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One of the factors of violence is selfishness. Selfishness is one of the main factors of violence.Man is a social being-a being that lives, works and grows in the midst of others; a being that needs the assistance and encouragement of others to attain his goal. For that reason he has to consider others’ interest in taking actions and everything he does. But when selfishness takes over him, he ignores totally or considers less this important aspect of his social life and focuses on self, his actions often become offensive to others and arouse in them negative reactions which must be violent in varying degrees. For example, the third term bid of the Obasanjo administration was a product of selfish desire. The former president Olusegun Obasanjo loved power borne out of his selfish- desire to remain in power until death strikes him in order to protect and preserve his wealth. That was why he and the people who were stupid to believe him worked to amend the constitution midway to elongate his tenure in office. Some Nigerians noticed that the bid was a naked violence to the nation’s constitution and their dignity, rallied round and said no.

Greed is a social cancer said to be at work in a person when that person has excessive desire for something be it food, money, wealth or anything else, which in reality he or she does not need or needs as much. Often it is excessive and selfish desire for money, wealth, power, influence, etc, without thought about the after effect. When voters who are supposed to use their votes to decide 100 The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria who should lead them and thus change their present and future of their children for better prefer to sell their votes for some cups of salt, rice, pepper or things like that from some politicians who are specialists in wrecking people’s homes and lives. Events such as these provoke anger and righteous indignation in the people against the perpetrators of these wicked acts.

The third is injustice. The common runs of mankind hold the view that nothing that makes easier and quicker a destruction of human society more than injustice. Once by omission or commission it is allowed to rear its ugly head in the society, its first port of attack is the web of human relations; second is the moral values like trust, truth, integrity, honesty, equity, peace, love, sincerity, respect for life and human dignity, for common patrimony; live and let live, etc, being the building bricks of the edifice called society; and third is justice which is the foundation of every human society. “If justice is put on the throne, peace and love will take their normal course. But if peace and love are planted where injustice is rooted, they will be choked”. It is injustice on their humanity. When Nigerian masses are forced to make peace with hunger, poverty and despondency in the midst of wealth cornered and monopolized by the elite and leaders who have at their disposal instruments of coercion to suppress the hapless masses in their righteous agitations, it is pure injustice.

Poverty is another cause of violence it is in two forms: material poverty and spiritual poverty. Poverty simply defined is a lack of what a human person needs to live a normal, true and genuine life. It is seen as a disease because it distorts person’s worth and destroys his dignity and pushes him or her to live a miserable life. In material poverty a victim whether a person or a country lacks basic needs of life like food, shelter, clothing, access to health and education. In spiritual poverty a victim lacks love for others, does not have regard for others’ interest, is always concerned with his own interest and prepared to ride roughshod over others to achieve his or its selfishness. Lying, dishonesty, blackmailing, conspiracy, greed, murderous impulse, etc, are his or its constant companions. In Nigeria where poverty is accommodated and crowned as a king, courtesy of bad managers of the country’s abundant resources, the bitterness it arouses in the people has made the country vulnerable to violent eruptions with enormous costs in terms of lives and property.

At the end of 1929, just when the government was congratulating itself upon the success with which the difficult task of introducing direct taxation into these provinces had been accomplished, rioting of a serious and unusual kind broke out in Calabar and Owerri. In Owerri province, in the heart of the Ibo country, where a particularly dense population inhabits the palm forest, there is a place called Oloko. Here a warrant chief, Okugo, under instructions from the district officer, was making a reassessment of the taxable wealth of the people. In this he attempted to count the women, children, and domestic animals. A rumor at once spread among the women that the recently introduced taxation of men was to be extended to them. All through this densely inhabited forest country, at intervals of a few miles, are markets where many thousands, mostly women, collect to do petty trading, sell palm-oil to the small middle-men*,*and gossip with each other. The rumor thus ran all through the locality in a few days, spreading anger and dismay which were all the more intense because at this moment the price of palm-produce was falling, and new customs duties had put up the cost of several imported articles of daily use. They were seriously perturbed. "We depend upon our husbands, we cannot buy food or clothes ourselves and how shall we get money to pay tax?" They decided to combine. "We women," as one of them stated afterwards in her evidence, "therefore held a large meeting at which we decided to wait until we heard definitely from one person that women were to be taxed, in which case we would make trouble, as we did not mind to be killed for doing so. We went to the houses of all the chiefs and each admitted counting his people."

Okugo, continuing reluctantly to carry out his orders, sent a messenger to count some of his people. This man entered a compound and told one of the married women, Nwanyeruwa, who was pressing oil, to count her goats and sheep. She replied angrily, "Was your mother counted?" at which they closed, seizing each other by the throat.' A meeting of women was called and Nwanyeruwa's excited story was told as confirmation of the rumor. A palm-leaf, which, it appears, is at once a symbol of trouble and a call for help was sent round to all the women of the neighborhood. From the whole countryside women poured into Oloko and proceeded according to custom to "sit" upon the man who bad tried to assess Nwanyeruwa. All night they danced round his house singing a song quickly invented to meet the situation. Growing hourly more excited, they went on to Okugo's compound where his own people tried to defend him with sticks and bird arrows. The crowd mobbed him, damaged his house, demanded his cap of office, and charged him with assault before the district officer at Bende. The latter arrested him and brought him into the station. "The women," said this officer, "numbering over ten thousand, were shouting and yelling round the office in a frenzy. They demanded his cap of office, which I threw to them and it met the same fate as a fox's carcass thrown to a pack of hounds. The station between the office and the prison resembled Epsom Downs on Derby Day." The women continued to camp in thousands round the District Office until Okugo was tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for assault. But this was not the end. The women, for a reason which we shall consider later, refused, in spite of all the assurances of chiefs and administrative officers, to believe that women, "the trees which bear fruit," were not to be taxed, and this even after a deputation of fifty had taken train to provincial headquarters at Port Harcourt to question the Resident.5 From Oloko women went out in all directions, beyond the boundaries of the province and even into the neighboring lbibio country, spreading the rumor, and from a wide area subscriptions began to come in to Nwanyeruwa who had become a figure of womanhood rising up against oppression. ...

During the second week of December, the movement spread from the Ibo divisions of Owerri and Aba, to the Ibibio peoples of Calabar. At much the same time as the elaborate form of reassessment, which the women connected with female taxation, was being undertaken in Oloko, the Resident of Calabar had issued instructions for a similar kind of enumeration in his province. This was zealously enacted in one district by a cadet in the administrative service. In some villages, the people cleared into the bush at his approach, taking their small stock and chickens with them; here, however, he counted the houses, there being generally one to each woman, and the tethering pegs for the goats and sheep. These animals, we may notice, were often the personal possessions of the women. In the neighboring district the chiefs protested vigorously against these house-to-house visitations, though they professed themselves ready to parade all the men of each village in the central square. Another cadet, in Opobo district, to the south, met with determined opposition from the chiefs as well as from the people who were already in touch with the women at Owerri. The women followed him about wailing and cursing; palm branches, doubtless reinforced with magic, were tied across paths and doorways, while on one occasion it was grimly pointed out to him that he was actually standing on a grave where a white man like himself was buried. Finally, he was assaulted and his tax registers taken. At the neighboring center of Ukam, he and two senior colleagues were powerless to check the women, on this occasion accompanied by men, who opened the lock-up, destroyed the Native Court, and cut the telegraph wires. At Utu-Etim-Ekpo appeared crowds of women scantily dressed in sackcloth, their faces smeared with charcoal, sticks wreathed with young palms in their hands, while their heads were bound with young ferns. It is interesting to note that no Europeans understood the exact significance of these last symbols though nearly all the native witnesses assumed that they meant war. They burned the Native Court and sacked and looted the "factory" (European store) and clerks' houses. They declared that the district officer was born of a woman, and as they were women they were going to see him. Police and troops were sent, and as, on two occasions, the woman ran toward them with frenzied shouts, fire was opened with a Lewis gun as well as with rifles, and eighteen women were killed and nineteen wounded.

The following day an even more serious collision occurred at Opobo. Mobs of women passed shouting and singing about the town, "What is the smell? Death is the smell**."**They beat upon the iron-trading stores with their sticks and threatened the traders. To one, Mr. Butler a merchant, they shouted derisively, "All right, Bottle, no fear morning time five o'clock we go come for you," and the next day, "We'll get our Christmas clothes out of you today." In order to calm their excited fears, the district officer agreed to meet the seven leaders at the district office the following day. Palm-leaves were sent around to all the neighboring clans, and when the time came not seven but several hundred arrived at the office, armed with stout cudgels and dressed only in loin-cloths and palm-leaves. In front of the district office was a light bamboo fence, beyond that the road and, almost immediately beyond that, the river. The district officer, with a military officer and a platoon of troops, parleyed with the women from inside the fence. The leaders asked him to make notes of the discussion and then asked to see his notes.

All this time the meeting was becoming rowdier. More and more women were streaming up, until the numbers were estimated as being about fifteen hundred. When the copies were handed out, various other demands were made, such as that they must be put into envelopes, that they must have two-shilling stamps attached. They made threatening and obscene gestures toward the troops, called them sons of pigs, and said they knew the soldiers would not fire at them. At last they struck at the district officer with their sticks. The lieutenant caught the blows, made signs to the district officer as to whether he should fire (for it was impossible to make himself heard in the uproar) and, just as the fence began to give way before the rush of women, shot the leader through the head with his revolver. Two volleys were then fired on the crowd which broke and fled, leaving thirty-two dead and dying, and thirty-one wounded.

This shooting was on December 17. Trouble continued sporadically in various parts of the disturbed area, but by the twentieth the situation was completely in hand, and the rest of the month was taken up with pacification by means of patrols, and punishments under the Collective Punishments Ordinance. The disturbed area covered about six thousand square miles and contained about two million people. Attacks were made upon Native Courts in sixteen Native Administration centers, and most of them were broken up or burned.

It is an encouraging feature of this unhappy incident that the responsible authorities in Nigeria, as in England, should have been so ready to face the fact that it resulted largely from defects in their government. Here the Aba riots point a moral that is applicable far beyond Nigeria. The difficulties in this region were exceptionally great. But beneath the peculiar local symptoms lies a pathological condition common to the whole of Negro Africa. It is produced by the sudden strain thrown upon primitive communities by the strong, all-embracing pressure of European influence. There are examples in various parts of the world of primitive peoples unexpectedly rebelling after years of apparent acquiescence in European rule, and their conscious purposes often draw strength from what is at bottom an unconscious cultural protest. The reaction may not be expressed in this form; some tribes endure the stress of change so quietly that their rulers do not observe their difficulties. One relief for the desire for reassertion is found in the formation of secret societies or of quasi-Christian bodies independent of white control, whose proceedings express at once European influence and an anti-European attitude. The Watch Tower movement in Southern Africa, with its apocalyptic hopes of the fall of Christendom, "Satan's organization," clearly belongs to this category.