

MARGINALISATION trumpeters have recently discovered a gold mine, namely, the marginalisation of 'The North'. They have been very busy exploiting this new find in the manner of a culture just the way they have been busy gorging up Nigeria's petroleum revenue. First of all, these men marginalise Tivs, Idomas, Biroms, Gwaris, etc. and claim that they and they alone constitute Lord Lugard's vanished Northern Nigeria.

Then they marginalise the economic, political, legal and constitutional reality and claim that Sokoto, Kwara, Borno, Benue, Kano, etc. states of Nigeria 'do not exist. What exists for them is the myth in their minds, namely, the ghost of the Northern Nigeria of Lord Lugard and Lord Milverton.

Further, simply because Olusegun Obasanjo has once again somehow become a President they echo British imperialist propaganda, as they have always done, and proclaim that the Yoruba ethnic group or 'The South' has mounted the throne of power and that they, "The North", have been marginalised. Of course, millions of Yoruba peasants, wage workers, petty traders, roadside artisans, underprivileged youths, miserable mothers and unemployed throngs will hardly find the money even to travel by *bolekaja* to Abuja, let alone peep at the inside of Aso Rock. The perfidious clowns of Nigeria and Anglo-American imperialist propaganda should leave the good Yoruba people alone. As for 'The South,' it is as much a myth of petroleum sharing Nigerian and Anglo-American imperialist gangsters as "The

Marginalisation of the North

By Eskor Toyo

North" is.

In the very sickly minds of people who may have been born in Nigeria but are non-Nigerians, being a Nigerian means being President, Minister of State, Secretary to the Federal Government, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, inspector-general of police, head of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, chief of the Petroleum Trust Fund, and the like. In that case, all those Nigerians who are not or have never been in such positions are marginalised. Consequently, these counterfeit Nigerians see Nigeria as an impossibility or a nuisance unless themselves or their closest cohorts hold these positions.

But do we mean to assert that no one in Lord Lugard's former Northern Nigeria is marginalised? Far from it. Millions and millions in that part of Nigeria were marginalised in power and what comes with it centuries before British rule and through all the years of colonial dictatorship. They have remained marginalised continuously since flag independence. In fact, in terms of economic power, the economic policies of Balewa, Ironsi, Gowon, Buhari, Babangida and Abacha have been a successive tornado of marginalisation to these millions. As for the Babangida and Abacha regimes they turned the whole earth into a scorching desert for the multiple millions of beasts of burden in Lugard's former Northern Nigeria.

The wretched and struggling peasants

that I see in and around their village hovels as I drive anywhere through Lugard's North have been so marginalised that one wonders whether the misery embodying donkeys I also see are not really happier since they are not supposed to be human beings.

As for the wage workers in Lugard's North, not only are they ruthlessly marginalised by the general processes of primitive capitalist accumulation; they are thrust further onto the famished margin of greedy society by distance from the coast where most imported goods land on which city life in Nigeria crucially depends. Middlemen of all sorts exploit the wage workers and peasants in a manner as if purposely to remind them every minute of their poverty. And the intensity of this exploitation grows by the day.

Surely, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) inflicted by Ibrahim Babangida, Olu Falae and other 'yes men' of Anglo-American imperialism was designed by its Anglo-American originators to marginalise millions of working people in order to revive depressed capitalism first of all in the United States of America and Western Europe and secondarily in their satellites around the world. Not all suffered from SAP. All over the world the capitalists have benefited from SAP as was meant to be the case; the masses have been ruined by it to pay them. This is very much the case

also in Nigeria. From 1986 when SAP was launched, imperialist banks and other businesses have enjoyed bountiful and entirely parasitic profits, while working consumers pine to death. The Nigerian primitive accumulators have had a field day. Many millionaires and big estate owners have been created by SAP and capitalist policies generally, while the masses have had nowhere to turn for breath in the hell of total marginalisation. If official statistics can be believed, most of these masses live in Lugard's former North.

As the desert encroaches, more and more of those who need firewood for fuel and rain or a stream for water are pressed to the very ends of life's marginalisation. At the same time, those who see themselves only as Presidents, Governors, Directors, Millionaires, etc. have built or are building themselves private electricity generators and have sunk or are sinking for themselves boreholes. They cannot care. After all, are not millions born for depressed margins while they occupy the exalted centre of things as president etc. seated on debauchery?

Aminu Kano, Abubakar Zukogi, Bala Mohammed and the like are dead and Gambo Sawaba is weak. So except for a few like Layila Dogonyaro no one cares for the woman in much of Lugard's Northern Nigeria. Are women even born to see the brightness of the sun? Is it not a capital crime to educate a woman? From what does any mad

dog of a man want to liberate a woman. Of all margins is it not a woman who should occupy the most hopeless? I can hear the voice of Layila Dogonyaro in a conversation with me at Abuja: "We are only spare parts". Of this philosophy that the woman's place is right at the margin of usable parts there is no stronger fortress than much of Lugard's North.

In various parts of Lugard's North, parents cannot send their children to school because there will be no one to fetch water or firewood for them, and this is full time work. Do those who want to be presidents care to know how many millions of youths — the flowers of Nigeria — are thus left to wither on the most desolate margins of the wilderness of illiteracy and drudgery?

As for the migrant Fulani men, women and children and the jaded chains of unemployed, underemployed, city boot lickers and those condemned to beggary, they do not even have a margin where to roast to death as the years tick by. Presidents may come and go till eternally, but no opulent marginalist bandmaster wastes a thought on them.

One day men and women of conscience will call on the really marginalised giant in Nigeria, and Lugard's North as every part of this terribly abused country will erupt like thirty-six thousand volcanoes. Meanwhile, let the *barawos* tug at their loot like bloody vultures letting out whatever nonsensical cry serves their mean-greed. There is no part of humanity that will for ever be prevented from a leap out of slavery by the crocodile's tears of monuments of dishonour.

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