

Parasites as democrats

By Eskor Toyo

IN the contemporary world, the air is rent by false trumpets about democracy. A host of persons, agencies, governments and governmental alliances tramp over the globe, wearing the mask, beating the drums, ringing the bells and wielding the machete of 'democracy'. They remind one of the Ekpo masquerades in south-eastern Nigeria. Exploiters of various kinds, imperialists, monopolists, financial empire builders, hegemonists, swindlers, military dictators, other social parasites of all descriptions, and even fascists, sing the tunes of 'democracy' in order to belong to the choir of the global uni-dollar bandmaster.

The bandmaster himself, a unipolar looter, prescribes that democracy means the holding of some election. In the 20th Century, and in view of the immense falsity of the mask of democracy, it has become necessary to distinguish between electocracy and democracy, that is, a fake capsule with the label of 'democracy' and genuine democracy. Where a government is the product of some kind of election, we have an electocracy. Elections, however, are not the essential content of democracy.

Democracy, as Abraham Lincoln rightly defined it, is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. The word *demos* means the people. Lincoln's emphasis was on

the people, and this is the emphasis of any genuine democrat. It follows that what classifiers of government call a pluto-democracy, namely, a state where there may be some elections, but which is dominated by the wealthy, is not really a democracy.

Throughout history, the term 'the people' has meant the working people in their various stations of life depending on the structure of society. In all predatory societies, including capitalism in all its forms, the predators have been at the same time the wealthy, the privileged, the powerful and the effective rulers. The working people have been the prey, the underprivileged, the relatively poor, and the ruled. It follows at once that unless government is by the working people and for the working people, it cannot really be a democracy, no matter the number and forms of elections.

What this means is that from ancient Athens to now, no genuine democracy has existed barring the effort of socialists in some countries in the last 80 years to bring about a system that is authentically a democracy. The American and other bourgeois propagandists who have in their trading interests advertised democracy as the mere holding of elections recoil from

any question that can disturb their parasitic or hegemonistic conscience. Who can effectively contest elections? If it is the rich or opportunists, does this give us government by and for the people? How are the elections conducted? What role has money in them? If, for instance, they are rigged, does that give us government by the people and for the people?

There are other questions. How are the candidates selected? What if they are selected by power-seeking factions actually financed by exploiters of the people? What proportion of the people come out to vote? If the majority have turned away, seeing that elections are only rotten *bazzars* that bring them nothing but more misery, how does that give us a government by the people? Who controls the news media that shape opinion? Do the people actually have the fullest access to education without which they are like chaff in a storm? What chance have those who really express the interests of the people got in the election if they are poor and honest? If candidature and votes are swayed by ethnic or racial loyalties, how does the champion of the ethnic or racial biases of a big ethnic group or a privileged race become a

representative of the people in general? By whom and in whose interest is government run after what passes for an election?

When these questions are answered truthfully, it becomes obvious that the governments in those lands of parasitism that want very much to be seen as flying the flag of democracy are anything but authentic democracies. As for Africa, Mobutu was a fool. If he had managed to put on show one fantasy called 'election' and reinstalled himself, his North American patrons would have hailed him a colossus of 'democracy' in Africa. For years on end, the masses in Liberia chafed and groaned under the fiendish depredation of Sergeant Samuel Doe. The peaceful road against him proved useless or fatal whoever dared to try. Then like a bolt from the blue, one Charles Taylor reentered the country with two revolvers in his hands. Doe had a whole army behind him, but the soldiers were Liberians. Soon Taylor and his comrades, with the masses inflexibly behind them, created a people's army and fought their way to Monrovia. Then and only then did all the dictators in West Africa, ganging behind former President Ibrahim Babangida, turn into missionaries of 'democracy' in Liberia. Taylor was nothing of a democrat

whether or not the masses were with him and he with them. The ECOMOG invaders were the 'democrats'.

In Nigeria, everyone is a 'democrat'. The imperialists do not even need elections to dictate the course of events. Neither do the capitalists and *money-bags* need even elections to be their partners in parasitism. The chiefs, the bureaucrats, or the top military officers need nothing called democracy to sit snugly in power. Actually, how many in these circles will not be afraid of democracy if it means government by the people and for the people? Yet everyone swears in the name of democracy.

As for the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), it invited the rich to come forward with half-a-million *naira* to collect permits to organise gangs called 'political parties'. It pretended that clusters so fabricated would go into government not to make their money ten-thousand-fold by foul means, but to put 'democracy' on the throne. Who says that a General who shoots his way to power through the barrel of the gun and some phoney ballot boxes is not as much of a 'democrat' as a millionaire who buffets his way to power borne on the wheels of the dollar-turned-*naira* and some stinking ballot boxes?

Democracy, now you have become a synonym for hypocrisy, a veil for multi-millionaire power manipulation, plus gangsterism of American filiation. And the masquerade is dressed with tinsel from the Mill of Falseness in Washington. Where do we go from here?

©Prof. Toyo teaches Economics at the University of Calabar.