

ing the rural community. Because over 75% of the population lives in the rural areas, as farmers. And because of that, we cannot succeed in Nigeria until we build the rural community.

You build the basic education. We are making it a fundamental right that at least everybody should go to school. And, we are making it part of the directed principles of state policy that Nigerians should have the opportunity to reach even the universities, and all tertiary institutions.

These are some of the factors which, we believe, if you built them, you would have a stronger and more stable democracy. While also encouraging education of the people, of the electorate, political awareness. And we are encouraging the people, also, with good publicity, that they should elect hard-working, responsible, honest people as their leaders. If they have confidence in the leadership, it would be more difficult for anybody to remove that particular leader. So, these are the things which, the sum total of them — there are many — which will help build a stable future for this nation.

EIR: Do the Nigerian people think they are part of this process; that it's not just a formal process of parties, but that the average Nigerian, who is struggling to survive, make a living, take care of his family — does he feel that he is part of this democratic process? Are you satisfied with the voter turnouts? Maybe you could tell us what some of them are, that show the Nigerians are joining in this effort to move into a democratically elected Presidency.

Nasir: I'm satisfied, but I'm not satisfied with the education of the voters. That can be improved a lot —

EIR: Education about the candidates or the issues?

Nasir: By government and candidates, to tell the voter his responsibility, so that we get the best of the people into politics, into contesting elections. I am satisfied that the turnout during the last two elections was reasonable, but I think that with good education that can be improved.

EIR: What was the turnout?

Nasir: It was over 60%. Which, compared with what happened in some of these developed countries, I think this was a reasonable figure. I'm not criticizing them, but one would have to have some comparison.

EIR: There was very little coverage in the Western press of the Constitutional Conference, which took place in 1994, and there is almost no coverage of this democratic process. And, I might add, even though Sudan had a democratically elected Presidency, there has been no recognition of their democratic process either —

Nasir: Yes.

EIR: So, what would you tell the West, and what would you tell Washington, in terms of how serious you and other elder statesmen in Nigeria are about this democratic election process?

Nasir: The United States, in particular: I still want them to remember that they were a colony which fought for freedom, mostly because of taxation. They got away from the mother imperial kingdom of Great Britain. And since then, they have been cherishing freedom of other people; they have been cherishing democracy. But we thought the basis of cherishing all this democracy, is to assist the people to build the government, by the people and of the people. That was one of the cardinal principles of the United States democracy. They should give other people encouragement to do it *themselves*; they should not impose what has been achieved in the United States over the last 200 years.

You see, even with that — take the time of the Second World War. The Japanese-American citizens were *rounded up*, as suspect. So, you cannot build democracy, even in your own country, on the same basis as we can do it in another country, with a different environment.

In Britain, nobody was rounded up, as an ethnic group, as was done in the United States. And that was a condition of the United States, which was not a condition in Britain. So, even today, the conditions available in the United States are not the same conditions as you find in Nigeria, or in Niger, or in Burundi, or in Egypt, or, indeed, in Canada. So, we want them, as a democratic nation and as the number-one world leader today, to remember that part of the Founding Fathers of the United States, were built on religion. Religion is fear of God, and one hopes that with that fear of God, they will be able to be fair and equitable in whatever they do. That is our opinion.

Interview: Chief S.K. Dagogo-Jack

Nigeria prepares for Presidential elections

Chief Dagogo-Jack is chairman of the National Election Commission of Nigeria (NECON). He was interviewed by Lawrence Freeman in Nigeria in October 1997.

EIR: The election in Nigeria is of great concern to the West. Could you tell us how the Nigerian Election Commission was set up, and what its functions are?

Dagogo-Jack: The National Election Commission of Nigeria was inaugurated on Dec. 11, 1995, and was also established under Decree Number Three of 1996. The functions of the commission, are as stated in the decree. The main functions, are to organize, conduct, and supervise all elections and matters pertaining to elections for all elected offices; to register political parties; to determine the eligibility of the

political parties to sponsor candidates for any of the elections prescribed; to monitor the organization and conduct of political parties; to determine the number of registration centers, for each ward of the Federation; to provide guidelines to the political parties, stipulating the rules and procedures of the electoral campaign—the main functions.

EIR: How many Nigerians have you registered to vote?

Dagogo-Jack: During the first registration, in February of this year, the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria registered 55.5 million voters—that is, people 18 and above, who are Nigerians. In September, we conducted an update, and registered 2 million more. That is, a total registered voters figure of 57 million, out of a total population of 104 million.

EIR: In March of this year, you had local government elections. Could you tell us how many of those registered to vote, voted in that election? Approximately?

Dagogo-Jack: That's approximately: For the local government elections on a party basis, we were able to get about 52%.

EIR: And, those elections are now going to be followed, in December of this year, by elections for Federal Assembly, is that correct?

Dagogo-Jack: The next election that is coming on is for the State Houses of Assembly. The election is on Dec. 6. That will purely be also on a party basis. The political parties are right on the ground. And right now, the political parties are conducting their primaries, to select their candidates, their aspirants for these state elections coming up on Dec. 6.

EIR: Could you tell us the process that you went through, and the criteria you used, for creation of political parties in Nigeria?

Dagogo-Jack: The creation of political parties was one of the main functions of the National Election Commission of Nigeria. We were charged with the responsibility of registering political parties for the electoral process, so we prepared the guidelines for the registration of political parties. That, in that sense, involved a lot of activities: We provided the guidelines which, in effect, clearly stated the various conditions to be fulfilled by the political associations, the process which led to the registration of political parties, commencing in the second quarter of 1996, with the release of guidelines on registration of political parties on June 17, 1996.

A total of 23 political associations collected application forms, on payment of prescribed, non-refundable fees; however, at the closing date for submission of completed registration forms, which was July 25, 1996, eighteen political associations returned their forms with the other relevant documents. Now, with the 18 political associations doing that exercise, the political parties asked for mergers; so, the commission considered the applications, and asked them to merge, out of which, 15—that is, including the merger—15 political parties were said to be verified.

The parameters which we used contained size of sample, verified; administrative organization; executives spread at local government, state, and national levels; then, the constitution, manifesto, and articulation of issues. Each of the political associations were advised by NECON—were required to drop off their constitution, their manifesto; to articulate the issues, such as on the economy, foreign affairs, and all that; and the membership spread, nationally, including how each association measured up in regard to meeting the requirements of the 40,000 members in each state of the Federation, and 15,000 in the FCT, which is the Federal Capital Territory-Abuja.

EIR: Forty thousand for each of the 30 states, and 15,000 for Abuja?

Dagogo-Jack: Yes. You have to get a membership of that number. The cutoff point, after verification, of not less than 50%, was regarded as a basic qualification for registration, if all of the other conditions were met. But, however, it needs to be noted that, apart from the level of performance, each political party, or, each political association, has to have its presence at the national headquarters; and, also, in two-thirds of each of the wards in the local government area of a state.

EIR: So, this is an attempt to make sure that each party is a national, broad-based party?

Dagogo-Jack: Right. And, as I mentioned earlier, this 40,000, and 15,000, stresses the national interest.

EIR: And, this would also help to ensure there's no so-called ethnic or tribal or geographical domination. So each party has to be a national party?

Dagogo-Jack: Right. Now, pursuant to Section 41(b) of our enabling decree—which is Decree Three of 1996—we went on to verification, and registered five political parties, which are the United Nigerian Congress Party, that is, the UNCP; the Congress for National Consensus, CNC; the National Center Party of Nigeria, NCPN; Democratic Party of Nigeria, DPN; and, Grassroots Democratic Movement, GDM. These are the political parties which are registered, and right now are standing up for the elections.

EIR: And, then, your transition program: You are going to have, in December 1997, state assembly elections; and then, in 1998, elections to the Federal Assembly, governors, and Presidential elections. And then, the process will lead to an inauguration of a President of Nigeria on Oct. 1, 1998.

Dagogo-Jack: That's right.

EIR: Some people in the West have not looked favorably on Nigeria's democratic process. Could you tell us what it is that guarantees that this process will lead to a transition to a democratically elected Presidential candidate in 1998?

Dagogo-Jack: That's the Western countries you're talking about?

EIR: Yes. And particularly, the Western press.

Dagogo-Jack: Okay, the Western press you're talking about. You see, we, Nigerians, are not skeptical about the transition program. We have studied it. In 1996, we've gone through the non-party elections. We've gone through the registration of political parties. We've gone through the process of attempting [to get] voters registered; we've also gone through the elections. We're now steaming up, full-steam ahead, the boat is now moving toward Dec. 6, 1997, for the House of Representatives elections.

You see, one should not be skeptical. Nigerians have plenty of lessons, and with the present National Electoral Commission, the chairman, and the members, have a reputation to maintain, have credibility to maintain. And, with the support of the government, we can clearly say, that the transition program must be pursued religiously, and it will show that on Oct. 1, 1998, which is the terminal date, a civilian President, democratically installed, is restored, and the National Assembly is inaugurated. So, one should not be skeptical about it.

EIR: What is your conception of the importance of bringing democracy to the Nigerian population, after so many years of military rule?

Dagogo-Jack: Well, you see, Nigeria—although we've been under military rule, I say, generally, Nigerians are democratic. They have that essence, that hot-blood of democracy in them. If, for one reason or the other, democracy has eluded us in government, it has not eluded us in the general issue of the people. And that is why the present transition program is welcomed by all facets of Nigerians. If you had watched the non-party elections; if you have watched the local government elections, and seen the turnout, seen the orderly manner in which it's performed, you will realize that Nigeria is already on the path of democracy. And, all that has happened, previously, has been addressed. And Nigerians are now geared toward democratic rule—not only democratic rule: We are making gains even in the economic field, and social field.

EIR: So, you feel that the Nigerian population is very much involved—let's say, in body and soul—in this transition process to democracy?

Dagogo-Jack: Definitely. There's no doubt about that. And we, as the National Election Commission, which is charged with the responsibility of conducting the elections, we have provided guidelines; we have delineated consequences; and, we have the support of the generality of Nigerians, with the five political parties. If you go to the grassroots, if you go to the wards, if you go to the local government areas, all are happy that the present administration is hell-bent, is committed, to ensure that Nigeria democratizes.

EIR: When you say the present administration, you mean, the administration of Gen. Sani Abacha?

Dagogo-Jack: Yes, Abacha.

EIR: Is he completely committed to this democratic process?

Dagogo-Jack: Completely committed, to enthroning a lasting democracy in Nigeria.

EIR: One question, which may be out of your area, is, are you happy with the political debate and discussion of policy by the five parties? I mean, how the parties have articulated their programs, or policies toward economic alternatives? Because, in my short stay here, I have not seen much discussion by the parties of what they stand for. Is this process proceeding?

Dagogo-Jack: After the registration of the political parties, we have what we call a decree on the campaign procedures: Decree 28. Through the radio, through the television, and also through the electronic means, they have started their campaigns; they have set up offices; stayed in Abuja (Abuja is the Federal capital), but you know every political activity, right now, starts at the grassroots. That is, in the wards and the local government areas, because most of the polling stations are right in the wards and local governments, with their primaries.

So, coming into Nigeria for three days, you will not feel the pulse of this. But, we hope you will come back, and see how aggressive they are in trying to get people to their side.

EIR: Now, one question I have to ask you, because it's asked all the time by people in the West, is: Are the elections and the parties being used just as a cover for General Abacha to turn in his uniform and become a civilian Presidential candidate, and win the election?

Dagogo-Jack: Well, this question has been coming up and down. You see, if you read our guidelines, if you read the Constitution, for anybody to stand in an election, you must be a member of a political party. There are no independent candidates. You have to be a member of the political parties, and you will register from the grassroots, which is the ward level. So, this question of saying, "The present head of state will take off his uniform," and all the rest of that, it's a factor that the Nigerian National Electoral Commission is not aware of yet. Because, *we have* our guidelines: For anybody to stand for an elective post, you must start by being a member of a registered political party.

EIR: When is the cut-off date for registering for a political party?

Dagogo-Jack: Well, the cut-off dates for public offices, you have before you. There's a cutoff date by which you *must* resign your appointments. And, it's indicated in the guidelines. You see, the public officers and civil servants, mainly, according to the Constitution, are apolitical. They are not expected to be involved in politics! And, they have the cutoff date, as in the Constitution and in our guidelines, when they

should resign their appointments, or withdraw their services from the public office, or, civil servants in the civil service, to stand for election. *It's all laid down.*

EIR: One question that I neglected earlier, is, who appointed you to your post as chairman of the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria?

Dagogo-Jack: Well, by Decree Number 8, all the implementive agencies are appointed by the head of state, on the recommendation of the Provisional Ruling Council. Of course, that's the government in power. You really wouldn't expect someone outside the government to appoint the chairman of the National Electoral Commission? But, we were appointed, and we were sworn in by—if you look at the Transition Program, it's at the consensus of, the programs were all prepared under the Constitution of the Provisional Ruling Council, which is the head of the constitutional body ruling the country.

EIR: And this whole procedure—not the details, but the orientation—came from the Constitutional Congress that met in Nigeria, with these recommendations?

Dagogo-Jack: Yes. The recommendation for setting up the implementation agencies was purely from the Constituent Assembly, the Constitutional Conference, which drew up the draft 1995 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

ria. So, it's not a making-up of government, but the appointments *must* be made by the apex authority, which is the Provisional Ruling Council.

EIR: So, you're satisfied that everything's proceeding in an orderly, positive direction for 1998?

Dagogo-Jack: Yes, we are satisfied—*more* than satisfied. What we require is the understanding of the Western press, as you called them; they should make it a point of duty to get the *facts*. And, they should not just get information from outside the government or outside NECON, and start vilifying Nigeria. What we want: peace, cooperation, dialogue, and not antagonism. Because, you see, Nigeria has been in the forefront of all the United Nations institutions—like the IMF [International Monetary Fund], Nigeria is a founding member; Nigeria is a member of the United Nations; Nigeria has played an important part in peacekeeping operations, among that. It's so tied to the United States: You have investments of over \$32 billion from our oil fields from there. Of course, Britain was our colonial master. So, what we want is understanding, is cooperation, is advice—and not antagonism. But, I can assure you, as chairman of the National Electoral Commission, which has a job to do, come Oct. 1, 1998, Nigeria will *definitely have* a democratically elected *civilian* President. And, we will not fail. We are determined and proud people.

Videotapes Available from FDR-PAC

The U.S. Backers of Britain's Africa Genocide



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis
FRONTMAN: New Jersey Congressman Chris Smith



Courtesy of Adella Hardin, Elko Daily Free Press
KINGPIN: Former President George Bush, who is a board member of Barrick Gold, which led the 1996 mining companies' invasion of Zaire. Here, Bush visits Barrick's Goldstrike facility in Elko, Nevada, along with former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis
FRONTMAN: Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf



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FRONTMAN: New Jersey Congressman Donald Payne, former head of the Congressional Black Caucus



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BLOODSUCKER: Televangelist 'Diamond' Pat Robertson



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