

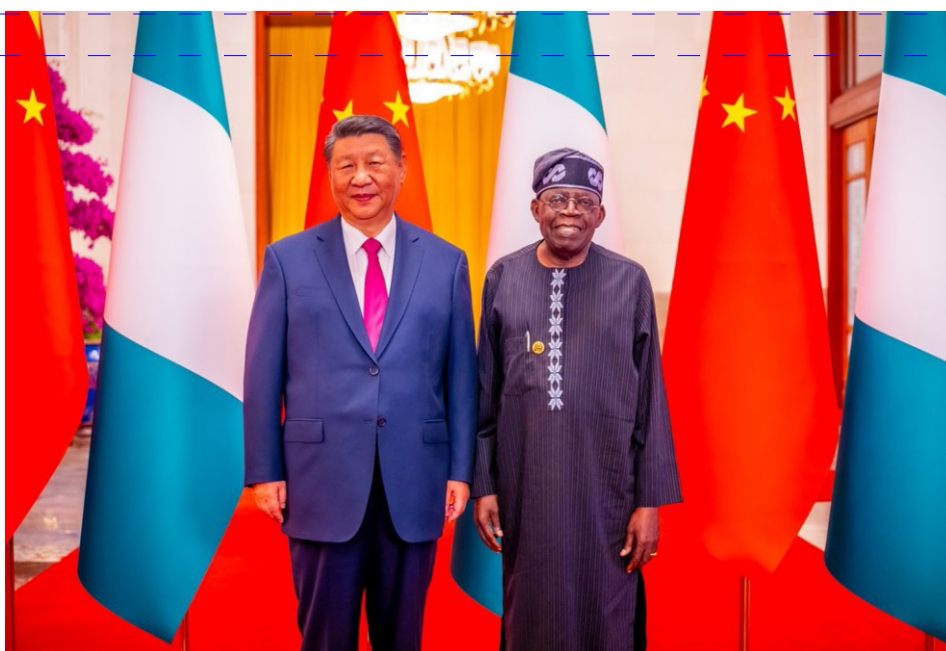
The Oppressors Who Love the Oppressed

BY OWEI LAKEMFA

"The basic principle of China is that the business of the Chinese government is business; in contrast, the Nigerian government says it has no business in business. So, how can the Chinese reforms be its model? In China, there is crime and punishment as indeed should be in any sane clime. In Nigeria, there is crime, but punishment depends on social status".

It is bizarre. The International Monetary Fund, IMF, calling on the government to protect the poor from the impact of the fuel price hikes it engineers! To add to its criminal thought process against the Nigerian people, the same IMF is telling the Tinubu administration that fuel prices in Nigeria are too low and need to be increased because it is allegedly selling below market price. What market? To understand this, we need to know that the Western Europe-owned IMF and its Siamese American twin, the World Bank, have since 1981 told every successive Nigerian government that our petroleum product prices are too cheap and must be increased. Based on their 'advice', every successive Nigerian government increases the price of petrol. The more government increases the price, the more impoverished Nigerians become to the extent that even as an oil-endowed and oil-rich country, Nigeria became the poverty capital of the world. Yet, the West imposes ever more pressure that the price be increased. Let me give you an idea of the depths the IMF and World Bank have pushed us. When this shoving of Nigerian governments started under the Shagari administration, a litre of fuel was raised from 15.3 Kobo to 20 Kobo. Then as part of so-called reforms and the ruinous Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP, the Babangida regime first moved the price on March 31, 1986 to 39.5K, then, two years later to 42K, on to 60K, and finally, 70K.

The illegal Shonekan interim regime moved it to N5, Abacha reduced it two weeks later to N3.25 before moving it to N15 and two days later reducing it to N11. The Abubakar regime took it to N25 before reducing it 17 days later to N20. Obasanjo in a series of increases took it to N70 and Buhari took it to N238 before handing over to



Tinubu on May 29, 2023. In the last 15 months, President Tinubu has increased the price, first to N545.883, then to N617, and now to N897. The goals of the IMF and World Bank are to dominate the world on behalf of the West, discourage production by the underdeveloped countries and ensure they remain providers of raw materials. Part of their strategy is to bury client states in unnecessary and doubtful debts and, reduce them to junk status. Anybody who thinks that these Western vehicles of underdevelopment have by their expression of sympathy with the poor become humane or repentant is mistaken. The IMF and World Bank are bandit organizations, ever-ready to steal from the poor and deprive the hungry child even half a loaf of bread.

They are undertakers of the West who dig the graves of the poor and underdeveloped countries and bury their hopes and, possibly, their future. So, if they express sympathy with the plight of their victims, it is not skin-deep. It is like a person carrying out cosmetic surgery, that in itself neither changes the age, nor the person. In the midst of

mass misery, deprivation, hunger and anger, the narration is being pushed that our political elites admire China and would want Nigeria to develop like the Chinese. Yet, they would not take the basic steps towards development the children of Chairman Mao Tse Tung and Chui Enlai have taken. Not even to start with the most basic step, this is to develop a thought process.

The basic principle of China is that the business of the Chinese government is business; in contrast, the Nigerian government says it has no business in business. So, how can the Chinese reforms be its model? In China, there is crime and punishment as indeed should be in any sane climate. In Nigeria, there is crime, but punishment depends on social status. As the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC, had often told its opponents, come over and join us, and all your sins (crimes) are forgiven. Indeed, it is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a politically-connected Nigerian elite to be successfully tried in court. Even if by happenstance he were found guilty, there is a guarantee that he would not spend his full prison term behind bars.

So, when government claimed that the Nigeria Labour Congress, NLC, President Joe Ajaero was detained last week on his way to the United Kingdom because nobody is above the law, I am not sure anybody believed it. The issue of Ajaero is not about law; it is about lack of coordination in government and little veiled incompetence amongst the security services. How come almost every arm of the security services are inviting or arresting the same person for a sundry of known and unknown reasons? The labour leader has been arrested, and even beaten by a state government and, multiple arms of the police and the secret services. I will not be surprised if local traffic wardens like LASMA arrest him to 'assist

with investigations'. So the issue about Nigerians like Ajaero and the youths on treason trial for publicly demonstrating their feelings is not about Nigeria being a country of laws, but about social justice. This, again, raises our claims to want the Chinese model of reforms. Unlike Nigeria where the law is supposed to be even-handed for every citizen, in China, the higher you are in public office, the higher your punishment. A crime in China, say for theft of public funds which would earn a lowly citizen years imprisonment, would fetch a highly placed public official the death penalty.

Let me also say that from my observation of the Chinese

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legal system, punishments for crimes are carried out. It is the failure to bring crooks to justice that has saddled Nigeria with lots of baggage that would not allow the democratic system breathes. For instance, our elections are a litany of crimes for which the perpetrators, including hired thugs, are richly rewarded. That is why certified street thugs in various parts of the country are multi-billionaires. I feel ashamed as a Nigerian that each time elections are to be held, especially at national and state levels, former leaders, serving and past

governors, senators, religious leaders, academics and security chiefs gather to sign peace accords with a promise not to rig elections or perpetrate violence. As it turns out, these agreements are not worth the paper on which they are written. After such agreements, the peacemakers – I wonder who picks their bills – retire to their homes, and the gladiators in the elections do what they know best. We can learn lessons on development but we will be deceiving ourselves if we think oppressors will fall in love with the oppressed. You can take this to the bank, including the World Bank