1979-86)

|      |   |          |
|------|---|----------|
| 1979 | — | ₦261.4   |
| 1980 | — | ₦352.6   |
| 1981 | — | ₦1,085.0 |
| 1982 | — | ₦1,018.7 |
| 1983 | — | ₦996.8   |
| 1984 | — | ₦1,061.5 |
| 1985 | — | ₦1,327.5 |
| 1986 | — | ₦1,166.9 |
|      |   | ₦7,270.4 |

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INTERNAL REVENUES 1979-86. (Figures of the estimates range from 4% to 30% of total revenue. If 10% is taken as the average, the L.Gs must have raised a total of ₦928.68 million during this period).  
Total Revenue of L.Gs between 1979-86 = ₦9,286.81 million.



democratic principle was subverted in these local governments are the events that happened in and around the Ilorin Town Council between 1956 and 1958. Following popular agitation and mass discontent in the Ilorin Province, the northern regional government was forced to allow popular election into the Ilorin Town Council in 1956. As a result of this, the anti-N.A. and anti-N.P.C. Talaka Parapo (I.T.P) won an outright victory by winning 32 out of the 51 seats in the Town Council elections of that year. As a result of this victory, the council embarked on radical reforms of the Council's administration in response to popular demands. It abolished the obnoxious *Ishakole* (tribute in kind levied on peasants *Aroja* (Tax in kind on traders) and *babakekere* taxes.

Furthermore, mindful of the fact that the poll tax had been raised by the former N.P.C-controlled council from 13 shillings to one pound, to cover the cost of the construction of the Ilorin Urban Water Supply System, the new I.T.P.-dominated council decided to abolish the water tariff of half pence per four gallons which the former council had imposed on the people, incurring an expenditure of sixteen thousand pounds in the process. In spite of this the efficient and prudent management of the affairs of the council by these popularly elected councillors enabled the council, for the first time in the history of the Ilorin N.A., to balance its budget in 1957.

The Ilorin experiment in popular and democratic councils was however subverted by the establishment, not only in Ilorin Province but in Northern Nigeria as a whole. For



Sulu Gambari

concerning itself with the welfare of the electorate, the Ilorin Municipal Council got dissolved by the N.P.C-controlled Northern Nigerian Government in Kaduna, which accused it (Ilorin Council) of "bad manners" and "rudeness" to traditional chiefs and colonial administrative officers, and in its place a new council, unelected and dominated by traditional title holders, was constituted.

This undemocratic and non-popular tradition in the constitution of the local government councils of the country has continued even after independence. Not even the much acclaimed 1976 Local Government Reforms has essentially changed this undemocratic and non-popular composition of this country's Local Government Councils. In all the Northern States for instance, the L.G. Elections of 1977 were indirect. And even in those states where the elections were direct, a sizeable proportion of those who finally became not only councillors but even chairmen were nominated by the state governments. Indeed, in one sense, these 1977 L.G. Councils were more undemocratically constituted than the local Councils of the colonial period. The Colonial Councils had only 10% of its members "injected" from the N.A. bureaucracy; the proportion of nominated councillors in the case of the 1976 L.G. reform was as high as 25%. What a reform!!

It is in this sense therefore that the forthcoming L.G. elections will be of relevance only to the extent that the candidates address themselves to the concrete conditions and interests of the working and toiling masses of this country and only to the extent that these elections radically depart from this retrograde tradition. This departure, can take place in two broad ways: First in the activities and concerns around which L.G. Councils base their work, and secondly, in the social and class composition of the Councils.

To take the first, any genuinely popular and democratic local government council at this stage in Nigerian history must have on its agenda the achievement of the following:

#### 1. PEOPLE'S POWER.

The building of people's power from the grass-roots level by making sure that all power and authority is derived and exercised solely by the democratically-elected organs of the village, city-ward and the local government areas; and by eliminating any role for the undemocratic, feudal and bureaucratic elements who currently control and dominate the local government system and by defending the rights of women and promoting their effective participation.

#### 2. DEMOCRATIC SUPERVISION OF THE POLICE AND JUDICIARY.

The exposure and purging of the police and judiciary of all oppressive and corrupt officials and the establishment over them of committees of control and supervision responsible to the democratically-elected councils at all levels; and promoting organised popular participation in crime-control and security.

## COVER STORY

### 3. ABOLITION OF POLL TAX, CATTLE-TAX AND LEVIES.

The abolition of poll-tax, cattle-tax and all the other levies imposed in order to extort revenue from the poor whose income hardly keeps them alive. The raising of greater revenue from just property-tax, wealth-tax, and taxes on luxury vehicles, and other items.

### 4. LAND REFORM.

The active defence of the people's rights to their farms, houses and land and the elimination of all oppressive land transactions, land seizures and land speculation.

### 5. UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION.

The provision of free, universal primary education for all children.

### 6. MASS LITERACY.

The organisation of mass literacy campaign to make all adults, of all sexes and ages, literate, numerate and politically aware of their rights and duties by 1st October, 1990.

### 7. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of the rural areas by community organisations, through community labour mobilised and sustained by farmers, women and youth associations and cooperations, including systematic and sustained campaigns for health and sanitation.

### 8. URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

Urban development by street and ward-level organisations and by associations of workers, artisans, petty-traders, youths, women and by trade unions.

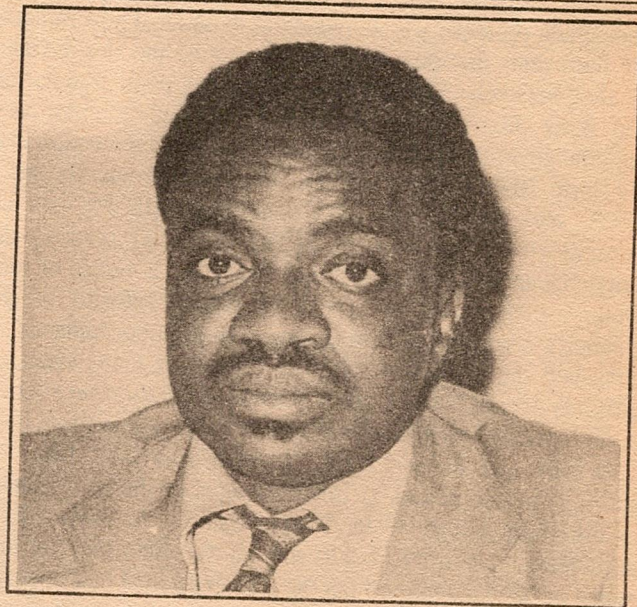
### 9. CULTURE AND SPORTS.

The promotion of cultural and sporting activities to build goodwill and harmony and to develop the health, creativity and well-being of all: the aged, adults, youths and children and the initiation of a popular campaign against drug-abuse, alcoholism, gambling, prostitution and other social vices.

### 10. NATIONAL UNITY.

The promotion of the fundamental right of every citizens to live and carry out his legitimate economic and other pursuits in every part of the country; and the defence of the right of people to their belief and religion and the total opposition to all attempts at manipulating ethnicity and religion to divide and set our people against each other, anywhere, and any time.

But this ten point programme, which is what any genuinely democratic and popular local government council must pursue, can only be realized if the workers, peasants, petty-traders, artisans, youths, progressive intellectuals and others are organized. These are the only democratic strata and social groups that have an objective interest in the realisation of these ten goals. They are also the social groups which are oppressed and kept powerless. They have been the ones at the receiving end in the plunder, exploitation, oppression, harassment and arrogance of the rich and powerful in the society. These social groups have nothing to lose, and



*Justice Idoko*

everything to gain from a radical departure from the past practices in Local Governments.

However, these social groups and classes will not and cannot take over the control of the affairs of the local government councils without becoming organized. The challenge of the December polls to the popular and progressive forces in this country is precisely to organize to ensure that the elections are not only free and fair but that this time around they are genuinely democratic and popular. However, the poor arrangements so far made for these elections leave little to cheer. ♦

*Abubakar Siddique, Alkasum Abba and Richard Umaru.*



*Shehu Musa*

# Whose Machinery is the Local Government

For the great majority of Nigeria's one hundred million people, "authority" and "government" mean local authority and local government. Even the police and the local courts which are, formally, part of the federal and state government machinery are, as far as most people are concerned, part and parcel of the local authority structure, as much as the village heads, district heads, market officials, sanitary inspectors, forest guards, emirs, obas, obis and chiefs.

This direct relationship between the common people and local government is often said by the establishment in Nigeria to mean that the machinery of local government belongs to the grass-roots. The fact of the matter, however, is that this close relationship of the local government with the daily activities of the ordinary people, is a highly oppressive and exploitative one, as far as the people are concerned; and a very lucrative one as far as those running the local government machinery are concerned. There is nothing grass-roots about the local government machinery in Nigeria, except the intensity with which those who control it suck and milk the people at the grass-roots, on a direct and daily basis.

This is not to say that a few local government councillors and officials cannot be found, here and there, who serve their communities and are genuinely respected. These rare types have existed and still do. But to the great majority of Nigerians the local government machinery is something to avoid having anything to do with, unless one is forced to. The local authority structure in Nigeria in the broad sense mentioned above, far from belonging to the grass-roots, is disliked, feared and looked down upon as petty, corrupt and parasitical.

Only the rich and powerful, who promote and protect the rapacity and greed of the personel of this machinery, can afford to romanticise about its "organic" and "natural" links with the people.

This reality for the people of Nigeria has, over the years been well documented in the course of inquiries into the failures and collapse of various local governments. Here we shall merely cite specific examples, letting each one speak for itself, illustrating one or other aspect of the terrible reality of the local authority structure in this country. Understanding this reality from these few, but vivid, examples drawn from across the country should prepare all of us for the changes and transformations necessary if we are to mobilise for the local government elections and start laying genuine grass-roots foundations for a democratic and economically and socially progressive local government system. Let us start with the issue of land which is one of God's most precious gifts to mankind, without which nothing is possible.



A. A. Howeidu

## LAND.

During the sittings of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into land matters in Kano State, in 1980, many shocking revelations were made. One of the most revealing and educative of these was how between 1971 and 1979, the District Head of Rano, Alhaji Abubakar Ila, village heads and the local divisional police officer seized the farmland of peasants and gave them to powerful government officials and rich professionals and tycoons from Kano city. A farmer from Ruwan Kaya in Rano District, Mallam Munkaila Dahiru, representing twenty seven other farmers; and another farmer, Mallam Hamza Shugaba, from Rurum, also in Rano District, representing seventy-seven other farmers gave the most illustrative evidence which the Commission in its investigations confirmed as truthful.

The truth of how the land seizure took place in Ruwan Kaya came out revealing that the matter goes back to 1971, when Alhaji A.A. Howeidu currently chairman Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin Authority - then holding the post of the Secretary to the Military Government and Head of Service of Kano State sent one Alhaji Shehu Ringim, a former schoolmaster in Rano to the District Head of Rano to tell him that he wanted land to farm. The District Head, Alhaji Abubakar Ila sent his *dogari* Dankawu to Ruwan Kaya to tell Munkaila Dahiru and the 27 others to sell their land to the SMG, Alhaji Howeidu. Those who refused to agree to sell the land were taken to the area court and imprisoned by the Alkali for eight days. After that most agreed to "sell" the land to Alhaji Howeidu. Munkaila Dahiru who had one-third of a farm that produced up to one thousand bundles of guinea corn was paid

## COVER STORY

N14.00 for his farm-land, out of which Dankawu, the *dogari* demanded and received N2.00. Another farmer from Ruwan Kaya, M. Musa Yakubu, was paid more than Munkaila. He received a total of N210.00 for four of his small farms and no payment at all for the two larger ones. The payments were made in the presence of Alhaji Howeidy who told the Commission that "he called the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) to be present and that he put the question to each farm seller if he sold his farm and each answered yes."

These farmlands are in the area irrigated by the Tiga Dam part of this Hadejia Jama'are River Basin Area; and in June 1972, Alhaji Howeidy had set up a company called Fertile Acres Ltd and claimed by 1980 to have invested up to N1.6 million, excluding machinery.

After the "purchase" by Alhaji Howeidy, the District Head claimed that he also gave farmland in Ruwan Kaya to the then Group-Captain Aboi Shekari when he was Military Administrator of Kano State in 1978-79.

In the Rurum area of Rano District, the same local

the chiefs and the other officials. These officials were extracting all sorts of taxes and fees to enrich themselves, and their masters and patrons higher-up.

The Agbekoya rebellion which started with the mass peasant demonstration outside the Olubadan's palace on 11th November 1968 was very much a reaction against the oppressive taxation of the local government machinery. At that time, besides the poll tax of three pounds per head, irrespective of income there were the seven shillings six pence for the Western State Development Contribution; increased water rates; the 5% Federal National Construction Levy; a tax on self-employed women, and numerous fees and exactions. Moreover Cocoa was being bought for less than half its price on the world market. And with all these being squeezed out of the farmers, there was nothing to show for it in the dilapidated schools, markets, health centres and motor parks.

But it was discovered that a road overseer employed by the Ife Divisional Council on a salary of N242 per annum, had,

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**There is nothing grass-roots about the local government machinery in Nigeria, except the intensity with which those who control it suck and milk the people at the grass-roots, on a direct and daily basis.**

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government machinery saw to it that as Tiga Dam took-off, the farmers of Rurum itself, Mailambu, Yelwa and Sabon Garin Garba "sold" their farm lands, and saw their forests and grazing land going into the hands, of a few rich and powerful people from Kano city and Lagos. These included three multimillionaires namely Alhaji Tijjani Dagazau, Alhaji Isiaku Rabi'u and Alhaji Aminu Wali; a top professional architect, Alhaji M.T. Waziri and the Grand Khadi of Kano State, Alhaji Hassan Gwarzo.

This type of heartless plunder and injustice through the local government machinery is not confined to land matters, to Rano District or to Kano State. It is to be found all over Nigeria as the case of taxation, enrichment and rebellion in parts of what is now Oyo State showed in 1968-69.

### TAXATION

The significance of the militant peasant movement known as *Egbe Agbekoya* which rose against oppressive taxation in the Western State in 1968-69 has been touched upon in the last issue of *The Analyst*, vol. 2 No. 5, (p 13-14).

What has to be appreciated about the Agbekoya Movement, however is that as the Justice E.O. Ayoola Commission Report brought out, it was very much a movement against the oppression and exploitation by the local government machinery, particularly the *akodas* (council tax collectors) and

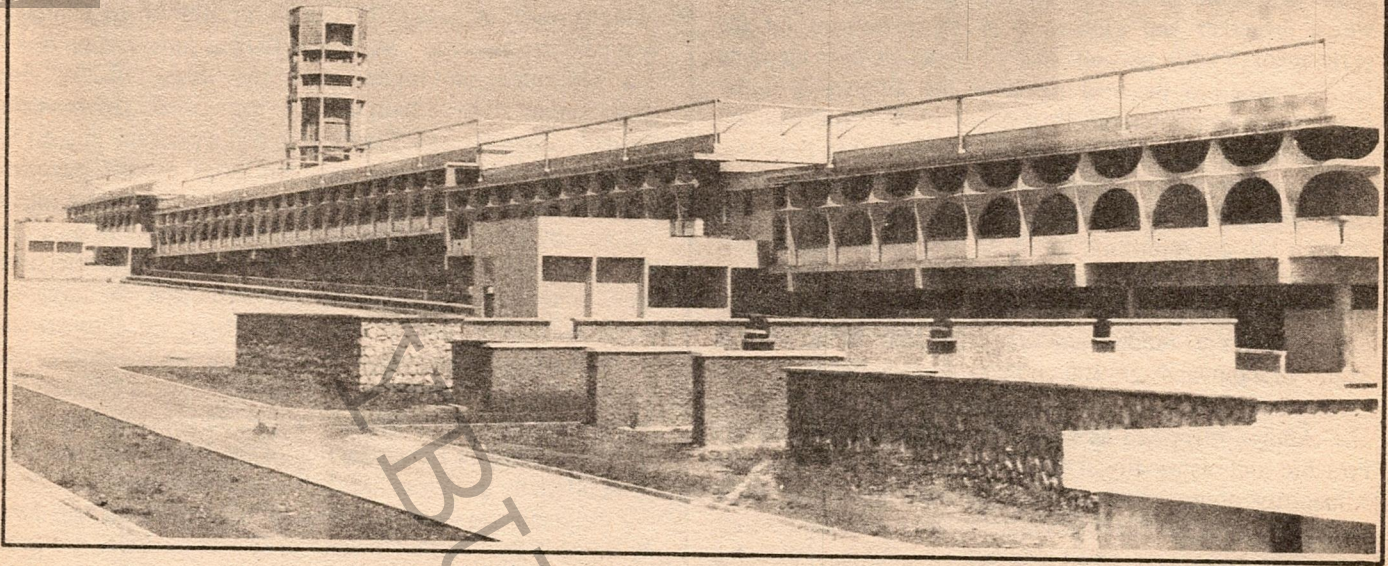
between 10th January 1962 and 31 March 1969, "saved" N443,769! Furthermore, a forest guard employed by the Ijesha North District Council on a salary of N242 per annum had, between October 1960 and October 1968, "saved" £109,851!

Clearly, over land, taxation, and markets, as we shall see, this local government machinery does not in any way belong to the grass-roots. It sucks the life blood out of the grass-roots, as these "savings" by even junior local government officials vividly show.

### MARKETS.

Anybody who uses the markets in Nigeria knows how much money is raised there and how much can be done with it to develop the markets, and also develop all the essential services for the community to which the market belongs. But, as we all know, the markets themselves are left in a very poor shape and the communities gain nothing from the revenue raised in them. Only a handful of rich and well-connected local government officials and their trader-partners and market hustlers become very rich from them.

Here I will directly quote from two official reports to illustrate how markets are actually gold mines for those who control the local government machinery, and that is why they do not serve as a stimulus for development as they should.



*A typical market ... revenue cornered by officials*

There is nothing new about the intense milking of markets by the local government oligarchies in Nigeria. As far back as 1954, the Floyer Commission of Inquiry into the Port Harcourt Town Council reported about the central role of stall allocation in the corruption of the local government system. The report states that:

"We noticed that at the end of each allocation of new stalls there occurred a series of names which were admittedly those of the wives of members of the Council's Staff. We also noticed that the family names of councillors appear with undue frequency in the lists. In August 1953 the name of every member of the allocating sub-committee and of the two members of the staff in attendance occurred at least once. Some of the names were admittedly those of Councillors' wives."

As the report reveals, many of these wives and relations were not necessarily traders. They were, in most cases absentee-stall "owners". For, getting a stall allocation and renting it out was, even at that time, very lucrative. One can live very well from this "rent", better than a trader in fact, and without doing any work at all.

"Again as in other markets, it is admitted that the great majority of market stalls are hired from the Council by persons who are not genuine traders, and sublet by them at greatly increased rate. An analysis of fifteen sheds in the main market shows that out of a total of 364 stalls 142 are occupied by the "owner" that is by the Council's tenant and the remainder by sub-tenants. The "owner" pays the council £1.12s. 6d per half year or 16s.3d per quarter and charges his sub-tenants in the better sheds from 27s to 30s per month and in the less desirable from 5s to 20s."

Thus for the better sheds in the main Port-Harcourt market in 1953-54, those who milk the town council market machinery can get over sixteen pounds per annum as "rent"

from sub-tenants and pay the council just about two and a-half pounds per annum for the stall - a clear wind-fall gain of over thirteen pounds per annum. If even one-third of this profit per stall were to be used to develop the market and the economy and social services of Port Harcourt how much more progress would the people of Port Harcourt have made in the last thirty four years?

But the milking of the markets by the local government machinery starts even with its construction. The Anya Board of Inquiry Report into the Onitsha Market Authority in 1975, for example, reports on how the Onitsha Market Authority inflated the cost of each of the 5,936 stalls it built by 33% from N60.00 to N80.00. This led to a total inflation of the contract by N118,720.00, as the contractors were paid N480,360.00.

The brazen nepotism of the Chairman of the Onitsha Market Authority, Mr. Ikwueme is quite common in the operation of the local government machinery. The Board reports, for example that "...the ex-Chairman and ex-Secretary evinced undue tendency to favouritism in the allocation of market stalls and culpable nepotism in the appointment of staff to the Authority. These were the direct consequences of the personal pressures to satisfy the Onitsha Community interest and the family interest of the two officials under reference. This nepotic tendency was particularly borne out by the appointment of Mrs. F.C. Anyaduba (nee Ikwueme) daughter of the ex-chairman to the senior post of catering Manageress, when in fact she had no catering qualifications and only possessed a class IV testimonial from Zik's Institute of Commerce. Out of the sixty-three (63) junior staff appointments eight (8) of them were either the ex-Chairman's children, or his nephews and other relations with little or no qualifications."

On the allocation of market stalls the report reveals the high

**COVER STORY**

level connections of the corrupt local government machinery which promotes and sustains it as an instrument for the enrichment of a few people: "Many individuals from the same family, either in the real name of the allottee or under fictitious names got more than one stall. Specific mention was made of the ex-Chairman of the Authority, Mr. Ikwueme who got thirty one (31) stalls at the Main Market and twenty-four (24) stalls at the Niger Bridge-Head market. The Secretary to the Authority, Mr. B.A. Iwegbu got twelve (12) stalls in the main Market and twenty-four (24) at the Niger-Bridge Head market. The Federation of Onitsha Age Grades got a total of one hundred and fifty (150) stalls at the Onitsha Main Market and several others at the Niger Bridge Headmarket, while an amazing assortment of men, women and children identified as kin of the Asika extended family each has stalls especially under List B. Embarrassingly enough a majority of the allottees were absentee landlords which included a diversity of professionals such as lawyers, doctors, top civil servants and magistrates. Others included housewives of eminent personalities in the society who are neither resident in Onitsha nor bonafide traders."

From the above facts of the operation of the existing Nigerian local government machinery whether over land acquisition in Kano, or over market stalls acquisition in Onitsha it should be clearly seen that this machinery is corrupt and parasitical, not because it is run by poorly-educated people. It is in fact very highly-educated people who sustain and promote it for their own purposes of greed, enrichment and power.

The local government machinery in Nigeria does not only milk the grass-roots through its control of land, taxation and markets, but even over basic services like the supply of water, health and education.

**BASIC SERVICES.**

The Abani Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Damaturu Local Government in Borno State in 1978 brought this out graphically.

If the intention of the Federal Military Government in bringing about the local government reforms of 1976 was: "that these reforms should fundamentally and directly affect the lives of all citizens of this country, for the better, particularly our rural communities that have least benefitted from the country's social and economic development" as General Obasanjo said to a meeting of emirs and chiefs in Lagos on 7th July 1976, the Abani Report illustrates how and why this intention has not been achieved anywhere in the country, eleven years after these reforms.

Damaturu Local Government is located in the South-Western part of Borno State. Like almost all of the state, abundant water can be obtained from boreholes due to the nature of the Chad Basin there. For borehole construction, the local government awarded a contract of N264,000 to Shinco

and Co (Nig) Ltd. for the the drilling of six boreholes at N44,000 each. A sum of N132,000, or 50% of the contract, was paid to Shinco on 13th March 1978 as mobilisation fees - a percentage far higher than the usual 10-20% for mobilisation. The Chairman of the Local Government Council Alhaji Hassan Yusufu who had a personal interest in Shinco, personally signed the certificate on the payment voucher. The construction was to be completed in three months, by 10th June 1978, failure to do which will incur on the contractor a penalty of N40 per week. Up to the time when the Commission sat and inspected the area in September 1978, that is six months later, no construction work at all had been started on any of the six boreholes. The Chairman of the Damaturu Local Government, Alhaji Hassan Yusufu emerged in the Second Republic as a leading lieutenant of Mallam Aminu Kano's faction of the P.R.P. and was later even officially recognised as its National President.

If the Damaturu Local Government Machinery had anything to do with the common people of Damaturu LGA it was to deny them of one of their most basic human rights, the right to potable drinking water.

These local governments of the 1976 reforms did not only continue with the rapacity of their predecessors but consolidated the process of plunder through contracts in the provision of all services.

The 1978 Awoniyi Commission of Inquiry into the Chanchaga Local Government in Niger State brought out how this was done over the provision of even primary school children's exercise books. The report states that: "From what can be seen from the supply of 2A, 2B, 2D exercise books by Alhaji Jaafaru Mairiga (Limawa Tradding Company) to the local government, prices quoted by Alhaji Jaafaru Mairiga were grossly inflated as compared with the prices supplied by Romas International Bookshop, Minna. At Romas International Bookshop, a dozen of each of these exercise books sells at 77 kobo. But Alhaji Jaafaru sold a dozen of



*Isiyaku Rabi'u ...beneficiary of the Tiga Dam land bonanza*

these exercise books to Chanchaga Local Government at 10 naira 8 kobo and he supplied the local government of 660 dozens of these exercises books. Another glaring case in this deal is that Alhaji Mairiga supplied 600 dozen of 60-leaf exercise books at 37 naira 44 kobo per dozen as against Romas International Bookshop sprice of 3 naira 36 kobo."

This plunder of the scarce educational resources of the poor people of Chanchaga by the local government machinery and its agents and patrons had the protection of powerful figures in the state and federal governments. The same shameless people, while carrying out and protecting this plunder, were crying out over how Chanchaga LGA, Niger State, and the northern states were being left educationally backward. They use the consequence of their plunder to corner more resources in order to plunder more resources and set the people against one another using conditions of educational backwardness which their greed and rapacity create and sustain.

This rapacity of those who control the local government machinery in Nigeria comes out in the areas of their finances, as the 1980 Alhassan Idoko Commission of Inquiry into the Kaduna Local Government reveals.

#### FINANCES.

The Kaduna Local Government came into existence in the second half of 1976. But the only report on its finances was submitted to its Finance and General Purposes Committee at a meeting on 27th December 1979 when its financial crisis worsened and the new P.R.P. government was not willing to cover-up and bail it out. In that report the Secretary to the Local Government stated that "no one can at any given time determine the finances of the Kaduna Local Government, so far as revenue collected was, as far back as 1977, being disbursed on the spot by the cashiers without banking them as is the normal procedure."

This was a local government council which spent over N2.8 million in capital projects in the 1976-1979 period, most of

which the Commission could not establish the real value or even completion of, as most of the documents were missing.

Even with the very limited documents available to the Commission, it established that the cashier from 15th November 1977 to 29 February 1980, Alhaji Umaru Miya, had misappropriated revenue in cash amounting to N680, 863.40! This was an average yearly embezzlement of over N300,000 by this single official.

But not only were the finances of the Kaduna local Government plundered in this way, but because of the vested interests of the oligarchy they serve, the local government officials refused to raise revenue from tenement rates on buildings in the metropolis. These rates, if properly tapped were estimated, in a memo submitted to the Commission on 19th March 1980 by one Abubakar Umar of Arewa Textiles Ltd Kaduna, to be up to N150 million annually.

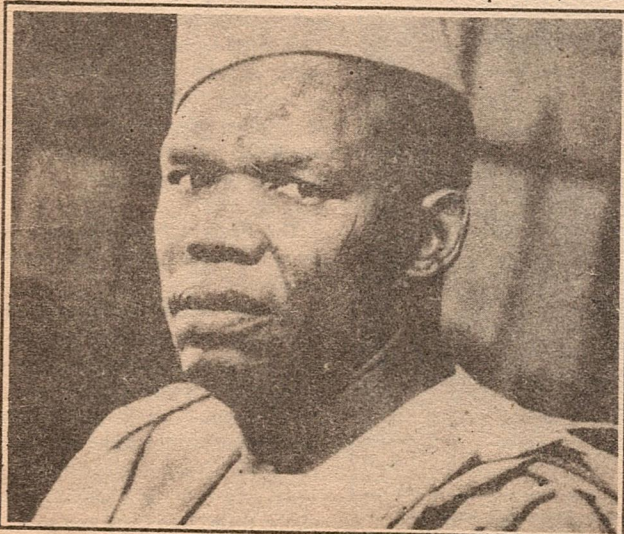
Far from tapping this source of massive revenue for the Local government and the whole state, the local government machinery concentrated on extorting poll tax and other fees and levies on the ordinary worker, artisan and trader. In fact, according to the Revenue Officer of the Local Government, up to 75% of the buildings in the GRA were not at all assessed for rates. The last time this was attempted was in 1969.

Right now a property tax is beginning to be imposed, not on the multi-million naira residential, commercial and industrial buildings in the metropolis, but on the shacks and huts of the poor in the high-density areas and the semi-rural ghettos around Kaduna. This action throughout Kaduna and Katsina States is being sold as property-tax on all property owners. But the existing local government machinery is not built to collect property taxes on the palaces, mansions, commercial and industrial estates of its masters.

#### THE MACHINERY VS PEOPLE

There should be no doubt that the local government machinery in Nigeria, far from belonging to the grass-roots is geared to directly oppress and exploit the people at the grass roots, in all sorts of basic ways. The majority of the people of Nigeria know this. That is why they avoid it, as much as possible. But avoiding it does not solve the problems caused by its rapacity and repression. The forthcoming local government elections offer a chance to start the process of dismantling this machinery and building a genuine grass-roots local government based on people's power. This requires the mobilisation of the peasant masses, the workers, the artisans, and petty traders, all the toilers, and all patriotic and progressive elements, to campaign, vote for the candidates who can do this. It requires going beyond mere shouting of progressive slogans merely in order to win the election. It requires building a support base for a new local government system built on democracy, popular participation and geared to ensuring all-round economic and social progress.

By Yusufu Bala Usman.



Hassan Yusuf ... rural boreholes paid for but not constructed

# LET ME SPEAK

## 'No Limit to the Taxes we Pay'

For Madam Habila, mother of six and a food seller in Wukari, the most regular visitor to her "bukka" are the tax men and the local government health inspectors. They may take a free meal, but their main mission on every occasion is to collect this or that tax or levy, or to simply extort money from her. Every now and then there is a new tax or levy introduced by the local government and the tax man comes calling at Madam Azimi's "bukka." From the five or six naira profit she makes daily, Madam Azimi manages to, pay the taxes and levies, bribe the health inspectors, and feed, clothe and educate her six children. But the burden of taxes and levies is, she says, becoming as unbearable as it is cruel. Cruel because in all these years there is absolutely nothing to show for the almost N200 she, like the other food sellers, pays to the local government coffers every year. As she asked during the interview: "...what does the local government do with all the taxes it collects from us?" This is a question being asked everywhere in the country. And the answer is, in-

variably, to be found in the rosy checks, fat bellies, big cars and big mansions of local government officials. Read on.

**The Analyst:** *What kind of tax do you pay to the Wukari Local Government.*

**Madam Azimi Habila:** Those of us operating in private or rented premises pay N45 tax to the local government every year. If one does slaughter a goat, which I do, then one pays another N40 per annum to the coffers of the local government. However, early this year to our shocking surprise, there was a notice from the local government that every woman who cooks food should pay N102 registration fee.

**The Analyst:** *You mean in addition to the N85 you have been paying?*

**Madam Azimi Habila:** Yes! We were told the fee was for registration of Hotels and Restaurants in Gongola State. When we protested, the local government told us that the instruction came from the Federal Government through the State's Tourism and Hotels Board. We were further told that this would help boost our hotels

business, as our names and addresses would be printed in a tourist guide so that any visitors coming to Wukari will patronise us. For God's sake, how can this my place be classified as a hotel or restaurant that will warrant this publicity? I operate from a 'bukka' and there are scores of them in this town. See the facilities I have... a cooking pot, two benches and a small table. Do you call this place a standard restaurant or hotel to warrant being mentioned in a directory for tourists?

Though we have not paid a kobo yet we have received threats of court action, should we fail to pay in the end. Heaven knows when this will happen.

**The Analyst:** *Are these the only taxes you pay?*

**Madam Azimi:** Certainly not. There is no limit to the taxes, we food sellers pay. We receive local government officials on daily basis demanding all sorts of taxes. Our constant guests are officials from the council's health department — health inspectors, popularly known as *duba gari*, and officials from the fire brigade. They de-

mand money from us in all manners.

Sometime, when we fail to succumb to their demands they would threaten to throw away our pots of soup. They will always find a fault with us.

**The Analyst:** *Is your group the only one singled out to pay these taxes?*

**Madam Azimi:** No. All market women are heavily taxed, whatever business they engage in. For example, I understand tailors pay N12 every year and N5 every month per shed. Fish sellers pay N25 every year and N5 a month per shed. Rice sellers pay 50 kobo daily or loose one mudu (which costs N2.50) to the officials.

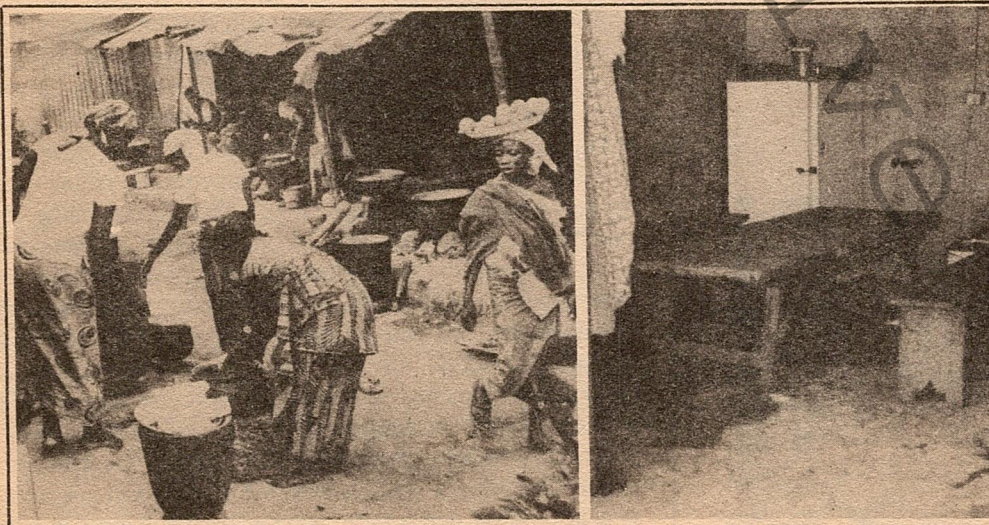
Infact, the whole tax paying exercise affects every woman in this town who is operating a business, whether in the main market or outside it.

**The Analyst:** *Does the local government provide social amenities to enhance your business?*

**Madam Azimi:** As far as I know the local government has never provided any amenities which will improve our food business despite the taxes we pay to it. Even by colleagues who operate from the sheds built by the local government inside the main market do not enjoy any amenities even though they pay monthly taxes to the council. They effect repairs to any damaged parts of the sheds. The local government doesn't even paint the sheds when they wear out. If I may ask what does that local government do with all the taxes it collects from us?

**The Analyst:** *How much profit do you make daily from your cooking?*

**Madam Azimi:** An average of five to six naira. My only consolation is that my children do not go hungry as they take all their meals here. As you can see even the five to six naira profit I make daily has not made life comfortable for me. I pay my children's school fees, clothe them, feed them and so on.



Wukari "bukka" women (left) paying taxes to boost business? Right: Inside Madam Azimi's 'Restaurant'.



# The Dasuki Report: A Return to Feudalism

Very few Nigerians have ever heard of the Dasuki Report. An even fewer number have heard of the Federal Military Government's White Paper on the report issued in 1985. So when the Armed Forces Ruling Council accepted the Political Bureau's recommendation, that traditional rulers in this country should exercise no judicial, legislative and executive functions and should be limited to their local government areas, but added that this should be implemented together with the decisions contained in the White Paper on the Dasuki Report, many people for the first time heard of the Dasuki Committee on the Review of the Local Government Administration.

This Committee was established on 10th May 1984 by the Buhari regime. Its first term of reference was to recommend: "the most suitable mode of managing the Local Governments within the context of the present military set-up."

Others covered finances, accounting, manpower development, and the place of traditional authorities in Local Government.

Obviously, this regime headed by two children of bodyguards *dogarai* of royal palaces from Daura and Ilorin (Buhari and Idiagbon) had no plans to work towards democratic government in this country. The review by the Dasuki Committee was clearly to entrench military rule with a semi-feudal foundation.

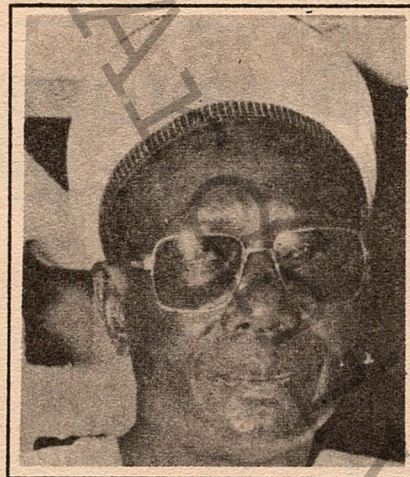
The nation-wide tours of Buhari and the massively enhanced wealth and power traditional rulers received from his regime all pointed this way.

It was no accident that to head this committee the regime chose a relation-by-marriage of Maj-General Buhari, in the person of Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki,

Baraden Sokoto. This princely aspirant to the Sultanship of Sokoto comes from the House of Mallam Buhari, a son of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, whose descendants have been bitterly frustrated by being unable to present serious candidates for the throne for over 170 years, until Ibrahim Dasuki turned up from Kaduna with tons of money and powerful connections in Nigeria and abroad.

Dasuki had with him many retired bureaucrats and academics largely of clear right-wing views.

The Committee started its work in May 1984 and submitted its report in



*Dasuki ... recommends return to  
feudalism*

September 1984. This was the middle period of the Buhari-Idiagbon reign of terror against all democratic forces and elements in the country. Naturally, the Dasuki Committee did not bother to consult anyone outside the bureaucratic and feudal establishments. In its own words the Committee ".....paid courtesy calls on and held discussions with Military Governors and Traditional Rulers. In addition it held Consultative meetings with the Commissioners and officials in the

ministries for Local Government, Sole Administrators and staff of Local Governments, representatives of State Council of Chiefs/ Traditional Rulers, members of Local Government Service Commissions/ Boards and Institutions responsible for training Local Government Staff."

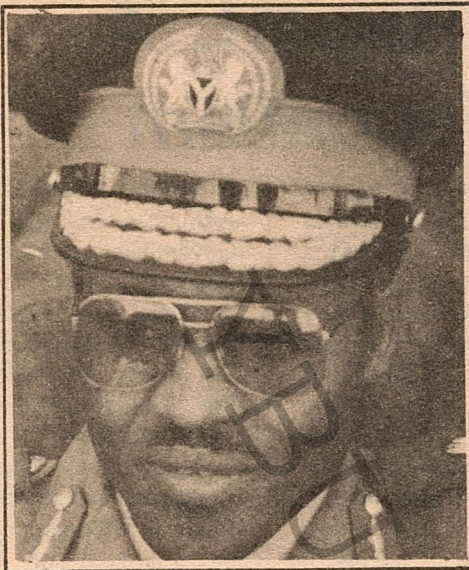
## SUBVERSION OF DEMOCRACY

Its politically and socially most significant recommendation for the future of Nigeria and Nigerians came on page 133 of its report. This recommendation completely subverted section 7(1) of the 1979 Constitution which provides that "The system of local government by democratically elected local government Councils is under this constitution guaranteed."

The Dasuki Report subverted this crucial democratic pillar of the 1979 Constitution by recommending that village and district heads, who are the core and basic administrative officials of the present local government system, should be responsible to emirs and chiefs and their councils and no longer to the local government council.

This is how all this comes out in the Federal Military Government's White Paper on the Report: "The Committee recommended that in order to minimise the friction in the management of district and village head affairs and ensure unity of command, district and village heads should be responsible to traditional councils provided that in their role as revenue collectors they should account directly to the Local Government of the area concerned. However, where Emirate/Traditional councils do not exist, the district and village heads should entirely be responsible for all their functions to the Local Government.

**Comment:** Government accepts this recommendation." Once the running of local government administration at the village and district levels - already in the hands of local government staff appointed on the basis of inheritance and ancestry - is placed under emirate and traditional councils, where the feudal and hereditary factor is even more concentrated, what democracy is left in the system?



*Buhari, Idiagbon: out to entrench military rule with a semi-feudal foundation*

The acceptance by the Federal Military Government of this recommendation of the Dasuki Report amounts to taking the

local government system in Nigeria one giant step back into feudalism. It is a betrayal of the spirits of the 1975-76 local government reforms started by the late General Murtala Muhammed. It is subversive of everything democratic in the 1979 Constitution. It is the foundation of friction, instability and conflict in the local government system. It is totally incompatible with any form of progress in modern Nigeria and the world today. ♦



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## Local Governments: Multi-Million Naira Enterprises

A popular myth propagated by those who control Local Government Councils throughout the country is that these councils are always short of funds.

The truth is, however, very different. From 1979 to 1986 for instance, the country's Local Government Councils got N7.270 billion from the Federal Account as statutory allocation. This amount does not include the various non-statutory grants they got direct for running elections, helping with the payment of salaries, and the recent N301 million for rehabilitation of township roads.

In addition they were entitled to another N1.087 billion in the same period, being 10% of the estimated internal revenue of the various state governments. While it may be argued that they did not get the whole amount, it is also true that some state governments gave them 10% of their whole (not just internally generated) revenue. So, the figure represents a close enough estimate.

Besides all this, the Local Governments generated their own revenue through various taxes, levies, rates, fees and rents amounting to between 4% to 30% of their total revenue. If we assume that on the whole they generate about 10% of their revenue internally, then we have to add a further N928.68 million to our figures, giving us a total of N9.287 billion as the total statutory and internal revenue for this tier

of government.

So why all the complaints that the money is not enough?

The answer is simple. It is not enough because the level of corruption in the Local Government Councils is very high indeed. The accounting procedure is extremely shoddy - if there is any at all. Auditing is almost non-existent. Accountability is zero. Why? Because genuine and organised democratic control is totally lacking. Indeed, most of the Councillors were never elected but simply put there by certain influential people in the military, bureaucratic and business circles and by certain traditional rulers.

Thus, both in the nature and manner of the taxes and levies imposed, as well as the actual amounts to be paid, the people are never consulted. The most vicious of these are the flat-rate taxes, cattle tax, or poll taxes and development levies where neither the ability to pay nor the people's income level is taken into consideration. Impoverished, destitute, unemployed or not, people are made to pay these taxes and levies simply because they have managed to stay alive.

Worse still is the use such funds are put to. Apart from direct thefts (or embezzlement, since the rich do not "steal" but merely "embezzle") by governors, commissioners for Local Governments and Local Government Chairmen and councillors, there is the totally unrealistic expenditures on the



*Dogari: agent of daily oppression*

councillors and other employees. Once their allocations arrive, and before they settle salaries and wages, these officials allocate to themselves housing "loans" and car "loans" which they never pay back. Others pay themselves salaries and allowances way beyond the efforts they put in and/or out of tune with the internal revenue base of their areas.

Take 1982/83 financial year for example. In Ekiti S.W.,

**Local Governments in Nigeria are multi-billion naira enterprises almost entirely geared to serve a tiny oligarchy of traditional rulers, bureaucrats, tycoons and military satraps, and to oppress and exploit the people and plunder their God-given resources with callous impunity.**

Ondo State, the Local Government Council spent N79,896.61 on its councillors when its internal revenue was only N61,852.15. For Ganawa (Bauchi), Hadejia (Kano), Akamkpa (Cross River), Lapai (Niger) and Yenegoa (Rivers), the expenditures on councillors are 202%, 225%, 227%, 301% and 327% of their internal revenue respectively. Wase Local Government in Plateau State is probably the worse case. With an internal revenue of N25,650.00, it spent N129,380.00 on its councillors, or 504% of its internal revenue!!

Local Governments in Nigeria are multi-billion naira

enterprises almost entirely geared to serve a tiny oligarchy of traditional rulers, bureaucrats, tycoons and military satraps, and to oppress and exploit the people and plunder their God-given resources with callous impunity. For any stability and progress in this country, the people have to organise themselves independently of this oligarchy and take over these multi-million naira enterprises and put them to their service.

◆ By Sanusi Abubakar.

## Local Government Elections Time Table

### NOVEMBER:

2 - 10: Compilation of voters register

11 - 17: Display of voters Register and filing of claims and objections

12 - 19: Filing of nomination papers

18 - 21: Hearing of claims and objections.

18 - 30: Compilation of final voters register

20th: Display of provisional nomination list

No. 23 - Dec. 7th: Distribution of final voters register

November 30th: Display of final nomination list.

### DECEMBER:

1 - 11: Electioneering campaign

12: Election day

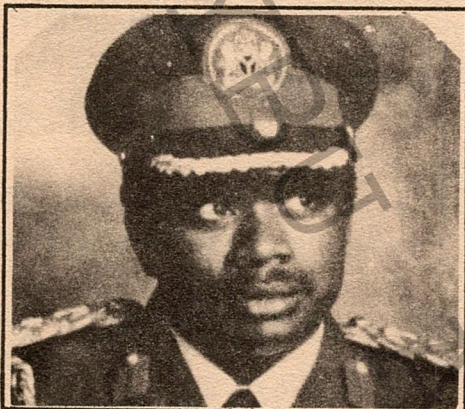
12: Counting of votes

12 - 13: Announcement of results.

# DFRRI's False Claims in Benue

In One of its issues, *The Analyst* (vol 2 No 3 1987) focused its searchlight on the Babangida administration's pet programme - Rural Development - and the agency responsible for this, DFRRI (The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures). In the cover and other stories, the magazine stripped the programme of its fancy dress, exposing its shortcomings in terms of the underlying assumptions and philosophy and its implementation, and showing it to be no different from other similar programmes before it that ended up being no more than mere outlets for private accumulation by bureaucrats, officials and contractors.

Not unexpectedly, the reaction was quick in coming from the DFRRI national headquarters in Lagos.



*Bakut, Umar: Where have the millions gone?*

Dr. Jerry Gana, then one of DFRRI's Directors, who signed the letter, called us names, denied everything but avaded the specific and crucial issues we raised. He then went on to list a number of states where, he claimed, DFRRI had achieved high success in executing its programmes. Benue state was one of these success stories.

But late last month, Dr. Haruna Mallam, Federal Resident Monitoring Director of DFRRI in Benue, sung a different song after his extensive assessment tour of the state. The state-owned newspaper, *Sunday Voice* (issue of 27/9/97) reported Dr. Mallam as saying, that he could not locate the 1,020 kilometres of roads Benue DFRRI claimed to have constructed in the state; that all the roads rehabilitated by Benue DFRRI are state or Federal roads; that the few bulldozed and graded roads are now full of pot-holes; that the few roads opened up are neither compacted nor laterited; that Benue DFRRI had only busied itself patching pot-holes on Federal and state roads; and that the Benue DFRRI has not been working according to specifications.

Earlier, in June, an *Analyst* crew was in Benue for on-the-spot inspection and assessment of DFRRI 'sperformance in the state - especially in view of the claims by the state's DFRRI Director, Major Mohammed Umar, that: 3,400 kilometres of roads have been constructed, many boreholes have been dug, improved seeds and fruit trees have been supplied to farmers, and infrastructures provided to local governments.

What then is the true state of affairs in Benue state as

regards Rural Development? Who is telling the truth - Dr. Gana or Dr. Mallam?

The crew found out that Benue had been allocated about fourteen million naira (N13.742). and that it has physically received the whole amount. The break down is as follows:- N7,859,000 for Rural Roads; N1,000,000 for Ecological Problems; N3,500,000 for Water Development; N0,181,500 for Fruit Trees; and N0,091,250 for Seeds.

Major Mohammed Umar, Benue state DFRRI Director said



however, that he had received only N8.37 million from Lagos. Still, even going by this figure, the question remains: what is there on the ground in Benue to show from the millions received and

spent?

For officials, and even local journalists in the State capital, Makurdi, DFRRI is "a sensitive issue," not to be discussed openly. But the young, good-looking and articulate Major Mohammed Umar, the Director, didn't think so. He was not too willing to discuss specific details of expenditure, of course. But he explained to us his "Benue formula" strategy of working through local government implementation committees, use of direct labour with community inputs, and contribution of implements and inputs from DFRRI. And then he gave us a long list of his directorate's achievements: construction of 3,400 kilometres of roads, (2,507 kilometres above the 893 kilometres directed by the National Directorate); reactivation or construction of 175 boreholes (by other agencies under the direction of DFRRI), out of the estimated 250 for which Lagos gave N5 million; the repair and sharing out of equipment to Local Government Implementation Committees; and distribution of improved seeds and fruit trees.

Quite an impressive list. But out there in the field, it was a different story and a different song we heard. The Major's claims simply couldn't stick.

## WATER:

This is particularly so in the case of water developemnt. True, in recent months, commissioning of boreholes, with so much noise and fanfare, has become almost a weekly ritual for the Benue state government. But who built the boreholes

now being commissioned? Our investigations in seven Local Government areas show that Benue DFRRRI itself neither reactivated nor built a single borehole. All the boreholes, we found out, were actually constructed by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and PCI, with foreign loans.

Consider the example of Adun East in Oju Local Government area which was ravaged last year by a yellow fever epidemic that claimed 1,500 lives. Major Umar claimed a borehole has been sunk by DFRRRI there. When we got there, there was now borehole at all. And, worse, the people there are now battling with the spread, in almost epidemic proportion, of Guinea Worm - a water born disease. The people told us they have heard of DFRRRI only on the Radio, and not seen a single official from DFRRRI in Adun yet.

Major Umar talked of the difficult geology of Benue State and the absence of a geophysical survey map, which has made sinking of boreholes difficult. He said DFRRRI had awarded a contract for a geological survey of Benue to enable the Directorate identify areas where it is easy to sink shallow boreholes using the easy-to-repair Indian Hampton Mark 2 hand pumps.

Still, we ask: where is the N5 million given by Lagos for the construction of 250 boreholes in Benue?

#### IMPROVED SEEDS:

As with water development so with the provision of improved seeds and fruit trees. Of all the seven local government areas we covered, not a single one had received, from DFRRRI, any supply of improved seeds and fruit trees.

Again we ask: where has all the money (N272,750) voted for this gone?

#### ROADS:

The story isn't much different as regards roads construction. We had asked Major Umar to recommend to us one Local Government Area which, in his assessment, was a model of DFRRRI performance in Benue. He recommended three: Bassa, Oju and Katasina Ala Local Government areas.

We did not get to Bassa but we got, from reliable sources, what we believe to be a true picture of DFRRRI performance there. The highlights: of the projected 181 road for that Local Government area, less than 30 kilometres had actually been opened up by bulldozers; a pick-up van, a few tippers of gravel, chippings and some tons of cement had been made available to the Implementation Committee; and a cash advance of N100,000 was given to the committee by the Directorate.

We visited Oju Local Government which does not have even one kilometre of tarred road. DFRRRI did not have much to show here either. There were two roads under construction here. The first, a 45 - kilometre stretch from Awajir to Oju, was awarded to the powerful Israeli firm, APROFIM, since January 1987. But so far, only 5 kilometres of the road had been bulldozed and graded. We were told Lagos awarded the



*Koivan: keeping mute?*

contract, and so the state cannot put pressure on APROFIM.

The other road, Ito to Aliade, 30 kilometres long, was contracted by DFRRRI to a company they refused to name. So far, only 15 kilometres had been bulldozed, and culverts were being constructed.

Along the 28 kilometre road from Oju to the boarder with Cross-River State, only 8 kilometres, we found out, had been done by DFRRRI. And of the 31 small streams along this road that needed to be bridged, only two bridges had been properly constructed with reinforced concrete. The others were constructed through communal effort, with planks and other local inputs.

The border town of Ohuma suffers total neglect: no water, no health facilities, no motorable roads, no schools (except for one primary school), and since 1983, only two of their children have gone to a post-primary school. But they are made to pay heavy taxes and levies.

In short, of the 212 kilometres of roads claimed by Major Umar to have been constructed by DFRRRI in Oju Local Government area, only 8 kilometres have actually been bulldozed and only 15 have been bulldozed and graded.

But DFRRRI hasn't done any better in other local government areas such as Gboko, Otukpo, Kwande, Vandeikya and Makurdi. Gboko Local Government, for instance, got only N12,300 imprest from DFRRRI in February 1987; one pick-up van, 2 trailer load of cement, 4 tipper trips of chippings and lubricants. These were used to construct 3 culverts along Boagundu-Wanne road. No machinery was given, so no road was constructed. Yet DFRRRI claims it has constructed 215 kilometres of road here.

Kwande Local Government only received 1 pick-up van; N13,000 cash imprest; 1,800 bags of cement; some chippings; N10,000 for reshaping Adikpo - Obudu road; N3,000 for a bridge at Manor; and another N3,000 for the repair of Adikpo-Koti road. So far, 5 culverts have been completed - 3 along Ushongo - Mainyan road and 2 along Nyihemba-Wase road. Not even one kilometre of road has been bulldozed or graded. The story is about the same, or worse, in the other Local Government Areas.

Everywhere in Benue State, people are now asking questions: what has happened to all the millions given to Benue DFRRRI? Why should the Federal and State governments allow a few unpatriotic bureaucrats to rip-off the people of Benue? Why should Benue DFRRRI, under Major Umar, give out contracts for geophysical survey maps when it could have easily obtained same from the State's Utilities Board? Where did the UNDP, PCI and the Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority get their own geophysical maps which they use to sink the boreholes that the Benue State Governor commissions with such fanfare, and which DFRRRI has been laying claims to?

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

A few days before we arrived Makurdi, Major Umar gave a lengthy press briefing on DFRRRI activities. But he refused to give any details of the Directorate's expenditure. He argued that such details are "not a thing that should go to the press," adding that "Much as the public is entitled to know, there is limit to what the public should know and what the public can understand".

But why should details of how public funds are spent (or squandered) be a secret? Is DFRRRI no longer accountable to the Nigerian public whose enormous sacrifice under the burdens of taxes, levies and SAP made possible the billions DFRRRI now presides over? Or is there an attempt to cover up what seems like a massive rip-off of the poor people of Benue?

We learned - as we went round the state and talked to people - from very reliable sources that despite an extremely honest but unfavourable report on Benue by a monitoring team from DFRRRI national headquarters headed by a Major, DFRRRI bosses in Lagos are keeping sealed lips and pumping more money into Benue. Which is why many of the people we talked to are calling for a probe of DFRRRI activities in Benue.

But whatever the government may decide to do, or not do, it was clear to us from the bitterness and anger evident on the faces of Benue peasants, that they will soon organise themselves and demand to have popular and democratic say and control over all programmes and policies that effect their lives.



By Iyorchia Ayu with Orduen Abunku.

## EARSHOT

### A Field Marshal Soon?

In what quickly changed from an independence anniversary parade to what people now call a "show of stars," President Babangida and the five service chiefs appeared at the parade ground in Abuja on October 1, wearing new ranks. A stunned nation discovered that fine morning that: President Babangida has become a full (four-star) General; Chief of General Staff, Aikhomu, has moved one star higher to the rank of Rear Admiral; Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defence Minister, Domkat Bali, has been upgraded to the rank of a Lt. General; and all the three service Chiefs of the Army, Air Force and Navy have now become three star Generals.

This novel, though clearly patronizing, way of announcing the new promotions to a country where all but a tiny few are increasingly finding even mere survival difficult, lent drama to what would otherwise have been a colourless celebration. And, of course, set tongues wagging in homes across the country.

But, as it is said, nature abhors a vacuum. Since the retirement of General Obasanjo in 1979, there has been a vacancy for a full General in the Nigerian Armed Forces. Now, it has been filled by IBB, who became Major General four years ago (in June 1983), and who, all things being equal, has five more years ahead as President and Commander-in-Chief. And throughout her 27 year history, Nigeria — the biggest Black nation on earth, whose Armed Forces have behind them the experience of a 30-month civil war and participation in the United Nations Force that fought in the Congo, and can boast a list of Generals as long as the country's coast — has been without a Field Marshal. Giving nature's abhorrence of vacuums, the vacancy is certain to be filled one day, soon.

But if nature proves too slow to act, the rather alarming rate of promotions in the Armed Forces will certainly help to ensure that a Field Marshal emerges before the military retires to the Barracks in 1992. In four years time, the shoulders of our five star Generals, some of whom became two-star Generals four years three months ago (in June 1983), are certain to start itching for additional stars. And then General Babangida, the first military leader to take the title of President; the first Nigerian leader to win an international award for economic strategy; and the first African Head of State to be away from his post for so long and return to meet it; may find himself being "forced" to move further up the last rung of the professional ladder and become Nigeria's first Field Marshal. By then, perhaps, through some miracle, the administration's Structural Adjustment Programme, which has so far failed to adjust anything for the better, will begin to turn things around and ensure that the economy is sound enough to support a Field Marshal, and God knows how many there will be, Generals.

So, can we all say congrats in advance.

# Justice: Bakori Style

THE Bakori Area court on Thursday, 10th September, 1897, lived up to the historic ill-repute of *Alkali* courts: it sacrificed justice, fairplay and honour on the seedy altar of technicalities and privilege. The court returned a verdict of 'guilty' on the innocent, and thereby subverted the very justice which it was established to dispense.

Delivering judgment in the long-standing case of the Commissioner of Police versus Yakubu Maidaji and six-teen other peasants of Maiyadiya village, the Bakori Area Court, presided over by Shehu Muazu, ruled in favour of the prosecution. It consequently handed down a sentence of three months imprisonment without option of fine on two of the accused peasants; two months imprisonment without option of fine on seven of the accused; and discharged and acquitted the remaining seven.

Imprisoned for three months were Yakubu Maidaji and Iliya Bala. Shekarau Yakubu and Gambo Yakubu (all of whom are the sons of Iliya Bala); and Bawa Hussaini and Babangida Bala were each sentenced to two months. Those discharged and acquitted were Bala Gaga, Danasabe, Bamni, Hassan, Samaila, Dauda Sarkin Noma and Sani Sarkin Noma.

In arriving at his judgment, *Alkali* Shehu Muazu said he took into account the 'fact' that in an earlier suit on the farm lands in question, instituted by Alhaji Hassan Alhassan (the complainant in the case), at Funtua Upper Area Court, judgment was given in favour of Alhaji Hassan. Shehu Muazu also said that his judgment was also based on the evidence of the prosecution witnesses, who in the course of the proceedings said that they saw Alhaji Hassan's agent, Alhaji Badamasi, being beaten by the accused. As for the discharged and acquitted, it was *Alkali* Shehu Muazu's view that their plea of alibi is upheld.

Before delivering his judgment on Thursday, 10th September, a re-inforcement of uniformed and plain clothes policemen were drafted to the court, and the few persons allowed into the courtroom were thoroughly searched.

Those convicted have since set the machinery in motion for an appeal. Apart from this, all the peasants whose farmlands have been confiscated in the area by Alhaji Hassan, his agents, and the collaborating traditional and Local Government hierarchy, have indicated their intention to sue for damages as well as for a legal confirmation of their titles to their farmlands.

On the whole, the Bakori case offers one more glimpse into the many ways in which a tiny clique of the rich and powerful in the society employ all sorts of deceits, legal manipulation and bureaucratic trickery to rape the weak and poor of their persons, resources and honour. For, what has happened at Bakori is not justice. Far from it. It is rather 'legal' (i.e. if even it deserves that qualification) 'voodooism'. The peasants of Maiyadiya never sold their farmlands to anybody, as was amply evident during the course of the proceedings. Even village Head, Maianguwa Na Mata, testified to that in the court.

So did Alhaji Bello Organiser, the Chairman of the Funtua Local Government Land Use and Allocation Committee, who was charged by the L.G. Secretary to investigate the matter. Even Alhaji Alhassan himself admitted to the court that he did not buy any land from the accused peasants. Yet, *Alkali* Shehu Muazu went ahead and sentenced the peasants for defending their inalienable rights to the farmlands which rightly belongs to them and on which they eke out their miserable sustenance. What justice!

But perhaps even more repulsive and offensive to the rule of law and natural justice is the fact that in deciding that the land belongs to Alhaji Hassan Alhassan, the Bakori Area Court partly relied on documents which no right-thinking person (not to talk about a court of law) would accept as legally tenable. Alhaji Hassan's 'evidence', and the prosecution's too, that the title to the farmlands is his was based on a letter of grant signed by the District Head of Bakori, Alhaji Tukur Idris, purportedly given under the authority of an extinct *Katsina Local Authority (Control and Cultivation of Land)* Rules of 1974. This so-called letter of grant of title was dated 15 August 1985.

Not only was this so-called law non-existent or of no legal effect whatsoever, but since the enactment of the Land Use Act in 1979 the power to grant title to land everywhere in the country lies squarely with the Governor of a state who may delegate this power only to a statutorily established Land Allocation Committee. Thus, since 1979, the powers of a District Head or any other local dignitary to grant title for land (if there ever were such) became completely ousted in law. The Bakori Area Court must be aware of this. Yet, it went ahead to commit a travesty of the very justice which it is established to defend, protect and promote.

But the people of Maiyadiya must thank *Alkali* Shehu Muazu at least for one thing: for demystifying for them the smokescreen of respectability which had hitherto enveloped bourgeois legal process; for bringing out in its ugly nakedness the real human villains usually behind our courts, especially the *Alkali* Courts which often claim to be spiritually inspired.

But above all, the peasant of Maiyadiya - and the rest of us - are eternally grateful to the Bakori Area Court for teaching us how to be courageous in the defense and protection of our legitimate rights; for showing us that judges and policemen and District Heads are just ordinary mortals like anyone else; for inspiring and strengthening our conviction that united and organized, the victimized, oppressed and exploited people of Nigeria shall yet bring about a new dawn for ourselves, for our children and for posterity.

For all these, we thank the Bakori Area court, and its presiding judge, *Alkali* Shehu Muazu.

By Richard Umaru.

# The Ban: How Principled?

In his broadcast on Wednesday 23rd September 1987, President Ibrahim Babangida announced more details of the transition programme of the Federal Military Government. One of the most important aspects of that broadcast was the announcement of the categories of former public office-holders who shall not be allowed to contest future elections, or hold political party office. Before setting out the categories of those banned from politics, President Babangida spelled out the philosophy and principles which guided the Armed Forces Ruling Council in reaching the decisions which he announced. He said:

"When the military overthrew the last civilian government in December 1983 it did so because that government had ruined the economy of the country, generated national dissension and instability and had engaged in massive rigging of elections with the attendant violence and insecurity of lives and property. That situation was virtually the same as what obtained early in 1966 when the military entered the political arena for the first time."

He continued: "These bitter experiences of the past have combined with present indications that the leadership had not changed its ways enough to persuade the Armed Forces Ruling Council that handing over power to the same political leadership in 1992 would amount to gambling with the future political stability and progress of the nation."

## THREE GROUPS BANNED

President Babangida then went on to announce that three groups of people are banned. The *first group*, which he divided into five distinct categories, is made up of all persons who have held public office, civilian or military, or those in the private sector, who have been indicted and found guilty of abuse of office, corrupting public officers and other such offences and misdeeds by panels, tribunals and commissions of inquiry, since Nigeria became independent on 1st October 1960. This first group is banned from contesting elections and from holding any party political office.

The *second group* is made up of those who, although they have never been found guilty of any offence, are banned because they have held the following offices during the first civilian regime of 1960-1966 and during the first term of the last civilian regime, 1st October 1979 - 30th September 1983:

President; Prime Minister; Vice-President; Regional Premier; State Governor/Administrator; Deputy State Governor; Minister/Presidential Adviser/Assistant; Presidential and National Assembly Liaison Officer; All the Presidents, Speakers and their Deputies of all Legislatures; Chairmen of all Committees of All Legislatures; Members of the National Executive Committees of All Political Parties; Members of Regional and State Committee of All Political Parties. The *third group* banned is made up of military and police personnel who held the following offices or who are currently holding them:

President/Head of State; Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters and Deputy; Chief of General Staff; Chairman, Joint Chiefs of

Staff; Chief of Defence Staff and Deputy; Chief of Staff (Army); Heads of Navy and Air Force; Chief of Army Staff, Naval and Air Staff; Inspector-General of Police; All Military Governors and Administrators; Members of the Supreme Military Council; Members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council.

This third group is only banned from contesting any election during the period of transition, that is up to 1992.

President Babangida concluded by saying that: "What has been done is not discriminatory in anyway. Both past civilian and military leaders have been affected just as present leaders have not been spared. This is a sacrifice which we all have to make so that 'Nigeria go survive'"

## OBJECTIVE OF THE BAN

From the broadcast by the President and from the press briefing given immediately afterwards by the Chief of General Staff, Vice Admiral Aikhomu, it is obvious that the government is anxious to convince Nigerians that these decisions are based on principled and patriotic considerations and are not aimed at serving the selfish interest of any individual or group. The objective to be achieved by the ban is, according to President Babangida, to:

"... give Nigeria a fair chance to develop a new political culture and leadership."

There is, however, a contradiction which shall clearly prevent the achievement of this objective of getting a new political culture and political leadership of service and patriotism. But before we go into this, there are serious elements of discrimination in the way the ban has been imposed which need to be highlighted.

## THE SABO EXAMPLE

The most glaring example of this discrimination is to include in the ban all those who have held high political office in the first term of the Shagari regime - that is between 1st October 1979 and 30 September 1983 - and leave out those who only came into office on 1st October 1983 and were overthrown on 31st December 1983. The argument that those who only held office for three months had no time to abuse their office is obviously baseless.

It was in the three months of October - December 1983 that Alhaji Sabo Bakin Zuwo, as Governor of Kano State, stole most of the N3,503 million found in his house, whose confiscation this government has officially confirmed, in addition to confirming on him a sentence of 21 years, for corrupt enrichment.

## THE ELECTION RIGGERS OF 1983

In addition, how can President Babangida say in his broadcast that:

"Indeed the military had taken over the reigns of government from civilian politicians in December 1983 on account of their failure to foster national unity, *conduct free and fair elections*, eliminate graft and corruption from public life and manage national resources in the overall interest of the nation"; (*Italics added*).



**UPDATE**

and in the same broadcast exempt the very civilian politicians who were clearly responsible for the rigging of the 1983 elections

For, if civilians failed to conduct free and fair elections, as President Babangida rightly stated, the responsibility for that failure rests largely on the shoulders of those who "won" the 1983 elections, which was the only election conducted by civilians since 1965. How can the government decry the rigging of the 1983 elections and yet exempt from the ban on politics those ministers, governors and legislators who organised and benefitted from the rigging of these same 1983 elections and who belonged largely to the N.P.N., which used its control of the federal government to ensure its "landslide"? It was precisely this "landslide" which led to the "gunslide" of 31st December 1983, as both military heads of state, since, have confirmed.

Are we being asked to believe that Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, who "won" the gubernatorial contest in Gongola State in 1983, has no responsibility whatsoever for the rigging of the 1983 election in Gongola, and that it was Alhaji Abubakar Barde, who was the governor during the elections, who "rigged" himself out of office? Are we also being asked to believe that Dr. Olunloyo, who "won" the 1983 gubernatorial race in Oyo State had no responsibility for the rigging of the 1983 elections in Oyo State, and that it was Chief Bola Ige who "rigged" himself out of office?

In fact, this discrimination extends to the N.P.N. itself. For many of the new ministers and advisers whom Shagari brought into his second term cabinet, like Dr. Ibrahim Tahir and Mr. John Nwodo, gained favour and office because of their role in supervising the rigging of the 1983 elections in various zones into which the country was divided for effective election rigging. How can they be exempted from the ban, while ministers in the first term, most of whom had hardly any active role in the 1979 elections, are banned?

Are we being asked to believe that it is from among the likes of the Olunloyos and Bamangas that a new political leadership of service and patriotism is going to emerge? Are we being asked to believe that the successful election riggers of 1983 are those who are going to develop a new political culture of tolerance and of free and fair elections after 1992?

**SELECTIVE TRIALS**

Another very serious form of discrimination in the ban arises from the highly selective nature of the military investigations and trials of the politicians. As we have consistently pointed out in the *The Analyst* (Vol. 1, No. 2; Vol. 2, No. 2 and Vol. 2, No. 3) the two regimes have not conducted these trials fairly.

For example, out of the sixty-seven people brought to trial before the Special Military Tribunals under the provision of Decree No. 3 of 1984, only one minister and one presidential adviser have been included, up to today. These are Mr. Victor Masi, Minister of Finance, and Professor G. A. Odenigwe, Presidential Adviser.

But, as the Justice Muhammed Bello Tribunal Report reveals, out of these sixty-seven tried under Decree 3, fourteen were state governors and about half a dozen were deputy state

governors. And we all know that the criminal wrecking of the Nigerian economy did not largely take place from Yola, Akure, Minna, Ilorin and other state capitals. What all this means is that the investigations and trials have been very unfair and discriminatory against the state-level public officers and in favour of Shagari and his ministers and aides.

Even when there is a *prima facie* case established by a judicial tribunal, the public office holders at the federal level are not brought to trial. For example, the Justice Uwaifo Tribunal established and recommended that:

"There is *prima facie* evidence upon which Dr. O. Saraki can be prosecuted but there is none upon which Alhaji A. Ali Monguno can be prosecuted. Although the case of corrupt enrichment of Messrs BEMCO International Ltd. by Alhaji Bello Maitama Yusuf was not a subject before the panel it is recommended that the N3.29 million by which the company was corruptly enriched should be recovered from the said Bello Maitama. Similarly the N1.5 million received by Chief A.M.A. Akinloye and the N1.0 million received by Ali Makele from the deal for their personal use should be recovered from them." The National Council of State and the Armed Forces Ruling Council at their meeting at the end of June 1986 accepted these recommendation and decided, according to the White Paper issued on the Uwaifo Report, that:

"the following people should be sent for trial: (1) Bello Maitama Yusuf (2) Dr. Olusola Saraki (3) Chief A.M.A. Akinloye (4) Alhaji Ali Makeli, for the kickback of N21.88 million from the firm of Fougerolle (Nig) Ltd. in favour of the proscribed N.P.N."

*Up to now, over fourteen months later, neither Bello Maitama Yusuf nor Dr. Olusola Saraki have been brought to trial! In fact, the government is rehabilitating Dr. Saraki, who was a leading participant at the official launching of the Kwara State MAMSER campaign on Saturday, 19th September 1987.*

Another glaring example of how discriminatory and unfair the trials of the politicians have been, can be seen in the case of Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan, Minister of Mines and Power (1979 - 83) and the four directors of an N.P.N. front company, Ajiya Investments Ltd., namely Alhaji Ibrahim Damcida, Alhaji Aminu Dantata, Chief Bayo Kuku and Chief Ugochukwu.

In April 1986, Assistant Commissioner of Police F.E. Ezena told the Uwaifo Tribunal that Ajiya Investments Ltd. had, by December 1983, received kickbacks for the N.P.N. amounting to N31.9 million. Of this amount, the sum of N3.65 million was identified as kickbacks solicited by Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan and Chief Bayo Kuku from the Brown Boveri Construction Company for a contract the company got from the Ministry of Mines and Power. Neither the minister, nor any of these four N.P.N. tycoons, have been brought to trial for this clear case of corruptly enriching a political party. But Chief Bisi Onabanjo, the Governor of Ogun State, was tried and jailed by a Special Military Tribunal for 27 years for corruptly enriching the U.P.N. to the tune of N2.85 million; Chief Bisi Akande was tried and jailed for 10 years for corruptly enriching the U.P.N. to the tune of N0.781 million; Mr. Samuel Kolade was tried and jailed for five years for corruptly enriching the U.P.N. to the tune of N1.0 million; and Mr. Joshua O. Yuki was jailed

**UPDATE**

for five years for corruptly enriching the U.P.N. to the tune of N1 million.

These four people were tried and jailed for corrupt enrichment of a political party to the tune of a total of N5.63 million; while Ibrahim Hassan, Bayo Kuku and others who corruptly enriched the N.P.N. to the tune of over thirty million have not been tried at all. In fact, the former Minister of Mines and Power is being carefully rehabilitated by a federal media organ in Kaduna.

Moreover, the judicial tribunals of enquiry which investigated several federal ministries and parastatals, namely the Nasir, Awogu, Okurubido and Babalakin tribunals, submitted their reports almost one year ago and the reports and the White Papers have up to now not been issued.

This means that because of the selective nature of the investigations and trial of the public officers of the Second Republic, many of those who should come into the first group, who because of proven cases of abuse of office, are presumably to be banned for life, shall not be included. Some of them now fall into the second group, whose ban only extends to 1992.

**A RETIRED GENERALS PARTY?**

Another level at which the ban is discriminatory, contrary to what the government claims, is over the way in which the military and police personnel are only banned from contesting elections up to 1992. They are not banned from holding political party offices in the period 1987-92. On the other hand, the civilians are banned from both. What are the patriotic principles or considerations of fairness, which can justify this discrimination? This is particularly because many of the retired generals and other senior military officers, itching to contest elections or who have contested already have never been subjected to any probes into how they got their huge fortunes. This is because the Shagari regime was too corrupt, and bankrupt, to investigate the Obasanjo administration, particularly its top echelons, who became multi-millionaires overnight. The few instances when the investigative searchlight was turned on the finances of that regime, a lot was exposed. For example, the inquiry into the crude oil sales by the Irikefe Tribunal of 1980, and the Bwator tower contracts with the Ministry of Defence by the Awoniye Commission of Inquiry of 1984, showed an equally high level of abuse of office by the top echelons of the Obasanjo regime.

The Political Bureau in fact proposed that the assets of all those who held public office between August 1975 and August 1985 should be probed by an appropriate machinery and any assets which cannot be accounted for, seized. The Bureau is not clear over whether this should include the military public office holders of the 1975-85 period. It seems to include them, but the Bureau was not, for some reason, willing to be definitive. In any case, the government accepted this recommendation, which should have taken care of corrupt enrichment under the Obasanjo regime. But now, it appears that the government has reversed its position. Why? Is it part of the grand design to build a party led by some retired military officers who will contest elections after 1992?

**PROBITY AND NEUTRALITY**

There is a sharp contradiction between this government's

stated commitment to the building of a new political culture and a new political leadership geared to service and patriotism and a number of the appointments it has been making to public office.

How can the transition period, and all the transition programme, be seen by the Nigerian public as being genuinely aimed at producing a new political culture and political leadership when the government appoints as chairmen and members of the boards of its parastatals, and has as its top permanent secretaries and chief executives, persons who have been indicted and found guilty by tribunals and panels of inquiry and who therefore stand banned from contesting any elective office?

For example, Mr. Samuel Ogbemuda was found to have extensively and corruptly enriched himself when he was Military Governor of the Mid-West State. One of Murtala's last and most popular acts, which probably cost him his life, was the dismissal of Ogbemudia and nine other former military and police officers from service for abuse of office and corruption. Now this same Ogbemudia, dubiously rehabilitated by the Shagari regime to rig the 1983 elections in Bendel State, has been appointed as chairman of the National Sports Commission, and is currently globe-trotting at public expense. This is the same government that has banned thousands from political office, including ones as low as local government councillors, because they were found guilty of abuse of office or for simply holding public office. What is the principle here?

Or take the case of Mr. Selcan Miner, who as the S.M.G. of Benue-Plateau State was indicted by a judicial commission of inquiry for involvement in the plunder of that state in 1968-75 and was declared by the government as unfit for any public office. Yet, this same Selcan Miner has been appointed by this administration, which wants to build a new political culture of service and accountability, as the chairman of one of the country's leading merchant banks, the Nigeria Merchant Bank. What is the logic of banning somebody from even contesting as a councillor in a local government election and yet appointing him to chair the board of a bank with an annual turnover of over N112.5 million?

Or take the example of Alhaji A. B. Umar, appointed in June 1987 to be a member of the board of the Nigerian Airports Authority, who was in 1976 dismissed from the North-West State Government because of the way he grossly abused his office as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. He is banned from contesting the forthcoming local government elections but is on the board of the N.A.A. which runs all the country's civilian airports where several billions of public funds have been invested. What sort of political culture or even political stability do we expect from this sort of contradiction?

Moreover, can anyone expect Ogbemudia, Selcan Miner, and A.B. Umar and their type to play the role of "neutral arbiters" in the transition programme? Their official positions give them a lot of power over public resources, a power they have been indicted for grossly abusing before, yet this administration bans thousands from contesting for local councils merely because they held some public offices before. This

position is clearly untenable.

**DEEP ROOTED CONTRADICTION.**

But even beyond this paradox of banning somebody from becoming a local government councillor and yet appointing him to head a merchant bank or a national commission, there is a more deep-rooted contradiction in the whole banning exercise. This is to be found in the fact that the only way in human society to build public accountability, service and probity is to develop the capacity to identify and punish those who abuse their offices and recognise and commend those who uphold the public trust. By banning all those who held certain public office, even those not found guilty, this regime is eroding and undermining the essential principle of punishment, sanction and reward, on which all societies build their means of controlling individual behaviour.

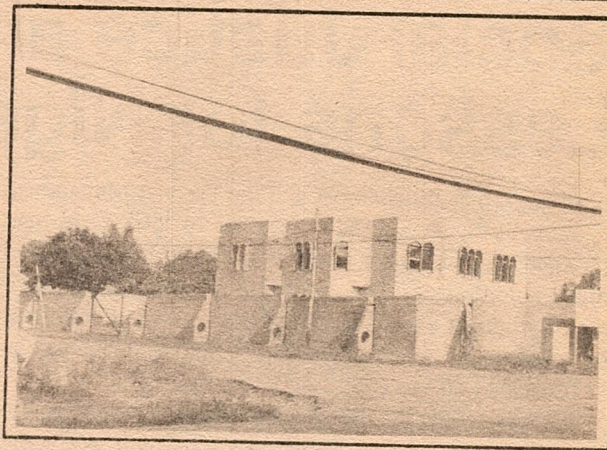
The resort to collective guilt is not just an attempt to escape from the tough task of separating the guilty from the innocent - it amounts to punishing the innocent and covering-up for the guilty.

This government cannot escape from its responsibility to carry out the tough, but patriotic, exercise of genuine investigation, trial and punishment. This is what Murtala did, at least for the governors, federal commissioners and "super" permanent secretaries. It gave Nigeria a breathing space from the avalanche of corruption which was going to sweep all public accountability away under the Gowon regime. There is no way the A.F.R.C. and the N.C.S. can avoid following Murtala's footsteps, if they want to do their patriotic duty.

**CONCLUSION**

This duty does not, and cannot, in all seriousness, extend to deciding which categories of public office holders should be banned. The duty of the government is to thoroughly and impartially investigate and justly try all cases of corrupt enrichment, abuse of office and other such crimes. The information and judgments should then be made available to the Constituent Assembly which, acting on behalf of the people of Nigeria, should decide on the Constitution, including the provisions as to qualification for all public offices. The sovereign right to decide on this Constitution belongs to the people of Nigeria, to be exercised through their democratically-elected representatives.

In addition, this government, in its own interest, and the higher interest of the nation, which, as President Babangida says, is greater than any individual citizen, should realise one important thing. This is that to set standards of public accountability which can have long-lasting effect, one must not only be above board, but be seen, and believed by the majority of the people, to be above board. Without impugning, in any way, the integrity of all the members of the National Council of State and the Armed Forces Ruling Council, it is a fact that many of the palatial mansions, and "castles" being built overnight in, for example, the Isa Kaita and Sultan Road junction area of Kaduna; and the choicest parts of Jos, Kano, Benin, Port Harcourt and Lagos, are widely believed by the Nigerian public to belong to some members of the A.F.R.C. and the N.C.S. In fact some of them are already tourist attractions in their own right!



*The tourist attraction at the junction of Sultan and Isa Kaita roads*

And as with these mansions and 'castles' so also the recent promotions of the very top brass of the military. A leadership which says it wants to "facilitate the emergence of a new political leadership" and culture can, even in its own interest, ill-afford the creation of the impression in the public psyche that it is selfish and merely concerned with its own professional and material advancement. Unfortunately, this view is fast gaining ground, particularly since 1st October when the promotion of the very top brass in the administration was announced with the greatest fanfare. Given the battering which most Nigerians continue to receive from SAP, and the clear signals given by the President in his September 23rd broadcast that there shall be further retrenchments ("trimming all state bureaucracies") and salary cuts ("reviewing the issue of uniform salary structure in the federation"), this impression is more than justified.

The issue of banning, therefore, like the whole of the Constitution and the transition programme, should be left to the Constituent Assembly. As *The Analyst* (Vol. 1, No. 2, July 1986) proposed:

"... we in *The Analyst* call on the government to limit the ban only to those who it has been clearly established had abused their offices. Better still, *The Analyst* would like to see such matters left to the political debate, whose outcome the government has pre-empted and whose credibility has suffered from the ban.

We would like to suggest also that whatever the (Political) Bureau emerges with from the debate on this and other matters be brought for discussion and approval before a Constituent Assembly democratically elected on basis of the territorial constituency and from popular organisation."

The fundamental principle that sovereignty belongs to the people, who alone have the sole legitimate right to decide on the economic, social and political system for their country, and how the country should be governed, is the principle that the A.F.R.C. and N.C.S. should base their actions on. Everything else is only going to obstruct our forward movement as a nation, towards greater unity, stability, democracy and social and economic progress. ♦

FROM THE PRESS

# Social Justice and Religion: Lessons for Nigeria

The messages that Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) brought to mankind are messages of love, peace and social justice. Social justice is the most powerful expression of genuine love. Social justice is also the foundation of peace within communities and nations and between them. Without social justice there can be no peace. Without social justice there is obviously no love.

But in Nigeria today, the messages of peace, love and social justice, at the core of both Christianity and Islam, are being deliberately twisted and distorted or even completely covered up. Rich and powerful individuals, many of whom have played and are still playing prominent roles in wrecking the economy of this country, so richly endowed by God, are promoting these campaigns of distortions. Instead of these messages of love, peace and social justice being used to bring unity, progress and dignity to all our people, they are using religion to entrench hatred, fear, conflict and violence at all levels - from our schools and colleges to the civil service and the armed forces.

Right now, they are using the money they have looted from the public offices they have held, as well as money obtained from sinister external forces, to turn the forthcoming December 12 1987, local government elections into a religious contest. They are doing this in order to prevent the common people of Nigeria, of all religious beliefs, from uniting and taking over power at the grass-roots level and building a local government system geared to ensure social justice, which will entrench peace and love in all our communities. They are conducting this campaign from churches, mosques, and all sorts of meetings, so that the Nigerian workers, the Nigerian peasant, the Nigerian artisan, petty-trader, fisherman, herdsman, and teacher, whose God-given right to the rich resources of this country they violate, will continue to remain impoverished, diseased and economically and socially insecure, whether he or she is a Christian or Muslim. They are doing this whether as pastors or mallams, bishops or sheikhs, kadis or cardinals, simply in order to protect their power, privileges, parasitical existence and wealth. They know that once the people wake up, unite themselves, and elect local government councils which will serve their interests, in accordance with the messages of peace, love and social justice brought by both Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) they are finished! It will be only another step and the people of Nigeria of all religions and beliefs, will take over power at the state and national level and start building a country without poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, landlessness and social and

economic insecurity. A country of love, peace and social justice. For only when power is in the hands of the people, from the grassroots level of local government to the highest national level can love, peace and social justice prevail in this country.

In this issue of *The Analyst* we bring to you two examples of how religious leaders in other countries pursue the true path of the messages brought by Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and refused to join the greedy politicking of the rich and powerful. One of the them is CARDINAL PAULO EVARISTO ARNS, the 66 year old Archbishop of Sao Paulo in Brazil. This is what he says in an interview he gave in his office on 14th August, 1986, on the conditions and problems facing his Brazilian people over democracy, constitution, debts, and military dictatorships and repression. Read on:

*Q: What steps are necessary to establish democracy in Brazil and in Latin America?*

A: Generally, one imagines that democracy is the freedom to choose politicians, and that is enough, that's democracy. The social component, the right to organize unions or associations, for example, is not included. It is even less common to think of democracy as popular participation in and control of the state, because we have had practically no experience with democracy in 500 years of Brazilian history.

So, naturally, it is necessary to proceed slowly, but firmly, and insist that the pedagogical, social and cultural components of democracy accompany or even precede the political aspects, which are actually only a small part of the total picture. For the majority of the people democracy is the right to elections, while the fact that the rich have everything and the poor have nothing is not part of dictatorship. The concentration of economic power is the greatest dictatorship in Latin America. In Brazil, this remains as it has always been.

*Q: In light of Latin America's economic and political dependence, what are the prospects for developing this kind of participatory democracy?*

A: ....For example, I believe that not even 1% of Brazilians have ever read or even heard of the constitution. Nor are they interested. But for the Church, this is a moment of transition. Even since the Latin American Bishops' meeting at Medellin in 1968, the Church has defended popular participation. Popular participation in all the countries would be the ideal in Latin America.

This also raises the question of the external debt, because the crisis affects the whole region. First of all, the debts have

already been paid two or three times over, because of rising interest rates. Some of our first loans were arranged at 4% interest, but we have been charged up to 21% interest. Another point to be made about the debts is that the loans were never meant to serve the people, but were for military objectives like the construction of the Angra dos Reis nuclear plant, the Transamazon highway and the Itaipu dam. The military concentrated on these projects during their 21 years in power, but the Brazilian people didn't know they had either an internal or an external debt.

Suddenly these debts exist and the workers have to pay them off. This is the greatest injustice. Foreign creditors set the interest rates as they wish, and equally unjustly, the loans were made to a government which had not been elected and had no popular support. In reality, the loans were made to a certain class, but now all classes have to pay. This is the greatest injustice, and it keeps people from believing in democracy.

*Q: What is the importance of the human rights question for the Brazilian transition to democracy?*

*A:* The concept of human rights in Brazil was something new, although Brazil had signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. When torture and imprisonment began during the military regime, we published 50,000 copies of the declaration. Our copies had footnotes indicating where to find certain of the declaration's points in the Bible. It also included human rights declarations made by different churches. We eventually distributed a million and a half copies. Students confronted the Police with this little book and recited aloud from it, in chorus, against the dogs and tanks.

This was a great struggle in Sao Paulo, which was really worth the trouble. Afterwards, though, when the opposition movement gained strength, the military government began a defamation campaign against human rights. This still exists. For example, there are some radio programs with a large audience which say that to defend human rights is to defend thieves. In this thinking, human rights guarantees protect criminals, not law-abiding people. Everywhere I go, people always ask, "Why are human rights only for thieves?" This is because human rights have been forgotten again, just as they were when everyone suffered under a regime which made us all into victims. Aside from this, there is also great ignorance in the developed world about human rights, especially when they include social rights. Our book *Brasil: Nunca Mais* was a response to precisely this situation, although the Church had already published many handbooks on citizens' rights vis-a-vis the police, job drawings and stories. *Brasil: Nunca Mais* is an examination of the reality we lived for 15 years, from 1964-1979.

*Q: Are you hopeful about Brazil?*

*A:* I believe that there have been free times in Brazil when there has been so great a possibility that the people will actually influence the course of history. So I am hopeful,



although all the forces from the past, from the dictatorship, are still present. I believe that the Brazilian people have become much stronger in these 20 years. They make many wrong choices, but this is natural because we have had no democracy for 500 years.

The other religious leader is Maulana Farid Esack, the National Organiser of the call of Islam organisation, in racist South Africa. The leader of the organisation is Imam Hassan Suleiman, who was recently elected to the regional executive of the United Democratic Front, the leading mass organisation fighting the racist apartheid regime, closely linked to the African National Congress of South Africa. The call of Islam has become, since its establishment in 1984, a militant and grass-roots base organisation working in solidarity with other democratic forces to fight apartheid. The call, and others following its line, have gone beyond the position of some of the other Muslim organisations in South Africa of keeping apart from the preachers and other agents paid by Saudi Arabia and other reactionary Middle East Governments who attack the liberation movements as atheistic and negroid and who use theological tricks and diversionary rituals and postures to divide the oppressed people of South Africa and whose video cassettes are widely distributed in Nigeria by agents and accomplices of racist South Africa determined to destabilise this country.

**FROM THE PRESS**

In August 1985, for example, the Call of Islam organised massive demonstrations of up to 18,000 people to mourn those killed in the Trojan House killings and the killing of Ibrahim Carlese. When the racist police again brutally shot their way into and tear-gassed a mosque containing over 3,000 mourners, killing Abdulkarim Friddic, in September 1985, the Call received sixty Anglican ministers who came to the mosque to offer their solidarity. In fact, this solidarity by the oppressed people of South Africa, uniting people of all faiths, had reached right into the prison walls where Nelson Mandela has been incarcerated for 23 years. For, on 4th March 1985 he wrote a letter of solidarity to Sheikh A.G. Jabir, Chairman of the Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa. Maulana Farid Esack explains their position in words which have many lessons for us in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> He says: "It is unethical and strategically unwise to work out such models (of Islamisation) in the comfort of drawing rooms. Unethical

Students). Here follows some parts of: "Indeed Pharaoh elevated himself in the earth and he separated its people, oppressing a class/group amongst them, slaughtering their sons and sparing their women. Indeed he was corrupt. But we wish to be gracious to those who had been oppressed in the earth and to make them the leaders and to make them the inheritors. We are going to show Phor and Haman and their armies that very thing which they feared." (28:4-6)

Pharaoh is identified with the white racists or Botha himself who introduced or perpetuated apartheid and oppressed the blacks. The children, yes even 3 year old Mita Ngcobeni, were killed by them. But Allah is going to make the oppressed victorious. Those being established in the land is understood to mean the rule of the working class. Haman, a priest, was symbolic of the theologians, Muslim and Christian, who still supported apartheid but Allah was going to ensure their destruction (which they feared).

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**"...people are dying of hunger now and others are engaged in a struggle for its elimination now. We may not agree with their ideology but that does not entitle us to impose (on them) a drawing room worked-out Islam ... Any attempt to impose a cosy, cushy and artificially nurtured Islam will be rejected as any other alien element would be."**

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because people are dying of hunger now and others are engaged in a struggle for its elimination now. We may not agree with their ideology but that does not entitle us to impose a drawing room worked-out Islam after a liberation achieved by these elements. It is strategically unwise because a new order can only accommodate elements that had grown alongside its emergence, an Islam that flows simultaneously relates to direct involvement. Any attempt to transport a cosy, cushy and artificially nurtured Islam will be rejected as any other alien element would be."

He sets out how the roots of their commitment to the liberation struggle come from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah: "Islam, through the Qur'an and Sunnah (the Prophetic example) has a history of militant and revolutionary opposition to oppression. The Qur'an on countless occasions, exhorts the Muslims to oppose oppression, injustice and tyranny....."

.....The saga of Pharaoh and Moses as related in the Qur'an has been tremendously relevant to Muslims in South Africa. Surah 28 entitled Al-Qasas (The Story) where this saga is related with much detail has even been mischievously referred to as Surah Cosas (Cosas being the acronym for the most militant and now banned Congress of South African

Muslims are generally financially much better off than other 'Coloureds' or 'Indians' and it is generally accepted that: they, especially the ones of Indo-Pak origin, stand to lose much by the creation of a just society. To them Allah says:

"Oh you who believe, stand up firmly as witness bearer; to Allah for justice, though this may be against your selfs (own interest)" (4:135)

The peasants, the workers, the unemployed, the landless, the petty traders, artisans and herdsmen, and all the poor and oppressed 100 million Nigerians of all religions are daily waking up and are seeing through the greed and selfishness of the dubious pastors, priests, shelkhs and kadis who divide, manipulate and help in exploiting them. The lessons from the words of the Maulana Farid standing for liberation in South Africa, and the Cardinal Paulo standing for exactly the same thing in Brazil, are very relevant for Nigerians today. They bring out the clear difference between the true religion of the people and the dubious religious postures of their oppressors. They have great lessons for us in general, and in the forthcoming local government elections.

Source: (1) NACLA: Report on the Americas Vol. xx, No. 5, September/Dec. 1986.

(2) BICMURA, Vol. 5, No 21 April 1987. ♦

**STRUGGLES IN THE FRONTLINE**

# Workers' Power in South Africa

The recent three-week strike in August by over 360,000 miners in the South African gold coal, diamond and platinum mines has been one of the most important events in the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa, as well as a remarkable advance in working class struggle in the whole of Africa. Miners throughout the world are noted for their militancy. This is not surprising, because work in the mines is difficult and dangerous Working underground, in almost unbearable conditions, with the threat of sudden death or disability always

lurking around the next corner of the tunnel, miners have to be tough and united to survive.

In South African mines, for example, workers normally work in excavations and tunnels only about one metre high, at depths of up to 3½ kilometres underground, at temperatures sometimes over 28 degrees celsius. Since 1900, more than 46,000 miners have been killed in the South African goldfields - 9,000 over the past ten years. Each year 15,000 miners are seriously injured. In 1983, an explosion at the Hlobano coal mine in Natal resulted in the death of 68 miners. On September 16, 1986, 177 miners were killed at the Kinross mine. (Gencor, the company that owns the mine, has assets of 6.75 billion dollars.) Not a day goes by in the South African mining industry without some worker getting killed or

injured.

One of the complaints of miners everywhere, and of the miners union in South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers, in particular, is that mine owners have been neglecting the safety of workers. In South Africa the situation is especially striking because of the enormous profits that are made by the mining companies, and the pitifully low wages that the miners get for their toil. For example, profit last year (1986) in the South African gold mines totalled 8,420,000,000 rand (£2,625,000,000 or

Not only are the wages paid to black workers in the coal, gold, diamond platinum and other mines miserably low, when compared to the profits made by the mineowners, but the black workers in the mines of South Africa have to face not only the strength of the mine owners, united in the South African Chamber of Mines, but they also have to contend with the apartheid system, which pervades and shapes every aspect of life in South Africa, particularly relations between workers and capitalists. Thus, in South Africa, white workers, even

those in the mining industry, are a relatively privileged group, earning wages more than 5 times that of their black counterparts for doing the same jobs. One of the major demands of the National Union of Mineworkers in the recent strike was for the abolition of



*Miners being served with shovel*

N18,375,000,000).

These profits earned the shareholders of companies like Anglo-American and Gencor a total dividend of £792,125,000. In the coal industry, profits for 1986 amounted to £309,062,500 or N2,163,437,500, and dividends to shareholders were 25,315,500. In contrast to these huge profits, the earnings of black mine workers in South Africa were a mere pittance: 484,541 black gold miners averaged £1,602 per year each; while 61,135 workers in the coal mines earned an average of £1,806 per year.

the differential wages paid to white and black workers. White employees in the gold mines presently average about £8,650 per year in wages, while white workers in the coal mines average about £8,700 per year (The average annual miner's wage in the United Kingdom is £10,932).

In addition, white workers get 35 days paid leave a year, while blacks get 14 days. Safety incentives are paid to white workers, but not to black workers. The system of apartheid is thus a major factor in relations between workers and their employers - and

## STRUGGLES IN THE FRONTLINE

creates conditions for the black mine workers of South Africa that no miners elsewhere in the world have had to deal with.

Perhaps the most important difference, however, between black miners in South Africa and miners elsewhere is the way in which the labour system is organised. In South Africa, the miners are entirely a migrant, temporary, labour force. They do not live permanently in communities around the mines, unlike their counterparts in most of the rest of the world, but are recruited from long distances away, from the poverty-stricken rural areas of South Africa where making a living on the land is impossible; and from neighbouring countries like Lesotho, Botswana and Mozambique. They come to the mines looking for work because if they do not get some where to work, their families back home cannot survive. The miners in South Africa are generally rural dwellers, who have never gone to school, and who are forced by the economic and social system to slave away in the hell of the mines, so that they can send back to their families some of their miserable wages, so that their wives and babies can manage to get some scraps to eat.

When these men migrate to the mines and manage to find work, they cannot bring their families with them. Instead, these workers live in all-male hostels built by the mining companies, where about 24 men share a single room, and where they sleep on concrete slabs in horrible conditions, and have their food dished out to them with a shovel in the company dining hall. Miners can have no normal family life, no "home cooking", no normal social relations, no recreational activities, no participation in community activities. They are not treated as human beings - they are merely "labour", whose sweat comes at the cheapest price imaginable. In all aspects of

their daily existence - food, housing, health - they are controlled by the mining company that employs them. Once they lose their job, they are not only out of work, but they have no place to live (they are immediately thrown out of the hostel), no food, and no legal right even to be physically present in the mining area. Once they are injured and can no longer work, they are thrown onto the trash heap,

strike in Wales, U.K., or in Harlan County, Kentucky, U.S.A., they are living in communities with their families, and with other families who are their neighbours.

When a strike is called, the whole community rallies to their aid. Neighbours feed their families when the strikers do not receive wages, launch fund raising activities to support the strike, and give important

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The fact that the South African mine workers, drawn from many nationalities of South Africa and neighbouring countries, could organise and sustain such a powerful strike with both economic and political demands shows that the future in South Africa, and the rest of Africa as well, shall be determined by the revolutionary power of the working classes.

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and left to fend for themselves any way they can.

These are the conditions faced by miners in South Africa - conditions which are significantly different from those of miners in Western capitalist countries. Conditions which make strike action unusually difficult, and which therefore make the recent strike in the South African mines led by the NUM particularly historic, because the miners in South Africa have, at least partially, been able to overcome these impediments and have been able to organise and sustain a crucial strike action aimed at doing away with many of these oppressive conditions. And the importance of this should not be underestimated. When miners go on

moral support to the strikers. But in South Africa to get such community solidarity is much more difficult - the workers are isolated from their home communities, and their families, and once their wages are stopped, and they are thrown out of the hostel, the South African state forces them to leave the mine and go home. Overcoming such obstacles, and organising successful strike action under these conditions, is therefore a major achievement.

It is with this background in mind that we can now begin to evaluate the significance of the recent strike by mine workers in South Africa.

The strike of the miners, led by the five-year old National Union of



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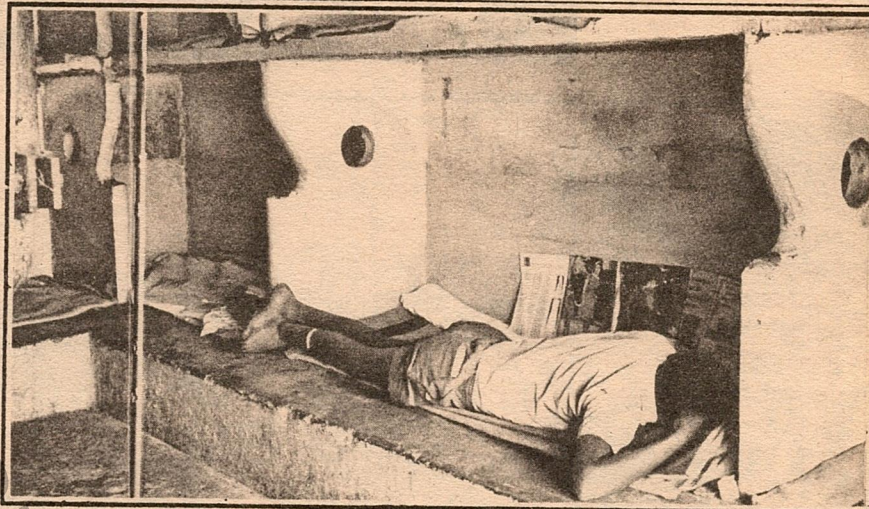
Mineworkers, under its general secretary Cyril Ramaphosa, lasted from 10th August to 30 August 1987. Although the NUM has a paid-up membership of 262,000 workers, the strike actually involved over 360,000. The strike affected 59 mines in the gold, coal, diamond and platinum industries - the backbone of the South African economy.

The NUM was making a series of demands from the mine owners association, the Chamber of Mines: a 30% increase in wages paid to miners (The Chamber of Mines offered 15-20%); recognition of June 16 (Soweto Day) and May Day as paid holidays; 30 days paid vacation; and increased death and accident benefits, as well as improved safety in the mines.

The Chamber of Mines, including such giants of the mining industry as Anglo-American and Gencor, were firm that they would not relent on the wage increase, despite the huge profits they have been making. They were prepared to sack thousands of workers in order to back up their threats, and in fact over 45,000 workers were dismissed during the course of the strike.

The period of the strike was marked by a series of violent attacks by the mineowners and their private security forces, as well as by the forces of the South African state, confronting and attempting to intimidate the miners. For instance, on 14 August at the Optimism Colliery, mine security guards fired gunshots into a crowd and injured over 13 workers. Police were called in and shot over 40 cannisters of teargas at the crowd. Rubber bullets were used against workers at the President Steyn mine. And there were many other such incidents. In all, over 400 miners were arrested and detained in the course of the strike; 9 miners were killed and over 500 injured by police and security forces.

The strike was supported by COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), to which the NUM



*Hostel for mine workers*

belongs and the UDF (United Democratic Front), as well as the vanguard of the liberation struggle in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC). However, the NUM and the strikers were hampered by the lack of a well organised strike fund to support the workers during the time they received no wages, as well as by the peculiar labour conditions in the South African mines described above. International support came from all the socialist countries, many African countries, and the British National Union of Mineworkers, the United Mineworkers of America, and the International Mineworkers Federation. However, South African law prohibits unions in South Africa from receiving any aid from outside the country, so much of the financial support could not be effectively utilised in the strike.

In the end, threats of and actual mass sacking of workers led the NUM to settle with the Chamber of Mines without succeeding in obtaining the higher wages they had sought. However, they did get higher holiday pay, and higher death and injury benefits for the families of the miners.

But the economic issues were not the only - or perhaps even the most important issues at stake in this strike. The major issue was the question of power. The Chamber of Mines were determined not only to

break the strike, but to demonstrate that the NUM could not sustain an organised strike action - which they and the South African government see as a threat to the whole racist regime. The strike cost the mining companies over \$8.2 million for each day it lasted; the money lost by the companies during the first week of the strike alone would have made up 60% of the amount required to settle the NUM's demands. So it is obvious that the mine owners were determined to break the strike and the union at any cost.

The fact that the NUM managed to organise and maintain a strike of this magnitude, in the most strategic sector of the South African economy, is a major victory for the workers and for all the oppressed people of South Africa, and portends future successful battles in the struggle to demolish apartheid and the capitalist system. The fact that the South African mine workers, drawn from many nationalities of South Africa and neighbouring countries, could organise and sustain such a powerful strike with both economic and political demands shows that the future in South Africa, and the rest of Africa as well, shall be determined by the revolutionary power of the working classes.

# PHOTOSPEAK



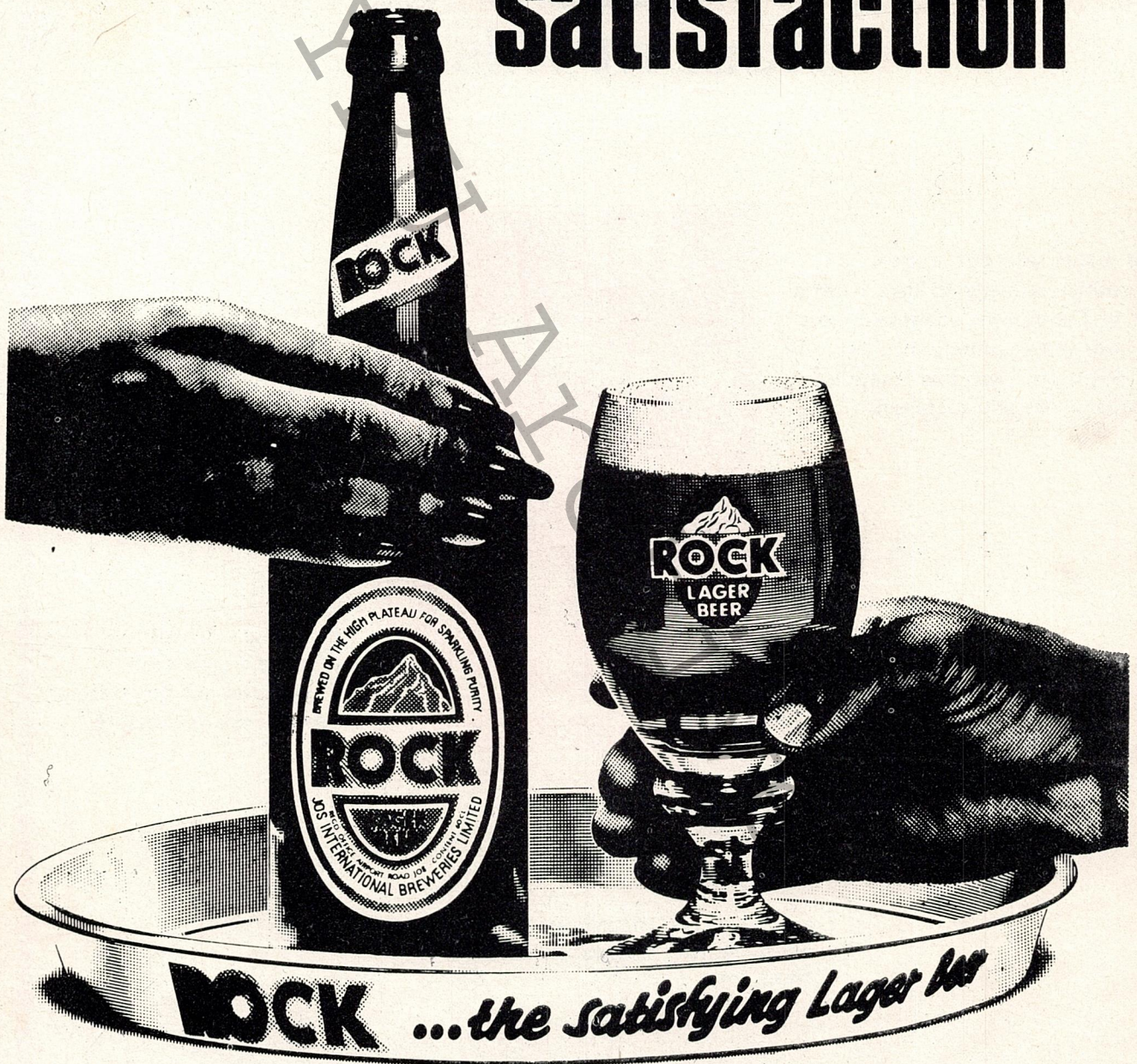
**Time:** 10.14 am.

**Date:** 5th October, 1987

**Place:** Kasuwan Monday food market, Kurmin Gwari, Kaduna - South.

*It is another market day. The haggling goes on unabated in a high-pitch amidst the din and the babel. The 'buyers' and the 'sellers' are all there. So are the truck-pushers, window-shoppers, shop-lifters and pick-pockets. But in this sprawling market, the buyers as well as the sellers, the window-shoppers as well as the shop-lifters, and all, are defenceless victims of the vagaries of the weather and the ravages of filth - induced diseases. For, in this Kasuwan Monday food market - like in many others run by the Kaduna Local Government and other Local governments in the country - essential amenities are never heard of. There are no stalls; no drains; no public conveniences; no fire-fighting service; no police post; no health post, etc. Indeed, there is simply NO NOTHING here. Yet, every Monday the traders and petty vendors and hawkers who converge here to sell their wares must pay one Naira to the revenue collectors of the Kaduna Local Government. Into whose greasy and bottomless pockets does this money go? This is the vital question that the traders of Kasuwan Monday food market - and of other markets around the country - must insist that the in-coming L.G. Councillors address themselves to squarely, and answer unambiguously, in the interest of the people and public accountability.*

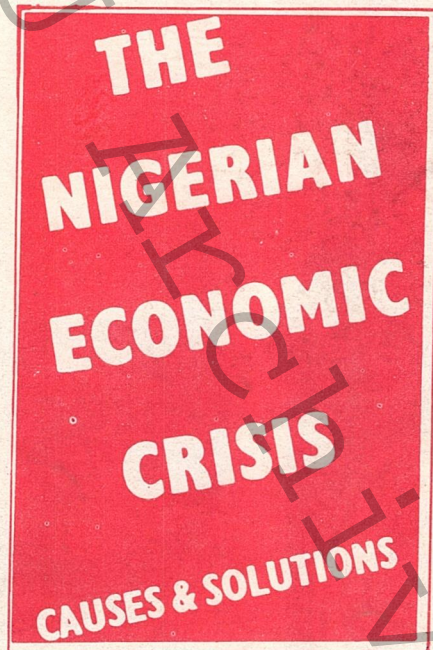
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