

viewpoint

Waiting for Tambuwal's revolution



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man who had 11 years – three years (1976-79) as a military dictator and eight years (1999-07) as an “elected” president – to change the fortune

THIS piece has nothing to do with what is happening in Egypt. Ultimately, Nigerians, based on their experience and the existing reality, will determine the trajectory of the current impasse. It was, instead, spurred by the recent call for a revolution by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, a 2015 presidential wannabe.

Last week, Tambuwal joined the growing list of public officials calling for a revolution in Nigeria, a call that is not only cynical but downright hypocritical.

Tambuwal was the guest speaker at the 2013 Distinguished Management Lecture of the Nigerian Institute of Management (Chartered) and he spoke on the theme, “The role of the legislature on the economic, infrastructural and ethical revolution in Nigeria”. “Nigeria is due for revolution – Tambuwal”, was how *The PUNCH* headlined its report of the speech.

According to Tambuwal, “The most compelling reasons for revolution throughout the ages were injustice, crushing poverty, marginalisation, rampant corruption, lawlessness, joblessness, and general disaffection with the ruling elite. You will agree with me that these describe conditions in our nation now, to a very large degree”.

It was the same chorus that the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, sang last November in a speech at a West African regional conference on youth employment in Senegal. “Unless the government of Nigeria takes urgent steps to arrest the menace of youth unemployment and poverty, it is a certainty that Nigeria will see a revolution soon”, Obasanjo said. For a

of Nigeria but wasted it, it is understandable that Obasanjo is seeking to make restitution and redeem himself.

For Tambuwal who was represented by the Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Legislative Budget and Research, Mr. Opeyemi Bamidele, “That these conditions exist is well-known to all persons in authority but the results of these successive efforts have failed to yield the desired results. This therefore is the justification for the radical change from the present approach to a revolutionary one”.

We can see a common thread that is worrying in the extreme in this cacophony of revolutionary battle cry. These voices belong to those who have brought us to this sad end. Both Tambuwal and Obasanjo, examples of the opportunistic and vain-glorious elite that have held this country hostage since independence, are leading figures in the Peoples Democratic Party. The PDP-led national government has in the last 14 years either created or exacerbated “injustice, crushing poverty, marginalisation, rampant corruption, lawlessness, joblessness, and general disaffection with the ruling elite”.

Considering Tambuwal's pedigree, it is unlikely that he authored or had any input in drafting that speech that was clearly a publicity stunt. I am inclined to believe that Bamidele, a former radical student activist and ex-president of the National Association of Nigerian Students, who represented the speaker, was merely expressing himself while invoking the name of

the speaker.

Of course, Nigeria is due for revolution. Nobody who has witnessed the way the country has been run, particularly in the last 14 years will deny that a revolution is imminent. A country where the ruling class connives with multinationals to dupe citizens in every sector deserves nothing but a revolution. A country where homelessness is the rule rather than the exception; a country where poverty, unemployment and hopelessness persist in the midst of abundance, is ripe for a revolution. Not just any revolution, but one that will usher in a new era of wealth redistribution and reward for genuine hard work as opposed to rewarding the indolence of our ruling elite.

Tambuwal and his cohorts can't “dash” us this revolution. Tambuwal's grandstanding should, therefore, be noted for what it is. As one commentator put it, “When the root of a problem starts recommending the solution to the problem, something is amiss”. I will give it to Tambuwal. He has become a star overnight, doing, saying and using politically correct lingo for whatever it is worth.

Is Tambuwal really interested in a revolution, ethical or otherwise? I doubt it. In his opinion, “The most critical role that the legislature plays is through the annual appropriation bill. As representatives of the people, the legislature ensured that the more critical needs of the people got priority attention, as efforts were made to ensure equitable distribution of projects”. Which critical needs is Tambuwal talking about? The collapse of education, health and social infrastructure across the country?

Let's even leave the issue of the scandalous salaries and allowances Tambuwal and his colleagues receive as “representatives of the people” – salaries and

allowances that are the highest in the world – and focus on the “more critical needs of the people” that Tambuwal talks about so glibly.

In a country where universities have become glorified secondary schools, where workers are expected to survive on N18,000 (\$110) a month; a country with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, where over 10 million school children are out of school, Tambuwal's House of Representatives approved over a N1bn (\$6m) for food in 2012 for the Presidency, N1.7bn (\$11.3m) for the vice-president on trips and N1.3bn (\$8.6m) on stationery in 2012. This amount included N12m (\$80,000) on books, N45m (\$300,000) on newspapers, and N9m (\$60,000) on magazines and periodicals. A breakdown showed that the VP would spend N723m (\$4.8m) on local travels and N951m (\$6.3m) on his international travels. That is the kind of profligate house that Mr. Tambuwal superintends.

We have heard from those who say Nigerians are too timid to carry out a revolution. Now, it is the turn of those who want to wage the revolution on behalf of Nigerians on the pages of newspapers. Of course, if we wait for Tambuwal's revolution, we'll wait in vain.

When the mass of our people know that when they confront this oppressive system, they have nothing to lose but their oppression, poverty and indignity, they will embark on the necessary journey of genuine revolutionary transformation of Nigeria.

An essential part of this revolution is to tinker with the structure of the country which feeds the corruption and impunity of which Tambuwal is a major beneficiary. Tambuwal, by his own words, has invited the rebellion on himself and others in his class. They should be concerned, really concerned!