

“WEEP not, laugh not, but understand”.

Early this year, a coalition of leftist parties came to power, via elections, in the former Soviet republic of Lithuania. The Communist Party from whose ashes these parties rose had, between 1990 and 1991, lost power in the republic in a process which began with a counter-revolution and ended in an election. At various times this year leftist forces bounced back to the political scene as active contestants for power in the former Soviet republics of Azerberjan, Tajikistan and Georgia.

Two months ago, the left emerged in Poland as the strongest party in the civil society and in the National Assembly elected that month. The Communist Party from whose ashes the new victorious coalition rose was the first to lose power in Eastern Europe.

In Romania and Bulgaria, the parties in power are leftist. They had risen from the ashes of the defeated Communist Parties. Early last month, Boris Yeltsin, the new Czar of Russia, was shaken by an armed insurrection, reminiscent not of 1917 — as erroneously claimed — but of 1905, the rehearsal for 1917.

Shortly after the Moscow armed uprising, Papendreau's Socialist Party came back to power via a general election in Greece. And in Pakistan the People's Party, under Benizar Bhutto, was returned to power, also through an election. Papendreau and Bhutto had lost power a few years ago under the same in-

ternational conditions.

At home, in spite of the prayers and wishes of many Nigerians, a new form of struggle — *armed politics* — has been born and successfully introduced. The question now is not whether we condemn or applaud it, whether we oppose or support it. Asking such questions now is like asking for moral opinions on thunders, lightning or floods. The question is whether we recognise armed struggle and individual terror as inevitable, given the trajectory of our political history, and hence whether we are honest and clear-headed enough to recognise the minimum conditions required to deny the new form of struggle the nourishment it needs for growth.

All over the world, — from the Middle East and the Gulf to the Indonesian colony of East Timor, from Southern Africa to the British colony of Northern Ireland, from Somalia to Turkey and the Balkans, from Germany to Indian Kashmir — the masses are once again on the move, struggling not for American-packaged “democracy”, not in support of Babangida or Shonekan-type fascist dictatorship, not for the restoration of Stalinist dictatorship, but for freedom, popular power and social equality. And they are fashioning weapons of struggle that are appropriate to the situation, not the ones proposed by fascists and latter-day reformers and their imperialist

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inspirers. They carry the banner not the so-called new International Order, but of freedom and sovereignty. The logic and direction of march is not only anti-fascist but also anti-imperialist. There is clearly a revolutionary resurgence, world-wide.

The political question in Nigeria, as far as the Radical Movement is concerned should no longer be posed in terms of support for, or opposition to, June 12. The historical moment when the question could be posed in those terms has unfortunately passed. What we mean here is that the resolution of June 12, one way or the other, can no longer move the nation forward in terms of balance of forces between progress and regression. For so many concessions have been made, and will be made, to resolve the question in those terms. The correlation of forces and system of alliances on the basis of which the political system was effectively posed in June have dissolved and they have been replaced by the *traditional*, that is, purely opportunistic, groupings and compromises.

It is not the fault of the Radical Movement that the historical moment defined by June 12 passed without being realised. Indeed the moment passed in spite of the monumental efforts and sacrifices of the Radical Movement. The ruling

blocs, the “political class” and the propertied classes who are committed simultaneously to the gods of exploitative: business and the gods of political equity are to blame. It is therefore unfortunate that some radical critics have continued to view every political development in terms of opposition to, or support for June 12.

This dogmatism, apart from paralysing the capacity to observe and reflect, will lead to insoluble dilemmas — the type that critics faced when trying to classify the *hijack episode* as either for, or against, June 12. For the “evidence” points first in both directions, and then in neither direction. It is more unfortunate that some radical critics do not see that even if we stick to June 12 in its pure and simplistic form, there is no way it can be realised except by armed intervention of one form or another. For the realisation of June 12 was prevented, and is being prevented, by armed intervention. It does not matter that this intervention is heavily mediated by politics. Here we must salute Gani Fawehinmi for his perception.

Raising the political question above the level defined by June 12 is not a vote of no confidence in Abiola or in ourselves for supporting him. The Radical Movement is right and wise to support him. If the movement had been as wise in 1983, we would not be in this mess today. But here we are.

We now have to recognise that history has moved beyond June 12 and the political governance defined by its possibilities. The “political class,” beside whom the politicians of the First and Second Republic are saints and angels, have killed June 12.

We should also know that the conception of 1994 election is farcical and that the election, if it takes place, will be farcical. Everyone knows it; the ING and NEC know it; the party leaderships know it. What this points to, as far as the Radical Movement is concerned, is that the enemies of freedom, progress and human dignity must now be confronted at a higher level of political engagement and by a combination of means appropriate to the task. In spite of the pontifications of the orthodox left and the mainstream of the Radical Movement, and without their permission, a new weapon of struggle has been introduced.

If the Radical Movement fails to come to terms with this new phase of our history — if it does not see and feel the new life emerging from the ashes of defeat — then other forces outside its ranks and without its discipline, experience and perspectives will fill the vacuum with tragic consequences. To prevent this — although some would say that it has started to happen — radical critics must shake off the paralysing stupor of bourgeois idealism and return to the critical elements of historical materialism, class analysis, nature and character of the state and dialectics.

● To be continued next Thursday.

THE world-wide revolt against internal dictatorship, on the one hand, and against the new imperialism, on the other, should be of interest to us in Nigeria for reasons that ought to be obvious. But in case they are not, let us run through them.

The collapse of the East European regimes between 1989 and 1991, and the victory which Euro-American imperialism claimed on the basis of this, had a devastating ideological effect on the Radical Movement in general and on the Nigerian left in particular. The demoralisation in the radical political community became deeper as the effect of the tragedy began to spread to other parts of the world: Cuba, Benin Republic, Congo, Zambia, etc. From this demoralisation came divisions within the left. These were divisions engendered by disagreements over the correct responses to the historic events. Then followed doubts, despair and cynicism in several circles, moral collapse and paralysis in others and premature retirements in the old generation.

The initial support which a section of the left gave to Babangida's transition derived, in part, from a wrong reading of the events in Eastern Europe. The overall response of the *Left* to that transition was inevitably influenced by those events. The response was wrong and tragic, as events have proved.

Imperialism rode on the back of the opposition movement in Eastern Europe to claim victory here and elsewhere for its own version of democracy. It is this version that we tentatively call *the new democracy*. This "democracy" is tied not only to privatisation, commercialisation, drastic cuts (in employment, public expenditure and social welfare), free enterprise and market economy, deregulation of import and exports, reimposition of the doctrine of world division of labour, but also to anti-

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communism, anti-socialism, de-empowerment of trade unions, and suppression of popular power. The new democracy enjoins us to accept the new imperialism, led by the rulers of America, as the natural world order and thus the end of history.

The ideology of the new imperialism condemns armed struggles and terrorism when used against satellites of imperialism. The new imperialists describe these struggles as "undemocratic" — even when they are popular. But they condone and support armed suppression of unarmed people when the acts are carried out by their satellites. To the new imperialism the role of the masses of Nigeria and elsewhere in politics should be limited to casting their votes for any of the parties which espouse the "ideals" of the new democracy and which, accordingly, qualify for million dollar grants — tiny fractions of the wealth expropriated from the working peoples and minorities of Europe and America as well as people of the weak nations of the world. Where and when the new imperialism supports a struggle against a dictatorship or for self-determination, it strives, by every means, either to purge the local movements of socialists, anti-imperialists and militant nationalists or to ensure that their programmes are neither anti-capitalist nor anti-imperialists.

The ideology of the new imperialism has penetrated not only the liberals but also the Radical Movement in Nigeria. This explains the disappearance of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism from the programme of the Radical Movement in Nigeria. The radical movement says nothing about the murderous and arrogant

role of America in Somalia; it sees nothing to hail in the resistance of General Aideed's forces; it sees nothing wrong in the support given by America and European countries to Yeltsin on his armed assault on the Russian people and their institutions. To the Radical Movement the stirrings in Poland, Kurdistan, Palestine, Indian Kashmir, Northern Ireland, Greece and Pakistan count for nothing. It sees nothing reprehensible in Clinton's threat to destroy North Korea or his sadistic desire to squeeze Cuba and Libya to death.

The time has now come to re-inforce, or transform whatever we may be doing now with a struggle against the *new imperialism* and the *new democracy*. As we ought to have seen, there is no liberation of freedom for the people in these directions. And as we see from events in Eastern Europe and across the globe the spell of the *new imperialism* is withering away.

Let it not be construed from what I have said so far that I saw nothing wrong with the regimes in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, I saw many things wrong, very wrong. I hold that most of the regimes were *unpopular*, that they deserved to be overthrown and that the revolts in which they were overthrown were popular revolts. I hold, however — and this is the critical issue — that the people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe did not get what they asked for, but rather got what they did not ask for. In the language of popular commentary, the revolts were *betrayed*. The people asked for democratisation of political life. But what they got was the abolition of the material gains of the 1917 Revolution. The people asked for greater regional autonomy but what they got was the transformation of a powerful power-block and its members into American colonies.

Since the organisations which took power between 1989 and 1991 in these

countries were *not* popular, one can say that the betrayal was inevitable. We therefore had a situation — by no means unique in history — where a popular revolt resulted in an unpopular organisation seizing or collecting power. This happens whenever the people-in-revolt are mere protesters and are not organised to seize power. Similar betrayals have taken place in Nigeria and will take place again and again — until the people and their organisations start posing the question of power and organising for power. And we have the lesson of history that you cannot seize power, or even win an election, — through a process fashioned and managed by your enemy or on terms dictated by those from whom you want to seize power. Power is seized on one's own terms.

The Radical Movement in Nigeria should not forget the trajectory of the present political crisis and the basis of its response:

The immediate reaction of the Radical Movement to the annulment of the June presidential elections was to demand the unilateral swearing-in of the winner of that election. This demand was made with every sense of responsibility and in the best interest of the popular masses and in furtherance of popular sovereignty. The political basis for the demand was that, in the absence of a revolutionary government to preside over the Sovereign National Conference (SNC), the second best was the government formed by the candidate who not only won the election, but was also supported by the mainstream of the Left and the Radical Movement. Such a government was to be supported, not because it would be the product of a "sacred mandate", but because it was conceived as a legitimate *interim* government whose main historical duty was to inaugurate a Sovereign National Conference (SNC).

Unfortunately the Radical Movement failed to carry the "political class"

along this redeeming line. For the "political class" chose to move round Euro-American capitals, seeking support, instead of forming a government here and allowing the "world leader" to make a choice. History has taught us that in a national crisis you don't have to seek out the world leaders or the media. If the question is seriously posed and engaged, world leaders and the international media will seek out the combatants, whether they are on mountain tops, in caves or in jungles.

Instead of consolidating the critical alliances which made victory in June possible, the victorious faction of the political class prefers to "reconcile" with personages that can never be reconciled to that victory. Instead of visiting the minority areas whose voting pattern constituted the critical element in the new political configuration, the "political class" chose to depend, as before, on the historically *doomed* tripod. Instead of strengthening its alliance with the Radical Movement — to construct a home-grown strategy — the "political class" chose to host, feast and court the imperialists who are at this same time, threatening, harassing and humiliating the peoples of Somalia, Cuba, Libya and North Korea.

Under these conditions the Radical Movement has to re-evaluate its strategy. In any case the worsening material situation of the masses and the new war mounted on them by this Interim Government have made a shift in strategy mandatory. The central political question now is the inauguration of a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) — in defiance of the Interim National Government (ING). Since the ING is military-backed the implications are clear. June 12 should align itself with this renewed strategy.

The world-wide political resurgence is a signal that the consequences of the (1989-91) tragedy have exhausted their historical potentials. New forces have risen from the ashes of that defeat. The imperialist proclamation of the end of history has come to nothing.

● To be concluded next Thursday.