

Unpopular Essays

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Successive military regimes have proved no better. Surrounding themselves with celebrated intellectuals of supply-and-demand economics, they have overwhelmed the country with plans for placing the economy at par with the baron powers of capitalism.

And the intellectuals in question have dazzled their countrymen with the profound depth of their knowledge. Acquire technology, they counselled and there is no difference between us and America!

This approach would have involved a great many Nigerians in the productive process and created a pool of semi-skilled indigenes from which a higher programme of industrialisation would have drawn. That way, importation of technology would have implied independence from foreign technicians that are now flooding the country. And the involvement of so many people in production would have eliminated the possibilities of a vampire relation between a few lazy Nigerian contractors and the Nigerian economy.

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would have stressed at the beginning, an emphasis on labour-intensive technology, not capital-intensive instruments.

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But as we have already said, the decision has been political. We are victims of a process whereby the state is employed as a tool for diverting public funds into the

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petually in its apendage position as a consumer-annexe of the world capitalist system.

Our description as a consumer economy has been made possible by oil. Oil is the only raw material upon which neo-colonial countries charge of fair price. Even then, there is an on-going effort to deny them this little benefit. Which is why we are experiencing a sharp decline in the demand for the commodity. Three years ago we were bleeding the earth of 2 million barrels of the stuff everyday, today we can only afford 1.5 million barrels a day.

When the loot was there, we were too busy discussing the immense benefits of western democracy and Fajemirokun's philosophy of work to bother about any other thing.

Our investment in agriculture has been the "Operation Feed the Nation", a funny programme that does not tamper with the land tenure system; that appeals to individuals to grow more food. This emphasis on independent production has meant that we can neither set targets nor evaluate our progress in food production. Under the ideals of liberal democracy and the philosophy of

The Death Throes Of A Neo-Colonial Economy

NOT many people know about Dr Osita Nwokah of the University of Nigeria. The man is a control scientist, patriotic but honest. Sometime last year, he took the academic community by storm. After a tedious and painstaking study of trends in the Nigerian economic and social systems, he fed his data into a computer which returned a devastating verdict. If current trends of legitimised dysfunction continued, Nigeria would collapse in 25 years!

Of course, the Osita observation was greeted with the contempt it deserved. The publishing elite was too bemused with the massive show of conspicuous consumption around them to allow Osita into the newspapers, the man must have been out of his mind!

That same elite were jolted out of their drunken stupor at the start of April this year when news came with the federal budget that Nigeria might have to borrow to implement its current "development" plan.

When recently Commissioner, Joseph Garba robbed in the news by disclosing that the

search for loans had indeed begun, people who were ever aware of Dr Osita Nwokah's verdict began wondering whether the scientist had not overestimated the resilience of Nigeria's neo-colonial economy!

And in down town Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University's Mahmud Tukur attempts an interpretation of the frightening scenario. "The Federal Military government, he observes, 'has after adequately warning' the people of Nigeria through hints and leakages, finally admitted, almost in so many words, that the country's coffers are running dry. Even a yogi should be realistic enough to know that this eventuality portends a worsening of the economic situation in the country, a prospect which in turn portends a deterioration in the economic position of the groups that make up the bulk majority of the Nigerian population, that is, the lower echelons of the civil and public services, small time shopkeepers, artisans, factory workers and peasants—categories of Nigerians whose economic situation is already desperate.

"As yet there is no sign that there will be a public enquiry into how Nigeria was misled into this pathetic situation... but there is bound to be a public row (sooner or later) in the newspapers... over what groups are to bear the blame for this eventuality as well as over the best measures to be taken to cope with the situation".

But no measure under our present economic formation, I argue, is capable of saving us from a systems-collapse. The position is dictated by the logic of neo-colonialism.

Nigeria was absorbed into the world capitalist system at the time of colonisation. Our position as a peripheral component of that system restricts us to the role of primary-products suppliers and unplanned consumers of finished products from abroad (in fitful periods of wealth).

The first indigenous Nigerian government went along with this formation simply because it (the government) was the logical result of a carefully arranged programme of colonisation by other means. That is, by means of replacing white fore-man with black Nigerian) fore-

men. brated intellectuals of supply-and-demand economics, they have overwhelmed the country with plans for placing the economy at par with the baron powers of capitalism.

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The acquisition of technology with no political base, ironically, has proved the cornerstone of our looming economic disaster.

Contracts are awarded lazy Nigerian middle-men who hurry abroad to share the booty with alien construction firms for the importation of technology. Heavy and impressive equipment are daily being employed on Nigerian road projects, in port building, in everything.

On the other hand, the economy is being drained of finances with no corresponding benefits to the Nigerian people.

The politics of technological development within the context of struggle against our neo-colonial position would have dictated a different approach. It

work, there is no need to plan.

These things might yet come to an end. Chronicle's Etim Anim captures this prospect in graphic terms. "We have reached a point where we probably can never host another FESTAC. We have arrived a stage where we cannot award a N1 million worth of contract for FgSTAC papers." In other words, we have arrived at a stage where we must redefine the philosophy of work.