

# POLICIES FOR NIGERIA

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NIGERIA is entering another phase in her political history. Her previous historical landmarks are three: the dawn of independence; the military *coup d'etat* of January 1966; and the counter coup of July of the same year—the antecedent of the thirty month civil war.

The present phase which it is said will last for at least the next six years may be described as the militario-civilian phase. The reason for this label is that one does not know who is influencing whom in the formulation of government policies. There is a reciprocation of influence between the civilians in the government and the military men, each group taking care not to arouse the antagonism of the other. The views and the interests of the man-in-the-street, whose hopes have been dampened, especially in the Eastern States, as a result of the disastrous civil war, have been obscured, for no one is allowed to raise his head above the political water.

At a time when the government is busy with reconstruction projects, many private individuals struggling by any means at their disposal (including the bribing of officials) to make the best of what trading opportunities there are, make it difficult for the government to curb the pervasive bribery and corruption in Nigeria today. The success of even the best-fashioned policies will depend largely upon the extent to which such ills are healed, for the corruption pervades even the ministries.

The economic policies of Nigeria require urgent consideration. The Malthusian and Keynesian economics adopted by the Nigerian government, can do little to raise the living standards of the majority of the people. At present, many workers wages are at, or below the subsistence level.

If the government wishes to avoid industrial revolt, brought about by a larger landless wage-earning class, it should be prepared to devote considerable energy and resources to aiding the farmers. This aid should not be in the orthodox form of monetary loans for this would tend to create a debtor class without any increase in the agricultural productivity. Most of the receivers of such loans would tend to use them to pay, among other debts, their children's school fees, unless the long debated educational system proposed by Chief Awolowo, the Commissioner for Finance—that is, free education to University Level—is made to materialize in the course of the next five years.

The most effective way of assisting the farmers would be the re-organization of the Co-operative Societies so that their activities would embrace the supply of agricul-

tural equipment and the education of the farmers in the use of modern methods of agriculture. The farmers could be further aided by the removal of import duties upon agricultural machinery and implements.

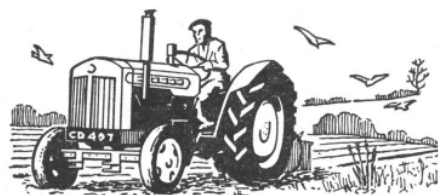
Another question of vital importance is the lack of trans-national labour mobility in Nigeria. The policy of everyone to his camp among the states should be discontinued so that everybody would feel himself a Nigerian rather than a state citizen. The creation of more states was for the convenience of administration and for no other purpose.

An imperative and fundamental reform which would have a profound effect upon the economy of Nigeria, would be the raising of public revenue from land rent, which at present is enjoyed by individual landlords.

Another point deserving a mention is the danger of curbing free association, freedom of the press including radio and television and individual people's opinions, although there is no evidence that free expression of opinion is not permitted in Nigeria.

To summarize: The phase into which Nigeria is now stepping will require that considerable attention be paid to socio-economic questions such as:

1. The envisaged free education to university level should be accomplished within the next six years.
2. The farmers should be given material help, and education in modern agricultural methods should be made



available throughout the country in order to increase the productive power of individual farmers.

3. The system of land tenure which gives the right of private ownership in land to individuals should be reformed so that the rents are paid into the public purse.
4. Liberty of the press (radio and television included), and free association should be carefully safeguarded.
5. Provision should urgently be made for people from one state to work in any other state without any let or hindrance, so that the spirit of democracy, patriotism, friendship and co-operation may flourish among the people.