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General Observations

Before we go on with the main body of our theme, it is important to emphasize, in line with the convictions of Gunnar Myrdal, that "problems in the social sciences - not only the practical ones about what ought to be done, but also the theoretical problems of ascertaining the facts and the relations among facts - cannot be rationally posited except in terms of definite, concretized and explicit value premises." For even at the level of national and international policy, economics has been shown to be not only many sciences, but also a special branch of statecraft and political philosophy in which analytical method and techniques cannot substitute for intuition and judgment. Such prior definite, concretized and explicit value premises and such prior intuition and judgement represent, in one word, ideology, a direction. Whether or not we openly accept it, whenever we make pronouncements on the socio-economic phenomena, we are doing so, expressly or not, on the basis of one ideology or the other. To say that we do not care about ideology is to profess our opportunistic inclinations and/or our innate incompetence to assimilate the existential conditions of man. Those who now talk profusely of the co-operative system as a preferable mode of social and economic organization and yet renounce socialism should consult the relevant historical records. They would discover that the founders of the co-operative idea are known as the founding fathers of the socialist ideology. It is therefore intellectual dishonesty not to call a spade a spade. It is not our intention to seek approbation from any quarters. Neither do we intend to be "captive intellectuals playing to the gallery of local or international radicalism." Our intention is simply to contribute to a better understanding of our present nightmarish developmental problems and to point to a possible package of solutions to them.
Let us then briefly examine a number of reasons why socialism, as so far propagated to us in Africa, has not made as much impact as it ought to on the consciousness of the majority of ordinary African peoples and the management of a sufficient number of African economies. Granted that the capitalist mode of production inherited from colonialism is basically at fault, it is important to also mention that most African exponents or advocates of so-called scientific socialism have not helped matters either.¹ We will briefly enumerate some of the ways in which they have, wittingly or unwittingly, stultified the growth of what they intend to build up.

African advocates of "scientific" socialism have not done anything authentic and penetrating other than engaging in mere angry and high-sounding verbalization of Marxist-Leninist theories and their supporting philosophy. Although they demonstrate full understanding of the intricacies of the Marxist ideology, they do not only treat its theories as dogmas and the idea of "scientific" socialism itself as a religion, they are also usually so impetuous in the way they become slaves to an idea that is intended to free people, not only materially, but also intellectually. What an irony of fate!

Because most African Marxists present the socialist ideology in such a way that it degenerates into a mere social fixity or an unbending dogma, they make it easy for people who would have been naturally drawn to it to feel a sense of nausea and disgust, and to begin to resist desirable change blindly. For those African ideologues, the only susceptibilities that matter are theirs, and it does not occur to them that tact and thoughtfulness in advancing into a front, intellectual or other front, are the measures of the profundity of mind. It does not occur to them that such tact and thoughtfulness could dictate that there may be many ways to reach a particular point or destination, leading possibly to the acceptance of variations in the processes for achieving the ultimate goal over time. They want the trumpet of the revolution to be sounded in the next minute only through rhetorical mimicry, without wanting to make any concrete intellectual contribution towards the practical realization of a change in consideration of the circumstances of their own societies. They forget that even the Eastern socialist countries, in spite of the immense work they have done to build up themselves, still consider themselves to be in an on-going process of achieving a completely classless society as projected by Marx.
The way some of these African exponents of "scientific" socialism talk about the subject gives one the impression that they are divorced from their own roots, and are living in the England, Germany or France of Karl Marx. Otherwise it would have occurred to them to go into a full study of their polities in order to discover how best to eventually arrive at the desired goal probably through different starting points. To this end, it would have been befitting for them to reassess not only the economic theories, but their supporting philosophy in the light of the susceptibilities and cultural roots of their peoples. It is morbid intellectual laziness for them to argue that "scientific" socialism is a universal theory in all respects, implying thereby that we have nothing that makes us distinctly Africans; if we had any, that those things do not matter, or that we cannot restructure the imposed capitalist mode of production and exchange, unless we disown our anthropological, historical and the good aspects of our cultural past and present, and fuse ourselves into an imaginary universal environment where we would feel, not like Africans, but as Zombie-like cohorts of a certain Karl Marx.

But as we know, even the countries of the socialist bloc have each gone about achieving socialism in its own distinct ways, using the institutions and methods which it finds appropriate to its own circumstances. These circumstances, in turn, are conditioned by the variables of each nation's social, cultural and historical dynamics. This goes to show that the proposed universal applicability of all the aspects of "scientific" socialism, as preached for Africa by its African exponents, is as pretentions as it is deceptive, grotesque and anti-intellectual. It is sad that African "scientific" socialist theorists have to simply sit down and shout about the impending revolution, without attempting to devise distinct ways and means by which they hope their country or continent can progressively achieve its brand of socialist goal, using historically dated and environmentally situated ideas, symbols, concepts, and if necessary, certain peculiar institutions and methods.

**Intolerance by African Marxists**

The lack of full-dressed intellectual debates devoid of petty-professional rancour and personality clashes among African socialists, has produced the poverty of ideas on the future of socialist development and the modus operandi of the practicable socialist pattern of development for Africa. In Nigeria, for instance, you cannot discuss freely with our "scientific" socialists. They brook no arguments; they know it all. Marx can never be wrong in any circumstance; he had said all that needs to be said about social philosophy for all ages; so you must freeze all human intellectual probing into the area of social thought and simply wait for...
the Marxist revolution! Most of these Marxist socialists are seemingly more interested in and vain-gloriously elated by the ovation of unquestioning youthful students who are naturally excited by the high-sounding phraseology of their masters, and who have to memorize and recite Marxist theories, if they must pass their examinations. What a disservice to and a ridicule of intellectualism! What a stupefaction of the essence of learning and critical mind development! But in the other continents, much profound intellectual controversy on these issues goes on all the time, and thus provides for them an incrementally deeper understanding of Marxism in the context of the problems of their polities.

The Obnoxious Atheistic Character of Marxism

For instance, as we know, the Hegelian Marxist theory and its supporting philosophy reject the distinction between fact and value, science and ethics. Hence, for them moral impulses and aims are irrelevant, and socialist politics and economics are interpreted as an ethically neutral social technology based upon a science of society. However, intellectual debates have also been conducted, notably by Bernstein and Vorlander, arguing, as we do, that a Marxist social science needs to be complemented by an ethical theory, if socialism is to be shown as morally superior and therefore worth striving for as an end.

The questions therefore arise: Must African Socialists abandon the bedrock of their culture and indeed their entire distinctive feature which is the deep and irreversible belief in a Deity, and therefore in morality (however defined by different historical epochs), simply because Marx was angered by the irreligious deeds of men who dubbed themselves religious, or simply because we want to show how “international” and esoteric we are in our learning at Conferences? Is it impossible to construct a socialist matrix which can be effective and enable us to rediscover and recivilize ourselves, without uprooting us from our basically moral and humane cultural heritage? If it is impossible for us to do so, then we are no more than mere quibblers in the arena of intellectualism. As our African “scientific” socialists do not, with Marx and in deference to Marx, believe in the propelling force of metaphysics or God ultimately on matter, their slavish imitation of Marx’s doctrine, especially its methods and supporting philosophy, does logically signify that their unpronounced god then is Marx, the “faultless” human!

As far as we are concerned, the core of the socialist economic idea
emanating from Karl Marx (for instance, the questions about the exploitative nature of the capitalist mode of production, surplus-value, exchange, the preferable mode of control of economic power, etc.) is nonperil, and we want to see change made progressively and consistently in that direction in Africa. In recognition of these questions regarding the core of the socialist idea, we want ourselves to begin to map out essentially our own agenda of actions and policies for obliterating in our own way, the identified structural impediments to the true development of our poor majority.

As long as the human species on this planet remain imperfect, it is logically only a self-revisionary and self-critical socialist ideology that can bring the people to their promised land. A social fixity, in the form of an ideology, cannot and will never work in any human society. For instance, granted that the essence of the socialist concept can be regarded as a fundamental legacy to mankind, it is not conceivable that human knowledge, especially in regard to the type of structure of socialist organization which would be appropriate to each of the various cultural, structural and environmental settings of the human race has also ended with Marx and Lenin or with any other foreign or local socialist theoretician.

This is precisely the reason why many renowned Marxist thinkers like Korsch, Lukacs, Gramsci, Bottomore, and other Marxist philosophers, particularly Horkheimer and Marcuse, have all in their various ways, interpreted (not aped) Marx, and put his theories and doctrines under the searchlight of rigorous intellectual probing.

When this probing is done in Africa, our "scientific" socialists lazily dub it "revisionism". But as T.B. Bottmore recounts, repeatedly, from the time of Henry Bernstein to the present day, someone has emerged to declare that he is defending the "revolutionary core" of Marxism against "revisionism", but this is a meaningless declaration, because it is usually not accompanied by a real and down-to-earth analysis of the political forces at work in a specific form of society.³

Where some of our African Marxists attempt any analysis, they are usually slavishly more eager to prove Marx right in all respects than to attempt a realistic and deeper understanding of the peculiarities of their given social and economic environment, and to see how socialism can be brought down to the grass-roots. To this end, Marxist "rational" and "universal" order is apriori assumed as a framework, and whatever that happens in Africa must be subsumed into its armbit, willy nilly.
However, such adulterated and indeed unethical research methodology has the effect of warping the mind, and constraining the discovery of the truth. Such methodology is never known to solve any practical problem. This sort of unproductive situation is very well reflected in much of the recent book by A.M. Babu (footnoted above). For instance, armed with his good memorization of Marxist predictions, Babu, referring to Africa, simply reechoes: “The advantage of the proletariat over the capitalist class is that they know where they are going” (p.69). He did not care to elaborate, even briefly, on the basis of such an assumption in an aspect that is so fundamental to Marxist revolutionary paradigm. He, like most of his type, seems rather more concerned with the florid ornamentation of Marxism, and not how and in what concrete context socialism (or his Marxism) can have a foothold on the African real world. It is certainly easier for him to keep pretending that the proletariat in Africa know where they are going. Afterall, to investigate that hypothesis may render the basis of his entire sing-song about the inevitability of Marxist revolution in Africa acutely senseless (We will soon do the investigation for Babu and others like him). On our part, we find much of his work to be one of the most boorishly worded outbursts of a master sentimentalist.

But discerning socialists recognize that within the same radical school, there could be other interpretations, explanations and modifications of the component processes and ideas of the pure Marxist ideology. For these truly intellectual socialists, Marxism, as Professor Ali Mazrui once put it, is “basically a source from which we learn, rather than a guru to follow blindly”. It is necessary therefore to infer that Marxist thought can be criticized of having failed to stimulate the expirical studies, or the reflections based upon empirical investigations, that would have advanced the theory of revolutionary change beyond its expression as a very abstract and static principle or model.

The Issue of Peasants’ and Workers’ Revolutionary Consciousness: Marxist Model and the African Reality.

For instance, it is noted that the actual consciousness of peasants and workers could, in real life, and in given circumstances, take diverse forms distinct from the imputed rational consciousness as formulated in the Marxist theory regarding the inescapable conditioning of con-
sciousness by the material conditions of production. In this respect, it is necessary to examine or analyse especially the presence or absence in Nigeria and some other African countries, whether as constituted reality or as historical tendencies, of a revolutionary class that would be so exactly and totally conscious of its “predestined” role to rise and expropriate its expropriators.

Let us first look a little closer at the case of the Nigerian and other African “peasantry”. As we know, socialism, in the Marxist perspective, can only be understood as a product of capitalism. Marx expected that socialism would build on the achievements of capitalism, just as capitalism was said to have built on the contradictions inherent in feudalism. Specifically, the scientific-technological development that had been accelerated under capitalism would be essential in inducing socialist development. If fact, the only way by which Marx could effectively argue his case of historical materialism was to assume the capacity of capitalism to complete its historical course, namely, to erase all traces of pre-modern social formations and cultural idiosyncracies by achieving an accelerated transformation of the means of production. Conventional Marxist class analysis therefore presupposes, as we haw indicated, the existence of a social system in which people are irreversibly caught in contradictory relations and to which there is, for them, no other option but confrontation of a very radical and convulsive nature.

But we hasten to emphasize that, in Nigeria, there is no clearly identifiable class of dispossessed peasantry in the fashion of that which existed, say, in England during the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, those were serfs, bondmen and women with nothing they could call their own, and with not even a notional power of decision over the product of their labour or over their leisure time. In plain language, they were slaves who toiled unremittingly on land appropriated by their lords, and were, for all practical purposes, “owned”, ordered around and used at will for little or no remuneration by their exacting task-masters.

It is true that in some places in Nigeria, there has been a tendency for the new rich, the chiefs and public institutions to alienate land from the farmers by using loans, kick-backs and public funds, as the case may be, to buy off entire rural corporate parcels of land. Such farmers have then invariably resorted to scouting for menial jobs in the towns. If they found such jobs, they were very poorly remunerated.

However, in general, it remains true to say that what Nigeria has are mainly “independent” farmers, not peasants. The institution of cor-
porate landholding and the intricate system whereby individual interest in such land also exists, as well as the difficulty of individual right to the disposal of such land, nevertheless still act to preserve, to a large extent, much of the available rural land for individual farming. Many sociologists will agree, and it is an important point in our analysis, that the nature of human relationships and of roles within these relationships in the later setting contrasts significantly with that in the former, even though the element of exploitation is also clearly evident in the Nigerian situation. Thus, many studies have shown that the problem of the Nigerian farmers is partly that of small land-holdings (fragmentation) which make it difficult, if not impossible, for them to overcome the pre-capitalist mode of production in such a way as to increase productivity and make themselves more attuned to modern scientific-technological agricultural development. As we also know, the structural and cultural roots of this present peculiar farmer’s mode and condition of production in Nigeria are very deep and active. Thus, in spite of the serious neglect of Nigeria’s farmers by officialdom and the indirect exploitation of their labour-power via the capitalist pricing policy which consistently impoverishes them, the forces of the existing traditional institutional foundation which give the rural farmers a false sense of independence of action and a bloated sense of possession in land, also make it improbable, in spite of their full exposure to the scourges of urban and international capitalism that they can ever, on their own, see themselves as a revolutionary class and thereby be in the assumed autonomous position to articulate themselves in a sufficiently revolutionary manner.

The consequent dilemma facing Nigerian and indeed African socialists therefore is that since capitalism or imperialism, following Marxist predictions, has failed to revolutionize the ownership of the means of production, their transition to socialism is, on the other hand and because of inherent cultural and structural patterns not supported by the assumed dynamic forces generated under capitalism or imperialism. These forces include an articulate consciousness of the farmers and workers, adherence to the principles of modern organization, technical know-how, and a general sense of control of the forces of nature.

The first African leader to discern this dilemma was Kwame Nkrumah who, according to Frances Hill, after having failed to obtain the support of Ghana’s independent but suffering small-holder producers, went out of his way to create a new group of producers who would be more dependent upon the government. In 1960, Nkrumah decided that state farms
should become the first priority in agriculture. His regime opted for state farms on the ground that it would help to establish a class system along his socialist thinking. He hoped that that approach would generate a sector of agricultural proletariat who could then be mobilized as a revolutionary class and thereby widen the political and ideological base of his regime.

However, because of hasty planning, the insincerity and corruption of the political and bureaucratic elite, and the lack of skill of most of the agricultural workers, the scheme did not contribute to increased agricultural production. Perhaps if he had tried the co-operative farm system, he would have been more successful.

Also, Goran Hyden's analysis of Tanzania has shown quite clearly the validity of the possible option of the farmers, even under contradictory production relations, to remain indifferent and docile, and to avoid confrontation. Hence, Nyerere, also a socialist visionary, had to intervene, as a matter of ideological process of conditioning, to establish a less amorphous class of farmers and a land-owning system along the lines of his peculiar brand of socialism.

The Tanzanian experiment could have succeeded more that it has so far done, if, according to Michaela von Freyhold, the political authority had been equally imaginative, at the level of implementation, to fully integrate the poor, middle and large-scale farmers into the new communal system, using the instruments of state policy to ensure that each segment participated fully, and that none had a feeling of alienation; if the political authority had supported the democratic structures of the Ujamaa villages against the high-handedness and biases of the bureaucracy, and if it had ensured that the technical staff served the villages loyal and with greater discipline.

As a foretaste of our position in this regard, and in passing, it is recommended in the new social and economic system of our vision that, as a conscious developmental policy, Nigerian farmers should be organized into reasonably large producer and marketing co-operatives on geographical basis. It has been proved from the experiences of many countries such as China, North Vietnam and Tanzania that the potential technical advantages of such communal (socialist) mode of production and exchange are obvious. However, based on the same experiences, we must avoid the pitfalls of imagining that farmers will begin to make use of such advantages simply because they have been brought together. In other words, conscious, proper and deliberate planning and organiza-
tional action must guide the behaviour of the actors (both bureaucratc and farm) engaged in the system, in order to sharpen and sustain their social and political consciousness to appreciate the superiority of collective action over chaotic and ruinous farmer individualism and independence. This critical point has also been duly emphasized by Le Duan in the context of the North Vietnamese revolution. 10

We must however emphasize that we are not talking about co-operatives in the sense in which that concept is being generally regarded in today's Nigeria. As of now, co-operatives are seen as a mere lever to cushion off, to a negligible extent, the harshness of the prevailing debilitating capitalist economic base, and as a propaganda stunt to divert the attention of the wretched of the land from the super-profits which the local and foreign thieving parasites are making from the sweat of the labouring farmers and workers. This accounts for the half-hearted attitude of officialdom to the idea of co-operation, and for the reason why the issue of co-operatives has usually featured only as a mere footnote in the country's Development Plans, after the "real" issues of importance to the capitalist overloads have been dealt with to their satisfaction.

We are rather recommending co-operatives as a major instrument of national social and economic organization, as a weapon of the farmers to wrest the control of the means of production from the indolent few who are holding the nation to ransom. In this sense, the existing pattern of capitalist organization should give way to the co-operative model. Perhaps in order not to continue to labour under the mental imagery of the present, we should rather refer to the proposed units as community farms. As a total system, even the existing River Basin Authorities which, on the whole, have provided more avenues for the upliftment of the elites than agricultural commodities to feed the nation, ought to be subsumed under the proposed community farm system, and the real farmers organized as its bulwark. Alongside the community farms, food processing and marketing enterprises as well as the Commodity Boards would also be established along the same lines. The ownership pattern for the community farms and community processing and marketing enterprises would, in addition to a specified participation ratio by those actively taking part in them, be as appropriate under the proposed shareholding system for Nigeria as specified in my forthcoming book: A New Framework for Development in Nigeria. The National Youth Service would be modified, such that all such services would be rendered only on the nation's community farms. Speaking to reporters during his tour of the former Mid-Western State of Nigeria in 1974, B.K. Binha of
the ILO echoed the same strain when he insisted that the colonial-oriented system of organising co-operatives must be substituted with a modern concept which lays emphasis on mass participation, for the purpose of eliminating chances of exploitation.\textsuperscript{11}

Back to the issue under discussion, it can be seen therefore that, as regards Nigeria’s farmers, in given circumstances, the capacity of capitalism to complete its historical course, relying solely on its own internal contradictory production relations, cannot be reasonably assumed.

Also in Nigeria, while there is a working class, there is no revolutionary working class, and the likelihood that such a class will ever emerge, on its own, for many decades to come and in the strict functional or even historical sense seems very remote. In this connection, let us complete our illustration, using the case of Nigeria’s dependent workers. Several reasons account for the lack of these dependent workers’ revolutionary consciousness in the face of the contradictions in the capitalist or imperialist mode and condition of production.

One such reason is the question of tribal loyalties and rivalries. Although some commentators may argue that tribal loyalties and rivalries will be reduced with the enthronement of equal opportunities and even development, yet it is pertinent to state that the existing perverse capitalist mode of production and exchange which it is the intention of socialist strategy to overthrow, can hardly ever be expected to bring about a satisfactory measure of equal opportunity that would assign the control of the means of production to the working class. These existing obnoxious production relations will inherently rather continue to exacerbate tribal rivalries. In this situation, there is no hope for many several decades to come that there can emerge an autonomous and self-propelled revolutionary class of workers of the multifarious ethnic groups which, on a national plane, rather engage in chicanery, murderous intrigues and invective propaganda that are so clandestinely and yet so ferociously conducted against one another in the bid of each group to achieve ascendancy in the capitalist-oriented political and economic spheres of the nation’s life. Indeed, the intemperateness and the gusto with which these paranoiac attributes are exuded by the majority of the illiterate and the highly educated and otherwise sophisticated workers alike, have often threatened and still threaten the existence of the “geographical expression” called Nigeria as a corporate entity. For instance, it is certainly tribalism that principally contributes to make it a herculean task for Nigeria’s Labour Movement to muster enough
coherence to launch itself as a revolutionary Labour Party. It is mainly tribalism that constantly and rapidly wears off the potency of Nigeria’s intellectuals as torch-bearers of a new vision of society. The majority of them, among whom are even the most vocal classroom or textbook Marxists, are so debased, barbaric and despicable in the way they ensure the elimination of others whom they regard as threats to their quest for clannish hegemony at the institutions of higher learning. A Nigerian intellectual recently vehemently argued that tribalism was so “good” for him that it was only when he was outside Nigeria that it was ever necessary to be identified as a Nigerian. As for the students, apart from the famous Defence Pact demonstrations of the early sixties, every other of their incessant demonstrations and boycotts of classes has invariably had a bread and butter component to it. They are hardly ever, with an irrevocable sense of mission, concerned with the fundamental problems, especially those of poverty, besetting this country. Even in the greatest robbery of the nation during the Second Republic (1979-83), they were too hopelessly divided among themselves to be able to initiate any concrete action towards the redemption of their fatherland. As long as they were given fatter bursaries and fed well, they forgot the proletariat and the farmers, and settled for polemics in the mass media. In this respect, Nigeria is, de facto, a nation of nations where, when it comes to the crunch and in the final analysis, the suffering worker still finds himself clinging tenaciously to the survival of “his own person”. His own person may be among the ruling and thieving bourgeoisie who, together with the imperialists, plunder the nation and keep the poor majority living on the fringe of the new zones of prosperity.

The other reason is the issue of the persisting extended family system, a system in which any ominous capitalist around one’s home constituency is regarded as one’s kin from whom one expects to receive some handouts. The continued existence of this phenomenon is fuelled by the same existing perverse capitalist and paternalistic economic system. The extended family system works in the fashion of tribal loyalties, but in a somewhat more microcosmic context. However, its effects on the total national life are sufficiently conspicuous. This is because any threat to the capitalist octopus is reacted upon by the wretched, lowly and battered people around him as a threat to them. They do not see that by removing him their condition would be any better. They are invariably prepared to rise in his defence, even against fellow proletariat. For instance, had the military not intervened in Nigeria each time the politicians and their cohorts plundered the wealth of the country and left the economy totter-
ing, the workers and farmers (including the intellectuals and students) would still be found merely seeking to keep body and soul together by scrounging around the nearest new rich for crumbs. Our workers and farmers would rather work as thugs and political song-birds for such son-of-the-soil politicians than come together, on the basis of a common economic interest, to dislodge their expropriators. All this has happened all too often to become a barometer for gauging the level of consciousness of Nigerian workers and farmers.

The third factor is the military. There now exists a pattern or tradition of military interventions in the politics of African nations, including Nigeria. From several experiences so far, military interventions can have varying ideological colourations. There have been the reactionary ones that tend to support, continue with or reinstate the degenerate status quo; there are others that are merely reformist. These tend to have a firefighting reaction to serious deviations from the norms of “welfare” which they expect the existing system to introduce. They do not have enough vision to critically look at the system itself. There are of course a few that attempt a revolutionary change of the existing system.

Based on the above, it is therefore uncertain that the military, with their firing power, will support or sustain any insurrection of the workers. For example, while it is true that Murtala Muhammed, a military Head of the Nigerian Government, intervened in 1975 on the side of the long-suffering poor masses, it is equally true that the degenerate, ultra-conservative and arbitrary regime that he overthrew was also military. The people have no means to counter the destructive weaponry of the Nigerian military, if it chooses to descend upon them. This situation certainly continues to circumscribe the already fossilised consciousness of the defenceless Nigerian proletariat, and instils in them a greater sense of resignation to their increasingly dehumanizing condition.

The above are among the factors which Karl Marx did not and perhaps could not address himself to for Nigeria in expounding his theory of the inevitable rational revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat in the face of the increasing contradictions in the material conditions of production. So that in Nigeria, and indeed in Africa, we are profoundly dealing with an increasing size of the “proletariat” without the assumed unity and power, and therefore with a diverse form of workers’ consciousness which, though it can be fully sensed in the general disenchantment of the impoverished majority with the prevailing naked, shameless, direct and brutal exploitation, does not possess, in any way,
the slightest attributes that could enable it to articulate itself in anything like a revolutionary movement as envisaged by Marxist theory.

It may still be argued by diehard Marxists that Marx did foresee that the organization of the workers into a class and consequently into a political party would not proceed smoothly, without being upset from time to time by the competition and rivalry among the workers themselves, and that therefore the situation described by us denotes that the Nigerian proletariat is yet simply in its infancy, in other words, that it will some day grow and become revolutionary in outlook. In answer, we firstly reiterate the great uncertainty about the reaction of the military to any insurrection of the workers, especially in the following form in which Marx lays down the pattern of their confrontation with their oppressors. “They (the workers) direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves, they destroy imported wares that compete with their labour, they smash machinery to pieces, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workmen.”

Will the local military at such a time see such actions (with the eyes of the bourgeoisie) as wanton vandalism of “disgruntled elements”, or will it itself possess sufficient revolutionary instinct that would lead it to back up the impending revolution? As long as people are flesh and blood, these are decisive questions. At least, from their cognitive profile, Nigerians, especially those who have seen war, indicate that these are decisive questions. Besides, also in this regard, one new thought-provoking dimension enters into the calculation of the level of readiness of Nigerian workers for a single-handed revolutionary onslaught against the bourgeoisie. It has to do with the new setting of international politics, namely, the possibility that the imperialist powers, faced with the demolition of their economic hegemony over a peripheral Third World country, may have no qualms militarily backing up the internal ruling oligarchs (especially if the local military is on their side) towards the obliteration of any large-scale insurrection, even to the point of waging a genocidal war against the mass of insufficiently armed and hungry working people. When the imperialists did it in Biafra, in a somewhat different context, the fact of the Biafrans, for three harrowing years, fighting gallantly and with a full consciousness for a cause they believed to be a just one, did not stop them from being militarily and brutally subjugated through the instrumentality of the immense firing power of the British and American imperialists, while those other powers that the Biafrans thought were their revolutionary allies, callously left them in the
lurch. Thus might became right, so to speak. What is important to note in connection with this discussion is that the imperialists intensified their strategy of decimating the Biafrans after the promulgation of the now famous “Ahiara Declaration” which had a clearly socialist flavour and which set the imperialists wondering about the safety of their investments and their control of the oil wells in the Delta and other areas of Biafra. Another classic case was what the Congolese people wanted to do in 1960, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) powers ganged up, murdered Patrice Lumumba, leader of the revolution, and set up the puppet government of Mobutu. On two occasions, NATO has had to intervene to save their marionette.

We know therefore that the configuration of imperialism, dependency and underdevelopment necessarily sets the stage for and equally justifies a socialist revolution whether or not local capitalism is autonomously mature. This is perhaps part of what Lenin meant when he wrote that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. However, he very much missed the issue of the role of the military in the context of the savagery that could be inflicted upon poorly equipped local hungry workmen and their wives and children by the fearsome arsenals of modern military hardware, including bacteriological and chemical warfare. In fact, Lenin specifically said that he was “not able to deal with non-economic aspects of the question.”13 Such a standpoint does not, in our opinion, indicate completeness of perspective nor any other thing other than sentimentality and utopian messianism on his part. This leads us to state that, in modern times, in one categorical success story of socialist revolution in a Third World country, Cuba, that country’s military outfit was and has been the anvil upon which Cuba’s revolution rested. The Cuban military has been in the forefront of the struggle to sustain the people’s faith in themselves which, in turn, is the precondition for firing the people’s revolutionary zeal. *In modern times, a revolutionary zeal cannot be fired or sufficiently fired in a military vacuum.* Perhaps we are here talking to the Nigerian military in parables! As we noted, these questions, these new complexities already act and will continue to act to dilute and weaken the force of any little revolutionary consciousness of the Nigerian workers.

Secondly, going through the account by Marx and Lenin of the actions and reactions of the bourgeoisie in the scheme of events leading to a people’s revolution, while they foresaw that the bourgeoisie, out of their “enormous super-profits” could overtly or covertly “bribe the labour leaders and the upper stratum of labour aristocracy”,14 it is clear that
they did not foresee that the modern bourgeoise, *having learnt some lessons from Marxist predictions themselves*, would become more treacherous and sneaky in the art of exploitation. There is now their heavy propaganda machinery which is aimed at subtly “educating” and indoctrinating the workers and farmers, and so designed to confuse them as to where indeed their interest lies. They (the bourgeoise) do not stop at that. They also dangle the so-called *welfare state* before the impoverished masses, and to this end, they dish out handouts to them in the form of bonuses, shorter hours of work, over-time and other allowances, some free medical attention, paid leave of absence, etc. which they (the bourgeoise) pay out of their super-profits, while they still, more than ever before, control the commanding heights of the economy through the instrumentality of the capitalist state. However, these more canny and subtle methods have had the effect of bamboozling and confusing the workers and farmers, and setting the more discerning ones against the naive and less ingenious.

Based on informed observation, it can be said that an overwhelming number of Nigerian workers and farmers are grossly ignorant and uniformed about what socialism really is and what it can do for them. They have been victims of the vile propaganda and the vicious tactical manoeuvres by Nigeria’s thieving parasites. In addition to the crumbs that these parasites throw down at the poor, the unfortunate atheistic character of “scientific” socialism and a bloated version of the story of repression of individual liberties during the formative years of Stalinist regime in Russia, have been deviously used by the forces of imperialist exploitation to misrepresent the ideal of socialist development, and thereby to cover their own atrocities that cry to the high heavens for vengeance. Must Africa’s over-zealous and imitative “scientific” socialists continue, unchallenged, to chant certain unrealistic Marxist choruses in the face of such debilitating psychological debacle, while their peoples lose everything but their chains? We think not! Hence, socialism must begin not only to be blandly, adroitly and more intelligently advocated, it must also begin to be made to appear to be workable and acceptable, taking into account what is good in the cultural and religious susceptibilities of the people, as well as the inhibiting structural problems.

Thirdly, there is the point that because of a combination of the above and other factors, the period of infancy of the Nigerian “proletariat” in a sense, is almost in reverse. In the case of the workers, for instance, some of them are now older than some of their employers.
outlook, may in fact be prolonged to doomsday. For Nigerians to wait for the kind of workers' revolutionary consciousness of the Marxist model to kindle and practicalize itself on its own would therefore amount to "revolutionary, utopian messianism" which would in fact be in the interest of the bourgeoisie and their imperialist accomplices. This illustrates how unrealistic, sentimental and uninquiring our African adherent of pure Marxism really are.

As we know, the Russian Revolution showed how a small revolutionary party, armed with the real essence of socialist thought, could effectively intervene and change the course of events in that country. Also, the failure of the working class in Western Europe to develop a revolutionary outlook, both in the immediate post-World War period and in the 1930s, teaches the same lesson, namely, that a revolutionary consciousness embodied in an activist but specific interpretation of socialism, had to be brought to the working class from outside it. Even the growth of the Nazi and Fascist Movements, and the ineffectiveness of working class resistance to them, seems to confirm the view that it is erroneous to set apriori the spontaneous development of a Marxist outlook in the working class.

The argument has been proffered that consciousness should be assessed not by a routinized method, but when the masses are "in a movement". Such movements, it is claimed, can be identified, for instance, when workers or students are on strike and go on rampage, destroying properties and manhandling their bosses who for them represent the Establishment. However, as we know, social science research methodology usually seeks to establish regularities of essential social ingredients or constants in order to be able to predict, with reasonable likelihood of certainty, the future course of events. In this regard, the question arises as to what has usually been the outcome of such sporadic "movements". We may start with the experience of Western Europe, the birthplace of the Marxist idea. We know from history that Western Europe was for many centuries a hot-bed of uprising, notably peasant revolts. Yet, as we have noted, the working and peasant classes, in spite of such sporadic "movements", failed to develop a sufficiently revolutionary outlook. Up till today, they are still enveloped by Capitalism, notwithstanding that even Marx himself helped to organize and radicalize workers in such places as Brussels and Zurich. In Eastern Europe as well as in a few African countries like Ethiopia and Tanzania, we already noted that it was not the masses, but rather small revolutionary groups which effected revolutionary changes in the countries that now practise one type
of socialism or the other. Also in Latin America, the spate of insurrections and uprisings of so-called dissident groups has for many decades not produced any likelihood of a permanent revolution. Here in Nigeria, not only have such sporadic rampages been conducted on the basis of specific demands and not for the purpose of changing the system, they have also usually been quickly quelled even by the Police.

In other words, based on historical experiences, it is safe to say that such sporadic "movements" have hardly been known to offer any enduring solution to the problem of a radical social transformation.

**Conclusion.**

We now can see that socialist development in Nigeria, and indeed in Africa, while desirable, requires elements which the Marxist models do not contain. Above all, it requires **consciously creating** the conditions for the articulation of class power in ways that the farmers’ and workers’ modes and circumstances now forbid. The transition from capitalism, therefore, is not an automatic process. There is no trace of inevitability in Marx’s concept of the final process, since it is impossible without the autonomous actions of men. Although Marx states in *Capital* that “capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of nature, its own negation”, we have attempted to show that these inexorable forces which govern the development of capitalism do not apply to the transformation to socialism, at least not in Nigeria. These laws only prescribe certain types of action. Whether these laws will be translated into social action, depends on the willingness and ability of men to take history in their own hands. It is in this important respect that the conventional Marxist paradigm has to be transcended in the study of Nigeria and indeed Africa. Therefore the complaint that the working class has not been given a chance in Nigeria and that it has been prevented from **ruling** the country is in fact an indirect acknowledgement by our protagonists of Marxism that they themselves have **lost faith** in the Marxist prediction of the inevitable revolution of the working class.

For Marx did not expect that the bourgeoisie or any other group would simply give the working people a chance to rule; they (the workers and "peasants") themselves, according to him, are to rise on their own and expropriate their exproprietors. What we are therefore saying is that, because of inherent cultural and structural impediments, this is not likely to happen in Nigeria. So, we must devise other ways of bringing about the desired social change.
Thus, the treatment of Africa by many Marxists resembles the dilemma which faced the French rationalists in the eighteenth century who, according to Znaniecki, were aware of the problems of irrationality in cultural life, but would not study them, lest the ideal of a perfectly rational new social order be thereby endangered, and they, having no other things to say, would be exposed as merely disputatious and lacking the spirit of intellectual enquiry.

This is why, like Otto Bauer, we prefer to see social revolution largely as a process of social reorganization, as long as it affects profoundly fundamental restructuring of the economic relationships among social classes. It is also because of our understanding of the superficiality and placidity of working class consciousness and the ever growing uncertainty about its future revolutionary development in Nigeria that we deem it more realistic to rest our expectation of an "age of socialist revolution" in Nigeria on an ideological primary group (preferably a civilian revolutionary Government backed up as a matter of necessity by a revolutionary military, or a thoroughly revolutionary military Government alone) that can consciously and effectively act upon the degenerate Nigerian economic and political scene and infuse socialist revolution from outside the working class, as it were. In this situation, their attacks would be directed not against the instruments of production themselves, but against the bourgeois conditions of production (the reverse of Marxist pattern of confrontation).

However much people who are irretrievably brainwashed by the "democratic" syndrome of the West may, in line with Plato's theory, regard every military rule as an "aberration", it is our calculation that it is only an intensely involved revolutionary military Government or a revolutionary stand-by military that can help to induce, sustain and guarantee a successful socialist revolution in Nigeria. The present and future configuration of local and international politics and economics, the rapid developments in the modern means of warfare and the subtle aggressivity of modern imperialism may dictate no other option. As Tanon Bali has rightly stressed, "circumstances justify the type of Government a nation shoukd have:" What is important to emphasize is that if we must have a military Government, it should be a completely revolutionary military government irrevocably sworn to the realization of the supremacy of the poor majority. As the following lines from Dare Babarinsa aptly illustrate, it is now historically validated that such a military government is within the realm of reality.

"We shall tell our grandchildren and our grandchildren shall
tell their grandchildren that there was once a man, called Murtala Muhammed, who was the miracle of our age, who gave us pride, hope and fulfilment, who proved to us that good government is not only desirable, but also possible.”

The same was true of the regime of General Velasco Alvarado of Peru who in 1969 ousted the elected President Belaunde Terry, a thoroughly corrupt and tyrannical capitalist stooge. Alvarado worked with great zeal and dedication to end his country’s subservience to foreign interests and to the stranglehold on the economy of the 200 notorious and affluent Peruvian families. It is instructive that a usually right-wing influential Swiss newspaper \textit{(Die Weltwoche)} even found itself constrained to hail Velasco Alvarado as “a General with heart for the poor.”

We are however leaving the other option open, hence we are also dealing, in my above-mentioned forthcoming book, with Trade Unionism \textit{for the Nigerian society}.

The need for the application of local inventiveness, however modest, in the continuing search for a \textit{structure of social organization} in the context of a true socialist life of man \textit{within his environment}, is therefore what we have set ourselves to attempt to satisfy for Nigeria. As T.B. Bottomore asserts, “it seems more plausible to say that it is socialism, in its diverse forms, rather than Marxism as a total philosophy, which has carried within itself, up to now, the elements of a new civilization.”
REFERENCES

1. One of the latest polemical materials in the arsenal of these protagonists of "scientific" socialism for Africa is *African Socialism or Socialist Africa* by Abdul R.M. Babu, Zed Press, London, 1983 (first reprint).

2. See, for example, K. Voriander, *Kant und der Sozialismus*. Berlin, 1900.


4. See T.O. Elias, *The Nature of African Customary Law*, Manchester University Press, 2nd imp. 1962, pp. 162-168. Elias categorically states: "... the landholding recognized by African customary law is neither 'communal' holding nor 'ownership' (in the strict English sense of the term). The term 'corporate' would be an apter description..., since the relation between the group and the land is invariably complex in that the rights of the individual members often co-exist with those of the group in the same parcel of land" (pp. 164).

It is instructive that this situation has practically remained generally valid, not withstanding the 1978 *Land Use Decree* which in Part 1, Section 1 vests all land comprised in the territory of each state in the Governor, to be held in trust and administered for the use and common benefit of all Nigerians.


On the need to break peasant farmers’ control and management of their means of production, in order to apply peasant production to the requirements of industrial capital formation and socialist development planning, see also Gavin Williams, “Taking the Part of Peasants: Rural Development in Nigeria and Tanzania”, in P.C.W. Gutkind and Immanuel Wallerstein (eds.), *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1976, p. 148.


14. V.I. Lenin, Ibid., p 9. It is noted that this state of affairs has been largely responsible for the chequered history of socialism and rampant in-fighting of the Nigerian Labour Movement since its inception. It was also generally suspected that the phoney labour leaders who tried to split the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) in 1983 in collusion with some fraudulent federal legislators, were allegedly bribed into such tactics in order to destroy the coherence and strength of the labour class.
