

GLOBALISATION:

The Myth that Rules and Ruins our Lives

by:

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Globalisation[@] has become the new tyranny by which the entire world must be >managed= by transnational corporate power and insatiable greed. Along with the so-called Free Market, this phenomenon is sold to the world as immutable divine truth which must underpin the success (or failure) of every society. The single mindedness, unrelenting pressure and comprehensive terror with which this new law is being imposed on the world, has, dialectically called forth a counter movement to demystify it so that ordinary human beings, especially in the >South=, can see that it is not necessary to lie prostrate before this global terror and that it can be defeated.

The basic approach taken in this paper to demystifying this phenomenon is taken from lessons received from my so-called ordinary friends, from both poor rural and deprived urban settings. These non-pompous women and men, living ordinarilised lives, seeking merely to find their way through the dense fog of impoverishment thrown around them by their ruling elites, have a very simple way of conceptualising and capturing most phenomena with which they have to contend. They proceed from their direct micro-level experiences, asking questions about those phenomena that present them with confusion. In response to their questions, and in a collective setting, we try to tease the problem issues into their constituent strands and examine each strand carefully, linking it with the others to try to understand the whole fabric. In such an encounter, simple questions such as the following are presented to the 'collective mind' for consideration:

- If we say that we became independent in 1960 (in Nigeria), how come we still cannot rule ourselves according to our own long tested systems of governance ◊ which definitely worked well for our forebears ◊ and must now look to Europe and America for systems of governance?
- If we say that we are trading and development partners with the people of Europe and America, why are we always having to buy more and more expensively what they make with their machines while selling them in return, more and more cheaply, only those products that we harvest from the land ◊ and we cannot make our own things and also sell to them?
- If our forbears did not have to depend on other peoples for their food, why are we now in a situation where we must import more and more of what we eat. Is it that we have become indolent and incapable of producing our own food?

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- From our own experiences, if a farmer grows yams in abundance, his family must have the right to eat as much of yams as they may wish to without having to pay for this commodity the same way the family of a farmer who does not produce yam must in the market. How come that we are forced to pay for those gifts that God blessed us with at home here as if we were strangers seeking to buy these things from our own government? Or what is all this about other peoples forcing our governments to remove what they call subsidy from all those services that our people need so badly and should have a right to?
- What justice is there in asking that gifts of nature, like petrol, which we have in abundance, must cost the same here as it does in all other countries of the world whereas, the income of the worker here is about one hundredth of that of the worker in the U.S., for instance?
- Why does our government accept that bigger and richer and more experienced manufacturing companies from Europe and America, can now come into Nigeria and compete on the same terms with smaller and poorer companies owned by our people — with the result that the Nigerian companies go bankrupt and lay off masses of workers?
- Why are our rulers pretending to rule or to have power when it is becoming ever clearer daily, that the policies that they enforce on us are made outside this country and rammed down the throats of other people through their own rulers?
- Those of us who know anything about farming know that if corn planted on a piece of land has matured and grown tall to cover the soil, one does not then plant anew, under the tall and older plants, fresh ones that must just sprout and reach for the sun.....the smaller ones would definitely not receive any sunshine and must die off. Why do our governments seem not to recognise this simple law of nature and are asking our own weak and young manufacturing outfits to compete on equal basis with better and longer developed ones from outside this country?
- What sort of help are we getting from Europe and America if all the people that we train as doctors of medicine, engineers, etc., leave our country to go to these foreign countries in order to earn what their counterparts there earn — incomes that they cannot earn here at home? Why is it that it is only these highly qualified ‘workers’ on whom we have spent so much money and whom we need very badly — not ordinary workers like ourselves — that are allowed or even encouraged to come to these foreign countries?
- Why has our history so abandoned us to the dictations of others such that everything we could be or have must be determined from outside our country to the extent that even our children look, feel, think and act more and more like Americans, for instance, than Nigerians or Africans, for that matter?
- Why, in spite of the fact that we work very hard, from dawn to nightfall, not spending anything on ourselves or our children, not having any luxuries, in fact, not eating enough at any time, why do we continue to be so poor?

- How did we get into this human trap called World Bank - IMF, and how do we spring this trap? Why should it be possible for two man-made organisations to learn that those who sat to invent them were actually men, not women who know the pains of childbirth and would not easily create monsters to terrorise their offspring to enforce their devastating programmes of so-called adjustment on whole nations?
- We do not understand the meaning of "National External Debt". There is no time when the people, that is us, gathered and instructed our leaders to go borrow such huge amounts of monies that we are now alleged to be owing. What did our governments do with these monies? What did they tell their lenders they were going to do with the monies? Did the money lenders make sure that the monies were actually applied to the purpose/s stated at the time of borrowing? Is it true that even the interest rates charged on these loans changed from time to time without the agreement or even knowledge of the borrowers? Should we really be repaying such corrupt loans for ever and at the cost of our national livelihood?
- Does it mean that without the so-called Aid from Europe and America, our nations cannot develop? Is this how it was with those countries that have developed themselves? From all that we hear, is it not really our poor countries, almost according to the Christian Bible, that give aid to the developed countries — from him who has nothing, even the little that he has, would be taken and given to him who already has much?
- If two financial organisations can dictate to the rest of the world and make decisions for us all without our participation, what is the meaning of the democracy that those who direct these organisations recommend to us?
- With all these problems and injustices that seem to be permanent, are we not correct to ask: **just what are we poor people and nations doing here....in this 'their world'?**

Many questions like the above crop up in these discussions of ordinary people as they seek to understand their difficult life experiences and the way the larger world and its ways impact on their own micro-level realities. Effective and appropriate answers to these and many other questions are, we find, very important for the proper development of the will and capacity to resist this comprehensive enslavement by a civilisation whose principal god is wholly selfish.

In demystifying the reality that so confuses our peoples, we do not resort to the standard technical explanations which anchor themselves solely in the realm of academic theories of economics, politics and the social sciences in general. We reach for the daily lives and experiences of our peoples themselves, encouraging them to capture in their own terms, the images that might best communicate what they feel and question. In dealing with what exactly this animal called globalisation really is for instance, we offer that the clearest way of explaining it to people is to say that it is a kind of **unity on a global scale** enforced unity whose goal is to ensure a uniformity of the terrain on which global business would be

conducted. Once it is thus explained, the people themselves take hold of it and begin to examine it more thoroughly. In most encounters, they insist that:

- Coerced unity is no longer unity that is worth having since it over-rides the free will of partners to the unity and reduces them to mere objects of an agenda that is not theirs.
- In order for unity to become enforceable, there needs must be, not only gross inequality of power and influence in the partnership, but a situation of perpetual weakness of one of the partners thus ensuring that the agenda-setter is able to enforce its will in perpetuity.
- Enforced unity is necessarily an instrument of oppression since it does not admit of any real participation by all concerned in determining its main characteristics.
- When unity is enforced in a condition of pre-existing gross inequalities, the outcome must necessarily be the perpetuation of these inequalities and even their accentuation and, when the strong partner is only a small minority, **genocidal impoverishment** is the ultimate outcome.
- Uniformity that not only ignores but actively undermines the cultural diversity on which the beauty of the world rests, must lead to a most debasing cultural fascism since it would kill variety, the very spice of life with the active connivance of the victims themselves.
- If uniformity cannot be achieved on the basis of shared needs and aspirations as well as of equal rights and responsibilities, then it is the urging of the acceptance of a state of enslavement — on a global scale and with global, frightful consequences.

Our people generally round up these conclusions by holding that: given that anything is possible, a cat could actually genuinely desire unity with mice but, it is the cat's insatiable palate that would make a mockery of such desired unity and mice would be profoundly ill-advised if they take this "love" and partnership seriously. Unfortunately however, the wisdom exhibited by our so-called ordinary people in not uncritically taking for granted the bona fides of this much vaunted partnership, is not shared by the leaderships that we have had in Nigeria or, in the main, in most countries of Africa or indeed, the 'South'.

I have chosen to examine this burgeoning genocidal autocracy called globalisation, not from the perspective with which we are all familiar, that of people privileged to be counted amongst the intelligentsia in our various countries and disciplines, but from the depths of confusion and pain imposed on the lives of ordinary people. It is at this level, the level of its effects on the lives of people who do not understand its claims to validity and world hegemony, that the myth holds the fastest. For, like a previously unknown plague that strikes an ignorant world, it is apt to be ascribed to the wrath or will of God and borne with religious fortitude instead of being fought and defeated once its mythical garb has been shredded through clear, critical knowledge. One more reason why this perspective of the ordinary people is important is because, with all our erudition and new theories, we cannot defeat this disguised vampire unless the so-called ordinary people are mobilised, both by change catalysts and by themselves, to resist the corrosion of life, both human and non-human, on earth by this

terrible product of minority greed. Our cerebral rejection of this monstrosity must be replaced or, at least, powerfully reinforced by a gut level revulsion and repudiation that issue from the bellies of massive social movements that say ever more loudly: **enough is enough**. We must stimulate our peoples to commensurate self-activity as they say:

- enough to the arrogant self aggrandizement that allows a minority in the world to decree that its word shall be law to the majority;
- enough to this deceptive unity which only serves the interests of the ruling elites of the powerful, so-called developed nations of the world;
- enough to this new 'world Parliament', called the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and all its statutes/decrees TRIPs, TRIMs, GATs, MAIs, etc., etc., which is no more than the instrument used by rulers of the 'North' to flagellate the majority of the world's peace loving, hard working and solidarity seeking peoples;
- enough to the mystification which passes off a brutal re-colonising mission as an effort to rationalise and equalise opportunities for trade and cultural exchanges;
- enough to the wholesale degradation of nature in the pursuit of profit maximisation and perpetual growth by a handful of TNCs (Trans National Corporations) — with all the horrors attendant upon such wholesale abuse of natural bases of human survival here on earth — using their home governments and the institutions floated and controlled by them as the bludgeon with which to whip the rest of the world into line;
- enough to the erasure of hope for untold numbers of generations yet unborn in the 'South' and, ironically, in the 'North' as well;
- enough to the destruction of the self respect and dignity of untold numbers of women and men across the entire world as they are dumped into the bottomless depths of unemployment and misery;
- enough to the mass anomie etched into the lives of people, young and old, in the North as life is more and more drained of real, value-based meaning by this insatiable market;
- enough to the destruction of real, human solidarity amongst the peoples of the world — who are **yearning to truly find one another**, to embrace each others variety and difference in pursuit of greater mutual fulfillment;
- enough to famines and fratricidal wars created by the destruction of national and individual livelihoods — as stable systems of national survival and food security are assaulted by the bogey of liberalisation enforced in globalisation — which serves the interest of giant food-controlling TNCs, causing insufficiency, internecine conflicts and a general scramble for ample resources now made scarce;

- enough to the ravages visited on human history by a civilisation that seems to have exhausted the goodness contained in it and now mainly dispenses wars, famines, conflicts, fear, hopelessness, terror, and the rumblings of an inevitable and impending holocaust.

The main thrust of this brief paper is the advocacy that: it is in such emotive terms — not in the cool, objective, rational and sedate terms of academic discourse — that the wake-up call to our peoples must be couched in order to produce the tremendous and sustained groundswell of energy that we need to overcome this menace. A great deal of analyses has been done by concerned and committed scholars around the world; much has been written; innumerable workshops and even ‘Summits’ have been held in the effort to demonstrate that what passes now for globalisation, based on so-called free market forces, amounts only to gratuitous injury to a world sorely in need of healing. The midwives of humanisation of our world have clearly won the argument on purely theoretical grounds but we cannot hope to win the war using rational arguments alone, against the protagonists of market-driven globalisation. It is my ardent belief and hope that what we need to and can work for is to uproot and replace this injurious globalisation-of-and-by-ruling elites — which serves mainly the greedy and insatiable interests of ever dwindling numbers of TNCs — with an **Alternative Peoples’ Globalisation Programme** on a world scale. We can do this, starting from this our own global solidarity that should constantly seek to be more and more inclusive. Some of the tasks we need to carry out, linking up wherever possible with other ongoing initiatives of the same kind as well as with other global movements, are:²

- the development and continuous upgrading of **Nodal Knowledge Banks** (NKBs) on Free Market Globalisation (FMG) as well as on Alternative Peoples’ Globalisation Initiatives (APGIs), regionally and sub-regionally, depending on the availability of committed agents;
- the development and vigorous pursuit of an ever widening programme of civil society stimulation with the material in our NKBs, targeting, not only the traditional NGOs but also, and more importantly, POs (Peoples’ organisations), Social Movements — particularly women’s movements given their incredible energy and tenacity, Youth Associations and Clubs; etc. We also need to stimulate Government functionaries, especially those who, are saddled with the responsibilities of representing their governments in global fora;
- the establishment, as a matter of urgency, of a **Peoples’ Global Solidarity Initiative** (PGSI) to bring together, at regular intervals, representatives of ordinary citizens of the world as we develop a Peoples’ Global Forum of the future;
- the establishment of a Peoples’ Globalisation Development Fund (PGDF) — earmarked for the strengthening and general support of peoples’ initiatives that foster the basic characteristics of APGIs:

² Already, the present Global Dialogue organised by IGGRI, Kepa and Third World Connection anticipates my comments here as the scope and experiential depth evidenced in the list of practitioners of genuine grassroots development invited to participate in the event is truly commendable. It is the deepening of this process and thrust that is advocated in my modest contribution.

- * promotion of the self-reliant, self-fulfillment enhancing, micro-livelihood supporting initiatives of the people;
 - * promotion of people-people solidarity in mutual respect, sharing, caring and mutual celebration;
 - * promotion of hope-renewal for the Youth of the world;
 - * promotion of stimulation-through-learning experiences and exchanges among peoples;
 - * promotion of justice, fairness and equity among peoples of the world irrespective of race, creed, age, physical status, or sex;
 - * promotion of humaneness and sustainability rather than mere profit maximisation;
 - * a strong sense of responsibility to the rights of unborn generations and of their future world;
 - * celebration of variety and 'difference' rather than discrimination and exclusiveness.
- Establishment of people-people — actual grassroots — friendship associations in different countries of the world; etc., etc.

From everything that I have seen and read and been told, the peoples of the world, despite the heavy handedness and mind enshrouding practices of the devotees of the market, are not resigning themselves in prostrate impotence. Rather, through a multitude of initiatives, they are refusing to be bowed and cowed for all times by the forces of greed that presently dominate our world. What is called for from us by our peoples is not more theoretical debates, good and important as these are for path-finding, but stimulation into political self-activity and self mobilisation to struggle against globalised misery and hopelessness.