

Oil and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: A Case of Study the Niger Delta

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ABSTRACT The centrality of oil in the Nigerian political economy is well established. The paper examines the implications of oil 'exploitation' for the possibility of sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper also explicates the contradictory tendencies of wealth and poverty in Nigeria despite her massive oil resources. It further conceptualizes the class contradictions of the Nigerian state, with particular emphasis on the commonalities of interest between the domestic ruling class and foreign capital. It posits that the political economy engendered by oil is such that renders the nation's rural majority population irrelevant to the task of capitalist accumulation by the ruling class, hence their continuous neglect and suppression. The lack of concern for the development of the instruments of labour by the ruling class is equally problematized against the non-entrepreneurial basis of capital accumulation in the country. The issue of development and its sustainability the paper argues is essentially the issue of power. Given a social relation of production at the apex of which the international imperialist capital and their local collaborators preside, the disempowerment, alienation, impoverishment of the ordinary people across spatial boundaries is an expected outcome. To this end, the paper calls for a multinational class action amongst all the oppressed people of Nigeria irrespective of ethnic affinities. The paper did not have any illusion that this would be an easy task. The first assignment is to provoke the consciousness of uniform social action amongst the people of Nigeria in general and Niger Delta in particular.

INTRODUCTION

The over 7,000 years old Niger Delta; a kind of rainbow coalition, is the abode of five major linguistic groups, namely, Ijaw, Yoruba, Edo, Igbo and those of Cross River origins. The politics of oil has however complicated the universe of membership of the Niger delta. At the first presentation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) Bill to the National Assembly by President Obasanjo only the following States were listed as belonging to the Niger Delta; Rivers, Baysa, Cross River, Ondo, Edo and Delta. Interestingly, when the bill was represented, Imo and Abia States had been included! Contrary to what political and economic exigencies dictates, there is a clear and unmistakable distinction between oil producing states and the geographical area known as the Niger Delta. Therefore, oil production for us is an inelegant classificatory basis of determining the universe that constitutes the Niger Delta.

The Niger Delta is Africa's largest delta. It is also one of the wettest landmass in the world, the ninth vastest drainage area in the world and the third largest mangrove forest. The Niger Delta played more than a passing role in the slave trade. But following the eradication of the illicit trade in

human cargoes, a legitimate trade in agricultural raw materials, mostly palm oil, was introduced. The success of this trade in palm oil was responsible for the historical description of the area as "Oil Rivers". The Niger Delta is highly blessed with oil and gas, fertile agricultural land, aquatic resources, wild life, rubber and palm oil. From the foregoing exposition, a point not in dispute is the ability of the people of the Niger Delta for autonomous and sustainable development. However, the Niger Delta is both a fragile ecosystem, as well as the most endangered delta in the world. (Ojo: 1996)

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF OIL IN NIGERIA

The Second World War terminated the initial search for oil in Nigeria by Shell D'Arcy Exploration Parties, an Anglo-Dutch consortium, who was granted a sole concession over the whole country, in 1937. This search however resumed in 1946, after the war. In 1958, Shell-BP started commercial production and exportation of oil in Oloibiri, at the rate of 5,000 barrels per day. This production rate soon doubled within the next one year. With the sole concession policy abandoned and exclusive

exploration rights introduced to encourage companies of other nationalities in line with a policy of accelerating the pace of exploration, in 1961, Mobil, Gulf (now Chevron), Agip, Safrap (now TotalfinaElf), Tenneco and Amoseas (now Texaco) joined in the search for oil, both onshore and offshore, with considerable success.

One observable fact is that most of the oil companies listed above and those still operating in Nigeria are from both Britain and the United States of America. This is in no way a mere coincidence. The truth as captured by Jean Marie Chevalier (1980) is that, "the history of the oil industry is the history of imperialism". The dominant position of Britain in the balance of power equation of the world in the early part of the last century assured her hegemonic position in the global oil network, and with the redrawing of the global configuration of power after the Second World War, a situation that threw up America as the new centre of imperialism, Britain was relegated next to the United States.

This international character of the oil companies as we shall see later is part of the problematic of the sustainable development in the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. However, the balance of power between the Nigerian state and the local communities where these oil conglomerates are located is such that favours the oil companies. Both the Mineral Oil Ordinance and the Petroleum Profit Tax Ordinance, both of 1959, were highly skewed in favour of the oil companies.

Oil occupies an important place and, plays a pivotal role in the Nigerian political economy. According to Obi (1997), oil accounts for 95% of export earnings and over 80% of national revenue. The growth of oil revenue greatly influenced the activities of the Nigerian state. The public sector expenditure for instance increased significantly. The government was able to invest a large amount of revenue in building social and economic infrastructure. According to a World Bank country report (1990), "the expenditure of the Federal Government doubled between 1973 and 1974 and doubled again between 1974 and 1975." Oil also enabled the Nigerian state to prosecute the thirty months Nigerian civil war without any form of external borrowings. There is a sense in which it could be argued that the issue of who controls the nation's oil resources was part of the underlining factors, which ignited the Nigerian civil war.

The operation of the oil business in Nigeria involved both private and public actors. While the private actors are mainly foreign oil transnationals, with some pockets of local oil marketers and intermediate actors, the public sector actors are various agencies of the state, such as The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), etc. This however is not to suggest that the dichotomy between the private and public sectors is forever held in a watertight compartment. Starting from 1971, the Nigerian state entered into a collaborative business alliance with foreign capital in the oil sector. It however acquired equity holding in both ELF and AGIP, which as at 1974, was as high as fifty-five per cent.

The linkage between oil and the Nigerian state has often led to the characterization of Nigeria as a rentier state. This is so because with the discovery of oil, the traditional agricultural and mineral exports like cocoa, palm oil, groundnut, cotton, tin, coal, etc that hitherto supplied the nation's foreign exchange and contributed the larger percentage of her Gross National Products (GNP) were relegated. The consequence of this being the streamlining the percentages of people that are involved in the production of the national wealth. With oil, only a very small proportion of the nation's population are directly involved in the production of the nation's wealth. And with the technology for oil exploration and exploitation totally in the hands of foreigners, the Nigerian states and its citizens are primarily reduced to commissioned agents.

This incidence of non-productive national revenue base evidenced the growth of authoritarianism, political alienation of the people, corruption, environmental degradation and conspicuous consumption to the disadvantages of national development. The development of underdevelopment and the authoritarian tactics of the state in Nigeria in general and the Niger Delta in particular can be understood in this context.

PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Darwin evolutionary theory's remarkable legacy in the biological sciences in particular and sciences in general was etching a permanent place for the issue of development. Based on this

Darwinian position, organisms started being accorded the ability to change and transformed into a higher, better and higher species. Flowing from this, development in human society started to be seen as a quantitative and qualitative transformation from a state of dependency, poverty, disease, autocracy, backwardness, social decadence, and political subjugation, to one characterized by freedom, abundance, good health, democracy, civility, egalitarianism, social welfare and security, as well as political independence.

The above conceptualisation of development find concurrence with Langdon (1994: 123) position which see development in a state as, "The elimination of poverty among its inhabitants and the emergence of a relatively egalitarian and participatory society, with an advanced material standard of living'. Quite unlike the development implied by Darwin evolutionary theory, development of human society is premised on certain agencies and the coincidence of the interest of these agencies with the implications of development.

The primary agencies of development are the state, the ruling class and its representatives in government. It is in this context that Marx and Engels position in the Communist Manifesto that "the ruling ideas of every society, is the idea of the ruling class" becomes meaningful. It must be stressed that the question of the desirability of development is never accidental, nor is it ever answered objectively. As Ake (1989: 43) argued "Somebody has to determine that development is desirable, that a particular kind of development should be pursued and in a particular manner."

The second condition for engendering development is what may be called a "barter imperative", that is, the condition of a sort of double coincidence of want between the ruling hegemony and the imperatives of development. In other words, the possibility of development, or the character of development is a function of the how the ruling coalition in a state perceives it in relations to its own objective class interest, both on the short and long runs.

The third condition flows from an awareness of the position of Ake (1989) that the state is a specific modality of domination, hence why it is necessarily a living contradiction, a contradiction of interests of powers and of social forces. Consequently, the nature of, and the ability of the hegemony class to maintain its hegemony

and the counter-force deployed by the dominated and oppressed classes in reaction to their domination goes a long way to condition the possibility or otherwise of development. Quite often, as the situation in the Niger Delta and in other part of Nigeria aptly shows, governance is to a large extent dominated by politics, which in turn finds expression in the domination, exploitation, and demobilization of the popular masses. In this way, scarce resources that would otherwise have been used for developmental purposes goes into building arsenal of terror and a militarized state.

From the foregoing, it is understandable why the developmental ideology pursued by the country is one hinged on the capitalist development agenda, despite its obvious drawbacks and crisis potentials. The next concern is interrogating the problematic of capitalist development agenda as championed by the Nigerian ruling class.

Given the liabilities of the capitalist development path and its neo-liberal metamorphosis, as manifest in the commodification of social goods like water, healthcare, education, and the institutionalisation of the primacy of profit, the pertinent question is whether capitalism can promote development in Nigeria? Expressed differently, the objective is to critique the possibility of the capitalist ideological orientation promoting development in Nigeria, and by extension, examine its capability of ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria. This becomes particularly germane against the background that the crisis and contradictions engendered by dependent capitalism in Nigeria prevent effective planning. This constitutes a fundamental obstacle to the possibility of any development, and by extension of sustainable development.

The year 1980 was very important for global developmental thinking concerning the issue of sustainable development. 1980 marked the beginning of a global fear that mankind monumental development. The year the Industrial Revolution, and more importantly after the end of the World War II may turn out to be a fluke. There was palpable and justifiable fear that the world may witness large-scale developmental reversal due to the careless and non-programmatic conventional developmental path under the influence of capitalist self-interest that was hitherto followed.

Consequently, globally, questions as to the cost and implications of present development on the possibilities of future development and the

lives of future generations become serious issues, which commanded worldwide concern. With the Brundtland report; the report of the World Commission for Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), the issue of sustainable development gained popular currency.

The WCED report called for a change in the conventional development paradigm for one oriented towards sustainable development and in which the concern for the long-term survival of humanity is accorded primacy. The report thus defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED, 1987: 8). This definition has been criticized as a statement of objectives rather than a definition. Because of the confusion and ambiguity of the WCED definition, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1992 put forward three definitions; sustainable development, sustainable economy and sustainable living. According to UNEP (1992):

“Sustainable development means improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystem.”

“Sustainable economy is the product of sustainable development; it maintains its natural resource base and it can continue to develop by adapting to changing circumstances and through improvements in knowledge organization, technical efficiency, and wisdom.”

“Sustainable living indicates the lifestyle of an individual, who feels the obligation to care for nature and every human individual, and who acts accordingly.” (Emphasis original).

A more embracing definition was that by UNU (1996) which see sustainable development as:

“Consisting of policies, strategies, plans, production systems, and technologies used in executing projects and programmes aimed at satisfying real human needs in perpetuity while maintaining environmental quality, biodiversity, the resilience of the ecosystems, and the welfare of all organisms by national, regional, and global levels.”

The ingredients for sustainable development, according to WCED (1987), include:

“A political system that secures effective citizen participation; an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant basis; a social

system that provides for solution for the tensions arising from disharmonious development; a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development; a techno-logical system that can search continuously for new solutions; an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; and an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.” (Emphasis original)

Similarly IUCN/UNEP/WWF (1991), in “Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living” articulated the following nine principles for sustainable development: respect and care for the community of life; improve the quality of human life; conserve the earth’s vitality and diversity; keep within the earth’s carrying capacity; change personal attitudes and practices; enable communities to care for their environments; provide a national framework for integration, development, and conservation, and create a global alliance.

From the above, the primacy of qualitative and meaningful existence of the people as central *desiderata* for sustainable development is firmly established. To this end, the people must have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of development, just as they must be empowered intellectually and technically to take decisions and be consciously engaged in the developmental process. The political, social, economic, and technological systems must be harnessed in an organic synergy that contributes to bringing out the best in the individual citizen and the environment.

It is relevant at this point to pose the question, to what extent is the politics, policies and programmes of the Nigerian state and the operations and practices of the Multi-national oil companies operating in the Niger Delta fashioned towards the realization of sustainable development? This is the concern of the next section of this paper.

THE NIGERIAN STATE: A REVIEW

The Nigerian state insertion into the global capitalist system was a deliberate act of Western imperialism to have the country as one of the peripheral social formations for the procurement of slaves in the first instance and, later raw materials and cheap labour for the development of Western capitalism. When trade became the

dominant concern of the relationship between Nigeria and its imperialist lords, it was an unequal one. Following the scramble and partition of Africa in Berlin in 1883 amongst European powers, to consolidate its hold on her imperial colony, the British colonial authorities formally took-over direct political control of Nigeria at the break of the twentieth century.

The combine effects of its trading policies, political tendencies and educational and socialization processes promoted the development of a class of local elite with the same organic interest with those of the colonizers. The totality of colonial experience in Nigeria was a veritable case of exploitation, brutalisation and injustice. The colonial state was in essence one that was anti-people, anti-development and irresponsible. The power of the colonial state in Nigeria as elsewhere were not only absolute but arbitrary (Ake; 2001: 2).

While capitalism despite its numerous limitations was a system with the potential to increase production; though the majority of the producers are alienated from their products, colonial capitalism was a different ball game. Contrary to limited state participation, which normally informs the logic of capitalism, the variant institutionalised in Nigeria involved a robust state participation. Primacy was given to trading and commercial activities instead of production and manufacturing, with the centrality of foreign capital to the economic existence of the country firmly and irrevocably established. This ensured that the entrepreneurial class needed for capitalist growth were never developed, hence the state acted as a platform for primitive capitalist accumulation. The point being underscore is that the multi-dimensional issue of corruption, authoritarianism, development of underdevelopment and over-centralization of power in the hands of the federal government has its historic root in the politics of the colonial period in Nigeria.

It was against this background that we agreed with Williams (1980: 11) assertion that, "Nigeria suffered, not only from the development of capitalism, but also from the backwardness of the development." The long-run implications of this process, which impacted greatly on post-colonial politics in the country, is the inability of the country to assure the development of her citizens despite her enormous human and material resources.

The struggle for independence in Nigeria for many reasons was a colossal failure. The nationalist agitations in Nigeria had two major objectives. One, at the initial stage, it was to seek a minimal accommodation for the local elite in the functioning and benefits of the spoils of colonial rule. Second, was to ensure the direct control of the exploitative state apparatus already institutionalised by colonial autocracy. It was therefore not surprising that ideological issues, agenda for development and more importantly a programme for the transformation of the obnoxious colonial state structure never formed part of the demands during the nationalist agitations. For all intent and purpose, the Nigerian independence struggle; if at all we can call it a struggle, was seriously speaking, a bread and butter business. It would therefore have been surprising to have a progressive consensus agenda for the transformation of the country by the nationalists. It was so bad that the colonial power were in most cases the mediator in the cutthroat struggles between the so-called comrades in the struggle for Nigeria's independence.

At independence in 1960, the non-transformation of the colonial state that was inherited ensured the continuation of colonialism in the grab of neo-colonialism, with the economy and its ruling class operators totally dependent on Western imperialism. Expectedly, liberal capitalism was the informing ideology for development. Consequently, from the very beginning the masses were alienated from the leadership. Given their inability to mobilize the masses for development; in fact they deliberately demobilized and repressed the masses; the problem of development and its sustainance assumed serious dimensions. The net effect of the ideological bankruptcy, visionless leadership, elite conspiracy with imperialism, state alienation from the people and lack of automatization combine to engender underdevelopment, poverty, squalor, unemployment, diseases, maladministration, corruption and other social malaise.

What comes out of the foregoing is that the Nigerian ruling class is not only dependent; it is parasitic and very corrupt. Lacking any meaningful material base for the perpetuation of its privileged control, the instrumentalities of the state comes in handy as a tool for primitive capitalist accumulation. And as we shall see presently, with the dominant position assumed

by oil in the political economy of Nigeria, the Multinational Corporations in control of the technologies for the exploitation of oil from the Niger Delta on behalf of the state and its decadent class becomes untouchable, while the just desire of the people of the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general for quality existence continue to be treated with contempt, making authoritarianism a preferred formula of governance in place of democracy. And when democratic pretences becomes inevitable, deliberate effort is made to caricature it and disrobes it of any meaningful content.

OIL, THE NIGERIAN STATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGER DELTA

The Nigerian state assumed affective control of the oil wealth in the Niger Delta area through a number of legal instrumentalities: Section 15 of Decree 51 of 1969, the Land Use Decree of 1978, Section 40 (3) of the 1979 Constitution, and the 1999 Constitution. What all these legislations have in common was the conferment of monopolistic power on the federal government as collector and dispenser of oil revenues. The usage of the oil resources has been a cause for serious disagreement among Nigerians. The spread of the benefits has been highly uneven and inequitably dispensed.

While oil from the Niger Delta ensured economic growth in Nigerian urban enclaves peopled by the major ethnic group in the country, contrary to expectations oil has only ensured the underdevelopment of the Niger Delta. Nigeria, by and large, has mismanaged its oil resources. Despite the monumental incomes realized from oil, the country has not been able to put in place a solid foundation for its industrialization, with over eighty per cent of her people living below the poverty line.

One sad aspect of the oil equation in Nigeria was the disappearance of the groundnut pyramids in the North, the cocoa export in the West and the palm oil trade in the East that were hitherto major foreign exchange earners for the country. From a net exporter of food, Nigeria today import majority of the food needed for her population. The country has turned to a dumping ground with a ruling elite whose unquenchable appetite for foreign products knows no bound. The debt peonage, which gained prominence in the early

1980's, was the direct fallout of this situation. The attempt to redress this problem within the liberal paradigms of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) imposed by the Bretons Woods financial institutions; IMF and World Bank, was a monumental failure and has as further compounded the nation's woes.

An important concern threw up by oil which is of direct concern to our present effort, has to do with the destruction of the pre-capitalist modes of production which operated side-by-side with the capitalist mode before the discovery of oil in commercial quantities and formed the basis of the economic wealth and development programmes of the three regional governments in the First Republic. The prevailing mode of production before the discovery of oil was one that is rooted in the agriculture culture of the people. And since the creation of wealth for accumulation was dependent on the people, they tend to matter in the development calculations of the ruling class. In the same way, the people have a stake and can in their own way affect the policies of government. In a sense, the agricultural mode of capital accumulation engendered democracy, accountability, transparency and responsibly governance.

With oil, all these changed. The means of accumulation now rest with the Multinational Corporations. Production in this highly technical endeavour became restricted and limited in character. Only a few are thus involved. The majority of the people were alienated from the process of creating the national wealth. And with this, the concern of the ruling class for the developmental needs of the people nose-dived. It thus makes economic sense for the survival and continued hegemony of the ruling class to forge alliance with the oil cabal, despite the obvious knowledge that on the long run the development of the country would be criminally compromised. The alliance and coincidence of interest between foreign capital and the Nigerian ruling class has compromised the issue of best practices in the operations of the oil companies such that oil spillages and environment pollution goes on with reckless abandon. Rather than check the oil companies, the various factions of the Nigerian ruling class are engaged in the struggle over the rents for the oil operations.

Given the centric tendencies foisted by colonialism and the political dominance of the three ethnic groups; Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo,

oil made the federal government the conduits of socio-economic struggles, thus institutionalising the tyranny of the major ethnic group and subjugation of the minorities mostly in the Niger Delta area. The concentration of money in the hands of the few, increased corruption in the system and exacerbated national systemic asymmetry. The Nigerian state and its ruling class became more engrossed in the rent collecting activities negating the need for development planning, sustainability and the issue of the development of the technology of labour. Under this situation, the struggle for, and control of power at the federal level becomes the *utima ditto* of political actions, with politician seeking the 'political kingdom' so that every other thing may follow in threes.

Following from the above scenario, it is not surprising that the potential wealth of the Niger Delta has turned into an apparent poverty. Majority of the Niger Delta people are living a subhuman life. This is because they happen to be minorities and powerless in the dynamic power calculus between the imperialist forces represented by the multinational oil corporations and the ruling oligarchy in Nigeria. As noted in passing earlier, the environmental degradation by the oil cabals in the Nigerian Niger Delta cannot be otherwise given the conspiracy of state officials and the non-existence of environmental friendly laws which is in fact part of the attraction for the operations of the oil companies in Nigeria in the first instance. The result was the destruction of the agricultural life style of the people while oil spillage continues to make fishing, which is the major traditional occupation of the Niger Delta people both difficult and unprofitable. In the same vein, the criminal flaring of gas in the delta region has led to acid rain with the attendant harmful effects on the people, their environment, vegetation and survival chances.

The destruction of the terrestrial and aquatic flora of the Niger Delta is no doubt on a genocidal proportion. According to reports by the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources quoted by the Constitutional Rights Project, there were 2,676 cases of oil spillage between 1976 and 1990. It attributed 38% of them to equipment malfunction. Corrosion of equipment, according to the same report, accounted for 21 %, while sabotage informed a meagre 3% of the total oil split in the specific period. The oil companies in

Nigeria operated with the least care for the environmental impact of their operations in mind.

Central to the Niger Delta crisis and development has been the issue of '*who gets what when and how*' of the proceeds from the oil resources found in the belly of the soil of the Niger Delta people. The underdevelopment and poverty of the people of the Niger Delta have left them no other choice than to confront their oppressors and demand for justice and control over the usage of their resource, as it was when groundnut, cocoa and palm oil from the three dominant ethnic groups were the mainstay of the Nigerian economy.

The state and her multinational partners have responded in three major ways to these justifiable demands of the people of the Niger Delta. First, state violence has been visited on the people with the multinational oil companies, especially Shell-BP, bankrolling the procurement of the instruments of terror. The criminal suppression of the Ogoni by the River State Internal Security Task Force, under the Abacha administration and the final executive of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others Ogoni's by the state is till very fresh in our memory. There is no part of the Niger Delta that has been spared of the state's authoritarian tactics in defence of the oil multinationals. The rape of Choba and the defilement of Odi in the life of the present Obasanjo administration confirm that the ruling class in Nigeria has a common position and agreement on the Niger Delta issue, the form of government in power, notwithstanding.

Second, is the deliberate engineering of communal discords and conflicts among the people of the Niger Delta by the state and their imperialist patrons. The Ogoni's had been involved in bloody clashes with neighbours like the Okrika's, Afam and Andoni's. The Eleme people and their Okrika brothers have had cause to fight it out. For a very long time, starting with the issue of relocation of local government headquarter during the Babangida administration, the Ijaw, Itshekiri and their Ilaje neighbours has been engaged in perpetual wars with many lives and millions of properties consumed in the process. Warri has being transformed to a perpetual theatre of war, with commercial activities and normal living impossible. There is no gainsaying the fact that the state induced crisis and violence in the Niger Delta would not give

room for development, talk less, of one that will be sustainable.

The third response by the state was the setting up of "development" commissions. First was the establishment on July 10, 1992, of the Oil Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) with a vote of 3 % of the budget for the development of the oil producing areas. With the second coming of Olusegun Obasanjo, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established with similar mandate and an increased budgetary allocation of 13 %. That the various commissions have not succeeded, and may in fact not succeed in developing the Niger Delta is rooted in the structural distortions and contradictions of the Nigerian social formations that are being glossed over. At best, the commissions are able to embark on some seemingly developmental programmes like, road construction, provision of social services like schools, health care facilities etc, but the real issue of development which in our conceptualisation must involve the eradication of poverty and the advancement in the quality of life of the people are left unattended to.

This could not be otherwise, as the informing ideology of action is a framework rooted in exploitation, authoritarianism and the survival of the fittest. The OMPADEC and NDDC initiatives is neither participatory nor developmental. It is, in fact, anti-development to the extent that it was a technique for disempowerment of the developing revolutionary consciousness in the people of the Niger Delta area. If it ever achieved anything, it is to the extent that it serve as another avenue for primitive accumulation for members of the Nigerian ruling class from the Niger Delta area.

It is instructive to know that the former chairman of the OMPADEC, Prof. Evic Opiah is still at large as a fugitive offender on account of his activities in OMPADEC. Sadly, the recent global increase in the price of oil has not impacted in any meaningful way on the living standards of Nigerians in general and Niger Delta people in particular. Neither has the government shown any creativity or resourcefulness towards channelling the excess revenue for the industrialization and ultimate development of the country. Like the Gulf Oil windfall that was mismanaged under the Babangida Military Presidency, it is yet another tea party for the members of the Nigerian ruling

class. The poor, especially the people of Niger Delta can peril. Bye-bye to development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Niger Delta has been in the centre of the storm threatening the very survival of the Nigerian state. What we have there presently is the peace of the graveyard. The fact that the nation's get the lion share of her resources from its soil should compel attention. The decay of the Niger Delta is symptomatic of the general decadence of the entire Nigerian state and the unpardonable poverty her people have come to be subjected to. It was against this background that agitation for resource control, sovereign national conference and much more fundamentalist and separatist tendencies has developed. The situation in the Niger Delta can only be ignored at our collective peril, especially now that armed militia has taken up the struggle in the area.

The first major recommendation is the need to radically transform the Nigerian state. To achieve genuine development and a sustainable one for that matter, the state and the social relations of production must be radically transformed. The people must be central to the issue of development. This would be highly impossible within the ambit of the neo-colonial and dependent political economy in which Nigeria is presently embedded. This advocated transformation has implications for the character and composition of the economy. Economic liberalization in the sense of radically democratising it to serve the needs of the greatest good of the greatest number must be institutionalised. Production should no longer alienate the people, and social agenda shall have primacy to profiteering. People in whose territory a given resources is domesticated should be accorded a prime control over it without prejudice to the rights of other members of the commonwealth of Nigerian nation to benefit there from.

Second, politically, the control of the instrumentalities of state must be democratised. This would involve widen the support base of the state. Here, concern is for a popular and genuine democracy and not cosmetic multi-partism. The people should no longer be seen as inconsequential to matters of governance as ultimately they are the reason for the existence of government. Justice, equity, equality and rule

of law should be the guiding principles of social intercourse among the various units of the Nigerian state. Everybody should be given a sense of belonging.

At the policy level, the ideology at the back of our development imperative has obviously failed. To this end, a new development orientation in which the people constitute the central issue of development and development is inward looking and internally propelled must be institutionalised. The failure of the development agenda of the Breton Wood School as championed by the World Bank and IMF is indicative of their irrelevance to the goal of sustainable development in Nigeria. Until our developmental agenda is radically transformed as advocated, and informed by socialist principles, the goal of sustainable development in Nigeria would continue to be a mere mirage.

Third, the over dependence on oil and the neglect of agriculture is a sad compliment to nation's drive for development. This has resulted in serious leakages of scarce foreign exchange as the country is turned into a dumping ground for all manners of foreign products. Furthermore, little or no attention has been paid to the need to develop appropriate technology in the country. Import-substitution industrialization, which was hoped would ensure the transfer of the needed technologies, has proved unrealistic. The various universities and polytechnics in the country should be supported and challenged to come up with appropriate technologies suitable for the Nigerian society. It is a hopeless illusion to envisage development without a technological base to backup such noble aspiration. The sooner we understand that nobody will transfer technology to use the better for us. Interestingly, one of the major preoccupation of the Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA) of the World Trade Organization; the principal agent of the globalization regime, is the protection of Intellectual properties.

Furthermore, the government should use its leverage to change and strengthen the preventive and safety requirements for all drilling activities. The use of state-of-the-art technology in exploration activities must be made mandatory. There is urgent need for a reform of the legal regime pertaining to pollution of all kinds, with particular reference to the Niger Delta area, such that claims for environmental pollution would be more justifiable. In line with this, legal

redtapism and loopholes should be plugged so as to assure the people more chance for justice when the oil companies violate their environmental rights.

There is an urgent need to develop the human capital of the Niger Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. In this wise, production of affordable goods and service for the ordinary people, qualitative public education, healthcare, housing, energy, water and full and gainful employment are a sine qua non to our drive for sustainable development both in the Niger Delta and Nigeria as a whole. This is definitely incompatible with the attempt at rolling back the state currently going on in Nigeria under the lordship of the international imperialist consensus.

CONCLUSION

The goal of development and sustainable development in the Niger Delta and Nigeria are both desirable, realistic and achievable given the proper understanding of the under-currents which we have problematized in the foregoing pages. This must however be rooted in the unmitigated knowledge that capitalism is a very ruthless system and its guiding law is survival of the fittest. Hence, the path to progress lies in radically negating its imperatives.

For the Niger Delta people, their struggle if it is to succeed must be placed in the correct epistemological perspectives. Presently, their understanding of the dialectic of the struggle and the issues involved is to say the least perfunctory. Two fundamental errors presently characterized the struggle of the people of the Niger Delta; First, allowing their struggle for sustainable development to be informed by the insatiable appetite of the local faction of the Nigerian ruling class among them, who are using them as a tool for negotiation for a larger cut from the national cake which is domicile in their backyard. They are sure to abandon the people of this area when they get a big enough concession from their comrades in exploitation. By this time, many of the people would have lost their lives with the existential conditions of those still living largely unchanged.

The second is the failure to situate the developmental struggle of the Niger Delta within the preview of a larger Nigerian agenda. Oppression has no ethnic colouration. While the

patron-client relationship foisted by the combination of the feudalist and the capitalist modes of production in Nigeria allow for some tokenist benefits on ethnic lines, exploitation and oppression are common decimal of the masses across the Nigerian divide. It should be understood that the crisis in the Niger Delta is a manifestation of the deepening crisis of global capitalism. Any attempt at separation from the iron rule of the exploiting nation in the name of self-determination would only provide a justification for ethnic cleansing. An associated problem, has to do with the allowance the people of the Niger Delta continue to give their oppressors to divide and atomize them in order to make their (oppressors) victor certain and decisive.

The promise of paradise if all groups go their separate ways is no less as cruel a hoax as the one made by the early nationalists during the struggle for independence. The rights of self-determination have never been granted to an oppressed people under capitalism except by exceptional network and concerted action of the working class irrespective of ethnic origins. It is for this, that a united and coordinated struggle by the working class and the peasants all over Nigeria is the sure basis of national liberation, freedom, egalitarianism, popular democracy, the total repudiation of underdevelopment and the institutionalisation of sustainable development in the Niger Delta, as well as Nigeria.

Let us conclude by paraphrasing Ogunsanwo (1985: 84), the road to peace and sustainable development in the Niger Delta and Nigeria is the same road to emanate from a non-capitalist development strategy, as it is this road alone that can end massive poverty and social injustice. A three-dimensional ideological, cultural and technological revolution is a condition sine qua

non for the cherished goal. There is no alternative.

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