

RECENT developments, abroad and at home, have suddenly and violently re-inserted this old and resilient subject in the agenda of national political discussion. Even though the circumstances are tragic, I am happy that socialists in Eastern Europe and in Nigeria have been shaken from the scandalous complacency and timidity they have shown before a social problem which can render the best socialist programme unrealistic and the most brilliant socialist advocacy irrelevant. For world history, our own tragic experience (1966-70) as well as contemporary developments at home and abroad have shown that an unresolved ethnic question can, at a certain stage, tear a nation apart and divide socialists themselves along ethnic lines. In other words, the ethnic question is a threat not only to the unity of bourgeois polity, but also to the political solidarity of the socialist movement.

It is, therefore, with every sense of responsibility that I say that any Nigerian who, in spite of what has happened, and is happening, in socialist countries of Eastern Europe and in our country, still holds that the ethnic question is a bourgeois question or is peripheral to the problem of people's liberation or of socialist transformation of Nigeria cannot be an honest or serious person, and *ipso facto*, cannot be a socialist or a genuine patriot. Indeed Regis Debray, a French-born international socialist fighter warned in 1969: "The near-silence of Marxists on the question of nationalism will one day be seen as the most costly and ruinous of all historical omissions. Such people work in a vacuum." How prophetic!

This series of articles is devoted to

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the consideration of the ethnic question, not in general, but in its proper context, namely, the struggle for socialism. For though socialism cannot be an automatic solution of the ethnic question, it is the only context within which it can be resolved. I am here using the term *ethnic group* in the most general sense to denote a distinct group of people, or a form of human community with a distinct set of customary ways or culture. In this broad sense, a developed ethnic group can also be referred to as a *nationality*. And a *nation* is a politically organised nationality.

In the remaining sections of this first instalment, I shall list some of the recent developments, at home and abroad, which together forced the subject on the agenda. In the second instalment, I shall take an inventory of the main responses to the specific developments which took place in Nigeria. The third instalment will present the ethnic question in Nigeria historically, but also within the context of socialist vision of man and society. The fourth instalment will deal with *conditions and directions of solutions*. And in examining and suggesting conditions and directions, reference will be made to other countries. For the ethnic question is not unique to Nigeria.

We start our inventory from Eastern Europe.

One of the main platforms of the Russian Socialist Revolution in 1917 was the freeing of the oppressed nationalities within the Russian Empire — one of the largest empires

in history. Politically, this principle resolved into the dismantling of the tsarist unitarist state and its replacement with a federal union of freely consenting, and equal republics each of which, constitutionally, reserves the right to secede from the Union. With a population of nearly 290 million — half of which is made up of more than 100 minority nationalities — the Soviet Union is today structured in such a way that at least, in formal sense, the realisation of self-determination and local autonomy are maximally guaranteed. There are 15 Union Republics, 20 Autonomous Republics, 8 Autonomous Regions and 10 Autonomous Areas. But Lenin's hope of national unity has not been released.

Many Nigerian socialists, however, believed and would, in fact, swear when challenged, that the ethnic or nationality question had been resolved in the Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries. But the logic of *Perestroika* and *glasnost* and the crisis of de-Stalinisation and socialist renewal have exploded the illusion. For the present ethnic convulsion in the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, etc, are comparable in seriousness, to the Soviet Civil War (1918-20), the World War II and the (1945-48) Civil Wars that consolidated the hegemony of socialist

forces in Eastern Europe after the World War.

The starting point in any analysis of

the present ethnic crisis is of course, the admission that the socialist revolution established a new principle for the resolution of the ethnic question in the Soviet Union self-determination and the right to establish independent nations. This process of decentralisation was however threatened seriously by Stalin's impatient and undemocratic dispositions as well as the Hitler's militarism and expansionism. The process was finally halted by the outbreak of the Second World War. The ethnic contradictions that emerged at the end of the war are yet to be resolved. With national borders significantly altered by the war, practically all East European countries — USSR, Romania, Hungary, Poland, GDR, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia — are today plagued by very serious ethnic minority problems threatening to become the ultimate sphere where the limit of *perestroika* and *glasnost* will be determined.

But in spite of the difficulties of the present, it is to Eastern Europe that I turn when it comes to the question of articulating and prescribing the conditions for the solution of the ethnic question. I make this choice for two reasons. In the first place, this is where — like Nigeria — reality has just blown off illusions, deceptions and hypocrisy. In the second place, this is where there is an engaged battle to resolve the ethnic question within the framework of socialism.

In Nigeria, the ethnic question takes the enlarged and complex form of ethnic-religious contradictions.

The debate to which I am now contributing was sparked off by this regime's end-of-year restructuring and reconstitution of military and political apparatuses of state, and the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. To appreciate the essence of this debate, let us separate the ethno-religious contradictions from the totality of social contradictions in Nigeria. It is then easy to see that the allocation of positions and responsibilities and the balance of powers that emerged from this end-of-year exercise showed a heavy dominance of Nigerians of the Islamic faith and from the northern part of the country. This fact is empirical and incontrovertible. But then it is the beginning of an analysis, not the end. What is the meaning of this fact? That is the question.

Those who are uncompromisingly committed to the progress of Nigeria, should be grateful to Lt-General Domkat Bali for providing the nation with the opportunity to table and debate this critical social question once again. We should be grateful to the retiring general for unwittingly drawing out the very primitive, selfish, ethno-religious interests and consciousness that inform the actions and positions of many of our "leaders" and "opinion-moulders." Without Bali, we would perhaps not have known that many Nigerians — including many progressives — are either drowned in the ethno-religious consciousness or are miserably dependent on the goodwill of those whose power is based on the manipulation of ethno-religious contradictions.

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THE celebration, during the second week of January, of the 20th anniversary of the end of the Nigerian Civil War became, like the controversy over the removal of General Bali, an occasion to debate our enduring ethno-religious question. *The African Guardian* blazed the trail with the cover-story *Whose Nation?* The depth of the ethnic antagonism and prejudice revealed in an attempt to discuss some of the questions raised in *The African Guardian* story in a series of otherwise enlightened and progressive gatherings shocked me to the marrow. After recovering from the shock, I decided to write this series of articles, and to be as down-to-earth as possible.

The title of the series was therefore chosen deliberately: For the term "ethnic" or "tribal" conveys the reality of our situation much more directly and correctly than the alternative term "national" which, in our peculiar circumstances, sounds too esoteric and too flattering. This choice was further suggested and endorsed by the dominant character of the responses which the "Bali crisis" generated across the national political spectrum.

This second instalment is an inventory of the most representative of these responses. But the first thing to note is that the more serious responses came, not as responses to the restructuring and reconstitution of state institutions which the president carried out at the end of the year. They came as responses, first, to Bali's own response and then as responses to the response of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). They were therefore "responses to responses". The implica-

tion of this, as indicated in the first instalment, is that perhaps we would not have had any discussion of this extremely sensitive and potentially explosive political act if General Bali had not spoken. This is another dimension of our national predicament: Opportunism and political timidity among the elite in general and the intelligentsia in particular.

The Bali story is now well-known. The president decided to restructure and reconstitute the country's central military and political institutions at the end of last year. At the end of the exercise, carried out allegedly by him alone, or with the help of a number of advisers, but definitely outside the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), the balance of political forces in these institutions on the *ethno-religious plane* had shifted heavily in favour of people of Islamic faith and from the northernmost part of the country. This incontrovertible, empirical fact says nothing of its own antecedents, interests, logic of development or motive force. It can therefore be at best the beginning of an objective analysis, not its conclusion.

But a failure to state their fact in any intervention cannot be justified either on the basis of socialist belief or on the basis of patriotism and nationalism. On the contrary, it will be sheer hypocrisy, opportunism or, timidity to fail to state such a crucial fact in a country where ethno-religious contradictions are so real, so widespread, so sharp, and so exploitable by reactionaries and enemies of progress. Genuine patriots and socialists have no business entering a pact of silence.

Appreciating the very deep cynic-

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ism and uncharitableness that characterise social relations and public discussions in this country, I need to emphasise two points over and over again: The institutions affected in Babangida's exercise are state (that is public) institutions, not private, or civil institution; and the sphere of observation is the ethno-religious sphere, not class sphere. But the ethno-religious sphere is very important as I indicated in the last instalment. It is so important that a crisis on it can tear the country apart.

Ethno-religious war, a clear possibility in this country, will at best throw the socialist question into a vacuum. At worst it will split the main bulk of Nigerian socialists themselves and push them behind rival bourgeois leaders — as happened during the Civil War. Genuine patriots and socialists therefore have a duty to themselves and their country to prevent this eventuality. And the beginning of this effort is a fearless intervention.

The first major reaction to the personnel changes came from Lt. General Domkat Bali, who informed the nation, via a press briefing, that he felt personally humiliated over his deployment, from the offices of Defence Minister and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to that of Interior Minister. But he imputed no ethnic or religious motives. His complaint was that the manner of his redeployment violated the principles of confidentiality and professional ethics. Next, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organised and carried out peaceful protest marches led by Archbishops and Bishops in some major cities in the north —

including Kaduna, Bauchi, Jos and Kafanchan. The march in Akure was aborted by the Police.

The Christian Association's letters of protests, handed over to the governors of the respective states, saw the regime's military and political redeployments as a stage in the implementation of a planned islamisation of Nigeria. Many other church leaders across the country issued statements to the same effect.

This was a very serious development, and I told many people so. To put the matter directly: The archbishops and bishops, not hooligans or "undesirable" elements, led protest marches on political matters is a serious and frightening development. Anyone who does not see this, or who tries to play it down cannot be a patriot and cannot be a progressive. Of course, such a person cannot be a socialist.

A few days before the protest marches, while swearing in Navy Commodore Lamba Gwon as a replacement for General Bali in the Interior Ministry, the President had said that in appointment to public offices, "there is no North, no South, and no Middle Belt, no Christianity, no Islam. There is Nigeria and a Nigerian nation." I am charitable. I therefore take it that the President was merely stating a hope and perhaps a personal commitment, but not an objective, empirically verifiable reality. Two senior army officers, who also appear to be powerful, Major-General Dongoyaro, and Major-General Nasko, in widely publicised comments denied that religious and ethnic considerations influenced the appointments. Nasko,

in addition, absolved the President of the charges of dictatorial tendencies. He insisted, however, that since military deployments are exclusively military affairs, civilians

have no business commenting on them. This statement is unpatriotic, provocative and insensitive. It deserves to be denounced by all, including the President himself.

Chief Moshood Abiola led the civilian intervention. He urged Nigerians to accept the changes in good faith and face the challenges of the future because, according to him, "the country is bigger than individuals." He, like Nasko, believed that the President had the right and power to make the appointment. Tai Solarin, on his part, admitted that the appointment were skewed. Saying that he was for all religions, he called on the President to correct the imbalance. Wole Soyinka appealed for calm.

While admitting that the religious and ethnic dimensions of the appointments had not struck him, he saw a positive side to the increased concentration of powers in the hands of the President. The concentration of powers according to Soyinka now makes the President directly answerable for the ways the affairs of the country are run. Soyinka, however, warned against all acts of omission or commission that might disrupt the transition. For he saw the latter as the critical programme on which the President can be judged.

Soyinka's intervention expresses a certain dangerous tendency on the left: Avoiding "national dirt." But then these dirt define Nigeria. I shall come back to this.

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REACTING to the protest march organised by the Christian Association of Nigeria over the alleged "Islamisation of Nigeria" the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) issued a statement calling on Nigerian workers to remain steadfast on their class platform and refuse to be involved in ethno-religious struggles. While a well-known socialist, of the older generation, in a private discussion, expressed happiness at the NLC's statement, his younger compatriot was of the opinion that by dodging a critical national issue, the NLC, as a claimant to the leadership of the country, had committed a great political blunder. The young man — whose name I shall not disclose because the discussion was a private one — was correct, hundred per cent.

The *African Guardian*, in its edition of January 29, succeeded in widening the scope of the debate by conducting a series of interviews with intellectuals and academics. The main responses to the magazine's questions can be summarised. Thomas Ankpe, a Theatre Arts lecturer at the University of Jos, affirmed: "The north is an illusion. We, the Middle Belters, have our own religion, culture, language and des-

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cent... It is ironic that while the Hausa man does not see us as Hausa, southerners think we are Hausa." Obaro Ikime, a renowned professor of history at the University of Ibadan, observed that if we take the Niger-Benue river system as the boundary of the north and the south of Nigeria, then the social and political domination of the south by the north has been a continuous feature of our history. The north-south dichotomy has worsened over time and, according to him it has now been reproduced in the constituent states: Benin-Delta dichotomy (in Bendel State), Ekiti-Ondo dichotomy (in Ondo State) Anambra North versus Anambra South, the Upland-riverine dichotomy (in Rivers State) etc.

The running commentary of the *African Guardian* is appropriate here. According to the magazine, if the "south" within the context of north-south dichotomy means "political co-ordination amongst Igbos, Yorubas and the southern minorities, then there is definitely no south: A geographical entity — yes. The north worked harder to construct a monolith. And the idea of this monolith was accepted

by southerners to the extent of their regarding any Nigerian from across the Niger-Benue as Hausa." Like Ikime, Ade Ajayi, a retired professor of history, feels that the federation is structured against the minority ethnic groups. Furthermore, the use of state power through federal character, quotas, appointments, recruitments have been conducive to the maximisation of the hegemony of the dominant ethnic groups." Ajayi and Ikime are almost correct. They would have been even more so had they added the class perspectives, however slightly.

Osisioma Nwolise, Niyi Osundare and Kunle Amuwo, all teachers at the University of Ibadan stated the formal leftist or marxist position. They admitted the reality of the ethnic question, but insisted that the ruling class manipulates, fuels, and hence perpetuates ethnic-religious contradictions not as an end in itself, but as a means of perpetuating its own rule. While Nwolise said that ethno-religious crisis reached their highest levels under the military, Osundare and Amuwo

were convinced that the military cannot solve them because "military politics drives on the basis of the ethnic question." The leftist academics cannot be faulted. But they are still abstract. For their thesis is as correct for Kenya and Mauritania as it is for Nigeria.

Ola Oni, a leading Nigerian socialist and a retired university teacher of political economy, argued that the ethnic question is a "divisive weapon against organised forces of the masses" and "part of a rather elaborate effort to sustain primitive accumulation and bourgeois rule." Ola Oni and the three academics mentioned above prescribed socialism as solution to the problem because in the words of Amuwo, "with socialism will come the politics of ideology, hence the hope of transcending the primordial defects of religion and ethnicity." The same general formula which has failed to work wonders in Eastern Europe. The question is: What is missing in this formula? For something is definitely missing.

On solutions, Ikime suggested, among other things, the setting-up of a commission to protect ethnic rights and a constitutional court to safeguard the interests of

minorities. Ajayi, on his part, suggested the institution of popular democracy, promotion of durable federation and the democratic use of state power. Now, if we add the prescriptions of Ajayi and Ikime to those of the leftist academics, summarised in the last paragraph, we have what in my opinion, is a close approximation to the correct solution. The fact that the elements of this combination come from different perspectives is very instructive.

The responses from the newspapers were perfectly predictable. While some, unambiguously supported either the North and Islam or the South/Middle Belt and Christianity, others tried to construct a national platform based on *religious pluralism* and *ethnic equality*. But with the exception of *The Guardian* no other newspaper really took an unambiguously nationalistic line. Their interventions on the side of the Nigerian nation were largely apologetic, opportunistic and timid.

These then are the main public responses to the ethnic question as seen through the end-of-year presidential appointments and conferments. A deeper appreciation of their import demands a brief return to the historical foundations of this important question.

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BY the end of last century, Britain had conquered virtually all the future constituent parts of present-day Nigeria. In 1890, the British government proclaimed the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. The Colony and Protectorate of Lagos was, in 1906, merged with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. And in 1914, the two Protectorates were brought together under one single colonial polity — stretching from Sokoto to Calabar, from Maiduguri to Lagos, from Kano to Benin. Thus, forcibly brought together were hundreds of previously *mutually-independent* communities at various levels and stages of evolution: Clans, tribes, ethnic groups, nationalities and nations. This act of creation put in place the first layer of the foundation of the ethnic question in Nigeria.

Later the two protectorates into which Nigeria was divided were re-named Groups of Provinces. In 1939, the Northern and Southern Provinces were broken into Northern, Eastern and Western Groups of Provinces. Though the country was, at this time a single colonial territory, in the formal sense, there were, in practice, two *separate* central administrations. One for the Northern Provinces and the other for the Eastern and Western Provinces. It was only in 1946 that a central legislature for the whole country was established. Simul-

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taneously, three Regional Houses of Assembly, one for each of the three provinces, were established. Thus *national politics*, as distinct from nationalist politics, did not start in Nigeria until 1946, that is, barely 14 years before independence. This point is often forgotten by analysts.

Nigeria emerged as a federation through the Richard's Constitution (1946), the Macpherson Constitution (1951) and a couple of constitutional conferences in 1954 in such a way that it could not escape future ethnic crisis. For the foundation of the ethnic question was cemented by and through these constitutions. In the first place, the Northern Region occupied three-quarters of the land area of the new federation and approximately half the population. In the second place, each region was dominated socially, economically and politically by one ethnic group: The North by the Hausa-Fulani, the East by the Igbo and the West by the Yoruba.

In the third place, almost 400 other ethnic groups scattered in the three regions were minorities. In the North, in addition to Hausa-Fulani who in 1952-53 Census, accounted for half of the population, there were the Kanuri, Nupe, Tiv, Igala, Idoma, Gwarri, Igbirra, Biron, Chamba, Jaba, Sura, Egedde etc. In the East, there were, in addition to the Igbos, who consti-

tuted about three-fifths of the population, the Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Ekoi, Bekwarra, Yalla etc. In the West, in addition to the Yorubas who constituted the majority, there were the Edo, Urhobo, Isoko, Ijaw, Igbo, Itsekiri etc.

In the fourth place, the regions themselves were powerful political centres. The central authorities were weakened to the same degree. This incongruity was a deliberate act. Furthermore, the British colonial authorities employed a method of administration known as the *Indirect Rule*: A method whereby some institutions of the colonised people were employed to rule over them. *It happened that the traditional institutions chosen were those of the dominant ethnic groups.*

The irony of our history is that despite the *passage of time*, the bloody Civil War, the lip-service to national unity, the break-up of the former three regions into 21 states and a Federal Capital Territory, the foundations of the ethnic question have not been weakened. Indeed, not only have their foundations become stronger the dynamics and logic of bourgeois politics lead to the intensification of the question and to further re-inforcement of the foundations.

The bourgeois-feudal ruling

coalition which took over power from the British colonial authorities in 1960, and which has remained in power ever since, has of course, tried to resolve the ethnic question, but they have tried to do this only within the frame-work of neo-colonial capitalist political economy and naturally under its own political rule. Their solution has failed largely because of the *contradictions* and *constraints* of their framework: For the ethnic question which the ruling class seeks to solve is defined in terms of the existing social structure, which guarantees and reproduces its own power. This structure is one of domination-subordination, and it has two dimensions: Class and ethnic.

Let us explain. The feudal-bourgeois coalition is in power; and within this national coalition, the Hausa-Fulani ethnic faction has maintained a hegemony. In other words, and more directly, the capitalist class, constituted nationally, rules over the whole country; and within this ruling class the Hausa-Fulani ethnic faction maintains a hegemony.

This same double-layer structure was reproduced in each of the three regions where one bourgeois ethnic faction exercises hegemony: Hausa-Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Igbo in the East. They have also been reproduced in all the

states that have been created since 1963. This is regrettable, but inevitable. But more regrettable and inevitable is the fact that though the original three regions have ceased to exist — having been carved out into 21 states — the structure of regional-ethnic-religious power-relations to which they originally gave rise, still persist. In other words, North-South, East-West, Majority-Minority contradictions still exist both objectively and in the consciousness of the Nigerian people. For the dominant ethnic bourgeois factions still remain dominant, state-creation notwithstanding.

While the Yoruba and Igbo bourgeoisie from the South (that is the East and the West) complain of domination by the North, the minority bourgeoisie of the West and East complain of domination by the Yoruba and Igbo bourgeoisie. While the minority bourgeoisie in the North (that is in the Middle-Belt and other places) complain of domination by their compatriots, the Hausa-Fulani, the bourgeoisie in the South simply regard all of them as "north." While the various ethnic factions of the bourgeois class are thus engaged in struggles for a new hegemony or for overturning an existing one, the lower classes (workers, peasants, and other toilers) complain not only against ethnic domination as it affected them and as they are led to see it but also against class domination by the bourgeoisie as a class.

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IN Nigeria, the structures of class and ethnic domination-subordination are real and strong. They are not the creation of anyone's imagination. Also real are the experiences of these structures as they are encountered by various classes and groups of people: The bourgeoisie and the working people, in the main. That the minority bourgeoisie suffer domination within their class is obvious. It is historically and empirically verifiable. One just has to study the economic relations in the country, as well as the structure of bourgeois power, the composition of key institutions of state over time and the disparities in economic and social development across the country.

Since the bourgeoisie are in power and are in control of the economy, the internal domination suffered by any of its minority factions is passed down, via relative economic and social under-development, to the working and toiling people of the particular area. This then constitutes the second dimension of the domination suffered by the latter — the other being the class domination. This will become clearer if one compares, for instance, Kano and Benue States or Anambra and Cross River States, or Oyo and Rivers States under the rubrics just indicated, namely: Level of economic and social development, the pattern of capitalist accumulation, power structure, composition of key institutions of state etc.

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The point that is being made is as follows: The working people are objectively united on the basis of the class oppression which they all suffer in the hands of the bourgeoisie but they are divided on the basis of relations of ethnic domination-subordination. It is the latter that unfortunately tends to unite the working people, politically, with the bourgeoisie of their various ethnic groups. The bourgeoisie, being in power, dominates this "unity," champions what is perceived as their common cause and leads the struggle for emancipation from ethnic domination, or in defence and perpetuation of ethnic privileges, as the case may be.

There are therefore two currents united in the political movement of the country: The class current and the ethnic current. The latter current is, today, dominant; and it is led by the bourgeoisie who also lead the movement as a whole. Even when we separate the movement into its broad components — the people and the bourgeois — the ethnic current, the natural home of the bourgeoisie, exists and is active in the people's movement. If it is not pronounced this is only because the leadership of the ethnic current is external to the working people.

The British colonialists bothered about the ethnic questions in Nigeria only to the extent that it impaired their complete control and exploitation of the colony. This is explic-

able. For a foreign power that saw nothing wrong in the enslavement of a whole people could not be bothered by the relative domination of one section of these people by another. The problem was then passed over to the "native" feudal-bourgeois coalition to which the colonial power handed over power at independence, in 1960. The extent to which this ruling coalition has been able to resolve the question 30 years after independence has been shown in the preceding instalments. Our task here is to pose the ethnic question within the framework of socialism.

The Bolshevik Party which led the 1917 Socialist Revolution in Russia endorsed and upheld the right of ethnic groups to self-determination. As it stands, this principle cannot be denied by any true socialist. It is irreducible. But Rosa Luxemburg, one of the founders of the German Communist Party and a revolutionary marxist of great stature argued that it was wrong to speak of "absolute rights" or "rights in general". The rights and wrongs of a given situation, she argued, must be arrived at through an analysis of the given historical circumstances.

But from this correct theoretical formulation, Luxemburg moved over to a maximalist political posi-

tion. Proceeding as a socialist and from the premise of socialist revolution and the emancipation of the working people, she argued that the question of rights is a question of power and must be settled as such. She provided an illustration: "Telling the workers they have the right to self-determination is like telling them that they have the right to eat off gold plates." In other words, rights have to be won, not abstractly proclaimed. This is a maximalist position. It is correct; but it is unhelpful in practical politics.

The socialist movement has not been able to resolve the argument between Lenin and Luxemburg. And the problem is not resolve, as Stalin tried to do, through criminal and cynical abridgement of principles, or by dismissing Luxemburg and sticking to leninist postulations in their general forms. Although Lenin was correct, in general, contemporary developments have taught us to go back to this argument and relate it to the concrete historical experiences. We, in Nigeria, dare not embrace dogmatism or escapism on this question. There is a serious problem to solve.

The Lenin-Luxemburg argument, when stripped of unhelpful maximalist postulations, revolves around two key practical problems. First, it is realised that in a class society, such as Nigeria, to speak of self-determination for the people

"would ordinarily mean the self-determination of the ruling class," the bourgeois class. The working

people would be left in a subordinate position as before. So Luxemburg had argued. But then the socialist movement is a movement against all forms of oppression: Economic, political, social, ethnic, racial, sex, and religious. Socialists cannot deny any of them without running into serious contradictions and facing a huge problem of credibility. Nor can socialists argue that the struggle against particular forms of oppression, such as ethnic oppression, *must wait* until some other forms, such as class oppression, have been removed.

Secondly, socialists in Nigeria and elsewhere painfully realise that the principle of self-determination, if pushed to the extreme, may encourage secession struggles and eventually lead to disintegration. All socialists in Nigeria stand for *One Nigeria*. But should they, on this account — for fear of disintegration — deny the principle of self-determination? Or should they advocate its abridgement? In a situation such as ours where ethno-religious domination exists as an empirically verifiable, objective fact and is reflected in the people's consciousness, and where the possibility of secession advocacy exists, how do socialists reconcile the principle of self-determination with the commitment to preserving and enhancing national unity?

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