

CULTISM IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: INCIDENCE, CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The unabated incidence and unrelenting activities of secret cults in the Nigerian educational institutions have wrought incalculable havoc on the lives and psyche of Nigerians. As at 1999, over 56 secret cults existed in the 133 higher institutions of learning existing in the country at the time. They were fast penetrating the nation's secondary and even primary schools. Members of the armed forces were linked with their atrocious activities. Cultism and many other social vices are related to economic distress arising from corruption-induced poverty. To stem the tide, (he political ruling class needs to mop up the courage and iron political will to reverse the trend. The government ought to initiate attacks on the conditions that breed cultism. Unfortunately, the political ruling class engages the services of cultists, as political thugs. Body guards and hired assassins, making it impossible to _ mop up the required political will. Therefore, the country may put up with pervading cultism for a long time to come.

Introduction

Cultism is undeniably one of the social vices setting the hand of the developmental clock of Nigeria backwards. The unabated atrocities of secret cults in the Nigerian educational institutions and even in the wider Nigerian society continue to take tolls on the lives of young and old Nigerians. Many young people, politicians, academics and industrialists have been hacked down in their prime by the cultists. It could be in the execution of a contract to assassinate and waste the life of their mentor's real or imagined often political enemy. Acting as hirelings, the cultists get their target in his residence or office or track him down on the way. In most cases, the murderers 'escape,'¹ not tracked down because they are serving the powers that be. They do not face the wrath of the law because the event is linked to a political godfather, a sacred cow. The dismayed Enugu State Development Association (ESDA) feared in 2005 that the failure of the government security apparatus to arrest and prosecute any suspects in the numerous incidences of political murder in Enugu State showed that the government had a hand in the crimes and made speaking out very risky. More often than not, however, it is in a clash between two cult groups, the one trying to demonstrate its stronger devilish powers over the other. The cultists strike in one Nigerian educational institution today and a reprisal occurs the next day in another institution, claiming lives in both cases. Sometimes, a chain of reactions is sparked off in many other institutions of higher learning. This depicts their synergy and network of existence and activities in a country already ravaged by under-development, poverty and misery (Onoh, 2006).

Widespread corruption in high places and endemic poverty in the society are precursors of cultism in the Nigerian educational institutions. Due to poor agricultural planning, leadership ineffectiveness and mismanagement, millions of Nigerians, many of them children, are starving to death. Only about 2% of Nigerians, many of them among the present and former ruling classes, control over 60% of the nation's financial assets, while over 70% of the Nigerian population live below the poverty line (Encarta, 2005e and Umar, 2007).

The cultists, mostly the youth, are merely responding to the societal contradictions in national socio-economic development. Nigeria, with the natural potentials to be among the richest countries in the world, a paradise on earth for all, is variously rated between the 13th and 21st poorest country and 1st or 2nd most corrupt nation in the whole wide world (Eneh, 1985 and Eneh, 2006).

Successive military and civilian governments have paid lip-service to the eradication of secret cults in Nigerian schools. Rather than thin out, these secret societies appear to grow by leaps and bounds, and to spread fast from the tertiary institutions of learning into the secondary and primary schools (*The Guardian on Sunday*, 2000 and Eneh, 2006).

Only iron political will can stamp cultism out of the Nigerian educational institutions and halt the untold tolls it exacts on the lives of the citizenry. But, since the political ruling class benefits from the services of cultists, as political thugs and hired assassins, the required political will appears impossible to mop up in the country in the nearest future. Worse still, the children of the ruling class might be involved as cultists in the matter, making the case a no-go area. Therefore, the nation might as well get ready to put up with this hydra-headed social vice for a long time to come. Relying on information from literature, this paper attempts to paint the gruesome picture of the incidence and atrocities of campus cultism and to deduce its fundamental causes in Nigeria. The suggested way

out of the national menace is mustering of the political will by the ruling class to eradicate it by seriously confronting its systemic root causes.

Cultism - A Historical Background

Secret cults or secret societies are organizations in which the members are usually bound by an oath of secrecy. They often require elaborate form of initiation and ritual, use of symbols, passwords and handshakes as a means of recognition among members (Encarta, 2005a).

The incidence of secret cults dates back to the ancient Greece, when the Pythagoreans combined philosophy and politics. *Mysteries*, with unknown origin and purpose, were secret rites and ceremonies known and practiced only by people who had been duly initiated. In the 12 century, some Muslim sects were founded as secret societies, notably the Assassins in Persia (now Iran) in the Middle East and parts of Asia. Unorthodox groups practice secrecy to avoid persecution and for economic protection (Encarta, 2005a and b).

Some secret cults were formed in the 17th and 18th centuries for scientific inquiry or political subversion. The Rosicrucian order (AMORC) mixed science and mysticism. Others became important centres of political dissent. The Sons of Liberty was created in the American colonies to resist British oppression. The revolutionary secret societies, such as the Carbonari in Italy, the Fenians in Ireland, and supporters of nihilism in Russia were important political forces. Other secret cults, notably the Mafia in Sicily, were established to organize criminal activities and to protect their members (Encarta, 2005a).

Secret cults are common among peoples in Melanesia, parts of Africa, and Native American tribes of North America, particularly the Pueblo and the Plains people. There is a long history of secret societies in China, perhaps partly because of strong state suppression of any openly heterodox movement. Secret cults were active in almost every major rebellion or dynastic struggle. Some secret societies in Japan were important in fostering militarism. The Japanese *yakuza* are among the most pervasive or criminal brotherhoods in any developed society (Encarta, 2005a).

Some secret societies, such as the Knights of the Golden Circle and the Ku Klux Klan, were created in the United States of America (U.S.A.) in the 19th and 20th centuries for protection, terrorism, philanthropy and mutual benefits of members. The fraternal element is traditionally predominant in the U.S.A. Secret organizations are an important feature in university life (Encarta, 2005a).

Studies by the French political philosopher, Montesquieu, and his successors relate disorganization and criminal behaviour, such as the cultist activities, to the natural and physical environment. Many prominent criminologists attribute crime mainly to the incidence of poverty. The incidence of crime tends to rise especially in times of widespread unemployment. The living conditions of the poor, particularly of those in slums, are characterized by overcrowding, lack of privacy, inadequate play space and recreational facilities, and poor sanitation. Such conditions engender feelings of deprivation and hopelessness and are conducive to crime as a means of escape. The feeling is encouraged by the example set by those who have managed to escape through criminal means to what appears to be a better way of life. The incidence of crime has also been related to the general state of a culture, especially the impact of economic crises, wars, and revolutions, and the general sense of insecurity and uprootedness to which these forces give rise. The crime rate tends to rise, as a society becomes more unsettled and its people more restless and fearful of the future. This is particularly true of juvenile crime, as the experience of the U.S.A. since World War II has made evident. Studies have also shown that criminal proclivities are psychological and psychiatric. About a quarter of a typical convict population is psychotic and neurotic or emotionally unstable, and another quarter is mentally deficient (Encarta, 2005f).

Preventing crime is a better approach than punishing it. Since, both adult and juvenile crimes stem chiefly from the breakdown of traditional social norms and controls, resulting, among others, to the effects of poor housing, unemployment, and economic crises, the government ought to initiate attacks on the conditions that breed crime (Encarta, 2005g).

Cultism in Nigerian Educational Institutions: Incidence, Causes, Effects and Solutions

In the morning hours of July 10, 1999, five undergraduates of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife lost their lives in one onslaught of cult activities on the campus. According to the judicial commission of inquiry that investigated this ugly incidence of nightmarish dimension, seven members of a specific cult took part in the killings, while 16 others, including a corporal in the Nigerian army, were recommended for further investigation to determine the level of their

involvement in the episode. The commission, which visited 30 tertiary institutions nation-wide, revealed that 56 secret cults existed in the 133 higher institutions of learning (including 31 universities existing in the country at the time). The menace was fast penetrating the nation's secondary and even primary schools (Eneh, 2000; Encarta, 2005d and *The Guardian on Sunday*, 2000).

In a swift response to this sad, blood-chilling development, the then newly incepted Obasanjo-led federal government of Nigeria issued an ultimatum to the Vice-Chancellors of Universities, Rectors of Polytechnics and Provosts of Colleges of Education in the country to eradicate cultism from their institutions. Eight years later, the bugging issue remains unabated. In spite of pseudo confessions and dramatized renouncements of membership of cult groups here and there, many Nigerian youngsters are still being initiated into, to be entangled in cultism, embroiled in dastardly escapades that leave their parents and lager members of the society in a dilemma as agonizing as it is traumatic. The nocturnal activities of the secret cult members paralyze the academic and other activities on the campus, as they unleash horrendous terrorism on their fellow students, strict lecturers considered stingy with marks, as well as social contenders or rivals. The nefarious activities of these daredevils in blood clashes send hundreds of future leaders' to the early grave, as they are knifed, clobbered and shot in cold blood. The lucky ones are only maimed, sometimes for life (Sodeinde, 2007; *Business Day** 2007a and Eneh; 2006).

In spite of the efforts to eliminate cultism in higher institutions of learning, cult activities have been on the increase in the country. Reports of murderous and other gruesome activities of the campus cultists are burgeoning. The Mead of Department of Geology of the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) was murdered by cultists in his office in 2002. The Commissioner for Lands in Enugu State was murdered and then cut to pieces, put in the boot of his car, which was then set ablaze, and the burning vehicle pushed into a ditch where the mangled body of the Honourable Commissioner was burnt to ashes in a part of the Enugu city. Over 100 students were killed in cult wars in Enugu State alone between 1999 and 2006. The government was reported as financing the three major cults operating in the State, namely the Pirate Confraternity, Black Axe and Two-Two. On January 2, 2005, the Dean of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was shot in his campus residence by hired assassins suspected to be cultists. In August of the same year, 50 students from various universities across the country were arrested in Ajali, Anambra State, while trying to initiate new members into their cult. On Sunday, the 1st day of July 2007, several people were killed by rampaging cultists, who took to the streets of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, shooting sporadically. On a spot at No. 1 Ojike Street alone, they hacked three men, including a 30-year old man (*Newshearer*, 2006; *Weekly Details*, 2006 and Onoyume, 2007).

Mourning and protesting the insensitive wastage of youthful lives and the attendant dread and morbid fear of the insecurity and extra-judicial killings griping the citizenry, Onoli (2006) lists the politically motivated murders by the government-paid thugs and hired assassins suspected to be campus cultists between 1999 and 2006. These had spilled the blood of over forty-seven lives in Enugu State alone. The victims, who were killed in different circumstances, included a former Vice-chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the Managing Director of a renowned publishing outfit, a Police Commissioner, worshippers, motorcycle transport operators, etc. Onoh lamented the security conundrum, regretting that no single day passed without the news of the killing of defenseless citizens by paid thugs or hired assassins. He further bemoaned such an unprecedented, irresponsible, senseless and uninterrupted waste of human lives as was witnessed in the State since 1999. The few cases given above can only act as a tip of the iceberg, Putting the picture together for the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria could make a foetus skip some breaths (Eneh, 2005b and Onoh, 2006).

Ajani and Igbikiowubo (2006), repotted that prior to the 2003 general elections in Nigeria, a new dimension was introduced into electioneering mobilization. Whereas members of the Nigerian public were used to thugs engaging in different forms of malfeasance, what took place on the election days was crude and shocking. The thugs were not only given a token on the eve of the elections, but were armed with automatic weapons of various categories, earlier imported and stashed specifically for the purpose of securing election victory. On the election days, many voters could not venture out of their homes. The bigger and more destructive dimension to this gangland style mobilization came after the elections. The already charged thugs, with arms in tow, but no visible jobs in sight, simply transformed largely into criminal elements.

Rather than abate, campus cultism is growing as the number of educational institutions grows. It has been described as a feeder for political thuggery. Nigerian politicians appear bent on the use of thugs, not only for electioneering campaigns and as body guards, but also to deal with their political

opponents, by way of intimidation or outright elimination. Therefore, it might be impossible to wipe out campus cultism that supplies political thugs, hired assassins and killer-squads that serve political clandestine interests. On the other hand, the cultists use the fat cash payments from their mentors to fund their tertiary education, which has become increasingly expensive with the ailing Nigerian economy, introduction of various economic reforms, increasing population and rising demand for tertiary education in the country (Eneh, 2005a).

The incidence and activities of secret societies, examination malpractice and other social vices associated with Nigerian undergraduates were unheard of in Nigeria's tertiary institutions of learning before the mid-1980s. The visions, goals and *modus operandi* of the few social clubs, often taken for cults, that existed then in a few higher educational institutions were clearly different from what obtain today. The tertiary institutions of learning were rich with equipped libraries stocked with books and journals, standard laboratories equipped for research, hostels furnished like hotels and attended by government-paid cleaners to change the bedding and clean the interior and exterior, standard cafeteria to feed the students, regular water and electric power supplies (Onyekakeyah, 2007).

Early 1980s, the federal government slammed stringent austerity measures on the nation as part of its response to the recession in the world price for crude petroleum oil, which had led to a drastic decline in Nigeria's oil revenue from over US\$20 billion in 1980 to less than US\$10 billion in 1982. In particular, the catering and hostel services and the food subsidy for the students of the tertiary educational institutions were withdrawn in 1984 by the government. Consequently, the university cafeterias were closed down. Students began to scavenge for food from the unhygienic 'bukateria' that soon replaced the cafeteria. Hostels began to stink. As the number of students increased, the hostel population exploded, with the concomitant stress. Laboratories, libraries, lecture halls and other facilities for effective studies and sports got outstretched without maintenance, replacement or addition of new ones. Starvation and stress multiplied on the campuses, changing the culture of sanity to negative tendencies and inclinations. Hungry students abandoned good conduct for all manner of misdemeanor on the campus. On their part, the lecturers left in their droves for foreign universities with better conditions of service and prepared learning environment. First to leave were the expatriate lecturers, followed by the indigenous ones. This signaled the beginning of the brain drain malaise that has robbed the Nigerian universities of crack academics, leading to the much decried production of half-baked and unemployable graduates (Encarta, 2005c and Onyekakeyah, 2007).

Graduate unemployment was also peaking this period, when industries began operating below installed capacities and laying off workers, because of the austerity measures that led to sky-rocketing exchange rate and unaffordable importation of foreign machine spare-parts and raw materials. Sani (2007), reported that unemployment rate hit 18.01% in year 2000 and that 10.2 million jobs needed to be created annually till 2020, against the backdrop of 5.1 million people churned out from the nation's education system.

The students, whose living conditions and learning environment kept deteriorating on the campuses, were left with little hope for employment after all the hassle. No wonder, frustrated by the ineffectiveness of their nation, they began to daily surrender themselves to new godfathers in cults, secret societies, etc. By the nineties, the cult virus, like a wild fire in harmattan, had spread to all nooks and crannies of the higher educational institutions and penetrated the secondary education system in Nigeria, leaving in its trail disappointments, dashed expectations and bereavements of unprecedented proportion (Kukah, 1998; Eneh, 2005a and *The Guardian on Sunday*, 2000).

The cult devotees, faithful and loyal are promised power, fame, pleasure, provisions, protection, promotion, freedom, adventure, money, girls, good grades, and good life. The appeal usually leads to a covenant between the giver and the taker of these mirages. Even when these gifts come, they are illusory, figments of imaginations. The cultist's academic performance deteriorates very badly as he abandons burning the midnight oil for night cult heinous activities. He soon becomes a belligerent recluse; having been turned into a sadistic and psychopathic human bloodsucker during the initiation ceremony. He soon gets disillusioned, discouraged, dejected, depressed, empty and wasted. The provisions he gets from his false master are so transitory and ephemeral that they soon fly away, leaving him much worse than when he joined the bad group. The power he gets destroys both himself and his target. Thus, he ventured into cultism whole, but must come out of it fragmented or dismembered or even dead. Indeed, all that glitters is not gold. The amount of youthful blood spilled in the nineties to illusions of cultism in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is too frightening to estimate (Eneh, 2000).

Achebe (1998), submits that there is nothing wrong with the geographical entity called

Nigeria, nor is there anything wrong with the citizens. Rather, the trouble with Nigeria is inept leadership. The Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), has declared that development will continue to elude Nigeria as long as corruption remains unchecked. The fight against corruption in Nigeria has been more of lip-service. It started with 5 majors of the Nigerian army replacing the corrupt civil rule with military rule in 1966, on the ground that the disciplined military men would not succumb to the lure of lucre. - Now we know that the lure of lucre is no respecter of persons or the colour of their clothes. Most of the military men who fought the war against corruption for the long and harrowing 34 years of military rule in Nigeria were badly defeated by corruption itself for the simple reason that they were unable to control the movement of their fingers and the dance of their throats to the satanic music of avarice. Afflicted with the same disease of corruption, they could not keep their fingers from the public till. Despite the anti-corruption laws and anti-graft agencies, the Nigerian public officers keep walking on hollow grounds of public till. The worm of corruption remains buried in the apple (Agbase, 2001; Eyoboka, 2007 and *Newswatch*, 2001).

Sobowale (2007) and Mamah (2007) reported that the federal, states and local governments and the FCT had N16.5 trillion from the federation account from 1999 to 2007. They further tabulated (Table 1) the allocations to the FCT, States and Local Governments, totaling N9.1 trillion, while the federal government had the rest, N7.4 trillion, to spend. The 36 States and the FCT got N5.7 trillion, while the 774 Local Governments received N3.3 trillion within the period, which started June 1999 and ended May 2007. The maximum total allocation, N622 billion, went to Rivers State, while the minimum, N145 billion, went to Nassarawa State. These income figures excluded the internally generated revenues of the FCT, state and local governments as well as the Petroleum Technology Development Fund.(PTDF), the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and other secret oil accounts operated by the federal government during the period.

Table 1: Allocations to States (1999-2007)

S/NO	State	Allocation (bn Naira)	S/No	State	Allocation (bn Naira)	S/No	State	Allocation (bn Naira)
1.	Rivers	622	13.	Iino	231	25.	Cross	190
2.	Delta	561	14.	Bauchi	227	26.	River	183
3.	Akwa	495	15.	Jigawa	226	27.	Anambra	182
4.	Ibom	452	16.	Benue	222	28.	Zamfara	181
5.	Bayelsa	371	17.	Okoto	214	29.	Abia	177
6.	Kano	331	18.	Osun	210	30.	Yobe	176
7.	Lagos	281	19.	Adamawa	200	31.	Taraba	173
8.	Katsina	263	20.	Edo	197	32.	Enugu	166
9.	Oyo	257	21.	Kebbi	196	33.	Kwara	155
10.	Ondo	256	22.	Ogun	195	34.	Plateau	153
11.	Kaduna	242	23.	Kogi	195	35.	Ekiti	149
12.	Borno	237	24.	FCT	193	36.	Ebonyi	146
	Niger					37.	Gombe	145
							Nassarawa	

Source: Sobowale, 2007

These total sum represents more money in 8 years than all previous governments have spent since Nigeria came into existence in 1914. Yet there is little value to show for it. Whatever projects the leaders claim to have executed were mere smokescreens for diverting the wealth of the nation into private pockets. There is no published account anywhere of how these colossal amounts of money were disposed of by the leaders at the FCT, federal, state and local governments. Yet, the administration was loquacious in advocating anti-corruption, transparency, accountability and due process. It was most mouthy of reforms agenda and programmes. For the economic sector, it shouted NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies) at federal, state and local levels. Although, the phase-1 of this much-vaunted programme has ended and adjudged a failure, the phase-2 has been launched (*The Guardian*, 2007). In the public service sector, it was loudest with the public service reforms involving rightsizing and 'service compact' ('servicom'), as well as the privatization and commercialization of state owned enterprises. In the education sector, it had the public-private partnership and other programmes. And, many more programmes without human face that were adjudged anti-people were credited to the administration. Most of these programmes are old wines in new wineskins; wishy-washy, din-don affairs, not meant to work, but to deceive the masses, while actually positioning the elephantine treasury of the country for cutting for themselves an unreasonably large and unfair share of the meat. Hence, there were no genuine supervision,

monitoring, evaluation and control mechanism in their implementation. The contracts for their implementation and fake monitoring mechanisms were awarded to the political cronies of the ruling class. These acolytes are normally used to corner the funds of the programmes and to eventually clean and seal the dirty deals. This is the simplest description of how poverty persists in and pervades the land of natural plenty, called Nigeria.

Ochu (2007), submits that the surest and easiest way to riches in Nigeria is involvement in politics and governance. Delving into some of the predatory world of tax swindlers and uncovering some of the criminal schemes that have produced not a few billionaires, Mayah (2007), reported that 66 million barrels of crude oil disappeared under the Obasanjo regime, while US\$291 million tax revenue crawled into private pockets. Over half of the governors of the States during the period were indicted of various corrupt practices by the anti-graft agency, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Some of them were selectively allowed to contest for public posts in the 2007 elections, while another fraction of them was prevented from contesting for public posts in the said elections. Yet a number of them, suspected to have failed to "sort themselves out" with the authorities that-be, were charged to court, while the rest, who did, are free today. Also, by all indications, most of the local government chairmen did pretty well for themselves at the expense of the people they led (*Newswatch*, 2001; Ajero, 2007 and Akintunde, 2007).

Power, roads and other infrastructures have been the bane of development in Nigeria. In 2007, the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) rated Nigeria 108 in terms of infrastructural provisions, showing that the level of infrastructure in the country is one of the least efficient in the world. Yet, the federal government spent N521 billion (\$4.07 billion) on electric power from 1999 to 2007, a period when the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) supplied more darkness than electric light (Nwachukwu, I., 2007 and Udo and **Okonji**, 2007).

Although, the government stabilized the exchange rate and wiped out the burden of external debt, to the ordinary Nigerians, most of whom are at the fringes of the economy, the government has woefully failed, especially when they weigh the impact of eleven (11) hikes in fuel prices from N2i to N70 in eight years and the flashing electricity supply in an oil-rich country where business concerns cannot even find fuel to run on electric power generating sets. Most of the roads are in extremely deplorable conditions, and some communities have been successfully cut off from the rest of the country by completely impassable roads. The death-trap state of the roads has often led to increasing rate of road accidents and menace of armed robbers faking advantage of the bad spots on the roads to operate. It was reported that 100,923 Nigerians died and 285.3 13 were injured in fifteen years in over 231,172 road accidents. The lifespan of vehicles compelled to ply the Nigerian bad roads is shortened to abysmally low levels (Adekoya. 2007; *Business Day*, 2007b and Adams, 2007).

Reports have it that 54,000 Nigerian women die yearly of complications arising from pregnancy and childbirth. Maternal deaths in the country stood at 800 per 100,000. Frightening as they are, these figures are only but a fraction of the actual figures in a country where majority of the maternal mortality cases are unrecorded in the rural areas that harbour 80% of the nation's population (*Daily Independent*, 2007).

Onah (2007), reported that the civil society organizations in Nigeria expressed worry over the increasing level of poverty in the country whereby about 54 million Nigerians go to bed hungry daily. The situation is being worsened by retrenchment and lay-offs. Education is of poor quality with 3 out of 4 Joint Matriculation Examinations (JME) candidates failing. There is no better corroboration for the described situations in Nigeria than her recent exclusion on the list of African countries adjudged by World Bank as making notable progress in improving governance and fighting corruption (Nwachukwu, O., 2007).

The Nigerian brand of politician would identify societal problems occasioned by the previous usually inept leaderships and promise during electioneering campaign to address them. More often than not, he gets into the office by means of various electoral irregularities, and not the mandate of the electorate. And, during his tenure, he plays down his personal manifesto and that of his political party and operates governance that can best be described as a farce, a sham, a situation of rhetoric and less action, or worse still, self-serving. As the politicians rig themselves into offices and steal mandates, the youth not only emulate their dishonesty in examination malpractice and certificate forgery, but also react in cult practices," in an attempt to even up the score or at least satisfy themselves. By looting the public treasury and exhibiting ostentation and squander mania, the politicians widen and deepen poverty, and the youth respond to this situation by engaging in cult activities to get their own share of the national cake. As the society misplaces emphasis on paper qualification, the youth seek to acquire it by means of hook or crook, including cultism. As the political ruling class accumulates the nation's wealth to itself and neglects and abuses the workers and the masses, poverty continues to

pervade ail over the society. These impact disastrously on the well being of the citizenry. The usually impatient youth react to the attendant distress by way of engaging in social vices, including cultism.

Recommendations and Conclusion

From Independence in 1960 till the early 1980s, when the economy of Nigeria was buoyant, little was heard of cultism in the Nigerian educational institutions. From the mid-eighties, when austerity measures and a number of economic reforms were introduced in the country in response to the global oil-glut of the late 1970s and the attendant dwindling petro-dollar revenue, economic stress-induced social vices, including campus cultism, multiplied. Cultism is not just related to socio-economic distress; it is a response by the youth to corruption-induced poverty in the land of abundant natural resources.

Only iron political will can stamp secret cultism out of the Nigerian educational institutions and halt the untold tolls it wrecks on the lives of the citizenry, especially the youth and future generations. To stem the tide, the political ruling class has to mop up the courage and iron political will to reverse the trend. The matter has to be addressed from the top - and the bottom will duly respond. The nation with its cake belongs to all citizens, and the ruling class owes accountability to those who have allowed them to occupy the public positions. Asking the citizenry to lighten their belts for reform measures to salvage the ailing economy, while the ruling class is neck-deep into corrupt practices and executive kleptocracy, will continue to court disorderly reactions from the youth.

Some Nigerian leaders are dishonest and unreliable to the core: masses-oriented and people-centric only in their campaign promises, but oblivious of manifesto contract and thoroughly self-centered in their activities throughout their tenure. This attitude ought to be reversed, if the conundrum of social vices, including cultism, must become anachronistic. Since cultism stems chiefly from the breakdown of campus traditional social norms and controls, giving rise to, among others, hunger and poor nutrition, poor hostel and recreational facilities, poor learning environment, unemployment, and economic crises, preventing cultism is a better approach than punishing it. Therefore, the government ought to initiate attacks on the conditions that breed cultism.

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