

Nigerian leaders: Economic growth and democracy are inseparable

by Lydia Cherry

Nigeria, the most populous country of Africa and one of the two potential superpowers on the continent, has learned how to say "No" to the economic and "democracy" experiments that have led to the disintegration of developing countries around the world. Instead, it is taking its cue from earlier historical periods in which "free market" gibberish was not touted as if a religion. Dr. Walter Ofonagoro, an important figure in Nigeria's upcoming Constitutional Conference and a scholar of economic history, explains, in an interview on p. 11, Nigeria's refusal to go along with International Monetary Fund (IMF) "medicine": "Do you know any Third World country that accepted those prescriptions and survived? We don't want to die!"

Both Dr. Ofonagoro and Nigerian Minister for Information and Culture Jerry Gana make clear that Nigeria has in no way given up on the goal of a genuine democracy for this country of 100 million people. And in fact, the Nigerian elite have explored this subject in a great deal more depth than the myriad groups currently funded by the West that carry the "democracy" label. "But democracy cannot survive if we are not able to build a sound economy," Gana insists.

Nigerian head of state Gen. Sani Abacha made the decisive shift from the economic policies of the previous Babangida regime on Jan. 10, with a clear message in his budget speech that to halt the collapse, the days of applying IMF Structural Adjustment Programs were over. Dr. Ofonagoro explains: "A military government is not the *ideal*; it is a stopgap between the last attempt at democracy and the next attempt at democracy. . . . We had to make certain adjustments to the policy of hook-line-and-sinker acceptance of IMF prescriptions."

The result of the "economic reforms" of the Babangida administration was that between 1980 and 1990, per capita annual income fell from \$1,030 to \$250 (1976 dollars), while Nigeria paid accumulated interest payments equal to the whole of its 1980 debt. Any attempt to increase industrial capacity met howls of rage from the West.

The knives are out for the Nigerian government, on the part of the British establishment and the U.S. apparatus based around Henry Kissinger's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. A black propaganda press campaign has been launched by British and U.S. establishment press organs. The self-proclaimed Nigerian democ-

racy movement is inseparable from the U.S.-based Nigerian Democratic Awareness Committee and a comparable organization in London. And, as D.M. Komo, the administrator/governor of Nigeria's state of Rivers, recounts in an interview on p. 13, the leader of a militant, separatist group supposedly fighting for the rights of the downtrodden Ogoni people, Ken Saro-Wiwa, is doing quite well for himself with two houses in London.

"You watch and see; this government is going to be out within weeks," threatens E.C. Ejiogu, part of the U.S.-based part of the Nigerian "democracy" movement. Either the Abacha government steps down to bring about Nigerian billionaire Moshood Abiola's accession to power, or there will be civil war, Ejiogu told a reporter in an interview made available to *EIR*. Ejiogu claimed that much of the policy line for the Nigerian "democracy" movement is coming from his group in the United States. He claims that the western elites would be happy with Abiola, who has had many dealings with the Anglo-American elite through his role as chairman of IT&T. Ejiogu claims the support of Ford Foundation board member and former Nigerian head of state Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, who spoke at a CSIS gathering in May.

A disinformation operation against the Abacha government came to light over the weekend of May 28. The operation includes circulation in Washington, London, and Nigeria of at least two forged documents. According to a Nigerian source, first is a purported letter of resignation by the Nigerian ambassador to the United States, Mallam Zubair Kazaure. The letter includes the signature of Kazaure. According to a Nigerian source in the United States: "Also there was another letter in circulation in Washington and also in London which shows that some key Nigerian figures have signed this document, including the ambassador to Washington, the Nigerian high commissioner in London, even the minister of external affairs himself, and some other key retired generals. This second letter says that these Nigerian leaders are again calling for Abacha to step down, and to bring about Abiola's immediate accession to power—the question of last year's June 12 election, which was stopped because of irregularities, but Abiola has claimed that he won. This second letter has apparently gone to the White House and major U.S. and U.K. think-tanks, as well as being circulated to key U.S. senators and MPs in Britain."