

The Crisis of Underdevelopment and the Transition to Civil Rule: Conceptualising the Question of Democracy in Nigeria

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RÉSUMÉ. - Cet article traite des problèmes de la démocratie en Afrique en mettant un accent tout particulier sur le programme de transition mis en oeuvre par le régime militaire actuel du Nigéria. Les différents modes d'accumulation entravent le développement de la politique démocratique dans la mesure où ils encouragent l'autoritarisme, les abus politiques, le clientélisme. L'Etat post-colonial a pour projet historique de créer dans le cadre du marché mondial une bourgeoisie nationale à partir de ces méthodes d'accumulation du capital qui sont limitatives sur le plan politique. Le programme d'ajustement structurel tente de mettre un frein à ces méthodes d'accumulation surannées et laisse les forces du marché régner sur l'économie politique. Par ailleurs cette mesure s'est accompagnée d'un programme de transition très compliqué sur le plan politique. Quant au programme d'ajustement structurel, il porte davantage sur le maintien de l'ordre politique et la construction d'une base politique pour assurer le succès de l'exécution de ce programme que sur la question démocratique. Pour l'auteur, il s'agit là d'un nouveau type d'autoritarisme puisqu'il combine les anciennes méthodes de contrôle et les nouvelles exigences d'un ordre social désormais chancelant sous-tendu par les forces du marché. Avec ce nouveau type d'autoritarisme la scène politique se retrécit, l'organisation des forces populaires susceptibles de contrecarrer le programme d'ajustement devient impuissante et une situation propice à l'émergence de nouvelles forces dans les rangs de la bourgeoisie et à l'apparition d'élites prêtes à soutenir le programme est créée. Il revient désormais aux forces populaires opprimées de lutter pour l'instauration de la démocratie. Or le traitement correct de la question démocratique passe nécessairement par l'intégration de la démocratie libérale au projet de démocratie populaire.

Introduction

Conceptualising the question of democracy has not been a serious academic practice in political science research in Africa. Political scientists have been more preoccupied with the problems of federalism, civil-military relations, party systems and the dynamics of underdevelopment. Even during debates on transition to civil rule the focus tends to be on the political engineering of stability, checking the intrusion of the military into politics and analysing the forms of liberal/authoritarian party systems. There is pessimism about the practicability of nurturing a democratic culture in peripheral social formations. Such pessimism is largely derived from the euro-centric standards of mainstream democratic theory and the mechanistic assumptions of the modernisation and dependency perspectives.

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I argue that the problematic of democracy has to be located within the broad framework of the specific, interlocking characteristic of business activities in the system of accumulation, and the modes of social and political behaviour such characteristics generate among the contending. Three of the four main characteristics (monopolistic production, the primitive accumulation of capital and petty commodity activities) encourage the growth of authoritarian values, political malpractices and patron-client relations. They also promote unequal development and the attendant problems of regionalism and nationality struggles which the national bourgeoisie coopts into its class project.

The primary objective of the post colonial State is the creation of a national bourgeoisie within the context of the world market, allowing the use of fundamentally corrupt and undemocratic practices in its evolution. The structural adjustment programme is attempting to check some of these methods of accumulation and enthroning market forces in the political economy. I argue that this project is premature. The advantages derived by the national bourgeoisie in the use of monopolistic and primitive methods of business activities have not yet been exhausted. The transition programme in Nigeria is, therefore, more concerned about political order and laying the political foundations - *a new authoritarianism* - for the successful implementation of the structural adjustment programme than with the development of democracy. The struggle for the construction of democracy has, instead, fallow on the shoulders of the oppressed, popular forces. But a correct handling of the democratic question requires the integration of liberal democracy into the popular democratic project.

Underdevelopment, Dictatorship and Democracy: Theoretical Issues

The substance of democracy, liberal or popular, has eluded most countries of the Third World. A dominant view is that a certain level of economic development is required before the question of democracy can be properly posed and resolved. Modernisation theorists relate the persistence of authoritarian behaviour with the resilience of traditional values¹. Instability, in the words of one of such theorists, becomes inevitable in the evolution of the modern African political systems. Not surprisingly, growth theorists in neoclassical development economics, following the footsteps of the former, place considerable emphasis on the technical issues of development as preconditions for democracy².

Such perspectives have largely informed the economic strategies of the western powers and their transnationals in the developing countries, even

1 See the reviews by Mamdani, M. et al, Social Movements, Social Transformation and the struggles for Democracy in Africa: A research Proposal (CODESRIA; Dakar) 1988; Ake, C., Social Science as Imperialism (Ibadan University Press) 1979.

2 Rostow, W.W., The stages of economic growth: a non-communist manifesto (OUP) 1971. (ed) The economics of take off into sustained growth: Proceedings of a conference held by the I.E.A., (London, Macmillan 1964).

though the political underpinnings of the model negates the liberal democratic ideals of the advanced market economies. Although some success has been attained, in growth terms, in some developing countries - often under very authoritarian conditions - most of the other LDCs, especially those in Africa, have not experienced much development. And yet, the problems of dictatorship persist. It is, as some commentators put it, a double tragedy for African people.

If the modernisation theorists have not been effective in posing the question of democracy in the context of development, their strongest critics, underdevelopment and dependency theorists, have not performed better either. Dependency theorists are, by and large, the flip of the modernisation theorists on the question of democracy. Their main preoccupation has been to expose the pitfalls of modernisation theory by emphasising the external constraints on Third World development. They, like their opponents, are concerned about the structural-economic issues of development¹.

Stressing the case for the disengagement from the world market as a precondition for self-reliant growth, the dependency thesis calls for a strong and purposeful national leadership capable of exercising independent decisions in the international system. Even though it is sceptical about the role of the national bourgeoisie in promoting such development, and tends to support the opposing, popular, class forces, the theory provides very little scope for the analysis of such democratic popular participation. It relies, instead, on either some form of voluntarism towards socialism or on strengthening the existing ruling classes so that they can be made to be more honest, independent and patriotic. Advocates of the theory invariably end up as advisers to policy makers that pay lip service to self-reliant development. Left-wing military regimes turn out to be good platforms for such scholars and activists².

Some of the fundamental questions of democracy are often sacrificed on the altar of national self reliance. There is, in fact, a complete disdain for liberal democracy, seen primarily as a bourgeois project which socialists should have nothing to do with³, and a strong sympathy for the one party State, charismatic leadership and bureaucratism. Many of the progressive one party regimes in Africa such as those in Tanzania, Zambia and Ghana (under Nkrumah) draw part of their inspiration from this perspective.

1 See, for instance, Palmer, G., *Dependency: A formal theory of underdevelopment or a methodology for the analysis of concrete situations of underdevelopment*, *World Development*, Vol. 6, 1978; Phillips, A., *The Concept of Development*, *Review of African Political Economy*, N 8, Jan-Feb. 1977.

2 Beckmar, B., *The military as revolutionary vanguard; A critique*. *Review of African Political Economy*, N 37, 1986.

3 Ibrahim, J., *The struggle for democracy in Nigeria*, *Review of African Political Economy*, N 37, 1986.

Both the modernisation and dependency schools offer limited insights into the study of democracy in the developing countries. They do not account for the peculiarities of the modes of accumulation of the LDCs as determinants of the prevalence of the repressive/authoritarian culture and the character of the social forces that have the capacity to struggle for and introduce a new democratic political system.

Western theorists of democracy emphasise the role of the individual, an industrial bourgeoisie, a market economy and a culture of compromise and pluralism as prerequisites for the evolution of democracy¹. Some of the authors insist on an optimal level of popular participation, which does not require majority participation, if the system should not be overloaded and unstable². Dahl argues that the small group of individuals that takes decisions is relatively responsive to the apathetic majority through the electoral process³. Popper, in fact, is so worried about the rule of the majority that he believes the classical question on democratic theory ("Who Should ru-le?") should be substituted with a more practical question; "How is the State to be constituted so that bad rulers can be got rid off without bloodshed, without violence?" This, in practical terms, means enthroning the rule of law over the rule of the majority⁴.

Can democracy be attained in the peripheral formations of Africa? What social forces can sustain such struggles for democracy? What type of democracy are popular forces, in fact, advocating? Under what conditions can their democratic objectives be achieved? What accounts for the persistence of dictatorship?

An analysis of the problems of democracy should take into account the inter-connections of the objective and subjective factors in development⁵. The objective factors - the structure of the economy - establish the parameters for what is possible at particular historical conjunctures; and the subjective factors - the forms and levels of organisations of the people, their values, culture and ideologies - provide the basis for altering the parameters and for posing new questions, strategies and solutions.

The structures of peripheral economies exhibit four important behavioural characteristics in the accumulation of capital viz, transnational and, to some extent, national monopolistic practices which developed in the colonial period through the imperial trading companies and were transformed into import substitution industrial activities in the post colonial period. Such companies extract surplus value from the exploitation of wage labour under monopolistic/oligopolistic conditions. The second characteristic is that of the primitive accumulation of capital. In the Marxian tradition, this is the process of transforming the precapitalist, small scale peasant/artisan economies into

1 Patemar, C., *Participation and Democratic Theory* (CUP) 1970.

2 Ibid. pp. 1-21.

3 Dahl, R. *Preface to Democratic Theory* (Univ. of Chicago Press) 1956.

4 Popper, K., On Democracy, *Democrat Weekly* 2nd and 3rd May 1988.

5 Mamdani, M. et al, "Social Movements..." *Op.cit.*

modern capitalist enterprises. This process involves the physical separation of the small scale producers from their means of production and their conversion into wage workers; the looting of State and church property by the rising industrial class; the conquest of foreign lands, particularly Africa, Australia, North and South America and the establishment of unequal exchange between these regions and western Europe. Toyo and Iyayi have reconceptualised the character of primitive accumulation of capital to take account of the contemporary Nigerian situation¹. These include the benefits of compradoring, State operations, unequal exchange, the appropriation and valorisation of land contract inflation and the use of bureaucratic positions for corrupt enrichment.

Ibrahim has shown how such methods were perfected by the National Party of Nigeria in the politics of the Second Republic².

The third characteristic of accumulation is that of simple commodity production - employed mainly by the peasantry, small scale artisans and craftsmen. It exhibits a strong dose of patron-client relations vis-à-vis the dominant socio-economic forces in the society. Extra-economic forms of control are common in such systems. Unlike in western Europe where the development of the capitalist mode of production was rapidly established, simple commodity producers have persisted in the evolution of the modern African economies.

Fourthly is the development of competitive industries, mainly local medium-scale manufacturing enterprises, nurtured from the wombs of party commodity production and the impact of the transnational monopolies on the indigeneous economy. The space for such market competition is, of course, quite limited, since such firms occupy a subordinate position to the industrial monopolies.

The major project of the post colonial State is the creation of a national bourgeoisie within the context of transnational capitalism. The evolution of such a class takes place within the broad parameters of the articulation of the four characteristics of capital accumulation outlined above. Undoubtedly, the first three are not conducive for the establishment of liberal democracy. Whereas the fourth is too weak to assert itself in the political economy. Monopolistic practices block new entrants into the market, withhold information and useful scientific knowledge to the public, create artificial scarcities and establish unreasonable profits. Non-democratic methods, usually bordering on mafia operations, are employed at the political level either to frighten and eliminate opponents or to get State functionaries to accede to the demands of the monopolies.

1 Toyo, E., Neocolonialism, primitive accumulation and third world orientations, *Nigerian Journal of Political Science* vol. 4, N 1 and 2 1985; Iyayi, F. The primitive accumulation of capital in a neocolony; Nigeria, *RONPE* 35, 1986.

2 Ibrahim, J., "From the primitive accumulation of capital to the primitive acquisition of power (mimeo) Zaria, 1988.

The methods of the primitive accumulation of capital are equally barbaric and authoritarian. There is no respect for rules and regulations, democratic procedures and the views and interests of opponents. Politics becomes a 'life and death' affair. Those engaged in it are not predisposed towards entrusting responsibility to other groups of individuals for the administration of State power, but are themselves interested in the administration of such power. Political power, its acquisition and the struggle for its control, is tied up with the primitive accumulation of capital¹. The methods of appropriation in the informal sector do not make for democracy either. There are all sorts of patron-client relations and coercive methods of work and social behaviour in this sector. The full weight of tradition hangs like an albatross on the necks of the social actors. Being subordinate to the other modes of surplus appropriation, the modern undemocratic methods of organizing business are brought to bear on the social and political practices of the actors in petty commodity production.

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the bourgeoisie emerging from such an environment, has not been able to put the question of democracy on the agenda of national politics. Its primary objective is to establish the conditions for its acquisition of property and evolution as a modern class. Liberal democracy respects the rule of law, democratic procedures and some level of accountability; it also concedes certain political rights to the oppressed social groups and classes. But the aspiring national bourgeoisie feels such groups and classes ought to be dispossessed, reconditioned and reoriented before the basis for order and democracy can be established. Fractions of the bourgeoisie can, of course, advocate for democracy if they are at a disadvantaged position; and there could even be attempts to control the predatory character of the politics of primitive accumulation in order to prevent a collapse of the political economy itself. The National Party of Nigeria's federal character principles on post charing should be seen in this light². At bottom, however, the national bourgeoisie is concerned with the economics of accumulation and the politics of control. This is the case whether we are dealing with a single or multi party system, civil or military rule, or presidential and parliamentary forms of government.

The character of the economies of the neocolonies and the post colonial project of the national leaders create further problems for democracy: that of the unequal development of regions, States, nationalities and religions. The race for accumulation is no respecter of poverty and inequalities. In fact, it recreates and deepens them. National inequalities mediate the class factor and blunt the exposure of the predatory values of the bourgeoisie. Since national inequalities and ethnic affinities tend to be quite strong and are easily

1 Ibrahim, J. *Ibid*; Bangura, Y. Crisis in Sierra Leone and Nigeria: A comparative study, conference paper, Nigeria: Economy and society since the Berlin conference; FASS, A.B.U. 1985.

2 Ibrahim, J., "From the primitive accumulation of capital..." *op.cit*; Mustapha, R., The National Question and Radical Politics in Nigeria, *Review of African Political Economy* N 37, 1986.

recognisable by the broad mass of the people, the dominant social classes incorporate these inequalities into their class projects, further worsening the culture of intolerance, authoritarianism and prejudices. Undemocratic practices by members of the upper strata of the various nationalities are either ignored or covered up by their respective nationalities. A network of patron-client relations is established by the leaders of the various nationalities with limited commitment to the problems of the poorer members of the group.

Instead the patronage structures are mainly used to strengthen the bargaining position of the elites in the "sharing of the national cake". It weakens the flowering of liberal democracy and the struggles of the popular forces for national democracy.

Democracy and Authoritarian Rule in Nigeria: Empirical Issues

The fundamental concerns of the elites during decolonisation were to step into the shoes of the colonialists. Although this group of people was clearly a minority, it was organised enough to play a leading role in the transition to independence. The colonial authorities recognise the group's weakness and, for a while, refused to relate with it, preferring instead the more traditional, conservative authorities¹. The petit-bourgeoisie had to widen its national constituency and political programme to include the interests of the working class, students, market women, peasants, small scale artisans and the unemployed². Such interests were to be guaranteed within a liberal democratic setting in countries where the colonial authorities were really to concede the principle of independence to the nationalists; and within a popular democratic platform in countries where the colonialists were intransigent and the nationalist had to wrest political power from them by means of armed struggle.

In the Nigerian case, the alliance between the colonialists and the leading nationalists, in 1952, for the ultimate transfer of power to the latter, soured the death knell of the liberal democratic experiment. The more power was transferred to the elites, the less prepared they were to uphold the liberal democracy they had advocated in the 1940s and early 1950s. The major project was the laying of the foundations for the emergence of a national bourgeoisie³.

The 'late colonial' State worked out several strategies for the realisation of this project: a) assisting the development of foreign capital and encouraging it to shift from commerce to import substitution industrialisation; b) promoting limited indigenisation in such companies, particularly in the employment of Nigerians; c) proclaiming an open door policy for the movement of goods, services and capital between Nigeria and the rest of the world; d) regionalising the key foreign exchange earning commodity boards which were ultimately used by the leading petit-bourgeoisie in the three regions in the accumulation

1 Nordman, C., 'Prelude to Decolonisation', (D. Phil, Oxford University Thesis, 1979).

2 Adebisi, N., Social groups in the National Colonial Movement in British West Africa, Research proposal for the project on Social Movements, CODESRIA, 1988.

3 Osoba, S., The deepening crisis of the Nigerian national bourgeoisie, *Review of African Political Economy* N 13, 1978.

of capital; e) the floating of parastatals to assist the development of the nascent entrepreneurs; f) promoting African commerce at the lower and middle levels of business.

The realisation of those strategies called for the regionalisation of the country, with the three dominant parties, the Northern Peoples Congress, Action group and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens having, or seeking to have complete control of their respective regions. Competing political parties were ruthlessly suppressed by the leading parties in their respective regions. There was fierce competition among the Big Three for the control of federal power and the subordination of the other social forces that had participated as partners in the decolonisation process. Even though the Richards and Littleton constitutions paid lip service to some form of liberal democracy, the State authorities and the petit-bourgeoisie failed to evolve sound structures for the practice of democratic politics at independence.

The struggle for the control of national resources and the ultimate development of a national bourgeoisie continued at independence, even though the independence constitution was well dressed with liberal-democratic values such as the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, human rights, free speech, free and fair elections and representative and responsible government. The seeds of the authoritarian culture, planted at decolonisation, matured at independence. The struggle for power intensified, often at the expense of the provisions of the liberal democratic ideals of the constitution. Left forces, unions and other popular organisations were incapable of checking the drift towards dictatorship¹. The various political parties coalesced into two factions, the United Progressive Grand Alliance and the Nigerian National Alliance, each preoccupied with the control of federal power to undo the activities of the others and to channel the benefits of accumulation to its principal supporters. The violence that attended the elections of 1964 and 1965, the acrimony over the census of 1963, the inability of the leading political parties to recognise the genuine rights of the minorities in their respective areas, (culminating, for instance, in the Tiv riots) made the military coup of January 1966 and the subsequent civil war somehow inevitable². The democratic question had ceased to be a dominant project of the national bourgeoisie.

The aborted birth of democracy at independence largely explains the similarity in outlook of military and civil regimes in Nigeria and, for that matter, Africa in general. It explains why military regimes acquire some legitimacy, even though military rule is, by definition, undemocratic. In the absence of a democratic culture, the question becomes which regime can

1 Abdul Raheem, T. and Olukoshi, A. *The left in Nigerian Politics and the struggle for socialism*, *ROAPE*, N 37, 1988; Cohen, H. *Labour and Politics in Nigeria 1945-1971*. (London, Heineman) 1974.

2 Anifowose, R., *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*. (NOK Publishers) New York, 1982.

provide stability and economic development. Military regimes are then judged by the popular masses in terms of their success in those areas rather than on the question of democratic participation and liberal values.

The long period of military rule, 1966 to 1979, exposed the inability of the military to establish the structures for self-sustained economic development and the construction of democracy. The major project of the military was not fundamentally different from that of the civilian leadership it had sacked. In fact, the environment for the development of a national bourgeoisie improved in the 1970s with the oil boom. Public expenditure increased dramatically, various agricultural and industrial projects were launched and indigenisation decrees were passed in 1972 and 1977 aimed at transferring some capital to the national bourgeoisie and defining the areas of competence of both local and foreign capital.

The military, under Gowon, used the experience of the civil war as an excuse to clamp down on democratic demands and tried to impose a culture of obedience and regimentation in industrial relations¹. Considerable powers were given to the repressive sector of the State and employers. The government, of course, addressed some of the dysfunctional aspects of unequal development by creating more States, revising the revenue allocation formula in favour of the federal centre², reworking the federal character principle and carrying out land and local government reforms.

Military rule, however, experienced very serious problems analogous to those experienced by the previous civilian rulers. The attempt to control workers while allowing the national bourgeoisie to accumulate huge amounts of capital through several, sometimes unpalatable methods, met with serious opposition from the broad sections of the population and raised the consciousness and militancy of the trade union movement. The rate of inflation in food and rents escalated. The Adebo and Udoji awards failed to pacify the unions. There were generalised industrial relations disputes and sustained popular discontent with the government. The quest for civil rule intensified in the mid-1970s culminating in a military coup in July 1975 and the establishment of Murtala's regime which turned out to be more committed to the transfer of power to civilians. Gowon had reneged on this promise in October, 1974.

But the transition programme of the Murtala/Obasanjo administrations addressed only one aspect of the problematic of democracy, i.e. the forms of liberal democracy: parliamentary vs presidential government; types and number of parties; human rights, the rule of law etc.³. It failed to tackle the conditions for the realisation of liberal democracy, talkless of the questions of

1 Bangura, Y. "Nationalism, Accumulation and Labour Subordination in Nigeria", Conference Paper, Nigerian Political Science Association conference, Ilorin, 1985.

2 Oyovbaire, S., The politics of revenue allocation; in K. Panter-Brick (ed.) *Soldiers and Oil: The political transformation of Nigeria* (Frank Cass) 1973.

3 Panter-Brick, K., *Soldiers and Oil*...

popular democracy¹. Chapter two of the 1979 constitution which dealt with "fundamental objectives and directive principles of State policy" attempted to grapple with the problem of accumulation by upholding the ideals of egalitarianism, planned and balanced economic development and economic democracy² but that section did not occupy a strategic position in the overall package and logic of the constitution. The links between the modes of accumulation of capital and the liberal democratic ethos the constitution attempted to espouse were never seriously addressed or established.

Instead the Obasanjo regime preoccupied itself with the question of controlling the transition programme and ushering into government the forces that would uphold the historic project of the post colonial State. Apart from the Peoples' Redemption Party which had some promise, at the initial stage, in challenging the neocolonial project, no other political party, with solid roots in the working class movement, was registered. In fact, the military had in the mid-1970s tried to separate trade union work from national politics; and between 1975 and 1978 had carried out a major restructuring of the trade union movement.

The national Party of Nigeria, the Unity Party of Nigeria and the Nigerian Peoples Party upheld the traditions of their predecessors. The period, 1979 to 1983, witnessed an unprecedented looting of the treasury, the deepening of the forces of import-substitution industrialisation, an expansion of the State sector and a pathetic mismanagement of the national resources. Such activities translated themselves into thuggery, violence, intolerance and repression at the political level. The political strategy of the leading party, the NPN, as we have pointed out elsewhere³; was to organise the bourgeois forces on a national scale, thereby penetrating the stronghold of the UPN and NPP in Ondo, Oyo, Anambra and Bendel; weakening the PRP and GNPP in the north so that the chieftains of the northern faction of the NPN could present the north as a monolithic entity to their southern counterparts in the distribution of offices and contracts⁴; checking the militancy of the left forces and the trade unions by fuelling dissensions within the trade union movement and pressing for the recognition of more than one central labour organization.

The democratic ideals of the constitution could not be operationalised. It was a major contradiction between form and content. The predatory character of the ruling class, acting through the principal political parties, was too strong to be checked by constitutional niceties. The "democratic experiment"⁵ was aborted in December 1983.

1 The Usman - Osoba minority report attempted to address this issue.

2 *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (a Daily Times publication. pp. 15-17.

3 Bangura, Y., Structural Adjustment and the political question. *ROAPE* 37, 1986.

4 Ibrahim has argued that it was largely the minorities that gave the presidency to the NPN. The politicians of the 'far north' were determined to improve and consolidate their influence in the party.

5 Oyovbaire, S., (ed.) *Democratic experiment in Nigeria: Interpretive Essays* (Berlin). 1987.

Crisis, Adjustment and Dictatorship: Extending the Frontiers of the Theory

The collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s exposed the structural deficiencies of the post colonial model of development; Radical reform measures were required to arrest the economic decline. State authorities were persuaded to accept the IFM/World Bank model of structural adjustment. The programme aims to roll back the State and give the market mechanism a free hand in the allocation of resources. It identifies what it calls distortions or rigidities in cost and price relationships. These are to be found in the exchange rate, tariff regime, the organisation of parastatals, interest rates, public expenditure and subsidies. It is a major challenge to the post colonial model of accumulation.

Capital accumulation revolves around the expansion of State activities as the basis for nurturing the national bourgeoisie. The economic crisis called into question the traditional methods of business organisation and the role of the State in such enterprises. The Buhari regime tried to tackle this problem through direct repression and fiscal discipline without adjusting the economic structures themselves. Babandiga's administration is attempting to address the problem through the market. It is believed, for instance, that the second tier foreign exchange market would eliminate import licences and the corruption associated with them; privatisation and balanced budgets would end subventions and inflated contracts; trade liberalisation would allow the law of comparative advantage to determine the type of goods to be produced and would check State support for inefficient firms.

In other words, the development of the national bourgeoisie should now be nurtured by market forces and not by the forces associated with State monopolies and the primitive accumulation of capital. Through this method, the bourgeoisie would rapidly transform the national economy along self sustained growth and check the resilience and expansion of the petty commodity sector. The liberation of the competitive market structures and values will provide the foundations for the construction of democracy.

Several questions arise in the analysis of the new policy thrust. Can market forces actually subdue the primitive accumulation of capital and monopolistic practices? Is it possible to identify the social forces that are wholly committed to the development of market forces? What are the implications of these for national development and the struggle for democracy?

The development of a pure market economy presupposes a certain level of development of the productive forces and of the mode of accumulation of the ruling classes in such formations. The relatively underdeveloped character of the Nigerian economy explains why the local entrepreneurs have not fully embraced the structural adjustment programme, with the exception of those with transnational ties; it has underlined the need for the close monitoring of the economy by the Fund and Bank, and has exposed the persistence of the so-called discredited methods of organising business, even with the regime's commitment to the success of SAP. The historical project for the creation of a

national bourgeoisie through State activities has not yet been completed. Market forces will, therefore, grow in a very stunted form, if they are to grow at all.

The adjustment programme itself seeks to devalue the living standards of the popular masses before the latter are allowed to regain them in the newly adjusted economy. Such a goal cannot be achieved under conditions of free political relations. It requires a certain level of coercion and authoritarianism for its success. Rather than adjustment promoting democracy, as claimed by its defenders, it, in fact, creates the conditions for a new form of authoritarianism which combines the old methods of control with the new demands of an enfeebled social order based on market forces. I have shown elsewhere the parameters of this new authoritarianism which restricts the political arena by promoting variants of military rule, limited political parties, diarchy, triarchy and corporate representation¹.

The new authoritarianism seeks to weaken the organised power of the popular forces that are likely to oppose the adjustment programme and prepare the basis for the emergence of new forces that are committed to the programme. It involves an assault on all classes, but with the working classes carrying the brunt of the repression. It is the modern-day version of the Bonapartist programme of nineteenth century France, which seeks to promote the long-term interests of the bourgeoisie by cleansing the latter of its old methods of organising itself and forcing it to assume new responsibilities and directions. The tragedy of the package is that it requires a high level of development for the bourgeoisie to play the role it is being called upon to assume.

The Politics of Transition

Several points have emerged in our analysis of the politics of structural adjustment. The first is the tendency of SAP to reinforce and deepen the authoritarian culture and the repressive apparatus of the State. The second is its attempts to purify the national bourgeoisie. And finally the third is its implacable opposition to the working classes. The transition programme has unmistakably mirrored these objectives. It does not seek to promote liberal or popular democracy per se, but to provide the political basis for the successful implementation of the adjustment programme. The political debate on the transition to civil rule betrayed the lack of commitment of the bourgeoisie and large sections of the élite to the ideals of liberal democracy. Ibrahim has

¹ Bangura, Y. ROAPE, 37.

observed that there was the point of view of upholding the liberal democratic ideals, when compared to that of the 1970s¹.

The political Bureau Report itself² came down strongly in support of socialism. Members of the Bureau, it would seem, tried to grapple with the specificities of the economy that act as fetters on the development of democracy. Thus their recommendation for a planned, self-reliant national economy³. They called for a two-party system⁴, some measure of corporate representation⁵ and a directorate for mass mobilisation (MAMSER)⁶ to usher in the new social and political order.

The report was strong on 'State/bureaucratic democracy' but weak on liberal democracy. It tried to resolve the complex issues of democracy administratively without resolving the antagonistic class interests in the field of struggle. It naively assumed that the forces that can implement the popular programme were already in control of political power. Conversely, it believed that a government that is rigorously advancing a thorough-going market-oriented adjustment programme would suddenly regret its chosen path of development and embrace the ideals of socialism.

The point ought to be made that the transition programme is, fundamentally, a government programme. It, probably, would have been more productive for "socialists" in the Bureau to have concentrated on the liberal content of the democratic struggles rather than attempting to construct socialism on a government platform. Such socialism, if implemented, would become a euphemism for bureaucratic/authoritarian controls.

What is the value of pushing for corporate democracy in a government document when the popular forces are not in control of State power? Isn't this a recipe for the cooptation of popular organisations into government and the destruction of their independent traditions? What is the point in restricting the political parties to two when the popular forces do not, as yet, have the power to ensure that they will control one of those parties? Doesn't this foreclose the development of a popular working class party? Why clamour for a single ideology when the contending interests in the country have not been resolved? Isn't this the surest path to totalitarianism and the breeding of false prophets of socialism? Why call for a directorate of social mobilisation in a government-controlled transition programme? Doesn't this lay the foundations for the creation of a vanguard for the enthronement of fascism?

1 Ibrahim, J., *ROAPE*, 37.

2 A substantial percentage of the 17-member bureau were political scientists with sympathies for radical populism.

3 *Report of the Political Bureau* (Federal Government, Printer) Lagos March 1987. p. 52-70.

4 *Ibid*, p. 126.

5 *Ibid* pp. 142-160.

6 *Ibid*, p.203-207

It is not surprising that the government rejected the core elements of the Bureau's Report which would have obstructed its march towards free wheeling capitalism; and insisted, correctly, that an ideology could not be imposed on the people. It clearly selected those aspects of the Report, such as the two party system, MAMSER, and the unstructured use of corporate representation, that are useful in establishing the political foundation for structural adjustment¹.

The core objective of the transition programme is the remoulding of the social forces in the country to correspond to the demands of the structural adjustment programme. The remoulding involves the creation of the environment for the emergence of social forces that will be committed to the defence of SAP, luring mild opponents of the programme over through various strategies and disorganising/repressing the social forces that are implacably opposed to the programme.

The debate on the country's relations with the IMF lucidly brought out the contending forces in the reform programme². The transnationals and their local allies were the strongest defenders of SAP. The national bourgeoisie was initially opposed to the programme since it posed a threat to its traditional methods of organising business. The programme had to be imposed on this class, but with several concessions in the 1988 Budget on the funding of SFEM, the tariff regime, interest rates, and the reflation of the economy³. At the political level, the transition programme aims to create a new set of people from among the ranks of the bourgeoisie and the elites who will carry the banner of SAP during civil rule. This explains the blanket banning of the old politicians, considered to be too committed to the old, discredited methods. The 'new political class' is expected to emerge from the newly constituted Local governments and the Constituent Assembly. This group should be strong enough to face the challenges posed by the banned politicians.

The rural and small scale producers did not feature prominently in the 'IMF Debate'. SAP is, however, expected to shift the balance of opportunities away from urban waged employees towards the rural producers. Devaluation promotes exports and increases the naira value of rural incomes. The dramatic rise in cocoa incomes in Ondo State is a case in point. The current shortages of locally produced food, even gari, and their astronomical price increases have been attributed to the export of these products.

The government recognises the potential support it can get from the rural sector for its reform programme. Thus, its decision to establish the Directorate

1 Government white paper on the Report of the Political Bureau (Government Printer) Lagos, 1987.

2 Bangura, Y., IMF/World Bank conditionality and Nigeria's Structural adjustment programme, in Havnevik, K., *The IMF and the World Bank in Africa: Conditionality and its impact* (SIAS) 1987.

3 Bangura, Y., "The 1988 budget: Adjusting the structural adjustment programme", Workshop paper, CSER, January 1988.

for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure; to start the transition programme at the local government area; and to insist that contestants would have to be resident in their respective local government areas to qualify for election¹. But, of course, SAP has not eliminated the obnoxious activities of the middlemen, who have actually cornered the booming export trade. All sorts of corrupt practices have also accompanied the implementation of the DFRRI, rendering it largely ineffective, in many areas, in providing facilities to the peasant farmers. The State seeks the cooperation of the peasantry in its reform programme, but seems to have more confidence in the large scale farmers and the rural power elite. No wonder, large scale rigging was witnessed during the local government elections. Peasant representatives, defending peasant interests, were few and far between in most of the local government councils. They hardly featured in the Constituent Assembly.

The debate on the IMF showed that the lower, urban petit-bourgeoisie of road transport drivers, traders and mechanics were opposed to the IMF loan and its conditionality. Transport operators and traders are central to the politics of adjustment. It is mainly through these two groups that the average consumer gets exposed to the adverse effects of the programme. The State has tried to neutralise the militancy of the transport operators - the National Union of Road Transport workers and the Nigerian Transport Owners Association - by entering into agreements with the leaders of these organisations and providing some of the inputs to the groups at controlled prices so that they will not feel compelled to raise transport fares and create mass instability. The other social group, the petty traders, has been held at arms-length. It cannot be cajoled by the government since there is really nothing to offer its members. This group, in any case, has a tradition of militancy². It has waged serious struggles against levies, the destruction of kiosks and other unpopular government measures. There is, in fact, a ban placed on the activities of this group in Bendel State following the crisis on gari, the staple food.

The backbone of the opposition to the reform measures are the working class movements, the radical intelligentsia and the students movement. The three social groups played a leading role in persuading the nation to reject the IMF loan, and have been at the forefront in the struggle for democracy. They have also suffered serious material reverses, following the implementation of the adjustment programme. The State has been unable to buy off the leadership of these groups; thus the policy of the big stick: the banning of the National Association of Nigerian Students; the control of students politics on the campuses; the making of the membership of students unions and the Academic Staff Union of Universities voluntary; the disaffiliation of the ASUU from the Nigeria Labour Congress and its ultimate proscription; the

1 Bangura, Y., "Crisis, adjustment and politics in Nigeria". A Research Proposal. November 1987.

2 Beckman, B., 'State, Class and Democracy, Nigeria, 1975-1992'. A Research proposal submitted to SAREC Jan. 1988.

dissolution of the NLC in February 1988; and the periodic arrest and intimidation of academic staff, student activists and workers' representatives.

The transition programme provides no role for these forces. Even the five per cent legislative representation given to workers and women by the Political Bureau has been nullified. Instead workers are selected by State functionaries to represent workers interests in the Constituent Assembly! The government seems to be determined to keep out of the transition programme what it calls extremists - a euphemism for the socialists. The recent elections of delegates to the Constituent Assembly by the local government councils were not only rushed but members were carefully screened to prevent radicals and banned politicians from scaling through. There is no activist socialist in the current Assembly of 563 members. The government, in fact, had to appoint 113 members to the C.A. just to be doubly assured of a block of loyal Assembly men and women. Guidelines were also provided prohibiting the debate on certain issue alleged to have been nationally resolved. Government functionaries are more concerned about the political engineering aspect of transition than with the question of democracy.

The Struggle for Democracy

The construction of liberal democracy demands a change in the modes of accumulation of the neocolony. The national bourgeoisie can play a leading role in this struggle only when it is sufficiently developed to make less use of primitive accumulation and become great masters of wage labour. Structural adjustment is trying to address this problem but, I think, rather prematurely. Extending Engels' observations on political power and class leadership, the worst thing that can happen to a class is to be compelled to change its mode of appropriation at a time when the class has not yet fully developed to dispense with the old methods of accumulation. What such a class ought to do cannot be done given the immaturity of the class forces for the new assignment; and yet what it ends up doing contradicts its own development, interest and principles¹.

If the bourgeoisie cannot be relied upon to defend democracy, the popular forces will have to impose their authority on the issue. The type of democracy that corresponds to the objective interests of these forces is one that transforms the neocolonial society and gives power to the popular forces in the administration of the political economy. Such a transformation also calls for the resolution of the problems of unequal development through an imaginative and democratic planning system that will involve the victims of unequal development themselves. The enthronement of these forces to position of power at the work-place and in the State structure will destroy the basis for private monopoly power; and will change the character of the transformation of the traditional sector into the modern economy through democratic means. This

¹ Mamdani, M., raised a similar question for the Uganda situation in *NRA/NRM: Two Years in Power* (Progress Publishing House) Kampala 1988. p. 23.

will minimize the appearance of primitive accumulation of a capital and its attendant authoritarian values and patron-client relations.

Several points follow from the analysis. First is that the struggle for democracy is not a once-and-for-all phenomena; the final product is likely to vary from one country to another, depending on the level of development of the productive forces and the organisational strength and consciousness of the forces committed to democracy. The level of conceptualisation of the democratic project and the capacity and willingness to fight for it can be quite decisive in the building of democratic structures.

Second, the struggle for popular democracy is linked with the struggle for liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is not just a bourgeoisie project¹; it is also the project of the popular forces. The European working classes, in most cases, had to compell their bourgeoisies to push the liberal democratic project further than the latter had wanted to go². This was necessary to defend such popular objectives as the right to free trade unions, independent labour parties funded by unions, the extension of the franchise to workers and women and the development of the welfare State. Liberal democracy is, therefore, part of the heritage of the popular forces. There is an added, fundamental, reason why the struggle for liberal democracy should be an integral part of the struggle for popular democracy; to promote a culture of tolerance, free debate, self criticism, accountability and broad internal democracy in the popular organisations themselves. Ignoring the centrality of liberal democracy in popular struggles can lead to small cliques within these organisations arrogating to themselves the responsibility for deciding the level of participation and freedom to be enjoyed by the rest of the society.

Thirdly, is the democratic resolution of the conflicting interests of the various social forces that are committed to democracy. Social groups may emphasise different aspects of the democratic project based on their objective class interests. Peasant interests may be different from working class interests and may even conflict on the question of the distribution of resources between the urban and rural sectors. Even within the ranks of the same class, say the petit-bourgeoisie, some groups may hold conflicting positions on specific issues on the democratic question, even if they remain committed to the general ideals of democracy. The national fuel crisis of April 10th 1988 and the role of specific groups in the strikes is a case in point. Various social groups ranging from students, workers, academics, butchers, the unemployed, lawyers, civil servants, nurses and doctors either took active parts in the demonstrations/strikes or sympathised with the popular resistance to the undemocratic manner fuel prices were raised.

The nurses decided also to demand the resolution of a specific, long standing industrial dispute bordering on democracy at the workplace, i.e. the

1 The Nigerian Political Science Association conference in its communique session in 1986 voted to delete a section in the communique which was calling for some liberal democracy.

2 Therban, G., The rule of capital and the rise of democracy, *The New Left Review* 103: 1977.

recognition of nursing as a profession, requiring no supervision from doctors; the establishment of a directorate of nursing; and the appointment of nurses into the highest decision making body of the health system. Even though doctors were sympathetic with the general opposition towards the fuel price increases and the hikes in food prices and transport fares¹ their association contested the democratic rights of the nurses to have their own independent profession. Their attitudes, betraying deep seated professional arrogance, assumed that nurses should be their apron-strings rather than their partners in the health care delivery system. Democratic practice requires the respect for the rights of others, irrespective of the positions they may occupy at the workplace and in the wider society.

¹ The Nigerian Medical Association did not take part in the strike, but doctors were, on the whole, sympathetic to the objectives of the popular protests.