

ANAMBRA 2014 – Rebirth or Rendezvous with Destiny

By Eugene Agbimson

As Anambra prepares to ring out the old and ring in the new administration, the stakes and challenges can't be any higher. The State is at a precipice with a weary population that have suffered and endured so much for so long. The outgoing administration no doubt made great strides, considering where it started. However, the expectations and aspirations of the masses from their government remains a colossal illusion. There is deep resentment at what the people see as economic mismanagement of the state for many, many years. Except for the privileged or a connected few, daily life for the masses remains a series of hard struggle for survival. While the vestiges and collateral consequences of the civil war have a part to play in the situation however, after four decades, and considerable guaranteed subvention/revenue allocation from the federal government, the people feel greatly short changed.

On most development metrics, the state lags behind many other States of the federation despite being endowed with all sorts of resources, tapped and untapped. But unfortunately, like most states in Nigeria, the ruling Governors are quasi despots installed by a political machine and ruling by fiat. Only on the throes of a reelection campaign or at the tail end of their reigns that some of them become very generous and benevolent despots, throwing around some goodies and pet projects on a population that hitherto had been neglected. What the State needs at this juncture is a Marshall Plan of sorts, starting from a top to bottom reassessment of the state development priorities. The baseline projects initiated by the outgoing administration should be reevaluated and those on the "critical path" be given urgent completion priority. I had a chance to spend some time with the governor elect during his brief holiday vacation in Texas and I came out more convinced that, he is a divine gift to the people of Anambra. Like the biblical King David, he was the least expected amongst his brethren, when the prophet (Governor Obi) came calling. Now, having been chosen and anointed, he is poised to get down to work and lead his people. His "Obiano 2014 My Strategic Blueprint" lays out a good roadmap akin to a Marshall Plan for the State. It contains some big and bold ideas that would transform every aspect of life in the State.

Sufficient and reliable power, pliable roads frequently maintained by the public works maintenance crew, education restored as a State priority, with emphasis on science, technical, vocational and trade schools as well as teacher retraining programs, revamped health care system with more general and rural health centers, hospitals and technologically advanced diagnostic centers, better drinking water supply for most people, initiatives to boost commerce and industry, mechanized and expanded agriculture that would make Anambra one of the nation's leading bread baskets, better public security and transportation system. Recruit and train an army of auditors, accountants, investigators and law enforcement task force to combat corruption and

fraud. New structures are needed to combat a heightened and expanded level of manipulation, usurpation, fraud, graft and corruption at State, local government, town and city administrations. The new administration can show that it could be possible to run an open, transparent and accountable administration at all levels of governance. Leaders need to set the tone at the top and lead by example.

Equally important is a reorientation of the masses, public attitude and discipline matters. Certain old notions and chronic anachronisms regarding ethnic nationalism or superiority need to take a back burner. As Nigeria braces as a key member of the world's third tier potential economic powerhouses, the so called MINT nations of (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey), the State needs to ready itself as a deserving destination for the anticipated rush of foreign investments into the country. A State that in the past had more university graduates and PhD's per capita than any comparable area in black Africa, a State with a burgeoning commercial and industrial base, and a population conditioned by circumstances to be creative, individualistic and resilient.

The state could easily become one of the country's major industrial heartlands..

The incoming administration offers a breath of fresh air and a potential answer to the yearnings of the masses who are utterly fed up and disgusted with an unending life of misery as the norm for more than 99 percent of the people. It needs to demonstrate early on that it means business, but not business as usual. It cannot be seen as a throwback or recycle of the selfsame operators and unsavory characters that have dominated and wrested power from the people.

While all problems cannot be solved at the same time, embarking on achievable and affordable projects such as drinking water supply project, or electric power project, or road repair and maintenance project or mandatory free primary or secondary/vocational school program or security project on a statewide basis could change the dynamics, drastically reduce joblessness, engender a feel good atmosphere and a realization that finally something meaningful and tangible is being delivered to all of the people of the State. The pervasive feel of hopelessness could become a distant memory, and the mortifying fear of being robbed in broad daylight or worse, kidnapped with impunity, would begin to dissipate.

Perception of stability and anticipation of future profitable economic activities in a safe environment would attract investors, local, national and international.. By and large, the state would start to live up to its reputation as some people have dubbed it – light of the nation and home of the brave.

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