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MAJOR-GENERAL IBRAHIM BABANGIDA
President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Introduction

August 27, 1985 marked another landmark in the chequered history of Nigeria as an independent nation.

A new military administration with Major-General Ibrahim Babangida as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces was born on that day after a successful putsch which was heralded with jubilation by an overwhelming majority of Nigerians.

*The new administration knew very well that it has an uphill task but accepted the challenge of revamping and restructuring the economy that was so badly battered by unpatriotic Nigerian politicians of the second republic. From the inception of the Babangida Administration, it was clear to all and sundry from his pronouncements and early actions that the objectives of the administration were **ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, SELF RELIANCE** and an ardent belief in the fundamental rights of the individual. The general assessment is that the Administration has performed reasonably well in its one year in office.*

It is to the efforts of the administration towards its set goals in its first year in office that this book is dedicated.

August 1986,
Lagos.

Federal Ministry of Information & Culture,
Domestic Publicity Division,
Ikoyi.



COMMODORE EBITU UKIWE
Chief of General Staff,

Contents

	Pages
Fundamental Human Rights.....	7
Social Services	13
Rural Development.....	24
Foreign Policy.....	33
Economic Strategy.....	41
Politics of the Future — Towards 1990.....	48

Fundamental Human Rights

One basic development in the post world war two period is the emergence of a universal code of ethics to control, or at least influence the behaviour of states on the issue of human rights and freedom. This has come about through the inclusion of Article 55 in the United Nations Charter, as well as the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Article 55 specifically enjoins members of the United Nations to take actions individually and collectively towards the achievement of "universal respect for, and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language and religion".

From history and current events in many countries of the world today, we know that the fundamental human rights of individuals have been severely violated and the United Nations appears not to be in a position to compel nations to abide by Article 55 of its charter. Many nations defy UN resolutions on this issue on the principle of domestic jurisdiction.

In spite of this internal sovereignty argument, a number of states have taken far-reaching measures to protect and promote the fundamental human rights of their citizens. Available records have shown that human rights violations are prevalent in third world countries. It is therefore a thing of commendation where one finds a Government in a developing country like Nigeria making the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of her citizens one of the cardinal points of its internal policies.

Such commendation is even more desirable when two factors are taken into consideration. The first is that the government is a military regime with all the forces of coercion at its disposal to force everybody into line, if it so wishes. The second is that the government is faced with very difficult economic problems, a situation most governments in developing countries have used to govern arbitrarily and even resort to the application of martial laws which often involves the total or partial suspension of basic human rights.

Before one undertakes a detailed examination of specific actions taken by the Babangida administration to promote and protect fundamental human rights during the first year of its

existence, it is pertinent to examine some of the provisions on human rights in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, as well as briefly examine what the situation was during the Buhari administration. This will make for a better appreciation of the human rights stance of the Babangida administration.

Constitutional provisions for human rights in Nigeria date back to 1957, with the setting up of the Willink Commission by the British colonial administration to investigate minority problems and recommend positive measures to resolve them. Rather than provide for the creation of new states in the country, the Commission recommended the provision for fundamental rights in the Nigerian Constitution.

Following the Commission's recommendations, provisions were made for fundamental rights in the Nigerian Constitution of 1960. With this precedent, every subsequent Constitution has provided for fundamental human rights. The 1979 Constitution for instance, among other provisions, had specific provisions on human rights for all Nigerian citizens regardless of ethnic and linguistic background, sex, creed, or position on the ladder of social and/or economic stratification. In the case of procedural rights, the constitution makes provisions for such rights as habeas corpus, fair hearing, representation by counsel, the status of innocence when charged with a crime until proven guilty by a court of law, and the right to be informed in writing of the facts and grounds for his arrest or detention.

It is now common knowledge that the Buhari administration promulgated a number of draconian decrees which critics said, flagrantly violated the fundamental human rights. Also, the controversial Decree 4 (Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation Decree) severely curtailed the freedom of the press. As was eloquently brought to light by Chief Rotimi Williams in the case of Tunde Thompson, Nduka Irabor and the Guardian Press Versus The State, the decree was drafted in such a way as to make the publication of the truth a punishable offence, if a public officer felt embarrassed by such publication.

Under Decree Two of 1984, a number of citizens and some foreign nationals were detained without specific charges or trial, for long periods.

The Counterfeit Currency (Special Provisions) Decree of 1984 provided for death penalty for certain offences; imprison-

ment for 21 years for some and imprisonment for 10 years for others under the decree. Perhaps the most unpopular law was Decree 20 (The Special Tribunal — Miscellaneous Offences) 1984. Although it was promulgated on the 6th of July 1984, its actual date of commencement was backdated to 31st December, 1983. Any sentence imposed or awarded by the tribunal was subject to confirmation, variation or disallowance by the then Supreme Military Council, and if confirmed, varied or disallowed, the sentence was thereafter not liable to review or be the subject of an appeal.

Membership of the tribunal included a chairman, who was to be a Judge of the Federal High Court, the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory or the High Court of a state; three members of the Armed Forces not below the rank of a major or its equivalent; and a police officer. Offences triable under the decree included arson on public building, damage to public property, electrical cables, tampering with oil pipelines, tampering with telephone wires, unlawful exportation of minerals, destruction of highways, tampering with postal matters, forging and uttering of negotiable instruments, unlawful exportation of food stuff, selling prohibited goods; dealing in cocaine and other hard drugs, cheating at examination; and unlawful dealing in petroleum products.

The penalty ranged from death by firing squad for certain category of offences through 21, 10, and 5 years imprisonment for various others. It was in accordance with the provisions of this decree that three young Nigerians: Batholomew Owoh, Bernard Ogedegbe and Lawal Ojulope, were dispatched to the great beyond, via the firing squad in the morning of April 10, 1985.

It should be clear from the above details that Decree 20 was a flagrant violation of human rights especially given its provisions for the death penalty, as well as its retrospective nature.

From its inception on the 27th of August 1985, the Babangida's administration has not hidden its abhorrence of such draconian laws or disguised its adoption of fundamental human rights and basic freedom as the cornerstone of its domestic policy. Its actions for the past one year have been consciously tailored towards the realisation of this laudable policy. The government has done this in two main ways: amendment and abrogation of some decrees bordering on human rights and

the setting up of tribunals to review sentences, punishment and release of detainees.

In his maiden broadcast to the nation, the president repealed the obnoxious Decree 4 with immediate effect and ordered the immediate release of all journalists detained under the decree. According to him, "we do not intend to lead a country where individuals are under the fear of expressing themselves". He went on to state categorically that "the responsibility of the media to disseminate information shall be exercised without undue hinderance". It is to the credit of the government that it has not in anyway gone back on its position on press freedom.

Also, the Counterfeit Currency (Special Provisions) Decree of 1984 has been amended by this administration. By the amendment, "life imprisonment" has been substituted for "death" in various relevant sections. Under the amendment also, the imprisonment terms for certain categories of offences have been reduced. Another amendment to this decree is that the tribunals constituted under the Exchange Control (Anti-Sabotage) Decree 1984 shall have jurisdiction to try offenders under the Counterfeit Currency (Special Provisions) Decree. Decree 20 has also been amended to substitute life imprisonment for death by firing squad. However, details of the amendment are not yet available at the time of writing.

Apart from the amendment of these decrees, government has further demonstrated its human rights policy by taking concrete measures to decongest the prisons and make prisoners serve their terms in less inhuman conditions. These measures include occasional visits to prisons by judges to free certain categories of prisoners. The government has also embarked on the construction of new prisons and the expansion of existing ones, inspite of its lean finances, in a further move to decongest the prisons.

To ensure that justice is not denied the less-privileged, by virtue of their inability to pay for the services of legal practitioners, the scope of the legal aid scheme has been widened to cover claims in respect of personal accidents. Under the amended legal aid decree which came into operation on March 14, 1986, the National Council of Ministers may, by regulation now provide for the giving of legal aid on a contributory basis to a person whose income exceeds N1,500.00 as against the previous bar of income not exceeding N1,500.00

In the celebrated Fela/Okoro-Idogu affair, government's action was based on the general practice in civilised societies where human rights are consciously promoted and protected. In such societies, doubts in legal cases are normally resolved in favour of the accused. Accordingly, a categorical government statement on the issue said that "the misconduct of Justice Okoro-Idogu in this case has raised a doubt about the impartiality of the court's decision. In all such cases, such doubts are resolved in favour of the accused person". In pursuance of this, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti was unconditionally released from prison with immediate effect, "in the interest of justice and fairplay". No other single action demonstrates the government's human rights stance better, than the release of some detainees and the review of the cases of others.

In fact, one of the reasons for taking over power, as stated by the President himself in an address to members of the Diplomatic Corps on August 30, 1985 was that during the Buhari administration, "the situation was compounded by the action of some government functionaries and organisations who seized the opportunity to trample on the aspirations and basic liberties of our freedom — loving people". Within the first few hours of the administration, two journalists and one other citizen was released from detention. On August 30, 1985, a committee was set up to review the issue of detainees. On August 31, 85 more detainees were released. On September 18, 1985, 31 more detainees were released. These actions were so far-reaching and laudable that the United Nations Director of Information in Lagos issued a statement praising the human rights stance of the administration.

Later in the life of the administration, three Judicial Tribunals were set up to review the cases of detainees. These were the Justice Mohammed Bello Judicial Tribunal of Inquiry to review cases of persons convicted under Decree No 3 of 1984; Justice Uwaifo Special Panel for the investigation of cases of persons conditionally released from detention and persons still in detention under the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No 2, 1984 and the Recovery of Public Property (Special Military Tribunals) Decree No 3, of 1984. The Justice Dr. Akinola Aguda Judicial Tribunal of Inquiry was also set up to review the cases of persons convicted under Decrees 7 and 20 of 1984.

After exhaustive deliberations on each of the cases before them, the panels later submitted their reports. Government

also acted with despatch in considering these recommendations and subsequently issued white papers. In arriving at its decisions on the various cases, the government was guided by its commitment to respect the fundamental human rights of all Nigerians, its firm belief in the rule of law, the promotion of a humane and just society and the pursuit of accountability and probity in public life. Specifically, government applied six basic principles to the cases. These are: consistency, restitution, political accountability, criminal liability, firmness, and promotion of better political and societal order.

Government decisions on these cases have been so humane that most of the detainees had their terms of imprisonment drastically reduced, some of the sentences were set aside and some detainees were discharged and acquitted. Those who still have cases to answer have been referred to the appropriate tribunals and courts instead of being detained indefinitely.

From the above analysis, one can safely conclude that the Babangida administration has set a very high standard in the area of protection and promotion of the fundamental human rights and basic freedom of Nigerian citizens. One hopes that future governments will strive to surpass, or at least maintain this standard, and that other developing countries will take a cue from this noble and laudable stance of this government.

Social Services

One of the areas of emphasis of the Babangida administration is the improvement in the social services which embraces the following specific sub-sectors:—

- (a) New Education Policy
- (b) Programme on the Disabled
- (c) Basic Health Services
- (d) Youth Development and Sports
- (e) The New Direction of WAI
- (f) Internal Security
- (g) Improved Social Services:—
 - (i) Communication Development, and
 - (ii) NEPA Services

(a) New Education Policy:

Crises and inadequacies associated with Nigeria's inherited colonial education system have necessitated the need for policy makers to critically re-examine the nation's educational policy. Education which is supposed to be an instrument of nation building has done little, in terms of meeting our national aspirations and enhancing technological transformation needed for industrial take-off.

The government has been working vigorously towards education for national development so that every child receives education free at least at the primary level. President Babangida has therefore declared education free at that level. This means education for all, equality of access to opportunities and the sharing of benefits of development. The Federal Government has allocated more than N100 million for primary schools in all the states of the Federation. The Government did not stop at that; it also introduced schemes that will improve the Nigerian educational system. These are:

- (i) Education of the "Gifted"
- (ii) Change of School Year
- (iii) A Re-Organised Federal Scholarship Board

The 6-3-3-4 system as stated in the new National Policy on Education is a functional scheme which will take the Nigerian youth into better days. It is a scheme for national development and places emphasis on the acquisition of skills for self employ-

ment thus reducing the dependence of young school leavers on paid employment. It will also produce skilled manpower for the science and technology sectors of the economy.

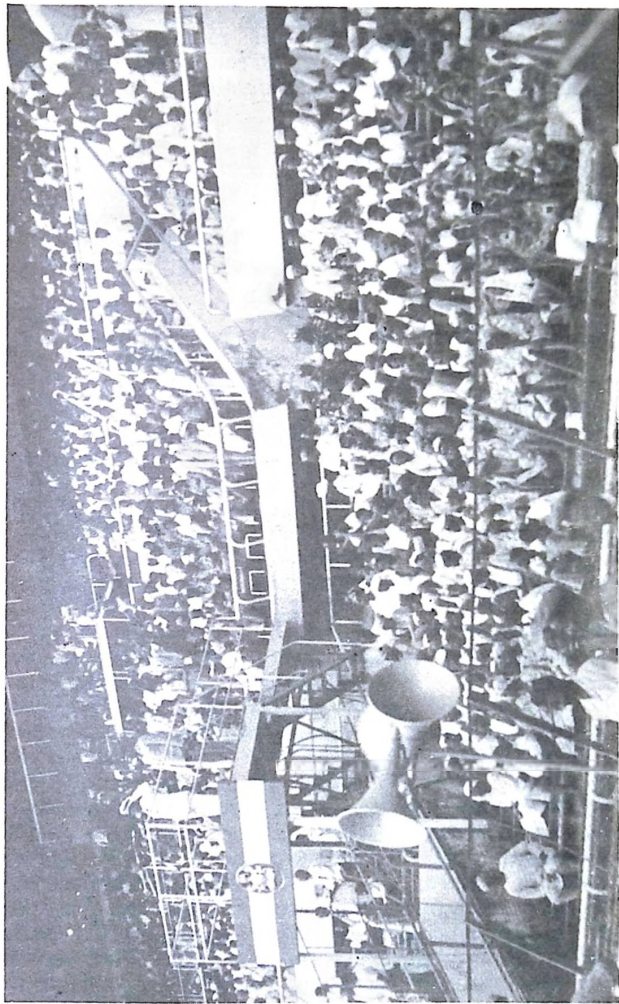
The system, regarded as a tool of social development, is designed to inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society. The 6-3-3-4 is also designed to train the child in the gainful use of his or her hands through the integrated training in skills that would enable a school leaver to enter the labour market at the lowest level and aspire to greater heights either through self-development, further formal school education or training on the job. At the junior and senior secondary school levels the system is to help in the general enhancement of the place of the youth in the development of this country.

The new policy is based on the nation's educational philosophy which seeks to mould an individual child into a sound and effective citizen and to provide equal opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system.

The new system attempts to keep what strictly belongs to university education within the confines of the universities, instead of wasting the extra year of the sixth form doing what is not relevant to the job options available to a secondary school leaver. There is also an attempt to expose students in the first three years, that is the junior secondary school (JSS) stage, to a wide variety of subjects for each student to identify his area of interest, so that he can go into greater depth in those areas during the last three years of senior secondary school (SSS).

This arrangement is a clear departure from the traditional British-oriented grammar school type of six years primary, five years secondary, two years post-secondary and three years university education which most experts agree has produced too many school drop-outs and contributed to the unemployment problem staring Nigeria in the face. Thousands of unfortunate young Nigerians roam the streets for months and even years after leaving secondary schools, without any job to do because the grammar school education did not prepare them for any vocation.

To assist the state governments in implementing the new JSS system, a total of ₦105 million worth of JSS workshop tools and



Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, Chief of General Staff taking the salute at the launching of the New WAI at the National Stadium, Surulere.

equipment were ordered by the Federal Military Government while a sum of ₦8.5 million has been given to some state governments to procure science equipment. Most states have received more than 50 per cent of the equipment and tools.

(i) Education of the 'Gifted':

This administration has taken great interest in the "gifted" child. A 10-man committee which is to advise the Federal Government on how to select and train Nigeria's gifted children was appointed. Its blueprint gives a clear definition of who could be classified as gifted, and from what age groups such persons could be selected.

The committee which worked closely with officials of state ministries of education, was asked to review all available literature on the gifted, design effective screening tests and designate pilot study areas; plan workshops and seminars and recommend alternative programmes that are appropriate for use in certain localities in Nigeria; plan suitable teaching curricula and work out the modalities for early identification of gifted children, and finally make recommendations with regard to material and sources. The project is expected to provide a final working document on the implementation of section 8 subsection 54(6) of the new National Policy on Education. The government has allocated ₦500,000 to the programme this year.

(ii) Change of School Year:

During the Independence Silver Jubilee broadcast on October 1, 1985, the President announced the decision of the Armed Forces Ruling Council to change the school year to coincide with the nation's agricultural activities and ecological zones with effect from January 1987.

Since then, officials of the Federal and state ministries of education have been busy working out details and modalities of the change to ensure a hitch-free change-over. The administration has decided to change the school year to the previous January to December School year because the September to June sessional programme had been found to be unsatisfactory from the point of view of the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system. There were too many holidays and the long vacation of two to three months was usually not profitably utilized by the students. The children, when they returned to school, tended to have forgotten

everything they learned during the previous academic year. There was also the problem of marking WAEC papers. The Council had a very limited time to mark papers and by the time it is through, admissions into universities were delayed till January. With the change, contact hours for children will increase to 39 weeks a year. The more children remain in school and are gainfully occupied, the better for the overall development of the society.

The government is well aware that agriculture is an all-the-year-round activity for most states of the Federation. The change will therefore enable the country synchronize her school system with her agro-economic and socio-cultural programmes. One of the main advantages of the January — December calendar is that it will give ample opportunity for carrying out the enriched curricula in the 6-3-3-4 structure.

(iii) Re-Organised Federal Scholarship Board:

The Babangida administration is very much concerned that every Nigerian child has access to qualitative and functional education. To this effect, the Federal Government has re-organised the Federal Scholarship Board and the Students Loan Board.

Under the new arrangement, the Headquarters of the scholarship board and the students loan board will be moving to Abuja. Three zonal offices will be created in Bauchi, Akure, and Port-Harcourt, while Lagos serves as the Liaison Office.

The secretariat of the two boards has been upgraded to category B, with university dons of the rank of Professor as their full time chairmen.

The loan has been increased, to a maximum of ₦5,000.00 per annum for students studying in Nigeria, irrespective of discipline, and maximum of ₦20,000.00 for students studying abroad for courses not available in Nigerian universities.

The award of scholarship to undergraduates has been stopped. In its place, gifted children will be sponsored by the Federal Government. Scholarships will however still be awarded to post-graduate students.

(b) Programme on the Disabled:

The disabled persons have not been left out in the new dispensation by this administration. They now have a bright hope for the future. In the 1986 budget, a directive was given by the

President that employers of labour should employ at least two disabled persons out of every hundred employees. Since the disabled persons can be trained to acquire different skills like other citizens, nothing stops them from being gainfully employed. There is now an appreciable increase in the number of disabled persons admitted into normal secondary school and university education systems. The training and vocational education given to the disabled can determine their socio-economic independence and enhance their productivity and employment opportunities and contribution to the overall economic development of the society. To eliminate disability, the government has taken steps to improve basic health services and to provide good drinking water and better environmental sanitation.

The Special Educations Unit of the Nigerian Educational Research Council, which has been responsible for carrying out scientific studies into the problems of the handicapped, is training teachers in the areas of the deaf and physically handicapped. The council has also developed a curriculum called "elements of special education". With this, any teacher trained in Nigeria will have the basic knowledge of special education which will enable him or her to deal with special students. Refresher courses for teachers already in the profession have also been organised.

(c) Basic Health Services:

There is no gainsaying the fact that there was gross mismanagement of many spheres during the second republic. Health sector was no exception. Consequently the well articulated health programme of the Fourth National Development Plan Programme remained unaccomplished.

Through primary health care, the present administration aims at improving, right from the grassroots level, the quantity and quality of health facilities, so that Nigerians can lead socially and economically independent lives. The administration's primary health care scheme is tailored to fit into Nigeria's local condition.

For effective implementation, one primary health care centre is being established in each local government area, to serve as a model for further establishments. Teaching hospitals and schools of health technology have also been enjoined to do the same,

especially in local government areas close to them, to serve as their practice centres. These health centres will complement the activities of Federal establishments especially the four zonal specialist centres of medical excellence located at the university teaching hospitals of Ibadan, Zaria, Enugu and Maiduguri. To further ensure the success of the scheme, the Federal Ministry of Health supervises and evaluates the scheme throughout the country.

Despite government financial predicament, the administration recently made a grant of N40 million to procure drugs for all the states of the Federation and Abuja for the year 1986. This is in addition to the sum of N12,815.00 made available for procurement of drugs, chemicals and medical supplies for the specialist hospitals.

In order to pep up Nigeria's economy through health care, the Federal Ministry of Health indicated that fifty percent of the drugs would be procured locally through reputable drug manufacturers. A sum of N100 million was allocated to general rehabilitation of existing health centres all over the country. Another N100 million has been earmarked for specialist centres of medical excellence. This is in addition to the sum of N24,000 provided annually for each teaching hospital that has completed its comprehensive health centre. There are provisions for spontaneous programmes to check the out-break of epidemics.

Prominence has been given to preventive healthcare, under which comes immunization programmes, health education and promotion, maternal and child care, family planning and environmental improvement. The Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) has been launched and publicised in various parts of the country by the Federal Ministry of Health, in line with the World Health Organisation's directive. The programme is geared towards the protection of children against six deadly diseases of measles, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, tuberculosis and whooping cough. Manpower training has been accelerated to handle this programme. The programme on Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) was also introduced and applied extensively both in the cities and rural areas of the country and this has gone a long way in saving several lives, among children suffering from diarrhoea and other forms of gastro enteritis. The therapeutic effect of salt and sugar solution in water is acceptable to the rural population because of its potency. Government's

efforts in the health sector is designed to ensure health for all by the year 2.000 in agreement with the principle that, "Health is a fundamental human right for everyone and an integral part of national development"

(d) Youth Development and Sports:

Any government that does not take children into consideration in her development plans should not expect a healthy and hopeful future. Through the launching of the new War Against Indiscipline (WAI) the Federal Government aims at mobilizing Nigerian youths for the onerous task of nation building. The National Orientation Movement focuses on national discipline, employment, economic recovery, national guidance and youth service.

The school-to-land programme was conceived by the Rivers State Government as a simultaneous assault on three pressing problems: unemployment, food scarcity and juvenile delinquency. Designed for secondary school leavers, the aim was to specially train and eventually place them in 500-hectare farms with regular assistance from the government in land preparation and continued supervision by ministry officials. The Federal Government has since given its blessing to the programme when the President presented a grant of ₦500,000.00 to the State Government to further prosecute the laudable agricultural programme.

Within a few weeks of coming to power, Babangida's regime was blessed with the victory of the Nigeria Flying Eagles for their brilliant performances in the FIFA Junior World soccer competition.

(e) The New Direction on WAI:

It is natural for every progressive nation to sit back and have a periodic stock-taking of her past in an attempt at discovering areas of short-comings that should not be repeated or, identify evidences of achievements that are worthy of enhancement. The newly-refurbished WAI crusade is a very commendable exercise in national stocktaking carried out by the present administration. The government hopes to establish an orderly society through the new direction it has given to WAI.

The War Against Indiscipline (WAI) was revisited when the WAI secretariat in the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture organised a two-day seminar on the new direction of

WAI at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos. The theme of the seminar was "Patriotism and Economic Recovery: New Direction of WAI". A number of papers by participants drawn from both public and private sectors all over the Federation were presented.

The seminar made some recommendations to the government and these included, a call to specify the roles multi-nationals should play in the National Economic Recovery within the context of well-defined national interest, and a call to carry out more studies to determine whether privatisation was the answer to the productivity in government owned parastatals and public corporations.

The present administration's new direction of WAI is geared towards raising the consciousness of Nigerians to higher national ideals, as well as arresting the ominous moral drift of the country. The National Orientation Movement (NOM) was inaugurated to enthrone a society that would provide the conducive atmosphere for the attainment of government's fundamental objectives of economic reconstruction, social justice and self-reliance.

(f) Internal Security:

The President, in his maiden broadcast to the nation on assumption of office in August last year, promised to overhaul the NSO.

Shortly afterwards, he followed up this promise with the setting up of a panel under Alhaji Umaru Shinkafi, a retired Commissioner of Police and former Director-General of the NSO to review the structure and operations of the Nigerian Security Organisation and the country's Security system generally and make appropriate recommendations. Government, in accepting the report of the panel, approved the establishment of three Security bodies viz, Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), State Security Service (SSS), and National Intelligence Agency, (NIA) all in an effort to maintain the national integrity of the nation and her national security.

It is the job of the Defence Intelligence Agency to ensure both internal and external security of the nation through the armed forces. In other words, the DIA is military-inclined and, will co-exist with intelligence services in the Army, Navy and the Air Force. However, according to Defence Minister Major-General Domkat Bali, civilians may be employed by the DIA.

The National Intelligence Agency is concerned with external intelligence and Security matters. The State Security Service deals mainly with internal security of the nation. The split of the former NSO has been described as a right step towards streamlining the functions and operations of the country's security agencies.

(g) Improved Social Services:

In the telecommunications sector, the new NIPOST and NITEL which replaced the now-defunct P&T and NET, have contributed a lot to the improved social services in communication generally. The Nigerian Postal Service Department (NIPOST) has launched its first three river-crafts purchased at a total cost of ₦82,137.00 for the improvement of mail services in the riverine areas. With the launching of these crafts prompt mail deliveries in the riverine areas will be guaranteed. It will also be easy for officials of NIPOST to carry out surprise inspections of post offices with a view to reducing frequent incidences of fraud. The Ministry of Communication's aspiration to ensure that any mail posted in any part of the country is delivered not later than the third day of posting to even the remotest part of the country, has necessitated the procurement of these river-crafts to cater for the riverine areas. Significantly since the inception of NIPOST in 1985, there has been great improvement in the delivery of mails and parcels.

About 70% success is currently being achieved in intra-city 24 hour mail delivery target. The inter-state delivery of mails within 72 hours has also attained a 60% success. Arrangements have been made with the Nigeria Airways to use special aircraft for daily conveyance of mails. Additional vehicles are being acquired to ensure regular mail despatches and receipts. Motorcycles and bicycles are being procured for the use of postmen for house-to-house delivery. As part of NIPOST policy to improve mail services with other countries of the world, a new service, known as the "expedited mail service" has been introduced between Lagos and Great Britain on the one hand and Lagos and Netherlands on the other. This service guarantees the delivery of this class of mails to destinations within 24 hours.

NITEL, under the Fourth National Development Plan, completed and commissioned over 245,000 telephone subscriber lines and there are plans to increase it to over one million by the

turn of the century. Also by December this year, NITEL would commission new 29 telephone exchanges as part of its telecommunication expansion programme thereby providing another 33,800 lines.

On telex, a new set of equipment would be provided to meet the desired target of 15,450 lines. NITEL has also revealed plans to introduce new services which include phonogram service, intelsat business service, credit card system, pocket switching system, data-link and news services. It has also built telephone booths in several parts of the Lagos metropolis.

Rural Development

One area in which there will be a consensus of opinion, among observers, is the need to pursue a rapid rural development programme for the country. Through lack of foresight, faulty implementation strategy, excessive bureaucratic obstacles, corruption or sometimes outright neglect, the rural populace of this country have over the years suffered untold hardship and neglect in terms of lack of basic amenities.

The tendency on the part of successive governments was that of "over development" of the urban areas at the expense of the rural communities where over three quarters of our general populace live. Urban dwellers have been subsisting on the sweat and toils of the rural farmers who produce most of all the food consumed in the cities. Yet the rural dwellers are denied essential facilities granted those living off their toils.

A journey from the cities into the hinterlands will bring into sharp focus the absurdity of the housing conditions of the rural populace and yet the imposing superstructures that litter the cities are made possible through the skilled and unskilled labour supplied by the rural communities.

While having schools in nearly every neighbourhood in the cities, pupils in rural areas have to trek long distances to attend institutions that are far and few, yet their parents pay rates and taxes. While there are over-abundance of good, well-treated water for city dwellers, the rural communities have to do with dirty and disease-infested water even for drinking. While displaying barrages of flyovers, bridges and expressways interlinking the cities, most of the rural areas still rely on roads constructed by the colonial government many of which are in horrible state now. Yet, there is a dire need for these feeder roads through which their produce can be brought into cities. A situation whereby most of these products cannot be gotten to the market in time only makes room for their wastage.

The consequences of all these can be listed out as follows:

- (1) Increasing hardship of life for the rural populace. Exposure to disease and death due to lack of good water and health facilities.

- (2) Decreasing output in terms of agricultural production as a result of lack of storage and bad roads for transportation.
- (3) Increasing drift to the urban centres and the over-stretching of limited utilities.
- (4) Greater unemployment in the cities.
- (5) Increasing crime wave.
- (6) Hunger and poverty generated by low agricultural production.
- (7) Lack of adequate agricultural raw materials for existing industries.
- (8) Decreasing Gross Domestic Product and subsequently low National Income.
- (9) High rate of inflation.
- (10) Increasing foreign debts due to higher imports bills without a corresponding increase in export.

New Hope

The Babangida Administration, since its inception, had made it categorically clear that it would give primacy to grassroot development through agro-based industrialisation. The President pointed out in his Silver Jubilee Anniversary speech last year that his government intended to pursue a food policy agenda and activity programmes that aim at reversing the present bias towards urban drift.

He later went on to confirm this hope in his 1986 Budget Speech with his promise that "rural development policy will move away from the past narrow sectoral pre-occupation with the generation of food and fibre supplies to overall formulation of a national rural development strategy with emphasis on the alleviation of rural poverty and enhancement of the quality of rural life".

He then announced the government plan to establish a Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure in his office with the purpose of co-ordinating and monitoring development projects at the grassroot.

Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure

The Directorate which was inaugurated by the Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe early in the year is headed by Air Commodore Larry Koinyan, a member of the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). In establishing it, the



Mr. President with members of the Fed



ral Executive Council and Service Chiefs.

government recognised the need for a national network of rural and feeder roads in order to strengthen the massive effort for food and agricultural self-sufficiency in the shortest possible period. According to the President, the Directorate would work closely with the state governments in order to reach the various communities in each of the local government areas throughout the country.

Fund-wise, 50 per cent of the ₦900 million generated from reduction in petroleum subsidy would be devoted to these projects. One main task facing the Directorate is the opening up of the vast rural areas of Nigeria for development. A National Rural Feeder Road Programme aimed at constructing and rehabilitating about 60,000 kilometres of rural feeder roads was launched. New rural feeder roads would be developed in the first instance in areas with the highest potential for the production of priority crops such as rice, maize, vegetable oil, cotton, groundnuts, cocoa and tubers. Furthermore, a national on-farm storage programme would be launched to establish a network of demonstration on-farm cribs, rhumba and other storage facilities for mass adoption by farmers.

The Directorate has since gone into operation compiling data on every single rural community in this country. The data include among other things infrastructures now available in every one of these communities. It has also opened offices in all the local government areas with a view to monitoring the performances of these projects.

To date, ₦200 million has been made available to all the states including Abuja for the construction, maintenance and utilisation of rural roads. Under the first phase of the programme for this year a total of 30,000 kilometres of rural roads are expected to be covered. The over-riding criteria for selecting roads to benefit from the scheme are that each local government area must benefit from the exercise and that priority would be given to roads that would open up food producing areas. The chairman has also embarked on a nation-wide inspection tour of rural communities with a view to ascertaining progress made so far.

With the help of the Directorate, the government intends to promulgate a Rural Development Decree to provide for the revitalisation and transformation of Nigeria's rural sector and the living conditions of the rural majority.

Rural Electrification

The importance of electricity in a rural-agricultural community is very tremendous. The need for better storage facilities as well as minor processing equipment for preservation purposes increases daily in order to avoid wastage. All these facilities operate better with the help of electricity. Furthermore, the availability of electricity in the rural areas will make life more comfortable in these areas so that unemployed youths in urban centres can be encouraged to go back 'home' to engage in farming. The task of providing rural electrification this year is three-pronged: The Directorate in relation with National Electric Power Authority; State Governments, and Self-Help projects.

The National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) has been equipped to cope with these tasks especially with the recent commissioning of the new thermal station at Egbin near Ikorodu. During the commissioning, the government pledged to NEPA ₦4 million monthly for the purchase of spare parts for its machines. All these, no doubt, will aid the drive towards rural electrification scheme.

At the state level much is being done by various governments towards providing their rural communities with electricity. A glance through the budget estimates of all the states reveals that quite a considerable amount had been devoted to rural electrification. A typical example is Bauchi State where the government has planned to spend ₦70 million on electricity supply to 163 towns and villages. According to the state government, these projects which are to be executed with the assistance of NEPA will rely on the construction of the proposed 123 kilowatts transmission line from Bauchi to Ningi and the proposed 132/33 kv substation at Ningi. Also in Cross River State, the rural electrification project is expected to cost the government about ₦18 million. Under a bilateral agreement, Bulgaria will provide the state with equipment worth ₦14.49 million for the scheme.

In Bendel State, a 100 kva electricity plant which will supply electricity to Burutu township was installed while its extension to Kiagbodo is in progress. Various rural electrification schemes are also going on in different states all of which aim at making life more comfortable at the grassroots.

Water Projects, Dams and Boreholes

The provision of well-treated pipe-borne water is but a

necessity to every community. Dirty or germ-infested water can be very dangerous for human consumption. The task of providing potable water is being tackled at various levels. These are Federal Government through the River Basin Authorities; State Governments through the Water Corporations; the UNICEF, and local self-development projects.

For the purpose of better services, the number of the River Basin Authorities has been reduced and re-organised. They are now charged with, not only providing water for agricultural purposes through dams, but also to assist in providing drinkable water.

Most rural communities especially in the northern part of the country lack adequate water supply for agricultural and other purposes. The effects of drought which has become an annual event affect them greatly. The River Basin Authorities assist in irrigation schemes by constructing dams and boreholes which feed the irrigation lines.

At the state level, pipe-borne water is being provided by the Water Corporations most of which have embarked on the construction of boreholes for their various rural communities. In Cross River State alone a ₦96.00 million loan has been guaranteed by the Federal Government for the execution of water projects. In Lagos State, the government has embarked on mini-water works projects with a view to providing every rural community in the state with potable water. Also in Bendel, the construction of two water boreholes at Agoloma and Uduophori will cost the government about ₦100,000 while the reactivation of two ring wells at Odorubu will cost ₦4,600. Also, the Ondo State government recently commissioned a ₦90 million Ero Water Scheme.

Various other water provision projects are also going on in all the states. By the end of the year, quite a great number of our rural communities must be enjoying well-treated and adequate water supply.

The United Nations Children's Fund's projects in this country included the provision of rural drinking water through low-cost boreholes. Projects in four states have already provided over 1,500 wells and hand-pumps and serve over 1,000,000 people with safe water to drink. The Federal government recently contributed ₦500,000 in aid of UNICEF's assisted programmes in Nigeria.

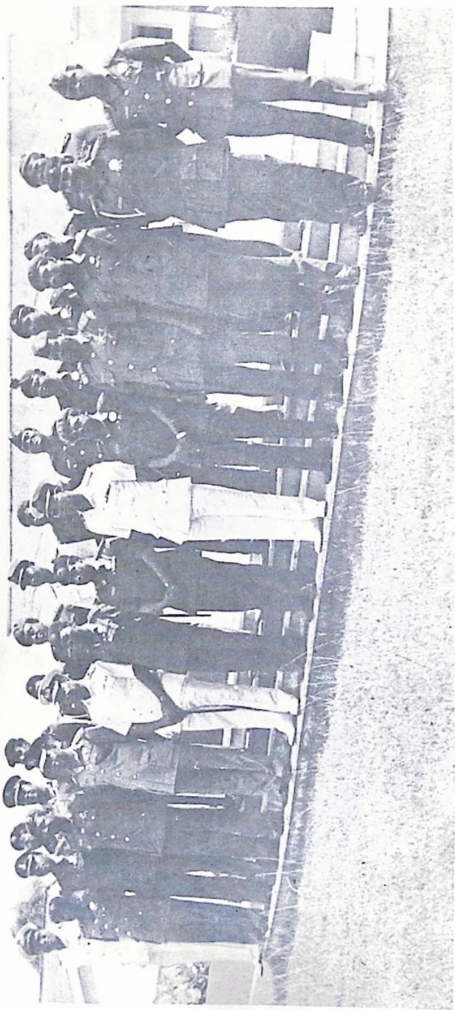
With these government and non-governmental efforts at providing adequate water supply, individual communities are being encouraged to embark on self-development projects and quite a number of such projects have been launched already.

From all of the above, there is no doubt whatsoever as to this administration's commitment to rural development.

The strategy of achieving economic development through grassroot development is one that had met with success in other countries like India, Pakistan and Tanzania. A critical factor that has always affected past programmes on rural development is lack of proper supervision, co-ordination and monitoring. This has resulted in mismanagement and diversion of funds into private pockets. The Directorate is determined to correct that by effective supervision and monitoring even at the grassroot.

Bringing our rural areas at par with the urban centres will not only decongest the cities but will also usher in an integrated agricultural revolution in terms of increased production.

It is therefore necessary that every assistance and co-operation be given to government to make this drive a success.



Members of the National Council of States.

Foreign Policy

Nigeria recognises the use of international relations as a veritable tool of forging bilateral, multi-lateral and global friendship and peace.

Guided by her historical experience as well as what she considers the best options in her own interest, Nigeria therefore maintains diplomatic relations with many countries all over the world.

Nigeria's foreign policy is based largely on the principles of the sovereign equality of all states, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of every state, non-interference in the internal affairs of states and commitment to functional co-operation as a means of promoting African unity and world peace.

The Babangida administration has given positive dimension to the development of closer relations with Nigeria's neighbours regarding these countries as special areas of concentration of diplomatic efforts. This is because the regime firmly believes that the security of the country is inter-woven with that of her neighbours. Nigeria shows special interest in the internal affairs of her neighbouring countries to ensure that hostile forces do not replace governments friendly to her.

Good Neighbourly Relations

As a demonstration of Nigeria's policy regarding Africa as the centre-piece of her foreign relations, the Babangida administration on coming to power flung open Nigeria's borders with her neighbours which had been closed by its predecessor to repel smugglers, currency traffickers and illegal bunkerers whose activities had wrought devastating blows on our beleaguered economy.

The regime is aware of the implications of re-opening our borders but in the interest of good neighbourliness and in the spirit of ECOWAS, the portals of our borders were flung open.

In the tragedy occasioned recently by a sulphuric gas explosion in a volcanic lake at Nyos in the Republic of Cameroon, Nigeria urgently despatched a solidarity delegation, August 26, to that country in sympathy for the loss of well over 1,500 lives.

It is noteworthy that the President's first visit outside the

country was to one of our neighbours, the Republic of Niger. This under-scores the value we place on relations with neighbouring countries. Good neighbourly relations, peace and co-operation are of primary importance to the realisation of our foreign policy objectives.

Peace effort between Mali and Burkina Faso

Under the present administration, Nigeria's foreign policy emerged from the temporary lull of recent years into one in which there are eloquent signs of ability to marry rhetorics with practical diplomacy. Since Professor Bolaji Akinyemi assumed office as Minister of External Affairs, Nigeria is bouncing back to play the role of the "giant" as shown by his peace initiatives between the warring countries of Mali and Burkina Faso. The speed with which peace was restored in that troubled region is attributable to the pacificatory stance of Nigeria and the shuttle diplomacy of Professor Akinyemi.

Underwrites \$10m Debt on Chad

There has been a long-standing internecine war in Chad, Nigeria's north-eastern neighbour where imperialist forces have declared interests. As part of Nigeria's efforts to forge a diplomatic settlement of the Chadian conflict, the Minister held talks with Mr. Biya, the Camerounian leader. The talks showed that both sides held the same view over the fighting in Chad. Nigeria's role in the conflict has been mediatory, believing in international conference as a step towards solving the problems of the war-torn country.

Nigeria also spearheaded talks held in Tripoli and Paris in a bid to get the opposing sides and their foreign supporters to the negotiating table for a solution to the 20-year-old civil war. She is one of the few countries that contributed to the peace-keeping force in Chad. She also contributed financially to the upkeep of the contingent in full hope that other African countries would toe the line.

Although Nigeria's economy has taken a long slide, the Babangida administration in an act of magnanimity has written off a \$10 million expense incurred on the OAU peace-keeping force in Chad if only to see that peace is once restored to that troubled country.

Joint Venture With Neighbouring Countries

In the foreign economic sphere, Nigeria now emphasizes greater co-operation with her neighbours more than ever before, a fact borne out by her technical assistance schemes and joint ventures projects with neighbouring countries. In the areas of economic co-operation and joint venture programmes, Nigeria and Guinea signed a protocol agreement at the conclusion of the second session of the two countries' joint-session held in Lagos recently. Under the agreement, Guinea would barter her bauxite for Nigeria's crude and refined oil. Both sides also identified projects aimed at facilitating the speedy take-off of their joint ventures. Nigeria also has joint venture projects with the Republic of Benin.

Liberation Struggle in South Africa

Successive governments of this country have been irrevocably committed to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and this regime is totally immersed in that struggle. At the 46th meeting of the OAU Liberation Committee, the President reiterated Nigeria's stand on the issue. The President assured the meeting that Nigeria would endorse any recommendation for concerted effort to intensify resistance to the racist regime in South Africa.

The President used the occasion to highlight five situations he conceived to be posing great threats to the peace of the world, the independence of all African nation and to the cause of freedom all over the world. These are the continued existence of colonial domination and racist oppression in South Africa; the terror, violence and repeated wanton massacre of freedom fighters; the torture and detention of heroes of the independence struggle; the refusal of the racist regime to come to terms with the oppressed peoples of Southern Africa and the subversive and aggressive steps against the states of Mozambique, Lesotho, and Angola.

One of the practical steps taken by this administration in pursuance of the struggle for the early independence of Namibia and the eradication of apartheid was the hosting of the 45th Ordinary Session of the Co-ordinating Committee for the Liberation of Africa which was held in Lagos from January 27 — 29, 1986. The session was officially opened by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Major-General

Ibrahim Babangida. The Committee reviewed among others the latest developments in Southern Africa and took a number of decisions aimed at facilitating the early independence of Namibia and the demise of apartheid in South Africa.

It was against this back-ground that the President gave the assurance that Nigeria and all African nations would not rest on their oars until they eliminated the threat to world peace. In consonance with Nigeria's total opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa, Nigeria has viewed Britain's refusal to impose sanctions against South Africa with all the seriousness it deserves. She consequently boycotted the recent Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. This was the first step in a package of measures being taken by the Babangida administration to protest Britain's attitude. The boycott came amid growing calls for Nigeria, as the largest black Commonwealth member-state, to take a principled stand on the games in line with the country's foreign policy commitment on South Africa.

There was a compromise decision to set up a special group from Commonwealth member states to try a last-ditch effort for a negotiated settlement in South Africa for which the former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd) was nominated at the request of the Frontline States into the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to forge negotiation between Mr. Botha and the freedom fighters in South Africa. While the group was on this mission the apartheid regime launched a co-ordinated military attack on some of the frontline states notably Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Nigeria was horrified by this dastardly act and wanton disregard for the EPG by the racist regime.

In the wake of the heinous attacks mounted by the South African Defence Forces on these frontline States on May, 19, 1986, a special envoy was dispatched to the region on a solidarity visit to, among other things, demonstrate our total commitment to the struggle. In addition to this and re-assuring the Frontline States of our solidarity with them, Nigeria gave urgent and immediate financial assistance of U.S. \$10 Million.

Another package from Nigeria came on Soweto Day, June 16 this year when the country made a grant of N50 million to the Frontline States. The announcement of the gift which will be spread over five years was made by the External Affairs Minister, Professor B. Akinyemi while speaking at the opening session of the World Conference on Sanctions Against Racist South Africa

at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Reflecting on Nigeria's role as a leading opponent of apartheid, Professor Akinyemi pledged that "Nigeria will match South Africa step by step. Where South Africa destroys Nigeria will build. Where South Africa preaches slavery, Nigeria will preach freedom".

Nigeria recognises SWAPO, under the leadership of Sam Nujoma, as the nationalist movement in Namibia. The Nigerian government believes that a combination of diplomatic, military and economic measures would be necessary to force the racists to abandon their hold on the territory. Nigeria has always condemned the intransigence of South Africa and its allies in Namibia and is, therefore, committed to the implementation of the UN's plan for Namibian independence.

Support for ECOWAS

Our commitment to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a vehicle of regional integration and development remains unshaken. In appreciation of our commitment to the community, the Abuja summit took the unprecedented decision of re-electing Nigeria for a second term as Chairman. This trust bestows on us a responsibility to strive harder to achieve those lofty objectives for which ECOWAS was founded.

During the recent ninth summit meeting of the ECOWAS heads of state, the President, in his welcome address, announced Nigeria's donation of N5 million towards the construction of the permanent headquarters of the community in Abuja. This represents about 32 percent of the estimated 15 million U.S. dollars needed for the project. Land in the central area of the city has also been given for the purpose.

In addition, Nigeria has, outside her statutory obligations, provided residential accommodation to senior staff of ECOWAS Secretariat in Lagos. The houses, 34 in all, have been renovated at Nigeria's expense and handed over to the executive Secretary of ECOWAS. This, the President said, would go a long way in alleviating the residential accommodation problem facing the secretariat staff in Lagos.

Nigeria, in a leadership posture, has ratified the Brown Card Scheme which would facilitate the free movement of people, goods and services within the ECOWAS sub-region and has set in motion the machinery for implementing the scheme. The

National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON) will play a major role in operating the Brown Card Scheme.

Organisation of African Unity

Nigeria is one of the most active member-states of the OAU and avails herself of the services of the organization's Liberation Committee.

This Administration has participated actively in the activities of the continental organisation, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

At the recently concluded OAU Summit, Nigeria spearheaded the adoption of a common strategy in the struggle and fight against apartheid involving a package of measures namely:

- (a) the denial of landing rights to airlines plying South Africa;
- (b) condemnation of Britain, United States, Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany for their collaboration with and support for Apartheid Regime with a call on them to desist from such collaborative acts; and
- (c) a resolve by African countries to take appropriate measures against these countries if they persist in their collaboration with and support for Apartheid Regime.

The present Government of Major-General Babangida is considering sponsoring and hosting a Pan-African Congress. Our External Affairs Minister Professor Bolaji Akinyemi in his address on the occasion of African Liberation Day and the 25th Anniversary of OAU said that the President was fully committed to the Federal Government's active role in enriching Pan-Africanism.

Member-states of the OAU are required to pay their respective annual subscriptions and other material assistance they may be called upon to provide into the special fund of the committee. Since the inception of the Liberation Committee, Nigeria has continued to provide its Executive Secretariat with the services of senior diplomatic officers on secondment. Their duties include interacting with the liberation movements with a view to ascertaining their need, understanding their respective policies and assessing their dependability for the pursuit of armed struggle.

The government re-affirmed its abiding faith in the goals set forth by the OAU, when it declared the June 20 of every year

as African Refugee Day. In keeping with Nigeria's stand, the President, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida signed the Instrument of Ratification of the OAU Refugee Convention on May 23, 1986.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Nigeria's recent rejection of the IMF loan in spite of the insistence by her traditional trading partners that she should swallow the "bitter pill", if her debts must be rescheduled and if further credits would be granted her, has clearly strengthened the assertion that foreign policy is an extension of the domestic climate of a nation. Nigerian public opinion, as amassed and analysed by the government, was clearly against taking the loan and the Babangida administration did not hesitate to toe that line.

Our Role in Non-Aligned Movement

Nigeria's policy towards the super powers is based on the doctrine of non-alignment. Nigeria continues to enjoy cordial relationships on the cultural and economic planes with countries from both the eastern and western world. Nigeria needs markets for her products and hard-earned foreign currency to finance her rapid industrialization programme. The present administration has positively continued the non-aligned posture of Nigeria's leadership role in the non-aligned movement.

Only last May, Nigeria donated one million dollars to Zimbabwe to assist that country in hosting the conference of the non-aligned movement.

United Nations

Nigeria is not only a member of the UN but also supports the body as a permanent and continuing instrument for strengthening peace and internal security. Nigeria is convinced that strict observance of the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and consistent implementation of United Nations decisions on all questions of peace, security, development and freedom are indispensable for increasing the effectiveness of the world body. The Federal Government notes the significance of special sessions of the United Nations relating to such international issues like raw materials, law of the sea and new international economic order. Nigeria's contribution to the work of the General Assembly is rewarded by the chairmanship which it holds

of the Special Committee on Apartheid and the Committee on Peace-Keeping. Nigeria participates in the annual sessions of the General Assembly and the specialised agencies of the United Nations.

Nigeria was unanimously chosen as one of the five spokesmen for Africa during the UN General Assembly's Special Session on the critical Economic Situation in Africa held in New York from May 27 to June 1, 1986.

Nigeria and other OAU members in collaboration with the Asian and socialist states of Eastern Europe have always pressed for recognition of colonialism as permanent aggression, self-determination as a modern principle of international law and the legitimacy of the use of force against regimes which refuse to comply with the implementation of the famous 1960 UN Declaration on Colonialism.

The present administration has introduced a new concept into foreign policy formulation process. The government, for the first time ever has decided to consult Nigerians openly on what they think should be the proper stance of Nigeria's foreign policy by organising the All-Nigerian Conference on Foreign Policy held in Kuru April 6—12 this year.

The various committees of the Conference had since submitted their recommendations to the government and one hopes that the white paper on it will once and for all, establish the proper foundation on which Nigeria's foreign policy will stand, and which will always guide whatever shade of government comes to power.

Economic Strategy

When Major-General Ibrahim Babangida and his team took over the reign of government on August 27, 1985, one of the many reasons given for the change of government was the country's deplorable economic situation. The President identified four main factors responsible for the gloomy economic situation in the country. These are:

- (a) Decrease of our domestic production while our population increased.
- (b) Dependence on import for both consumer goods and raw materials for our industries;
- (c) The yawning gap between the rich and the poor; and
- (d) The large role played by the public sector in economic activities with hardly any concrete result to justify such a role.

IMF

President Babangida shortly after assuming office threw open a national debate on the desirability or otherwise of Nigeria taking an International Monetary Fund (IMF) stand-by facility loan which Nigeria, under successive governments since 1983, had been negotiating. The resounding negative verdict from the majority of the citizens gave the administration a clear signal that Nigerians were ready to make the necessary sacrifice towards solving the social and economic problems confronting the country. That verdict bolstered the administration's confidence in commencing the pursuit of some self-adjustment policies aimed at bringing the economy out of the woods. It then announced a programme of backward integration under which Nigerians are now reaching out desperately for local substitutes to foreign inputs in the production process, local substitutes for their imported consumer goods, as well as a greater national drive for the development of indigenous technology.

Rescheduling of our Debts

In a bid to reduce the level of pressure on the economy arising from huge foreign exchange commitment to debt servicing by the immediate past government, General Babangida announced Nigeria's decision to reduce the debt-servicing ratio from 44 to 30

per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. One direct advantage of the policy is to ensure that there is enough foreign exchange to finance the importation of raw materials badly needed to keep production industries running on at least 55 per cent of their capacity.

The administration stepped-up consultations with the country's foreign creditors with a view to obtaining a re-scheduling of the nation's sectoral medium and long-term debts. A committee comprising officials of the Federal Ministries of Finance, National Planning, Central Bank of Nigeria, Cabinet Office and two representatives from the private sector, with the Minister of Finance as the team leader, was set up to negotiate with our external creditors. Loans being negotiated are in three categories: export credit loans; commercial bank loans; and promissory notes insured or short-term debts. The first two involved the Paris Club (association of export credit agencies) and the London Club (commercial bank creditors).

After the preliminary talks on March 26 and 27, 1986, at which the request to suspend sectoral medium and long-term debts having original maturity of over 12 months was put forward, an initial 90-day moratorium was granted to Nigeria during which time all interests on such debts would remain constant. The debts affected are mainly public, owed and guaranteed by the Federal Government.

During the 90-day moratorium, bilateral meetings took place in which Nigeria's position and circumstances were explained to various financial institutions. However, no consensus was reached. The deadlock prompted another 90-day moratorium which would last till the end of September, 1986.

National Economic Recovery Fund

In October 1985, the administration announced a package of measures aimed at arresting the downward trend in the economy. A 15-month period of economic emergency was declared, under which was ordered compulsory contributions to a national economic recovery fund by all workers in the armed forces, the civil service and the private sector.

In a bid to reduce the degree of burden of these measures on workers and restore their purchasing power, the administration recently announced that the compulsory contributions to the National Economic Emergency Fund, would be stopped by the

end of 1986. In addition, the deductions made from junior workers' salaries under the scheme would be converted to savings, and eventually refunded to them.

Highlights of the 1986 Budget included the reduction of the level of government subsidy on petroleum products by 80 per cent, the introduction of 30 per cent import levy, the ban on the importation of certain consumables like rice, vegetable oil and maize, all in a bid to conserve the country's fast-dwindling foreign exchange and also, encouraging local production.

Reduction in Oil Subsidy

The reduction in petroleum subsidy by 80 per cent came at a time when the country was faced with myriads of economic and social problems, chief among which was unemployment. The decision to cut the level of government subsidy and use the proceeds to develop specific sectors of the economy has been described as courageous — a decision from which previous governments had shied away. Even with the reduction in subsidy, prices of petroleum products in Nigeria still compare favourably with what obtains in other oil and non-oil producing countries. The price of kerosine which a lot of common citizens use as their energy source remains unchanged. What is more, bringing the prices of Nigerian oil to the level that obtains in other parts of the world will substantially reduce smuggling of petroleum products. Over the years unpatriotic Nigerians and their foreign collaborators were ever ready to risk the last litre of their blood to smuggle petroleum products to neighbouring countries where they sold at huge profit.

Backward Integration

It is to the credit of this Administration that most industries are now falling back on our, locally available raw materials for their input. Government is now working on a special package of incentives for companies using local inputs in a bid to encourage their drive to reduce our dependence on imported raw materials.

Export Promotion

As a demonstration of its resolve to broaden the foreign exchange earning sources of the country, the administration announced a series of incentives and promulgated a decree to boost export of agricultural and manufactured products. It is hoped that the export promotion drive would reverse the trend in which Nigeria had been dependent to the tune of more than 80

per cent on petroleum as foreign exchange earner.

The response of Nigerian companies and manufacturers to the export promotion incentives package has been encouraging. Statistics provided by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council indicated that about 130 new companies were registered in January and February 1986 alone. Many of the companies secured export licences which they have utilised.

Agricultural Development

The administration, in pursuit of its policy of restructuring the economy, has ordered a complete overhauling of the operations of agricultural credit guarantee scheme. Under this policy, agricultural and commercial banks were directed to give not less than 15 per cent of their loans to the agricultural sector. Many co-operative unions, private enterprises and individuals have benefitted immensely from the scheme.

To strengthen the massive national efforts to increase food supply and bring about self-sufficiency in agriculture, the Government decided to spend half of the estimated ₦900 million expected to accrue to it from the reduction on petroleum subsidy specifically on the rehabilitation and construction of rural and feeder roads. The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure has been set up in the Office of the President to administer the fund and co-ordinate the scheme. A total of about 60,000 kilometres of rural roads is expected to be constructed or rehabilitated in 1986 under this scheme.

The other measure taken by government is in the area of the River Basin and Rural Development Authorities. These have been reduced from 18 to 11. In order to avoid confusion in their operations the RBDA have now been directed to deal only with the development of the agricultural infrastructures. This means that they will no longer get involved directly in agricultural production activities.

To complement these efforts, a package of incentives has also been adopted to encourage companies to invest funds and management skills to develop commercial farms. In this connection, the government has also decided to wind up eleven of its companies involved in various agricultural production activities and to transfer them to the private sector. The Government is already in the process of privatising four parastatals, namely The Nigerian Dairies Limited, Madara Limited, the Nigerian Food

Company and the Bauchi Abattoir. In addition, the National Livestock Production and Nigerian Ranches companies are being wound up.

SFEM

As part of the continuing measures aimed at improving the economy, the government has announced the introduction of a Second-tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM) through which certain categories of imports will be financed. The measure is expected to lead to a gradual adjustment of the value of the Naira against other foreign currencies, ease government control of the economy, reduce bureaucracy and corruption often associated with import licence processing, as well as destroy illegal dealings in foreign exchange. The scheme is also believed to have the advantage of encouraging industrialists to look for local sources of raw materials to run their production facilities.

Unemployment

Determined to chart a new direction, the Babangida administration took a number of measures to arrest the worsening unemployment situation. Government halted the mass purge in the civil service. At the same time, it embarked on programmes that would generate employment opportunities. It ensured this through the massive and prompt release of import licences to genuine businessmen and industrialists. In executing this policy, the government has ensured that priority attention is given to industries that have the potentials of creating more employment opportunities.

In addition, the government has continued to vigorously pursue policies that would create self-employment opportunities for Nigerians. Hence the Federal Government has given its support to programmes such as the Graduate Farming, School-to-Land and Office-to-Land schemes with commensurate incentive packages to ensure their resounding success.

In addition, the banks have recently stepped in with support of the Government to assist in making funds available to graduates of polytechnics who are willing to set up small scale industries in their areas of specialisation rather than wait for government to provide employment for them.

Recently, a nation-wide census of the unemployed was taken by the Government to enable it plan effectively for them.

Basic Industries

The government is also committed to an early completion of basic industries that have great potential multiplier effects such as petro-chemicals and steel industries. As part of the government's efforts to ensure the take-off of the Ajaokuta Iron and Steel Complex, for example, the Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe undertook a visit to the Soviet Union recently.

With the measures taken so far, a significant improvement has been recorded in the economy. In 1985, the economy attained a 2.4 per cent growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in contrast to the decline of 8.5 per cent and 5.5 percent recorded in 1983 and 1984 respectively. The deficit in the general account was also cut drastically from N2,660.4m in 1984 to N1,708.9m. Even in the external account, the harsh import restrictions helped the country to increase its external reserves from N1,006.8m at the end of 1984 to N1,657.9m at the end of 1985.

The reality of our times is that Nigeria is a member of the international economic community severely hit by the glut in the world oil market. In concert with other members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Nigeria is in the fore-front of a struggle to bring back sanity into the market and ensure a better share of the market and higher price for her crude oil.

On the home-front, the government is vigorously pursuing measures aimed at restructuring the nation's economic base and changing the tastes and value-system of Nigerians.

With unalloyed co-operation from all citizens in giving maximum support to all the measures, no doubt, the measures are bound to result in a rapid revamping of the economy, for the benefit of all.



COL ANTHONY UKPO
Former Minister of Information and Culture.

Politics of the Future — Towards 1990

In her twenty-six years as an independent sovereign nation, Nigeria has so far experimented on two types of government — the Parliamentary system of government popularly referred to as the Westminster system and the Presidential system. So far, the two systems seem to have failed to solve our political problems. Nobody seems to be able to advance convincing reasons why the two systems already experimented on have failed.

Two major schools of thought have emerged with conflicting arguments. While one school holds that the two systems failed as a result of bad management by those charged with operating them, the other school of thought feels that these systems are too sophisticated for a rather young and politically inexperienced country like Nigeria, considering the complexities and technicalities of these two systems.

When the present military administration came to power about a year ago, the President, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida, in full realisation of the perennial political and economic problems of the country, set the ball rolling in finding short-term and long-term solutions to these aching problems.

For a lasting solution to our continuous political problems, the President appointed a 17-man Political Bureau charged with finding a most suitable and acceptable political arrangement that would reflect the aspirations of the people of this country and guarantee political stability. This, the Bureau was required to do after thorough consultation with the entire citizenry of this nation. The Bureau was inaugurated on January 13, 1986 at Abuja by the President, with Dr. S. J. Cookey as its chairman.

Considering the diverse educational, socio-political and cultural nature of this nation, coupled with the linguistic heterogeneity, the enormity of the Bureau's task is not in any way in doubt as it is expected to consult the opinion of the entire citizens of this country.

In order to achieve an effective participation by the greatest majority of Nigerians, particularly the rural dwellers, the Bureau had to devise effective public enlightenment and general mobilisation campaigns. These campaigns are geared towards educating the generality of the people on the need to have a say in the future political structure of the country.

The Political Bureau established offices in the state capitals, after releasing a 28-point guideline which it considers as the main issues and themes that need to be addressed by the Nigerian public in the course of the political debate. The Bureau's centres have also been established in the headquarters of the various local governments in the country. In addition, committees of the Bureau are springing up in the different areas of the various local governments with the sole aim of reaching the grassroots. To achieve this objective, traditional rulers, opinion, religious and community leaders are being used to sensitize views and opinions gathered through debates, seminars and rallies.

Meanwhile, a certain degree of awareness and success has been achieved in the direction of creating the desired awareness. Hence the various sections of the citizenry are daily expressing their opinions on the type of future political arrangement they consider to be the most suitable for Nigeria. Some have suggested a return to either the Parliamentary or Presidential system. According to the group advancing this argument, the failure of the two earlier systems in Nigeria was due more to the operators of the systems than to the systems themselves. Others have proposed the diarchy, a system of joint military-civilian administration. On the other hand, some have suggested the adoption of a variety of other systems namely, Workers' Government, the Zero Party Option, the Positive Democratic Tribalism Option, the Civil Servants Party Option, the Military-Rule-Forever Option, the Provincial Government Option, the Rotational Presidency Option, the Local Government Option, and the All-Women-Government Option. At least, for once, the generality of the people of this nation have been granted a platform for an elaborate discussion of the future political arrangement considered most suitable for this country, the ban on political activities notwithstanding.

In a country like ours where political disillusionment is very rife consequent on the disappointing past political experience and when what lies at the bottom of our past dilemma has been acknowledged as the absence of a viable political arrangement, the relevance of the Political Bureau to the future Nigerian political set-up is self-evident.

As President Babangida rightly pointed out while inaugurating the Political Bureau, the political history of this nation is partly one of disenchantment with politics and politicians. The

history of Nigeria's past 26 years as an independent nation, the President noted, has been dominated by the question of a viable political arrangement.

Our search has been to remedy immediate problems without sufficient attention to the long-term issues. Not surprisingly, our efforts so far only succeeded in producing inept and inherently unstable political arrangements which have failed to synchronise our cultural ideals with our political potentials. In other words, what the nation is indeed searching for now is a system of government that will be devoid of the crisis-ridden potentials of the previous systems so far practised.

On the morality of future politicians which almost every honest Nigerian considers very essential for future participation in the politics of Nigeria, the recent pledge by the Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, becomes most reassuring. Said he: "The era of lousy policies and rhetoric by politicians in the administration of this country is over. The present military administration would ensure that the politicians do not deceive Nigerians in the future administration of this country".

To buttress this pledge, corrupt politicians and their allies in the recent past civilian administration are being compelled to disgorge their ill-gotten loots while at the same time adequate punishment is being meted out to all those found to be corrupt. These penal measures are in addition to the ban, ranging from 10 years to life, being imposed on the guilty ones. These measures are meant to deter future politicians from going the way of the past discredited politicians. In this not-too-easy "cleaning-up" campaign, the Federal Military Government has pledged that nothing would prevent the present administration from carrying out all these actions.

It is note-worthy that any future political arrangement in Nigeria that fails to take care of equitable development, unity, problems of ethnicity, religion and language is bound to fail. This is because these problems have consistently caused the collapse of past regimes in the country. So also, any future political arrangement that fails to accord the ordinary man of this country his rightful place is bound to fail. This is because the grassroots, the masses who make up the greater majority of this country are predominantly rural dwellers.

Here, the issue of local governments in the country comes into place. It is primarily through the local governments that the greater masses of this country can be adequately reached. The present administration appreciates this unavoidable fact, and has consequently, on assumption of office, promoted efforts on local government reforms. The new local government structure, recently approved for implementation by the present military administration is to facilitate community development in all parts of the Federation and make them more viable and responsive to the development efforts in all parts of the country. To achieve these enviable objectives, the local government would be made to work more co-operatively with their various state governments so that most of the plans envisaged would be implemented under the new local government structure. Under the new local government arrangement, this tier of government is now given a greater autonomy in running their affairs.

With these positive, orderly and systematic political programmes of Babangida's administration, it is evident that Nigeria is well on the way to attaining a stable political future and the evolution of a distinct Nigerian political culture.

