

# Nigeria: Deepening Crisis and the Imperative of Popular Resistance<sup>1</sup>

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## The Origins of the Current Crisis

Very few serious citizens of Nigeria will disagree that the country is entering yet another era of the very deep crisis of neocolonialism which was inaugurated on October 1 1960. There is deep crisis and violence within the ruling elite and between the ruling elite and the generality of the Nigerian people. In spite of the massive crisis within the ruling circles, however, its capacity to violate the humanity of the Nigerian masses has not diminished a bit! The ruling circles have managed, at all levels since May 1999, to use their alleged electoral mandates to sustain and intensify the central programs of imperialism and programs of re-colonising Nigeria.

It is surprising (or is it?) that many of Nigerians do not expect that the post-military “civilian” administration would turn out to be what it is in 2006. The general lack of reflection, or is it the collective amnesia, in the polity needs to be overcome and we need to work hard along with patriotic organizations to prevent the deepening of this malady of forgetfulness and myopia. We make bold to re-iterate that the remnant of General Abacha’s regime, which itself was the remnant of Babangida’s military regime, orchestrated the hand-over of power to the Obasanjo regime in May 1999. The same class, the same agenda, the same victims, the same beneficiaries!

In 1998, discerning Nigerians openly accused the western powers and their friends of complicity in the murder of M. K. O. Abiola in Abdusalami Abubakar’s military custody. Similarly, various western and Nigerian media have implicated imperialist western powers in the emergence of Obasanjo as the President of Nigeria in May 1999. Indeed *Impact International* (Washington, 1999) characterized Obasanjo as “Washington’s Gift to Nigeria”. And the present renovation of SAP in the form of what Obasanjo’s henchmen and henchwomen call economic “Reform” was pre-vised in one of Obasanjo’s first appearances on CNN where he insisted that there is no opposition to IMF in Nigeria. Neither is anyone surprised that our Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Nigeria etc. are superintended by IMF and World Bank ideologues and agents.

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But then, the present stage of Nigeria's re-colonisation was supervised by the force of arms wielded by many generations of generals and lesser officers of the Nigerian armed forces since 1966. The most visible of these are, of course, those whose forces occupied Nigeria since Obasanjo's first coming after the murder of General Murtala Mohammed. Since 1979, Nigerians have been kicked around, humiliated and disinherited while the triumvirate of western imperialist forces (through IMF and the World Bank), military top brass (heads of state, governors etc.) and their civilian bureaucrats and acolytes helped themselves to Nigeria's wealth. Consequently the twenty years between 1978 and 1998 was a period of armed "softening up" of Nigeria for imperialism and its Nigerian agents. To be sure, during that period, the crisis of accumulation and allocation of looted wealth created massive violence inside the ruling circles occasioning coups, counter coups, fathom coups and reprisals including the one which Obasanjo and his friends suffered under Abacha. This legacy of intra-class violence has not, and will not, abate.

The upshot of the foregoing was that in 1998 when it became clear that Abacha's regime was endangering imperialism and its Nigerian agents, some way of continuing the bleeding of Nigeria had to be found. Between imperialism and critical elements of the Nigerian ruling class, and in spite of Abiola's connections with imperialism, the Abiola option was not acceptable to the forces of recolonisation. For, at the point when MKO Abiola became a serious contender for the presidency of the largest black nation in the world, he started raising critical questions about issues like reparation and the manginalisation of black people. These were questions and issues that Obasanjo repudiated consistently since May 1999. Consequently, when the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) emerged in 1998/99, the generals were the most prominent funders of the party. Indeed, they decidedly tilted the scale in favour of Obasanjo. An observer opined correctly:

"The generals who... plundered the country for 28 years .... were said to be secure in the knowledge that Obasanjo would not start a which-hunt of his old comrades-at-arms as much as Ekwueme could..." (*Tell*, February 22, 1999: p. 20).

It was also widely reported that one of the generals who became Obasanjo's Minister of Defense actually threatened (at the Obasanjo fund-raising dinner on Thursday 28 January 1999) to go on self-exile if Obasanjo was not elected president (see *Sunday Vanguard*, Jan. 31, 1999: p. 1).

The process of accumulation of wealth over the years also placed the military and the civilian segments of the ruling circles in a vantage position to seek perpetuation of their hold on power after the cessation of formal military rule in May 1999. Obasanjo alone was reported to have donated, at a point, ₦130 million to PDP. According to *Tell* (Feb. 22, 1999: p. 20), General Danjuma "raised" about ₦200 million while Babangida was said to have "chipped in an equally intimidating sum" in the bid to smash [Alex] "Ekwueme challenge". To be sure,

some of the soldiers sided with Ekwueme while many civilians sided with retired soldiers in this donation spree (see *Tempo*, February 4, 1999: p. 7 and *Tell*, February 22, 1999 mentioned above).

Both the civilian and the military wings of the Nigerian ruling class have profited from the long spell of formal military dictatorship in Nigeria. The military had been more generally effective in allocating the loot from public treasury especially because it had capacity to force disgruntled segments of the rich elite to uphold class solidarity. What the Abdulsalami Abubakar dictatorship inaugurated on May 29 1999 (Obasanjo government) was, therefore, not anything near democracy but *military dictatorship by other means*. That is partly why Abdulsalami Abubakar himself had since functioned as Obasanjo's ambassador-at-large or, some say, the *de facto* Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nigeria's *Newswatch* magazine (May 24, 1999: p. 9) wondered, "with only three weeks to go, General Abdulsalami Ababakar approves extra-budgetary expenditure of ₦64 billion. Why?" Still on the question of treasury looting and corruption, *Tell* magazine (*Tell*, November 29, 2004) produced a comprehensive, and clearly informed, report on the lootocracy of state governors under Obasanjo's regime.

It was not until 2003 that the internal struggle within the coalition that installed Obasanjo began to crack visibly. That crack is the reason for the generalized crisis inside the ruling party (PDP) and in the satellite parties. The huge confusion in the Conference on Political Reform and the violence within the ruling circles are all part of this crisis. The open dissensions in the parties and today's multi-party realignments within the ruling circles (MDD, MRD) are all attempts by the ruling circles to reposition the ruling class *as a class* to sustain its hegemony.

But more important, the main cause of the crisis is imperialist-supervised accumulation of wealth within the ruling class and its consequences for the welfare of the generality of Nigerian people and the disappearing sovereignty of our country.

### **Private accumulation, private-sector-led economy, corruption and imperialist intervention**

Since January 1, 1984 and especially since about the middle of 1986, the Nigerian ruling circles have imposed the neo-liberal ideology of private-sector supervised economic development led by western capitalist finance institutions like IMF, IFC, etc. Those with massive private wealth in Nigeria, along with government, worked overtime to install this ideology which got them richer by placing them at vantage position to buy public property (privatization), kill public institutions and substitute them with private institutions (universities, airlines, telecommunication companies). Those who supervised the treasuries were not only able to make decrees to enhance and enforce these robberies, they stole directly from the treasury and enhance accumulation among their friends; they lent their friends public money to buy public property!

It is clear from the amount of private wealth owned and advertised by the richest people in Nigeria today that a major (if not the ultimate) source of private wealth is public treasury. Political power, especially under military dictatorship, was also central to enhancing and protecting private wealth accumulation. Most political crises pre-1999 and post-1999 (coups, counter-coups and intra- and inter-party-crises) arise from the pursuit of wealth, political power and/or both. Post-1999, the most influential political forces were led, or funded, by former military heads of state or their friends and nominees.

In the last ten years or so, the international imperialist financial institutions have started highlighting the phenomenon of corruption as a factor impeding development in third world countries. While it is true that corruption within the ruling classes has deprived developing countries of development resources, it is more true that debt peonage and related adjustment policies have been major causes of underdevelopment. Focusing global attention on corruption has consequently enabled imperialist financial institutions to divert local and global attention from the centrality of the adjustment programs in the sustained impoverishment of Nigeria and other developing countries. And in any case, how is capitalism and its appertaining political economy to be developed and sustained without corruption and brigandage? The history of the American robber barons (Carnegie, etc.) and activities of the contemporary heirs of capital (Enron, Pamalat, Halliburton, Soros, Andersen, WorldCom, etc.) are appropriate testimonies.

The crisis of poverty and social instability engendered by the Structural Adjustment Programs (now re-christened “economic reforms”) started to threaten the interests of foreign exploiters (fronted for by IMF and the World Bank) and the Nigerian ruling class. While the ballyhoo about corruption strives to re-assert the altruism of imperialism and its local agents, the various successions of alleged poverty-alleviation programmes in Nigeria since the mid-80s (Better Life for Rural Women, FEAP, PAP, NAPEP etc.) are similarly contrived to con the victims of neocolonial oppression into believing that their oppressors are, indeed, friends. As we demonstrate clearly below, Obasanjo’s alleged war on corruption and its selectivity are designed more as a filter to control entry of looters into an established Nigerian looting class. This is because an unwieldy looting class will have a material (money) base that is too diffuse; and such a diffuse material base will create a political fulcrum that is equally diffuse and, consequently, inefficient. Such a state of affairs will be too unstable in an epoch of renewed primitive (wealth) accumulation. The more concentrated economic and political powers are, they reason, the more effective the control.

It is important to apprehend Obasanjo’s touted war on corruption at a deep and comprehensive level and from the general background above. In this regard we see a conjuncture between the strategy of imperialism and the general interest of the ruling circles in Nigeria.

Since the dominant development ideology is that public property must be privatized and the dominant source of private wealth is public treasury, looting public treasury will be, and had become, a major way of promoting privatization. If members of the ruling circles are frantically engaged in private accumulation, as they are, stopping corruption in public life has to be pursued selectively if the ruling class, in its totality, will not face total collapse. This is the rule of the game in the western capitalist countries too. In Nigeria, Abacha is the only former head of state that is being probed. No single former head of state or former governor (military or civilian) is being probed. All the other heads of state (Obasanjo, Buhari, Babangida and Abdulsalami Abubakar) have remained untouchable. Various others (many stinkingly rich retired military governors and administrators, former ministers, bureaucrats etc.) who have been openly indicted in the media (with catalogues of their looted properties etc.) have remained untouched (see *The News* 24th August, 1998; *Newswatch*, May 24, 1999; *The News*--Oputa Panel's verdict--6 December, 2004). Similarly, various previous probe reports of the last thirty years--Irikefe (1978?), Okigbo's report on the Gulf War Oil windfall, many unaddressed probe reports including the Kolade Report of 2000 on Abdulsalami Abubakar's last minute spending spree, have remained unvisited. Many aforementioned players and categories of players constitute the mainstay of Obasanjo's regime. They are the people who are poised to take over and continue from wherever Obasanjo departs--if he departs. And it will not matter what happens to PDP. Still on the question of corruption and treasury looting, more than a whole year ago, *Tell* magazine (*Tell*, November 29, 2004) already produced an informed report on the looting and brigandage perpetrated by state governors inside Obasanjo's war on corruption. *Tell* magazine observed (on p. 16):

“Thus from early this year, security agencies including SSS, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, and the National Intelligence Agency have been investigating the state governors and their alleged involvement in money laundering believed to run into hundreds of millions of dollars.... one security report concluded that of all the governors only two .. are ‘clean’. And according to that report, that only means that no evidence was found that they have done things of the scale of magnitude of the others in terms of abuse of office.”

Public knowledge of the pervasive and subsisting level of corruption and abuse of office in public life, in the last six years or so, lends massive credence to the charge of selective apprehension of corrupt public officers by Obasanjo and his anti-corruption agencies. For, in spite of the grandstanding and loquaciousness of EFCC officials there simply does exist a lot of untouchables among allegedly corrupt public officers in the ministries, parastatals, universities etc.

At the University of Ilorin, Obasanjo's own Visitation Panel (in 2001) indicted the authorities or operatives supervised by them, of various financial crimes (stealing, mismanagement, misapplication, etc., of University funds). Federal Government's White Paper dissolved the Governing Council on that account but spared the Vice-

Chancellor who, under the succeeding Governing Council headed by a retired Army General, sacked the entire Branch Executive of ASUU and 45 other lecturers and professors without due process. The real crime of what became known as the **Unilorin 49** was that they exposed fraud and stealing under the desolved Council. The Unilorin authorities not only, for a long time, denied the existence of the Government Visitation Panel Reports of 2001, Obasanjo (the Visitor to Unilorin) personally went about peddling the allegation that the **Unilorin 49** were sacked because they disrupted university examinations!

Similarly, following Obasanjo's (PDP) "victory" in 2003 General Elections, Mr. El Rufai, who became Obasanjo's FCT Minister, accused some members of the National Assembly of demanding bribe from him to facilitate his (El Rufai's) confirmation as Minister. We do not know till today whether El Rufai was lying or whether the demands were actually made by the accused National Assembly members! Since then, there was the Ministry of Education bribery saga; Minister Osuji got kicked out but we are still waiting to hear what happened to the Executive Secretary of the National University Commission (NUC) and the members of the National Assembly who were implicated directly.

**Between Obasanjo's Federal government and the state governments:  
Corruption and gangsterism in the States.**

After the 2003 General Elections, the war of primitive private and group accumulation intensified. Because of the massive centralization of fiscal and political power in the President of the Federal Republic (a phenomenon that had its origins in the military antecedents of the civilian presidency), the state governments were literally at the mercy of the Presidency which also controls the courts, the army and the police. This was especially true for state governments that are controlled by governors from the President's own party (People's Democratic Party-PDP). In the accumulation crisis that developed in the states, therefore, the factions that the President endorsed were almost invariably the triumphant ones. This was what happened in, and led to, the promulgation of the state of emergency in Plateau State. The situation was responsible for the prolonged stalemate in Anambra State (between Uba and Governor Ngige), President Obasanjo's *coup d'etat* in Bayelsa State and the consequent removal, by force of arms, of Governor D.S.P. Alameiyeseigha; it was what caused the removal of Oyo State Governor Adewolu Ladoja and the prolonged attempt to remove Governor Dariye of Plateau State. In all these cases President Obasanjo was generally perceived to be using the so-called war against corruption, and its more visible agency (the EFCC), to selectively persecute his political enemies; the president always left no one in any doubt about whose side he was on.

Among other episodes, the spectacular show of Federal (President's) might in the removal of Governor D.S.P. Alameiyeseigha is a concrete example of the

ludicrously selective nature of the war on corruption in Nigeria after the 2003 General Elections. The Bayelsa pattern became the template in Oyo State!

EFCC's Nuhu Ribadu, having gone to UK to prosecute the Bayelsa governor, was reported to have fumed that it was a scandal that the British law enforcement agents allowed Alameiyeseigha (the governor of Nigeria's Bayelsa State) to escape. That was also about the time that Obasanjo's Attorney-General went to the UK to persuade the authorities not to grant Alameiyeseigha bail. It was curious that a large segment of Nigeria's citizenry, having surrendered to Obasanjo's regime of impunity, were asking the government of another country to apprehend their criminals for them. And having, in self defense, been unable to abrogate Section 308 of the Constitution on immunity, Nigeria's National Assembly retroactively endorsed Obasanjo's military invasion of Bayelsa state! Even among lesser officials (ministers, Vice-Chancellors, heads of parastatals) probes are selective. More significantly the entire Obasanjo campaign against corruption has little if any integrity since the National Assembly permits the **immunity clause**, protecting certain public officials, to remain and to keep these officials above the law. Consequently, Nigeria (a sovereign state) relies entirely on foreign countries to catch thieves who are resident in Nigeria.

We must not permit Obasanjo and his friends to forget that the ultimate act of corruption is governance without a people's consent or mandate. Perhaps only Obasanjo and his PDP governors and allies believe that Obasanjo had the mandate of the Nigerian people to rule. Even some members of the ruling party who used to believe so are not quite sure anymore. It is not surprising at all then that government had degenerated into absolute and open gangsterism in Oyo, Bayelsa, Anambra and Plateau states to mention a few prominent cases. As for general misconduct and abuse of office perhaps no government had ever been as guilty as Obasanjo's. Examples have been given of the obscene and open donations to Obasanjo's Library at Abeokuta, apparent protection of retired public officers such as Babangida who was accused of killing Dele Giwa at the Oputa Panel, National Assembly members who were accused of demanding or taking bribe etc. Obasanjo's government and party (PDP) have been openly accused of disregard for the rule of law and of all manners of multiple standards in apprehending crime and misconduct among public officers.

At a deeper level, the definition of corruption by Obasanjo's government is fraudulent. One of the most critical definitions of corruption is abuse of power or contemptuous use of power. The Nigerian ruling class under Obasanjo has used state power, more than any democratic regime in Nigeria, to rob the Nigerian people of collective property (privatization), to demobilize educational development (deregulation), to disgrace Nigerians in international circles, to hand over Nigeria's resources to dubious creditors paying hard currencies to settle dubious debts without appropriate authorities from the National Assembly etc. Nigeria has been so demobilized and its governance so corrupted that the country cannot respond to the health needs even of the ruling class (they prefer to die in

foreign hospitals) or to various emergencies as exemplified by the complete inability of the state to promptly respond to the Bellview and Sosoliso air crashes or the Wukari-Jalingo Flood disaster!

### **Ambivalence of the ruling class to the so-called ethnic militias and destruction of solidarity among Nigerian people**

There are two main ways in which the Nigerian ruling class has subverted the solidarity among the generality of the Nigerian people. The class has worked in various ways, including making laws in the National Assembly, to weaken pan-Nigerian organizations such as the NLC (through the instrumentality of the 2004 Labour Act which enabled Obasanjo to return to the 1978 scene of crimes against the Nigerian labour movement). While the state supervised by the ruling class has failed consistently to honour its obligations to Nigerian Pensioners, they have, through the instrumentality of the 2004 Pensions Act, imposed what amounts to *pensions tax* of 7.5% of monthly salaries on workers. While pensions and gratuities owed to regular workers remain unpaid, political office holders, legislators, special advisers etc. from local government to federal government levels are collecting horrendous pensions (otherwise known as *severance allowances*)! They are also drumming up another tax (compulsory health insurance scheme) on workers. They hand over all these resources to their friends (licensed undertakers) to whom workers will be virtually abandoned.

While waging these wars on the generality of the Nigerian working people, the leading lights of the Nigerian ruling circles have also comported themselves publicly as ethnic, geo-political (southern governors, northern governors, northern senators etc.) or religious leaders. The later tendency has also encouraged escalation of ethnic and regionalist agitations leading partly to the development of the so-called ethnic militias. In some states the militias have been actually recognized and incorporated into law-enforcement machinery. These are all of course opportunistic: they enable the various ethnic nationalist wings of the Nigerian elite to use their ethnic base and the threat of the “militias” to negotiate intra-elite relations at the national level.

The opportunism of the various segments of the Nigerian elite becomes particularly palpable when the so-called militias then challenge the legitimacy of the hegemony of the elite commonwealth that the national treasury has become. Indeed the various elite wings of the Nigerian ruling class actually instigate crackdowns on the ethnic militias of their ethnic base. For, the Nigerian elite also apprehend the emergence of the ethnic-nationalist militias as a crystallised, even if manipulated, anger of the deprived and marginalized segments of the Nigerian polity, This is why each time the militants create generalized public disorder that threatens the peace of the elite, the latter characterize the former as hoodlums, touts, area boys or dregs of society! The complex process of negotiating the release of the oil workers held hostage by MEND (early February, 2006) in the Delta

epitomizes the ambivalence of the ruling circles *vis a vis* the youth militia in different parts of Nigeria (see *The Guardian On Saturday*, February 4, 2006; “Issues in the Oil Worker’s Hostage Saga”: pp 50-52).

Today, the police has embarked on a generalised crackdown on these militias across Nigeria. They have even borrowed the term “terrorists” from USA to describe the militias. But is the ruling-class sufficiently coherent or sincere to address the crisis and contradictions that produced the militias? Are the Nigerian masses allowed to understand their own ultimate interests inside the confusion created by the ruling class? Are they even allowed by the coalition of Nigeria’s ruling class to organize towards understanding and defending **their own class interests**? If these incensed, misled and manipulated militias are instigated by police violence to get out of control, what kind of response is the Nigerian state likely to elicit? Is the incumbent government deliberately engineering militia-related chaos to stay in power or invite the Nigerian armed forces? For the armed forces is the organization that is in power! It is under it that the ruling elite and imperialism have profited most fully! Or are they preparing grounds for a more open and more direct interventionist foreign forces? Because we know that the nuclei of such forces are already on the Nigerian soil!

### **Neo-colonialism and the crisis of succession: The third-term bid and other ruling-class options**

Since 2004, the rumours of Obasanjo’s plan to succeed himself have been making the rounds. Very early in the process when Obasanjo was asked on CNN about the rumour, his answer was that third term is not in the constitution. But that was not the answer to the question he was asked! The import of his answer, however, was that if the constitution allowed it, his answer may have been different. We can quickly take care of the question as to whether OBJ is interested in another term *for personal reasons*. The answer is simple. With the enormous, indeed dictatorial, power that OBJ wields since 1999 and the incredible consequences for the lives of his friends and foes, he will not go quietly. Because he cannot!

But also for the Nigerian ruling class and imperialism, OBJ’s third term is clearly one of the critical options. And OBJ re-echoed Babangida’s statement when the latter threatened that he knew those he would not hand over power to (see IBB’s speech at NIPSS Kuru, on 22 October 1988). OBJ was reported to have similarly assured his audience on a certain occasion that he had groomed certain technocrats that would ensure the continuation of his “reforms”. Reforms!--the new name for SAP a.k.a. re-colonisation. And for imperialism, what is crucial is that ‘reform’.

But there are problems. Negotiation for power inside the ruling-class circles has a logic which has heavy components of regionalist, geo-political and ethnic-nationalist consideration. For example apart from OBJ's other criteria of eligibility for the Presidency in 1998/99, his Yorubanness was critical for placating the Yoruba elite over Abiola's murder and the abortion of his June 12 1993 victory (see Audu Ogbe's comments on this in *Sunday Punch*, December 18, 2005: p. 40). And by 2003, the pacification of the Yoruba elite was accomplished. The *notion of rotational presidency* has remained pivotal in the race towards 2007. The logic of that notion has only three credible options: South-East, South-South or Middle Belt. All the three options will shake the solidarity within the elite to its foundation. Outside the logic of rotation among the three aforementioned geo-political zones, there is the grand-North option; but it is not viable. And all these options are not affected by what political party any presidential aspirant belongs to.

OBJ's third term bid is characteristic of the myopic, short-term and opportunistic program of both Nigeria's ruling class and their Western imperialist collaborators. We should remember that in spite of the alleged objections of western imperialism to Abacha, its chief hegemon towards the end of Abacha's reign (Bill Clinton of USA) was already saying that the USA would not oppose Abacha transforming into a *civilian* president.

Because both western imperialism and Nigeria's ruling caucus under OBJ consider the third term option seriously, they are also, through the agency of the ruling caucus, working overtime to actualize it. Their main strategy seems to be to create maximum confusion on all fronts as an excuse for the perpetuation of Obasanjo in power. The main elements of that program of generalised confusion include Obasanjo's strangle-hold on PDP (including the non-elective convention of PDP on 10th December, 2005), the war with Abubakar Atiku, the wars in Oyo state (between "Governor" Adedibu and the Governor Ladoja) the *coup d' etat* in Bayelsa, the crisis in Plateau, the active stoking of the North-South divide within the elite, the crack-down on the so-called ethnic militias and the generalised war (insitigated by IMF and the World Bank) against public welfare, the labour movement, the university system and the students' movements, and the heavy *no-alternative-to-reform* propaganada. It was this same *no-alternative-to-SAP* propaganada that sustained the Bababgida disaster for thirteen horrid years. In Lagos on 6th March, 1989, Babangida told the Oxbridge Club that "*The only possible answer* (to Nigeria's national political-economic crises) was provided under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by this (IBB's) administration". It is much worse under Obasanjo because we now have *a strange kind of democracy* in which people are told that they have no alternative to political, economic and social paradigms offered by the ruling caucus: a caucus that never offered the electorate any programme or manifesto when it started bidding for state power in 1998!

There is yet another option inside the third option. The ruling circles and imperialism may create so much crisis that they lose control or pretend to lose control. Because such generalized chaos will not be conducive to ruling class and imperialist accumulation, *they may resort to their standard answer*: call in the armed forces to restore order. After all it was the armed forces that installed Obasanjo. We may thus be back where the barber's chair started the current moribund motion. And imperialism will rationalize it *a la* Parkistan with Pavez Musharaf! The victims of imperialist recolonisation programme of the last three decades (from Obasanjo to Obasanjo) must prepare for this possible eventuality which this writer pre-visions since July 20, 2002 (see *Insider*, October 7, 2002) arising from the build-up to the 2003 General Elections. Primitive ruling class accumulation had always been least acrimonious under direct military control.

### **Nigeria's peripherality, the new imperialist audacity and the era of [indigenous and foreign] economic hit men (EHM)**

Nigeria's situation today, from our discussion above, arises from Nigeria's general incorporation into the new world vision of western economic and political interests as led and articulated by the dominant power brokers (especially USA and her primary allies) and their military and trade organizations (NATO, EU, WTO, IMF, World Bank etc.). It is a situation that has developed steadily from direct colonial rule through proper neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965) to what they now call globalisation. The pivotal paradigm of this situation is what is also generally characterized as *liberal democracy*.

What is characterized as liberal democracy is pivoted on capitalism which, in turn, envisions a generalized market concerning which Samir Amin (2004: p. 9) observed:

The development of the generalized market (the least regulated possible) and of democracy is decreed to be complementary to one another. The question of conflicts between social interests which are expressed through their interventions in the market and social interests which give meaning to political democracy are not even posed. Economics and politics do not form two dimensions of social reality, each having their own autonomy, operating in a dialectical relationship; capitalist economics in fact, governs the political, whose creative potential it eliminates.

From USA to France, South Korea, Uganda and Nigeria, this is the interphase of "social (class) interest" politics that determine and drive privatization, corruption, "elections" economic "reforms", political "reforms", obedience or disobedience to court orders etc. "Pure" economics, which also corresponds to the dominant market forces ideology, Amin (2004: p. 11) further observed:

.....is not a theory of the real world, of really existing capitalism, but of an imaginary capitalism. It is not even a rigorous theory of the latter. The basis

of the development of the arguments does not deserve to be qualified as coherent.

Clearly, our foregoing appreciation of the falsification of reality in the world globally has unique and accentuated tangibility in the peripheries of western capitalism as epitomized by Nigeria. In these circumstances, the centers of capital (and their institutions) and their agents in the peripheries (national governments and their ideological and cultural institutions) have to combine all kinds of instruments (coercive and otherwise) to remain in power and to persuade their victims that they are living in the best of the worlds. This is why *they have to sack thousands of civil servants to create a better economy: to reform the economy, they have to create a Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) for the purpose of liquidating public Enterprises, they have to support god-fatherism and gangsterism in the states in order to save the electorate from elected state governors, they have to under fund public universities in order to achieve reform of tertiary institutions: they have to weaken Nigeria's central labour movement (the 2005 Labour Act) in order to save Nigerian workers. What they call democracy and the electoral mandate they allege to obtain therefrom have become the license for systematically dispossessing the Nigerian people.*

What all of these boil down to is that a class has been strategically placed in Nigeria by indigenous and foreign interests to rob the country and return its people, in spite of the tremendous amount of actual and potential human and material resources we have, to a state of barbarism. The indigenous segment is not autonomous as it is fundamentally a class fronting for western capital. Many of those scrambling to take over Nigeria have important foreign financial partners. The essence of the ₦25bn recapitalization of Nigeria's banks is simply to hand over Nigeria's banking industry to the big multinationals as they now call most of the shots in the banking sector. Nigeria's government and public institutions are now effectively in the custody of "donors" and "donor countries".

The foregoing has created a situation in which the functionaries of foreign economic, political and cultural interests have become very active, sometimes openly (at other times, clandestinely), in the formulation, implementation, and manipulation of social, economic and political policies in Nigeria. Some of these functionaries and agents of foreign interests are of course Nigerians: those who peddle the mythology of iron-clad "global village" and the religion of no-alternative-to-deregulation (no alternative to SAP); the policy that Ibrahim Babandiga and Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd. generals) elevated to the status of state religion.

The ideologues, economic and political evangelists and enforcers are what have now become known as the Economic Hit Men (EHM) (and Women). One of those who used to be an EHM decided to tell the world his story. The cover jacket of the book (Perkins, 2004), carried the following comment:

John Perkins should know--he was an economic hit man. His job was to convince countries that are strategically important to the U.S—from Indonesia to Panama--to accept enormous loans for infrastructure development, and to make sure that the lucrative projects were contracted to US corporations. Saddled with huge debts, these countries came under the control of the United States government, World Bank, and the US-dominated aid agencies that act like loan sharks--dictating repayment terms and bullying foreign governments into submission.

In the preface to the book (Perkins, 2004: p. ix), the author himself wrote:

Economic hit men (EHMs) are highly paid professionals who cheat countries around the globe of trillions of dollars. They funnel money from the World Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other foreign “aid” organizations into the coffers of huge corporations and pockets of a few wealthy families who control the planets natural resources. Their tools include fraudulent financial reports, rigged elections, payoffs, extortion, sex and murder. They play a game as old as empire, but one that has taken on new and terrifying dimensions during this time of globalization.

What creates and drives the renewed virulence of what Amin (2004: pp. 7-8) characterized as the “liberal virus” (and its clones around the world) is not by any means attributable to all the citizens of the capitalist metropolises. Indeed Noam Chomsky (1988: pp. 1-2) reached the conclusion that “U.S. international and security policy” which drives the phenomenon that institutionalize what we call the economic hit men (EHMs) is:

... rooted in the structure of power in the domestic society [and] has as its primary goal the preservation of what we might call “the Fifth Freedom”, understood crudely but with a fair degree of accuracy as the freedom to rob, exploit and to dominate, to undertake any course of action to ensure that existing privilege is protected and advanced.

Chomsky opined that F. D. Roosevelt “overlooked” the Fifth Freedom when the latter articulated the four freedoms (of speech, of worship, from want and from fear) which the US and her allies were to pursue to confront fascism. The Fifth Freedom had today become established in the centers and the peripheries of capitalism.

The categories of *economic hit men in the indigenous populations* are of course variegated and the hierarchic relations among the categories are complex. They are in the executive, legislative and coercive (law-enforcement) agencies and in the cultural institutions. At the decision-making echelons, they vary in power from the Presidency to the Ministries (Finance, Defense, Education, Foreign Affairs, Petroleum, Women Affairs etc.) and the parastatals (NNPC, FCT, Central Bank,

National Universities Commission–NUC). Many of the Nigerians that head these public institutions have direct relationship with the enforcers of the Fifth Freedom such as IMF, the World Bank, or western-based multinational corporations. They were either seconded to the Nigerian government or they have worked for these enforcers or they are their consultants! They are paid off-shore salary scales and in US dollars! These categories are being reproduced in the cultural areas--universities, arts and music, the churches etc. The foregoing visibility of the hit men (and women) is a key element of what we refer to as the burgeoning audacity of imperialism in the peripheries of capitalism like Nigeria.

At yet other levels, the western capitalist ruling circles having pocketed our decision- makers, now openly engage in what used to be diplomatic indiscretions. They send emissaries to come and settle minor quarrels between the Nigerian Executive and the Legislature. They comment freely on Nigerian budget and social and economic programmes. They pass comments and make judgements on minor political squabbles; they coerce Nigeria into making diplomatic decisions such as the Charles Taylor asylum. They send their army to “help” our army and conduct naval exercises on our shores. *And*, they “predict” how soon Nigeria will break up! We need to emphasise the question of the war at the level of ideas because winning the struggle at that level is critical for our capacity to organise at other levels. The ruling circles and their hit squad have not just the advantage of physical violence; they use that advantage to force down ideas down our throats. And the forces of liberation in the peripheries are weakened by a large combination of factors: consequently, the victims of the globalizing empire(s) are organizationally and ideationally backward.

For a long time now, and especially since the liberal virus acquired greater virulence, the coalition of popular forces and their intellectual allies have made tremendous progress towards forging global consciousness. In Davos, in Seattle, in Genoa, Nice and in Durban, anti-globalisation forces have engaged in street battles with the enforcers. People’s intellectuals like, Chomsky and Samir Amin have produced robust challenges to the hegemon and to the illusions erected by the intellectuals of rampaging capital.

Consequently, the no-alternative song spearheaded by the ruling circles and their no-alternative-to-reform (SAP) intellectuals in the periphery, have become ludicrous and discredited. And concrete popular struggles and political engagement in Bolivia, Venezuela and Chile are giving life and authenticity to the voices of the victims around the world. In these general regards, the observations of Boris Kagarlistky (1999: p. 3) are quite apt:

When the American philosopher Francis Fukuyama declared that with the triumph of neo-liberalism the end of history had arrived, people first agreed with him then began laughing at him and finally dismissed him. But this was a mistake...he [Fukuyama] did not by any means base his thesis on the economic or social successes of capitalism. He merely argued that

capitalism was the end point of mankind's ideological evolution. In practice, he measured the success of the victorious ideology by a single criterion: the ability of the world ruling class to destroy, suffocate, corrupt or discredit any constructive alternative to itself.

Arguing that the "time for alternatives has now come, Kagarlitsky (Ibid.: p. 2) asserted:

Despite the unprecedented political and ideological strength of capital on a world scale, most societies display growing instability, uncertainty and sense of crisis. Neo-liberalism has not only been unable to improve the well-being of workers (this was never its goal in any case). It has also been unable to create favourable conditions for its own rule. The defeat of neo-liberalism is no longer a question for debate. The triumph of neo-liberalism never occurred, the economic model of the free market is disintegrating before our eyes and in the countries of Eastern Europe, the words and expressions making the liberal lexicon have taken on the force of obscenities.

### **Articulation of Alternatives through Popular Resistance: Patterns and Problems in Nigeria**

Throughout human history, groups or classes that profit from existing social and production relations insist, because of their class or group interests, that the existing system has no alternative. This was true under feudalism, slavery, colonialism, classical capitalism, degenerate socialism and now the "triumphant" democracy and market forces. Today's liberalism is also being touted as the end of history for these same reasons and because of the collapse of the Soviet state. As we have shown above, triumphant liberal democracy and capitalism has failed to create a humane and peaceful world. Indeed as the title of Amin's (2004) book has suggested, the "Liberal Virus" has simply created a global state of "Permanent War and Americanisation of the World. The situation has sustained *the spectre of socialism and the imperative of socialist transformation* especially at the peripheries of liberal democracy. *In any case, the constant struggles by the victims of any system is the ultimate articulation of the alternatives.* Consequently, the refrain, among the propagandists of any dominant social, economic or political paradigm, that there are no alternatives, can only be self-serving rhetoric. The business of this section is therefore to *summarise* the response of the victims of colonial and neocolonial domination in Nigeria.

Throughout the colonial period, the victims of colonialism and their allies (comprising largely educated elite) struggled against colonial occupation (Asiegbu, 1984; Ahazuem, 1987; Freund, 1980; Ihonvbere & Falola, 1987; Okoye, 1986). In this regard, Olorode (2003) observed:

“Colonial rule, which started and coexisted with the development of liberal ideology in Europe and US was a violent and repressive enterprise because it was erected to exploit the peoples of the colonies. Its racist ideology justified and reinforced violence (economic and cultural) and exploitation”.

The responses of the victims included and involved, sabotage, rebellions, tax “riots”, strikes and direct military confrontations against colonial authorities. One of the central characteristics of *the nationalist* struggles against colonial oppression was their pan-Nigerian, indeed pan-African, vision. For example, although the earliest “nationalist” movements in Nigeria were concentrated around Lagos, their vision and activities reverberated into the Nigerian hinterland. Contrary to the self-serving refrain of the Nigerian ethnic-nationalist and regionalist elite especially in the last few decades, the nationalists actually welcomed a political unity of Nigeria. In other words, no known objection to amalgamation of Nigeria (in 1914) came from the nationalists. In 1938, the Nigerian Youth Movement had branches “at Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Warri, Benin City, Aba, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, Kano, Sapele, Ilesa, Uyo, Ejirin, Makurdi and Yelwa” (Arifalo, 2001: p. 43).

The dichotomy in political culture and the pan-Nigerian vision between the nationalist and popular mass movements on one hand and the bourgeois political formations, that inherited power from the colonial authorities, on the other, arose from the ethno-nationalist and regionalist base of the contest for political power among the bourgeoisie. The current disillusion regarding “the Nigerian project” which is being orchestrated for intra-class power negotiations within the Nigerian bourgeoisie had its origin in their constant manipulation of ethnic-nationalist antipathies since about 1947 (Jega, 1999; Arifalo, 2001).

In spite of the dichotomy addressed above, however, the Nigerian bourgeois formations and the mass organizations and their allies, struggled towards Nigeria’s political independence from colonialism in their different ways and with their own different visions. For the bourgeoisie, the struggle for independence was largely towards replacing the colonial authorities. For the victims of colonialism, however, the struggle for independence was to access the promises of independence—national economic and political sovereignty, better educational and economic opportunities and a philosophy based on the interest of toilers. This dichotomy of visions was discernible in the manifestoes of the political parties that took over the Federal and regional governments (by 1960) on one hand, and the manifestoes of the parties based on the vision of the labour movement and the youth (e.g. Imuodu’s Labour Party).

Arising from the prevalence of the welfare-state paradigm that propelled the struggle for independence in the colonies and especially the pressures from the mass organisations (especially of the labour movement and the movements of the youth), the bourgeois parties of the first republic built considerable social welfare infrastructure especially in education, public health and utilities. They also

enlarged employment opportunities by enlarging public bureaucracies at various levels. However in the first few years of independence, the dominance of regionalist and ethnic-based ruling coalitions at every level ran into problems engendered by the crisis of primitive accumulation and occasioning state repression and violence within the ruling circles, violence against the oppressed and violence instigated among nationalities. Consequently, apart from the General Strike of 1964, and the resistance against the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, *pan-Nigerian* working peoples' and youth confrontation against neo-colonial policies did not amount to much up to the military intervention of January 1966. But then, the 1966 intervention by the military merely accentuated the crisis of accumulation within the ruling circles, it produced a three-year long Civil War 1967-1970 and a generally repressive state thereafter.

The cessation of hostilities in 1970 and the increased oil wealth which led to what came to be known as the oil boom enabled ruling circles to enrich themselves and created the illusion among them (and the general polity) that they could "indigenize" the Nigerian economy. Indeed most of them were merely fronting for foreign enterprises. During this period also (i.e. up to about 1976), part of the oil boom was expended in sedating workers and the youth through pay rises (such as the Udoji Award) and scholarships (Bursaries) for students. New states were created and expanded state bureaucracies increased employment in the public sector. The massive harvests of petrodollars, especially after the rise in oil prices following the inauguration of OPEC in 1973 was, of course, expended on import substitution industries and massive constructions which also enhanced unprecedented private accumulation under military dictatorship.

A lot of the petrodollars were therefore simply recycled back to Europe and America. International finance capital therefore took charge of Nigeria's wealth. By 1977, Obasanjo's Minister of Finance was hunting for an IMF jumbo loan and austerity measures were surfacing in the public and other sectors.

There was incessant war inside the ruling class (coups, counter coups property confiscation etc.) there was government war against students (Ali Must Go, 1978), there was war against the labour movement. The period between 1973 and 1978 witnessed frantic efforts by the progressive segments of the labour movement to unify the labour movement in Nigeria in order to strengthen them. The military dictatorship from Yakubu Gowon to Obasanjo made equally frantic efforts to stultify the unity moves and to take control of the labour movement. Decree 31 of 1973 prevented the attempted merger of the four labour centers. In December, 1975 the four labour centers merged and inaugurated a single labour center: The Nigeria Labour Congress. The General Olusegun Obasanjo-led military dictatorship orchestrated the final steps of turning the NLC into a parastatal, instigating fifth columnists inside the labour movement and using military decrees to intimidate and neutralize patriotic labour leaders like Wahab Goodluck and Michael Imuodu and to take control of the Congress. The Trade Unions (Disqualification of Certain Persons) Act 15 of 1977 and the Trade Unions

(Amendment) Decree 22 of 1978 were the pivotal instruments in this regard (Adewumi, 1997); they set the general stage for the development the progressive subversion of, and degeneracy in, the labour movement since then.

We need to put it on record, however, the achievement of the coalition of the labour movement (represented by the NLC), the Nigerian intellectuals (represented by the Academic Staff Union of Universities--ASUU), the professionals (represented especially by the Nigerian Bar Association and the Nigeria Medical Association), women (represented especially in Women in Nigeria--WIN) and the Students' Movement, which also demonstrated clearly during 1977/78 to 1998 (and especially 1978-1988) what commitment and creative organizational effort could achieve. For, in spite of the viciousness of military dictatorship (in the mid-70s) and fascism within the 1979-1983 civilian interregnum, the afore-mentioned coalition of patriotic forces struggled gallantly against imperialism and its local agents.

Early in its life, the Sunmonu-led NLC produced the NLC *Charter of Demands* which became a basis of engagement with the various tiers of post-military political formations after October 1, 1979. And the resultant May 11, 1981 General Strike for Minimum Wage was a major struggle by the NLC. Following the Buhari-Idiagbon-Babangida coup on December 31, 1983, both the NLC and ASUU (which already became an affiliate of the NLC) issued powerful policy statements (see ASUU's *How to Save Nigeria*, 1984 and NLC, 1980; 1984; 1984a; 1986) stating the expectation of Nigerian patriots and toilers. These various organizations also engaged imperialism and its agents robustly in the NMA Strikes, 1984-85, the so-called IMF Debate (1986) the Political Debate (1986), the Killing of ABU Students (May 26, 1986) and the anti-SAP uprisings and debates (almost every mid-year between 1986 and 1989). By 1988 when Babangida handed over NLC to John Holt's Ogunkoya, the Congress was almost fatally wounded. Consequently, after Ali Chiroma, the professional trade-unionists seized the jugular of the labour movement; the labour movement has not recovered since then.

In terms of bidding directly for state power, the labour movement had not forged any serious labour-based party since the 1950s and 60s. The effort to form a Labour Party in 1989 was squandered by some of the same professional trade unionists when they ended up in bourgeois political parties.

By the opening of the 1990s, it was the radical intellectuals, the students and some of the professionals, all scattered in NGOs, the so-called "human rights" movements, even ethnic-militia movements, and "pro-democracy" movements that led most of the anti-SAP and the anti-military struggles on the streets. With the exception of the brief spell of the involvement of the oil workers (PENGASSAN and NUPENG) in these struggles, organized labour (in NLC) avoided the anti-dictatorship struggles like a plague. It is therefore not surprising that when the dust of *administrator* control of NLC settled in 1998, Congress was handed over to the

professional trade unionists all over again! The weakness of the popular struggles in the 1990s can be accounted for largely by the complete distancing of organized labour from the efforts. This situation also deprived the popular forces of the education which popular struggles enhance among the oppressed. It partly explains, too, the central role that divisive ethnic and confessional groupings have come to play to the detriment of pan-Nigerian solidarity among the oppressed.

The failure or limited achievements of popular resistance, especially in so far as it has not coalesced into a pan-Nigerian toilers-based movement is also what enabled the remnants of the Buhari-Babangida-Abacha dictatorship to regroup and hand-over power to Obasanjo in what they now call *democratic dispensation* or *nascent democracy*

### **The Imuodu, Aka-Bashorun, Usman, Ubani Heritage and the Imperative of Popular Resistance**

The need to rescue Nigeria from IMF, World Bank (fronts of imperialism) and their Nigerian agents compels toilers, the youth and all patriots to return to the tradition of popular struggle and the politics of liberation as circumscribed earlier on in this discussion. The task compels Nigerians to invoke the spirit of struggle; the spirit that galvanized their people to assert the sovereignty of Nigeria and the solidarity of her peoples, the spirit that animated the likes of Jaja of Opobo, Herbert Macaulay, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Raji Abdallah, Abubakar Zukogi, Ibrahim Nok, Hajia Gambo Sawaba, Malam Aminu Kano, Saad Zungur, Wahab Goodluck, Mokwugo Okoye, Mahmud Modibo Tukur, Frank Dimowo and other heroes and heroines of Nigeria's nationalist struggles for liberation.

For, that spirit and its heritage have survived in spite of the unrelenting siege by imperialism and its generations of agency and running dogs in Nigeria and other conquered territories of the world.

The nationalist and patriotic movement in Nigeria had lost four prominent nationalists and patriots in four overlapping generations of Nigeria's heritage of struggle. We must return to the spirit of the heritage. Without the Imuodus of Nigeria, there would be no independence. Even then the anti-colonial struggles yielded fruit that was squandered by the emergence of a neo-colonial negation of popular struggles. Alao Aka-Bashorun was a nationalist professional (lawyer), a fighter for the working class and a professional who straddled the anti-colonial struggles and the post-colonial anti-imperialist struggles working actively with the intellectuals (in ASUU), the students' and workers' movements. Bala Usman's generation was in the mainstream of the struggles of the 1970s to the 1990s and later.

Bala Usman was a revolutionary intellectual who as a teacher of history engaged the local agents of imperialism robustly. His best known work in social intervention was **"For the Libration of Nigeria"** published in 1977. The

Nigerian Students' Movement blossomed richly between 1977 and the early 90s. One of the most notable among the Nigerian students that struggled against SAP (supervised by military dictatorship) between 1983 and the 1990s was Chima Ubani. The Ubani generation touched and enriched the nationalist tradition of Imuodu, Aka-Bashorun and Bala Usman. Ubani was at the forefront of the struggles against military dictatorship in the 1990s. He died working along with the NLC to resist the on-going recolonisation of Nigeria under the civilianised military dictatorship headed by General Obasanjo (rtd) since May 1999.

All patriots need to reflect on these continuities towards readiness for the impending and unavoidable confrontation with the renewed programme of re-colonisation (first in what they called SAP, and now in what they call 'Reform') and the imperative of robust patriotic resistance to imperialism and its overlapping generations of military and civilian agents in Nigeria. True, considerable and traumatic instances of apostasy and betrayal of our resistance had occurred among many of our earthswile allies and comrades in the nationalist movement. But history never offered us any guarantee that opportunism, betrayals and apostasy will not occur. History has availed us neither of any instances where victims of social, economic or political repression had been abolished by their tormentors. It is only the victims of torment and their allies that can abolish torment and tormentors.

Nigeria's ruling class is a doomed class; their "reforms", being anti-people, are also doomed. But they have, in alliance with imperialism, almost unlimited capacity to regroup and to renovate their strangle-hold on our country and peoples. They can always produce and reproduce some *Olusanni Okikingida Abachanjo*. To abandon Nigeria to this class is to condemn Nigeria to barbarism. Only the victims of the existing order and their allies have abiding interest in building a more humane Nigeria. And it is their historical duty to build it. The task is urgent and time is running out!

The traditions of Michael Imuodu, Alao Aka-Bashorun, Bala Usman and Chima Ubani need to be re-enacted. A formidable working peoples' organization rooted in the toilers, the patriots and their allies need to be forged now! This is what makes a nationalist and anti-imperialist people's organization imperative today. **In broad outline, and flowing from the heritage of Nigeria's nationalist movement, the vision of the proposed working people's organization or movement must be guided by three central commitments. The first is commitment to a united Nigeria with a united people who are genuinely sovereign. The second is commitment to an economic order in which the welfare of the people is the primary goal, in which the resources of our land and their exploitation and allocation are under the full control of the toiling people thus immediately enabling the minimum of a welfare state and incremental socialization of the means of production, distribution and exchange. The third commitment of the movement will be the pursuit of a social and cultural policy that promotes cultural freedom and solidarity**

**among the Nigerian people, and frees their minds from superstitions and from ethnic and confessional prejudices.**

We have defined above the objective of popular resistance in very telescoped form to avoid dogmatism and in order to start from a *minimum programme* or *consensus* platform of a welfare state. We are conscious that a welfare state is feasible or approachable only if the resources of Nigeria are under the control of a ruling class or group that is nationalist and committed, minimally at least, to the welfare of our people. The possibilities of this paradigm have collapsed immediately after independence and especially since neocolonialism became more virulent under SAPs and “globalisation”. This is why creating a welfare state, not to talk of a welfare state that is stable, under the current conditions of the peripheries of capitalism, is an illusion. Consequently, struggling for a welfare state makes sense only as a stop-gap process towards a socialized economy; the goal is therefore, socialism. In the practical and patriotic parlance of Mkwugo Okoye (1986), I did suggest (Olorode, 2003) that we must return, in the interim, to the politics of liberation:

The politics of the labour movement (especially the nationalist and revolutionary Michael Imuodu tendency) between 1944 and the immediate post-1960 period, the politics of the [Osoba-Usman] Minority Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee (1977-1978), the politics of the Political Debate (1986) which recommended a socialist arrangement for Nigeria, the politics of the September 6 (1990) Aka-Bashorun-led] Sovereign National Conference]. Underlying this politics of liberation had been the undying influence of the radical socialist forces and tendencies that is pivoted on the imperative of a “thorough anti-imperialist and democratic revolution (ASUU, 1984)” led by an alliance of working people, the peasants, the youth and the oppressed segments of the entire Nigerian society and all their patriotic allies.

This return has become important for us if we are to overcome the debility and the “neurosis” that the falsification of reality by neo-liberal ideology continues to impose on the world. Samir Amin’s (2004) heuristic circumscription of the “schizophrenia” caused by what he called the “liberal virus” is very instructive:

Human beings no longer live(d) as whole beings ... Hence forth, they lived sometimes as *homo economicus* abandoning to the market the responsibility to regulate their “economic life” automatically, and sometimes as “citizens” depositing in ballot boxes their choices for those who would have the responsibility to establish the rules of the game for their “political life”.

If socialist transformation rejects the neutrality of the market or at least insists that most economic decisions (like the recent mergers of Banks in Nigeria) made outside (and beyond) the market and that socialism is democratic, a problem arises. The alleged complementarity of the market and democracy and the capitalist claim

that the market enhances democracy require interrogation. We do not have enough space or time here to pursue these issues. In any case, more competent thinkers (socialists and non-socialists) have been giving serious attention to these issues in the last five years or so (Amin, 2004; Bakan, 2004; Chomsky, 1988; Kagarlitsky, 1999; 2000).

Suffice it to say that democracy was not invented by capitalism or by the market. Democracy, like human rights, abolition of slavery, abolition of colonial oppression, abolition of child labour, women's suffrage, the right of the black to vote, minimum wage, reduction of working hours, etc. was imposed on capitalism by the resistance of the victims of capitalism in its centers and its peripheries! Traditionally, and even today serious doubts have been, and are being, expressed by the intellectuals and ideologues of capitalism as to whether democracy and capitalism are compatible (see Therborn, 1977; Kagarlitsky, 1999).

To be sure the socialists are not blind to the mistakes and errors of the past and they were never uniformly oblivious to the growing crisis in the pre and post-Gorbachev Soviet Union for example--the critical responses to these crises dated back to the era of Lenin himself. In terms of retooling for the tasks ahead, Kagarlitsky (1999; 2000) indeed referred to the "frustrations" and the "neurosis" on the modern left.

Before concluding, it is important to ask why the Nigerian ruling class and its intellectuals have completely ignored the intellectual and political struggles in the west against the illusions created for the world by liberal democracy. The answers are not far to find. First the peripheries are invariably more backward than the centers and the elites of the systems there are, consequently, more culturally and politically primitive. Second, the hegemons in the peripheries are, invariably, much more bestial in the use of the mechanisms of repression and other means of social control because as Eskor Toyo insists, the bourgeoisies of the peripheries are themselves, "slaves".

I will conclude with two copious quotations. The first of them is from Kagarlitsky (1999):

It was not any socialist or radical journal but the *Financial Times* that published an article 'Das Kapital revisited', asking why the world had swung 'from the triumph of global capitalism to its crisis in less than a decade'<sup>2</sup>. One can hope that sooner or later things will improve because 'this is just a matter of time'. It is not. And this is not just a cyclical crisis. It is structural. And it is here to stay at least as long as we keep the global structures of the free market liberal capitalism unchanged. As Ken Livingstone wrote. 'The enormous shifts on financial markets are not driven by "psychology" or "herd mentality" but by absolutely fundamental international economic forces'<sup>3</sup>. After undermining the state as the agent of regulation, after defeating socialist challenges, global capitalist institutions

(including multinational companies) discovered that they are not able to control the process which they themselves started. The society has changed since the times of Karl Marx, no doubt about that. But how did it change? Many of the prophecies made by Marx were actually premature for his own time, but now they come true. Capitalism is now global. So is its crisis. The simple truth is that Marxist analysis of capitalism is correct. But while this is becoming more and more evident to market analysts and managers this is not the case among socialist politicians. The left remains hostage to its own failures and neuroses. It is not only weak politically but it lacks the determination and moral strength needed for action. It can win elections but not struggles. Unless it dares to speak again about class solidarity, nationalization and redistribution, unless it challenges the system of global capital and its local political representatives, it has no chance to change anything. And with the crisis of capitalism becoming deeper, with democracies more and more divorced from real decision-making and global economic forces escaping control, the alternative posed by Rosa Luxemburg is becoming clearer: socialism or barbarism. Now we understand that this was not an exaggeration, not a poetic way of speaking about possible dangers. This is just the only real choice. Leftist politicians, who do not dare to choose socialism and fight for it, will bear full responsibility for the possible outcome: the triumph of barbarism.

Samir Amir (2004: p. 43) clarifies today's precarious situation (especially at the peripheries of capitalism) for us:

Democracy is a modern concept in the sense that it defines modernity itself, understood as the adoption of the principle that human beings individually and collectively--that is, socially--are responsible for their history. To be capable of formulating this concept, it is necessary to be liberated from the alienations characteristic of forms of power prior to capitalism, whether they be formulated in religious terms or clothed in other "traditional" forms.

Amin (Ibid. p.47) proceeded further:

This is where we are today. It is a dangerous situation because, with the erosion of the credibility and legitimacy of democratic procedures, it could very well lead to a violent backlash that purely and simply abolishes those procedures altogether in favor of an illusory consensus founded on religion or ethnic chauvinism, for example. In the peripheries of the system, democracy, which is impotent because it is subject to the brutal demands of a savage capitalism, has become a tragic farce, a democracy without value; Mobutu replaced with two hundred Mobutist parties!

In Nigeria, Abacha's reign was a chimeric clone of what Obasanjo started in 1976, what imperialism and military dictatorship husbanded between 1984 and 1998, and

which Obasanjo and the ruling circles of Nigeria (the same people, the same class and the same class interests) returned, much more virulently, to re-tool in 1998 under the same but more muscular and more audacious imperialism. That is the tragedy that the toilers and their allies are called upon to resist. By all means necessary!

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