

POLITICAL PARTIES AND A REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL PARTY

(The case of Nigeria and her People's Redemption Party)

By

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Paper submitted at the seminar on Political Repression and  
Assassination: A Tribute to the Late Dr. Bala Mohammed,  
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# POLITICAL PARTIES AND A REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL PARTY<sup>1</sup>

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We shall use the opportunity afforded by this seminar to enter into a more or less extended discussion of the current crisis in the Imoudu-led faction of the People's Redemption Party. We shall refer to this simply as 'the second PRP crisis' or 'the second crisis'. In doing so, we shall be concerned only with the principles and policies involved and not the personalities. It seems to us much more fruitful to do this than to enter into an abstract disquisition on political parties and a revolutionary political party.

The discussion shall be taken in three parts. First, we shall discuss the basis of political parties and revolutionary political parties in the present epoch of world history and in Nigeria and seek an identity among parties for the People's Redemption Party as it has been conceived up to 1982.

Secondly, we shall discuss the second crises in the PRP, showing in much greater depth than has been done so far what is involved. Thirdly, we shall identify the solution to the crisis that is a genuine revolutionary solution.

Let it be stated from the start that we do not consider either a simplistic 'Let us join PPP' or a simplistic 'let us retain PRP' opinion as offering a genuine revolutionary solution.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the seminar on Political Repression and Assassination: A Tribute to the Late Dr. Bala Mohammed, Bagauda Lake Hotel, Kano, September 2, 3, 4, 1982.

Very often when there is a seemingly irresoluble crisis of opinion with some aspect of the truth on both sides, the simplistic dogmatisation of 'the truth' on either side is metaphysics. A genuine solution to the dilemma lies in a dialectical leap. This requires a many-sided and serious theoretical-practical examination. It is not a question of what the majority accepts but one of where the core of the whole truth lies, for the majority can be and often is mistaken. We shall be particularly careful of the poisonous enthusiasm and flattery of opportunists. On the final count their partisan 'fire' burns for the class enemy.

Bala Mohammed was a theoretician of the People's Redemption Party, the Chairman of the Research Bureau of that party, a highly gifted revolution intellectual in general, as well as a revolutionary activist within the ranks of the PRP. He paid the supreme price. Nothing can be a greater betrayal of his efforts than merely to dissolve the party for which he fought and died without a genuine revolutionary substitute. No forum can be better than this one for discussing in depth the issue of life and death facing his party, the PRP. And to do honour to his revolutionary integrity, the discussion must be free of all hypocrisy.

PART I

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE PRP

Political Parties in the Present Epoch

A political party is an association of like minds who agree on the purposes for which state power should be used. A political party is much more than an agreement of like minds. Its concern is the use of state power. Therefore, a political party is a characteristic of states; it is a phenomenon of the epoch of the state in human history. Political parties do not exist in stateless societies.

A state arises out of the contradictions and contests for power associated with the class epoch. It exists, therefore, only in the epoch of class formations. The state is, in fact, the organised machinery of coercion and discipline for imposing the will of one class or alliance of classes on the other classes of society. The coercive instruments of state power - armed forces, administration, police, prisons and law courts - serve this purpose.

The character of the major disagreements giving rise to conflicts and therefore the character of the state and of party formations in it depends on the character of the socio-economic epoch.

Strictly speaking, a political party as distinct from a movement or faction under a leadership, that is, a party as an organised and stable group of people with a definite membership,

a program and a constitution, is a phenomenon of the modern epoch.

The modern epoch is divided into three periods: the rise and ascendancy of capitalism (1660 - 1880), the rise and ascendancy of capitalist imperialism (1880 - 1917), and the epoch of transition to socialism and national liberation revolutions which started with the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the liberation movements in China, India, etc. after the First Imperialist World War (1914 - 1918). The period after the Second World War (1939 - 1945) has witnessed breath-taking broadening and deepening of the socialist and national liberation revolutions. These revolutions lead either to the establishment of socialist states or to industrially underdeveloped states with a mixed economy facing either a capitalist direction as in Nigeria or a socialist direction as in Tanzania.

Thus the period from about 1600 to the present day is the bourgeois epoch in the sense that all political and economic movements in this epoch have sought to create, constrain, preserve or destroy bourgeois, that is, capitalist society.

Corresponding to the nature of the bourgeois epoch, we find fundamentally four kinds of party. First we find parties representing primarily the interests of the traditional elite whose power lies in the control of land and peasant labour and who resist the conquest of their world by urban, bourgeois and

populist influences associated with the development of capitalism. Secondly, we find bourgeois parties representing primarily the interests of capitalists or people aspiring to be capitalists. Thirdly, we find proletarian parties that seek the abolition of all exploitation, which means in effect the abolition of feudalism and capitalism and the creation of a popular democracy based on social or private non-exploitative ownership of the means of production and exchange. Lastly we often find a petty-bourgeois party - a party of small owners, peasants, handicraftsmen and lower-level professionals - that vacillates between a bourgeois and a proletarian outlook.

Since the current epoch is one of revolt against colonialism, however, we also have in this epoch in colonial countries political parties embracing, various indigeneous social groups, that are anti-colonial in outlook. After the granting of formal independence to a colony, however, political parties reflecting traditional aristocratic patriarchal, capitalist, petty-bourgeois and proletarian outlooks emerge in these former colonial countries. These parties have different attitudes to the continuation of imperialist domination which now assumes the form of neo-colonialism.

In its attitude to social change, a political party may be conservative, reformist or revolutionary. These attitudes are developed around principal questions of social change in a given epoch or society.

The period after the Second World War as we have observed is one of socialist and national liberation revolutions. Political parties are conservative, reformist or revolutionary according to their attitude to these two processes. The socialist revolution seeks a fundamental change from one existing form or other of exploitative society to an exploitation-free society. The national liberation revolution seeks complete freedom for all the peoples inhabiting the earth.

In greater detail, the socialists seek

- (a) liberation of colonial countries from colonial rule,
- (b) emancipation of countries from neo-colonialism,
- (c) unshackling of all races from racial oppression,
- (d) wresting of exploited and oppressed classes from exploitation and oppression,
- (e) freedom of human society from ignorance, obscurantism and backwardness,
- (f) deliverance of mankind from anti-human practices,
- (g) liberation of women from the exploitation and oppression arising from male chauvinism.

Political parties are conservative to the extent that they seek to preserve the traditional, capitalist, semi-capitalist or imperialist social status quo against any or all of these forms of liberation sought by the socialist and national liberation revolutions. They are reformist to the extent that they

seek certain reforms in the existing pre-socialist society that stop short of socialism or certain reforms in the colonial or neo-colonial situation that stop short of complete liberation from imperialism. In our epoch, political parties are genuinely revolutionary only if they seek the thorough-going liberation of the peoples and masses of the world or any part thereof along the foregoing lines.

It follows that in the contemporary epoch only socialist parties, socialist-inclined parties and national liberation parties opposed not only to colonialism but to neo-colonialism can be genuinely revolutionary.

#### Political Parties in Nigeria

In Nigeria, of the six political parties so far legally registered, only the People's Redemption Party turns towards socialism.

The National Party of Nigeria, the party running the federal government, is an opportunistic ganging up of traditionalists anxious to preserve the last remnants of feudalistic traditionalism on the one hand and ambitious bourgeois elements brought together by a common desire to grow rich or richer from a share in the Federal revenue on the other.

Of the other parties, the Unity Party of Nigeria, the Nigerian People's Party, the Great Nigerian People's Party and the Nigerian Advance Party are actually one party. The principal



factor keeping the UPN, NPP and GNPP apart is ethnicity. The UPN and the NPP represent respectively the conflicting interests of the rival Yoruba and Ibo bourgeois elites. In the GNPP we witness one form of the traditional Kanuri repudiation of the hegemonic pretensions of the ruling class among the Fulani.

In the separateness of the two main bourgeois parties opposed to the NPN, namely, the UPN and the NPP, there operates a second divisive factor; personality. Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the UPN, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, leader of the NPP, differ in their personalities and political styles. Both are ambitious and have been rivals for national leadership for over thirty years.

The Nigerian Advance Party is an effort by one of the so-called 'younger politicians' to exploit in the interest of capitalism the mass resentment to capitalist rule that became intense already in the First Republic (1960 - 1966) and that thirteen years of military rule and three years of post-military government have done nothing to attenuate. As usual in bourgeois circles, this attempt to exploit mass resentment for political opposition is being done by focussing on so-called 'misdirection of the nation' or 'misrule', which, in the case of Nigeria, consists of tribalism, corruption, inefficiency, indiscipline, 'absence of a sense of direction', 'planlessness', or 'indifference to the masses' - for instance, to poverty and unemployment.

In other words, the leaders of the Nigerian Advance Party are trying to take over Young Turk bourgeois populism in Nigeria

from where Dr. Chike Obi left it off in the First Republic (1960 - 66) or where the military left it off in their thirteen-year interregnum (1966 - 1979).

It is also said that the NAP is simply a ruse by the invisible masters of the NPN to split the votes of the UPN, the most formidable of the bourgeois parties opposed to the NPN. Such a view of the NAP can exist at all only because of the absence of any ideological or basic policy differences between the NAP and the UPN or, for that matter, between the NAP and the other bourgeois opposition parties.

#### Revolutionary Programme and the PRP

In any country today a genuine revolutionary program, as we have observed, must aim at those liberation goals listed in an earlier section of this paper: liberation from colonial rule, from neocolonialism, from class exploitation, etc.

A party is essentially socialist if it aims at a new democracy based on the abolition of all exploitation of man by man through the social or non-privileged ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Such social ownership permits the transformation of production relations, that is, the abolition of master and servant relationships in the economic sphere. Such democratisation and humanisation of the economic sphere makes possible the genuine democratisation and humanisation of other spheres of social life.

Yet a party is not genuinely revolutionary merely because it has the liberation goals listed by us or is socialist-oriented. To be genuinely or realistically - revolutionary, a party must aim at an alteration of the basis of power. It must aim at the transfer of political power from exploiters to the exploited. It must aim at the destruction of the state apparatus of the feudalists, the colonialists, the neo-colonialists or the bourgeoisie as a whole and the creation of a new state apparatus to serve the revolution. In the case of a socialist revolution, the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie must be destroyed and a new state must be created which organises the new democracy and the transition to socialism.

A set of liberation goals and awareness of the need for new political power and an entirely new type of state to serve these goals make up the two elements of a genuinely revolutionary program.

If we examine the program documents of the People's Redemption Party, we find that the outlook of this party is genuinely revolutionary.

As to the goals, the General Programme of the PRP observes: "Out of the wombs of the old order, a new and more humane social order is about to be born." The party is the midwife of this new order.

What is the character of the existing order from which an 'awakening people' opposed to this order must be liberated?

The basic facts of contemporary Nigerian life," says the General Programme, are

1. "Political sovereignty operated by a small elitist well-to-do and consumer-oriented class, on the basis of an alien socio-political culture;
2. "Economic dependence and under-development;
3. Technological backwardness which provides the anchor to a captive and dependent economy;
4. "Cultural subordination and retardation;
5. "Elite rule whose modus operandi is nepotism and the appeal to ethnic, religious and regional sectionalism."

In diametrical opposition to this order, the PRP aims at "full national liberation, national cohesion, true democracy, development, and social justice.

On national liberation, the General Programme declares: "This process strives to complement Nigeria's political independence with economic, technological and cultural independence." The programme explains that "the enemy of our national independence has been, and remains, western imperialism which now takes the form of neo-colonialism." The programme then declares: "It is through conscious and systematic struggle against neo-colonialism that we can hope to achieve full independence for our motherland. In order to build an independent, balanced, self-sustained, and people-oriented national economy, there is the

need to eliminate foreign dominance in the economy ...."

On national unity and harmony, the General Programme notes that civil commotion and a painful civil war have characterised Nigeria's life. It is true that in the midst of all this we have managed to maintain territorial integrity. "However, this territorial unity has to be reinforced with political, economic and cultural unity. This can be realised only if "under the Nigerian state (a Nigerian citizen) enjoys liberty, equality of opportunities, freedom from want and a chance to realise the best that is in him."

Needless to say that this is a far cry from the existing situation.

On democracy, the program observes: "Elite rule has been the root cause of our people's disenchantment with our politics.. On paper, government policies have been meant for the masses. In practice these have served vested interests. "It then proclaims: "If politics is to work out to the good of the people political power has to be in the hands of the people themselves."

On development, the General Programme notes: "Our country is still underdeveloped." It then asserts: "It has to be rapidly developed and fully modernised." In other words the country must be rapidly liberated from economic backwardness. However, development may be associated with the growth of new injustices. The programme is aware of this and comes to grips with it.

On social justice, it says: "But development has to be in the context of social justice, if painful social upheavals are to be avoided." It opines: "Social justice demands that development should be spread out evenly throughout the country; that the production of wealth should not be accompanied by exploitation or by sweated labour; that the distribution of wealth should guarantee a minimum living income for every citizen.

To ensure this the programme proposes among other things the public ownership of minerals, forests, water and energy resources and the public ownership and operation of key sectors of the economy, specifically finance and banking, insurance, oil, import/export, capital goods industries."

It proposes to "get rid of production relations based on exploitation."

The foregoing review shows that the programme of the PRP is revolutionary as to the aims of the party.

Concerning the question of power, the programme is definite. It calls for people's power as against elite power. It says: "People's political power has to be organised effectively. It requires a set of institutions appropriate to it. It simply cannot make use of the existing state apparatus created by erstwhile ruling elites. Hence peoples power needs a new State - the organs of power (civil service, military, police, judiciary,

executive, legislature) have to be so organised as to reflect the will of the people at all levels and at all times."

Thus on the second question, the question of power, the PRP shows itself to be unequivocally revolutionary.

We do not mean to imply by this review that there is nothing that can be criticised from the revolutionary or socialist standpoint in the PRP programme. For one thing its definition of 'the people' is faulty for Nigeria and comparable countries. The programme gives the impression that by 'the people' it means what is popularly called 'the common people'. But then it defines 'the people' as the "workers, peasants, fishermen, craftsmen, youths, traders, small businessmen, self-employed persons, as well as professionals, academicians, big businessmen, and traditional rulers with a social conscience."

One ought to distinguish clearly between 'the people' and their allies from ruling classes. Professionals, academicians, big businessmen and traditional rulers may belong to the latter category.

A second criticism may be proffered. Social justice is a value in itself. It is not desired merely to end social strife, although it is desirable for this purpose as well.

Yet a third criticism can be advanced. The General Programme says: "There is the need to vest control of the commanding heights of the national economy in the State while preserving and

encouraging bona fide Nigerian private enterprise." From the point of view of a development towards socialism, this preservation and encouragement of private enterprise is only valid if it is made clear that it is a transitional measure aimed at developing the economy as rapidly as possible and at making sure that in the transition to a new social order the state takes over only what is at a given stage important and what it can manage efficiently.

From the point of view of a socialist revolutionary critique, the formulation of the foregoing point in the program document, Your Golden Key to a Bright Future is more reassuring. Here it is said that one of the ways by which the state will finance its development programme is "encouragement of private enterprise with production relations that are free from exploitation, e.g. personal family and co-operative enterprises."

In answer to confused ultra-leftism and infantile idiocy, however, it ought to be pointed out that in a people's democratic state transitional to socialism, even foreign private investment can be encouraged and protected in specific cases for developmental purposes. Especially for underdeveloped countries, there is no question of abolishing all exploitative relations overnight.

It ought to be pointed out also that not all private enterprise is exploitative. A collective farm in the Soviet Union is a 'private enterprise', but it is not exploitative private enterprise.



Since the PRP program sets forth the ultimate aim of a new social order based on production relations that are free of exploitation, it follows that any measure of development which tolerates exploitative production relations can only be transitional and is not part and parcel of the final end product of the revolution.

### THE SECOND CRISIS IN THE PRP

#### Second Crisis

The first crisis in the PRP came soon after the 1979 election over the question of whether or not the party should enter into an alliance with the NPN for a 'national government' and for the running of the Kaduna State government. In Kaduna State the PRP had won the governorship but the NPN had won the majority in the state legislature.

In our opinion, it was not proper to make this alliance if only because the first duty of a revolutionary party that has just come into existence is to establish in practice its revolutionary credibility beyond every shadow of doubt. It was necessary to show in practice what the PRP would do in office and it was necessary to defy the NPN.

It is not surprising that over this question the party got split with Aminu Kano and Samuel Ikoku on the one hand, who advocated alliance with the NPN, and Michael Imoudu, Abdulkadir Balarebe Mussa, Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, Una Akpan and the vast

majority of the party on the other, who were against such an alliance.

The end result of this split is that the overwhelming majority of the party membership and of the representatives of the party in the various legislatures rallied round Imoudu and constituted the Imoudu faction. Members of this faction run the PRP government in Kano and Kaduna States. These two states are strong bases of the party because of these governments and partly because of the large mass following which the PRP enjoys in these states.

Because the Federal Electoral Commission does not recognise the Imoudu faction as the legal PRP for election purposes the party is thrown into a quandry. It has to seek an election plat form.

Three solutions have been proposed to this problem. The first is to keep the faction intact and enter into an election alliance with one or more of the already registered opposition parties: the UPN, the NPP, the GNPP and the NAP. In that case members of the PRP would sit as UPN, etc. members in the legislature.

The second solution is to merge the Imoudu faction of the PRP, the NPP and the GNPP into a new party called the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP) with a programme not different from that of the NPP.

The third solution is for the Imoudu faction to change its name and apply for legal registration as a political party for

election purposes.

There are problems with the first choice. First, the identity of the PRP would be lost in the legislatures and in government. Secondly, the bourgeois parties could ditch the PRP at the eleventh hour leaving no choice to its members who wish to contest elections except simply to join the UPN, the NPP or the GNPP.

Some members of the PRP have opted for the second option. It is only now (August, 1982) that the third option is being seriously considered by some members of the party.

The first and third options are not interesting for the purpose of this discussion, since they would preserve the identity of the PRP itself, legally recognised or not, as a revolutionary party. After all, some revolutionary parties have remained underground for decades, meaning that they could not even operate in the open let alone contest elections.

It is the second option that is interesting because it calls for the informal dissolution of the PRP without offering any revolutionary organ to replace it.

#### The PPP and the PRP

It is not surprising that the advocacy of the PPP among some leading PRP members of the Imoudu faction has brought about a deep split in that faction.

The PPP is a bourgeois party pure and simple. It is not right to claim as Eno Edet Traore does that the program of the PPP and that of the PRP are substantially the same.

In its constitution, the PPP says it aims at 'an egalitarian society'. This is the only phrase by which it addresses itself to the social question. However, the Second National Development Plan, 1972 - 74, of the bourgeois military regime also aimed at 'an egalitarian society'. Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, a Minister of Finance in the First Republic and one of the leading capitalists in the country, launched one of his budgets by saying it aimed at 'an egalitarian society'. The bourgeois Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria advocates unity, equality and justice, meaning by 'equality' the bourgeois concept of 'equality before the law'. In fact, in Nigeria it has become very fashionable in bourgeois circles to speak of the need for an egalitarian society.

It is not surprising that the programme of the PRP never once spoke of the need for an 'egalitarian society'. What the programme of the PRP advocates is clear and definite. It seeks the complete abolition of imperialist exploitation, the public ownership of the major means of production and the transformation of production relations in such a way as to create a new social order, based on the power of the people themselves, where all exploitation is abolished.

There is absolutely no meeting ground between the above concretely formulated objectives and the vague and dishonest talk about an 'egalitarian society'. One may ask. If the difference between the PRP programme and that of the PPP is "far too flimsy" to bother about why did not the pioneers of the RPP simply take over the program of the PRP?

Eno Edet Traore also claims that the PRP is not a revolutionary party because "the word socialism was carefully avoided everywhere in the programme." She holds, further, that the programme of the PRP is not revolutionary because "it said little about concrete steps it would take to achieve socialism."

First of all, a programme is not socialist simply because it proclaims itself socialist. Chief Awolowo proclaims the UPN a socialist party and yet it is thoroughly bourgeois. Secondly, a programme that is socialist does not need to proclaim itself socialist. The tendency these days is to formulate programmes concretely. Socialism is nothing but a new democratic order based on the social ownership of at least the major means of production and the creation of exploitation-free production relations. Either Eno Edet and others like herself do not know that this formulation in the PRP programme means the same thing as socialism or she is merely trying to discredit the PRP for a purpose.

About the concrete steps to be taken to realise the new social order, the PRP programme says much. A number of 'concrete

steps' are to be taken. Imperialist control of the economy is to be terminated. The 'commanding heights' of the economy are to be taken over by the state. A new state - a people's state - is to be created quite different from the state envisaged by the bourgeois Nigerian Constitution whose 'enshrined' clauses are the last word for the PPP. Production relations are to be transformed. All unearned income is to be expropriated. The distribution of wealth will be made to guarantee a minimum living income for all citizens. There are a host of other concrete steps mentioned in the programme. They are as detailed as is possible in a general programme.

#### Election Platform and Revolutionary Party

It was not and is not wrong for PRP politicians to seek an election platform in any liberal bourgeois formation. What is wrong for a revolutionary to do is to disband and jump onto a non-revolutionary election platform without providing for the organised continuity in one form or other of the revolutionary party.

From the point of view of revolution, the mistake of the advocates of the PPP was to come up with a formation which liquidated the programme of the PRP without suggesting at the same time how the PRP as a revolutionary mass organisation was to be preserved or even improved. By so acting they gave the impression that they were interested not in changing the status

quo and in building an organisation for this purpose but in winning elections and participating in administering the status quo.

It now seems that some members of the PRP intended it to be a revolutionary party whereas others intended it to be a 'non-tribal or 'Northern' substitute for the NPP or the UPN.

If it is not revolutionary simply to dissolve the PRP and opt for a liberal bourgeois formation; neither is it at this stage revolutionary to retain the PRP as it is. Even if the Imoudu faction of the PRP is at last legally recognised, that will not make it a better party than it was.

As we have seen the outlook of the PRP was revolutionary, as seen through its programme, but it was not organised or equipped as a revolutionary party. This leads us to what is to be done to arrive at a thoroughly revolutionary party, assuming that to be desirable.

### PART III

#### WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

##### Roads to Revolutionary Victory

All revolutionaries do and must recognise that winning an election is not the only way of coming to power. After all, within Nigerian experience the armed forces came to power and ruled for thirteen years without contesting or winning any election. There are at least five ways in the history of the contemporary

period by which a revolutionary party or group has come to power.

1. It may do so by an armed insurrection as in Russia in 1917, Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War, Cuba and Nicaragua.

2. It may do so by assuming the leadership of and radicalising an anti-colonial armed revolution as in Vietnam, North Korea, Angola or Mozambique.

3. It may do so by a military coup d'etat staged by revolutionary elements in the established armed forces as in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Benin or Rawlings' Ghana.

4. It may do so through victory in a referendum as in the case of Guinea.

5. It may do so through victory in an election as in the case of the Convention Peoples' Party in Ghana and in the experiences of Guyana, Chile, Kerala, Zimbabwe.

It is noteworthy, however, that in the case of election victories, the revolutionary government has remained in power up to the time of writing (August 1982) only in the case of Zimbabwe, where the election followed an armed struggle already successfully waged by the revolution. Therefore this case is not a true 'peaceful election' case.

The verdict of history is that no revolutionary party or group has so far won power and held it through election alone.



In this connection it is pertinent to observe that coming into power is not the same thing as retaining power. Although it is often presumed that the first implies the second, the inference is wrong. It is the inability to see the difference between the two that leads to many errors of anarchists and Trotskyists whose theories give pride of place to revolutionary enthusiasm and factionalism, regarding bourgeois competition, non-centralism and indiscipline as 'freedom'. Without a centralised and highly disciplined party organisation, the revolutionary mass will never be able to hold power after winning, say, in a popular uprising.

#### Registration of a Revolutionary Party

In Nigeria there is a further lesson to learn from the experience of the PRP. At the moment the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) decides who are the legally recognised leaders of a party. In the event of a split, FEDECO does not conduct a referendum or adopt any democratic method to ascertain the views of the party. It simply pronounces recognition of the faction which it prefers or the faction headed by the man whose name has been registered with it as the President, even if this man has only a small minority with him.

Under the existing condition, that is, so long as no law exists to guarantee that the leaders of a party will be none other than those who enjoy a majority in it, a revolutionary party cannot trust itself to the parliamentary process.

There are thus three reasons why a proletarian revolutionary party should be basically a non-election party.

The first is that as an election party pure and simple, it would be acting entirely within rules defined by the ruling class. It would then be committing suicide in revolutionary terms.

The second is that in underdeveloped countries, there is a pronounced tendency to arbitrariness and authoritarianism. The ruling class in these countries is subject to imperialist dictation. The respect for democracy in them is tenuous.

The third is that in Nigeria, FEDECO can intervene to frustrate the development of a revolutionary leadership or policy.

The only way of freeing the revolutionary forces from these constraints is to build a party whose thinking, organisation and functioning are not focussed on elections.

If the revolutionary party is not registered, then it should regard itself as an organised association of the people with friends or secret members in other parties and fight for recognition in a revolutionary way. Even a military regime has been forced by the people to abandon power. In the Western Region of Nigeria from October 1965 to January 1966, Chief S. L. Akintola's government was the legal government, but it could not rule.

To the extent that the PRP was entirely election oriented and remained so it was not in practice a revolutionary party.

From PRP to Revolutionary Party

The real revolutionary solution to the second PRP crisis, then, is for those who wish to do so to develop a truly revolutionary party.

A revolutionary party is not completely that by merely having a revolutionary programme and revolutionary personnel. Such would be simply a mass movement. A serious revolutionary party must

- (a) be a mass movement,
- (b) have a disciplined 'general staff',
- (c) have a party apparatus, including party sources of funds that are independent of individual god-fathers or financial patrons,
- (d) possess a clear revolutionary identity - it must be independent of, even if it associates for certain purposes with, political formations with non-revolutionary goals,
- (e) be equipped for various forms of political struggle,
- (f) have a dependable and effective underground organisation so that its continued existence and activity in all circumstances can be guaranteed.

The People's Redemption Party was simply not a party of this kind. If any fraction of it is to become a truly revolutionary party there is a long way to go to transform it into one.

From PRP to a Proletarian Party

A proletarian party is simply a party dedicated to the interests of the poor. So understood, the PRP was proletarian party. Such a party need not be revolutionary. For instance, existing trade unions in Nigeria are proletarian organisations, yet are not revolutionary. If they came together to form a workers' party whose purpose would be to ask politically for limited reforms within the status quo, such a party would be proletarian without being revolutionary.

However, no modern political party aiming at a new social order, that is, a non-capitalist industrial order, can succeed in bringing about such an order without becoming a modern proletarian revolutionary party. The significance of this statement is that only two classes characterise modern or industrial society: the capitalist class and the working class. In modern society, the capitalists are the exploiters and the wage workers the exploited. Therefore to fight consistently for its goals and to achieve them, a political party that seeks an exploitation-free social order must become proletarian in the modern sense: it must rally the class of wage workers for revolutionary struggle.

All other classes, such as the peasants and the artisans that are also exploited and discriminated against by the existing capitalistic neo-colonial order can liberate themselves from this exploitation and discrimination only if they form a revolu-

tionary alliance with the modern working class. If the wage workers do not rise to destroy capitalism, no other class will succeed in destroying it.

All opportunities to develop an organic relationship between the PRP and the modern working class movement remained unexploited. The PRP has been, in fact, a party of the urban and rural poor, whose essential outlook has been that of petty-bourgeois revolutionary populism.

It is a mistake to think that if a party has no large followership from among wage workers, it cannot be revolutionary. What is true is that although it may be revolutionary in intent, no party based vaguely on 'the poor' and dominated in practice by petty-bourgeois populist thinking can establish a new social order free of exploitation.

#### Revolutionary Party and the Mass Movement

If the PRP had serious limitations as a revolutionary party seeking a new social order, it must also be said that so-called 'Marxist parties', 'proletarian parties' or 'Leninist parties' which consist of one or two high priests and a few students and workers are not even parties to begin with, to say nothing of 'revolutionary party'.

A group only pretends to be a revolutionary party if it is a mere sect of 'revolutionists' isolated from the democratic mass movement. This was the issue between Karl Marx who advocated

belonging to the mass movement and August Blanqui who was engaged all his life in sectarian 'revolutionary plans' and plots.

Only a person who does not know what he is talking about could deny that the PRP has been a revolutionary mass party opposed to the status quo.

The road forward for revolutionaries is not to dissolve the PRP without a revolutionary substitute for it. It is not to retain the PRP as it has been. It is not to continue with sectarian 'parties' of a few people who remain completely isolated from the political process and, therefore, constitute no parties at all. It is to evolve out of the second crisis in the PRP a new party. This party should be

- (a) a worker-peasant proletarian party, rallying the urban and rural poor,
- (b) a mass party deeply involved in the political process,
- (c) a completely revolutionary party in the light of the foregoing critique.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper we set out to examine the social characters of modern political parties in general and of Nigerian political parties. We also examined what revolutionary parties in the modern epoch set out to do.

We then focussed on an important radical party in Nigeria, namely, the People's Redemption Party, which from 1980 to 1982 has undergone two major crises. We posed the question whether the PRP was a revolutionary party. Our answer is that its programme is without question a revolutionary one. In practice, however, we observed that the PRP needed a number of things to make it a thorough modern revolutionary party.

Our conclusion is that it is not revolutionary merely to abandon the PRP. Neither is it a serious revolutionary step merely to retain it, or any faction of it, simply as it has been. The real task of the Nigerian Left, we propose, is to develop a party that will be a more genuine instrument of revolution than the PRP as it has been in its two factions up to now.

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