

Unpopular Essays

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THAT for long as the human society survives, there will always be change, is an incontestible truth.

When it comes, change is either evolutionary or a revolution. In most cases, it is evolutionary where there is a political system, recognisable and acceptable to a majority of people. This is so because political systems are invested with in-built devices to absorb and canalise change.

Political systems thrive on the basic habit of man to obey. But where this obedience negates the search for basic human wants, when it is no longer satisfying, men have occasionally resorted to disobedience. Disobedience becomes a revolution (i) where it leads to radical change; (ii) when the change is violent (and preferably, sudden).

The new military administration in Nigeria appears determined to exterminate corruption by punishing past wrongdoings. There is also an effort to change the political configuration of the country by dislodging decadent informal political power-blocks here and there. All this with-

King's College and Federal Government Colleges.

"And Army Children's Schools. And Model Girls' Schools.

"Let teachers all over the country be paid same salaries, according to qualifications and experience.

"Stop loans to civil servants and teachers to buy cars.

the possibility that a lot of the loot made by members of the Gowon brigade as well as their collaborators in the private sector is stacked away, outside the country, what is going to prevent them grabbing political power when we eventually return to "democracy"? Also, what is there to prevent them from raising private armies to sabotage the present regime when they consider them intolerably radical?

The French, American, Soviet and Chinese revolutions took heavy tolls of human life. So did the Cuban revolution and others. Before we knew what was happening, the Ethiopian revolutionary government had executed 60.

In all these places, the immensely improved quality of life has pro-



sustain the various revolutions in question. In each case, there was a vanguard force which raised and organised the revolutionary consciousness of the people. Nkrumah writes: "mass movements are well and good, but they cannot act with purpose unless they are led by a vanguard political party."

Today, we have diffuse sentiments of dissatisfaction amongst our people. It is now the duty of the Nigerian Army to organise these sentiments, help them identify the source of their affliction, and mobilise them around a central philosophy.

This propaganda programme should be matched by a determined

know, that because our society is unjust, we have not all had equal chances in our hustle for ownership. Because we operated the laws of the jungle whereby the strongest animal ate at the expense of others, General Gowon made away with 2,604 acres of land and Brigadier Johnson with 7,440 acres in Lagos alone.

The current purge must therefore, not confine itself to the confiscation of property illegitimately acquired, it must also revamp the legitimacy — basis of acquisition. The laws of the jungle must go. We are in dire need of new property—relation rules.

If we take the view that government is only the executive arm of the ruling class and if the present administration wants to be seen as representing the masses of our people it must set aside the old laws governing production, distribution and exchange. It must make new rules regarding ownership.

Finally, there can be no revolution without revolutionary rhetoric. There is something heroic about a regime which prefers to act rather than talk, especially since it is succeeding one that had totally lost its credibility. But at times such as this, words acquire an added importance. Impressed by the current purge, the people are becoming trusting once more. They are daily listening and wil-

Nigerian Revolution, 1975?

out letting a single head roll!

Yet Governor Ibrahim Taiwo insists it is a revolution. And his enthusiasm is shared by usually articulate Nigerians. Sam

"Let this nation go to work for a change."

Solarin and Ikoku are perfectly in order. But the danger here is that with the pervading sense of relief and enthusiasm,

vided adequate justification for the violence. If we must eat omelettes, we cannot escape breaking eggs.

The Nigerian military government must learn from the experience of other societies which have undergone revolution. The inconveniences suffered by the Nigerian people in the hands of the old brigade will not fuel the revolution for too long if they are not properly utilized.

Shortages induced by excessive taxation by an absentee government helped bring about the American revolution; the French revolution was urged on by a harvest that failed; scarcity of bread and extreme wartime poverty brought

effort to improve the people's quality of life. Agriculture and land ownership is where to start because, to a very great extent, it will determine whether the change we are witnessing will be permanent or not.

More than any other thing, redistribution of land planted Castro and

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Ikoku rejoices that "a close security of performance so far lends weight to the view that we may be in for a new play. In the first place, personal rule is openly discredited and discarded."

From downtown Ikenne, Dr Tai Solarin's usually harsh voice booms with renewed favour and enthusiasm. "Let us stop apartheid in education immediately.

"Let all existing post-primary institutions be nationalised immediately, and throw away

critics tend to lose sight of the fact that there have been no killings. That this is not necessarily good. Infact, some people have even gone as far as congratulating the new administration on this score.

"A revolutionary government draws much of its strength from the intense feelings and aroused energy of a people . . . It draws its strength also from the barrel of a smoking gun."

This act of congratulation betrays an ignorance of the fact that wealth determines the location of political power. Given

things to a head in the Soviet Union.

But decisive as they were, these severe economic dislocations did not

his socialism firmly in Cuba. On the other hand, it was because it failed to cope with the agrarian problem and thus to meet the basic needs of people that the Kuomintang missed its opportunity in China and was superseded by the Chinese Communist Party.

Joseph Gomwalk used to argue passionately in defence of the right of every one us to "legitimate ownership of property." But we also

ling to learn, anxious for direction. A refusal to talk will create a frustration of its own.

A revolutionary government draws much of its strength from the intense feelings and aroused energy of a people who have been through a vicious period of privation and social injustice.

It draws its strength also from the barrel of a smoking gun. There can be no making without destruction.