

Nigeria: T-PAPS March 25-28, 2021.

The Peoples' Alternative Political Summit.

T-PAPS Central Planning Committee Co-Chair's Opening Address delivered by:

Omotoye Olorode.

Distinguished Comrades and Compatriots!

On behalf of the Expanded Planning Committee, the Central Planning Committee, and all the sub-Committees of the Expanded Planning Committee of T-PAPS, I welcome all the political initiatives, all organisations, all coalitions, all political parties, and all our distinguished guests, to this historic Summit.

We are here once again at the threshold of an important possibility of building A NEW NIGERIA with the masses of our people, and, in which all the forces of production, distribution and exchange are mobilised by our people to meet the needs of the labouring people of our country without compromising their future and time-tested solidarity among them.

Precisely because the burden of colonial exploitation and oppression was borne primarily by Nigeria's labouring people (workers, peasants,

women, and the youth), the resistance against colonialism was also led by their various organisations until the 1960 Independence.

For the colonial authorities, granting independence was a strategic retreat compelled by growing resort to wars of independence in certain colonized territories like Algeria. In Nigeria, negotiated independence enabled the retreating colonial authorities to sideline the working people and to foster a neo-colonial ruling class which, as junior partners of the colonial metropolis, continued to exploit Nigeria's resources and people even after Independence.

The hopes of Nigeria's working people and the promise of independence in 1960, the possibilities of economic, social and cultural sovereignty, human dignity and banishment of poverty, have become a mirage for the masses of our people.

The neo-colonial ruling class has constantly diverted the attention of the masses from ruling class crimes of wealth accumulation and abandonment of our people by creating and manipulating ethnic, regional and religious antipathies among the oppressed.

In the last one or two years, the diversions and manipulations have deepened antagonisms and confusion among the masses of the victims of ruling class and imperialist accumulation of wealth. As the few rich loot Nigeria, the poor attack one another and society generally. This situation is what they now call terrorism, banditry; the situation has

multiplied inter-ethnic and inter-community clashes, and herder-farmer violence across Nigeria.

Nigeria's ruling class have remained fully under the control of imperialist looters' (IMF, World Bank, AfDB, IFC, WTO) and their multinational corporations whose agents continue to surface in Nigeria as ministers, technocrats, contactors and consultants to supervise the auctioning of public assets, dismantling of social services, imposition of new and higher taxes (on fuel, electricity, education, VAT, etc.) increased debt burden; killing of local industry (by encouraging imports as with the lowered import duties on used vehicles—the Automotive Industry Bill) and unending Naira devaluation. They are building an archetypal rentier and irresponsible state.

The foregoing captures how the current crisis developed under the supervision of a constantly regrouping and morphing ruling class led some of the time by its armed wing, and at other times by its wing in the civvies, composed of elements of the main ethnic and confessional groups of Nigeria. The ruling class continues to be made up of exactly the same people, their friends and younger clones, especially since the mid-1970s, transiting from the public bureaucracies and the military into board rooms; and when they allow their cash-and-carry elections, they migrate into state and national *gold mines* they call legislatures or assemblies.

Just as overlapping generations of Nigeria's ruling class had struggled to impose, maintain, and continually renovate the strategies of exploitation and impoverisation (SAP, Vision 2020, Vision 2020-20 and, now, the 2017 ERGP), the victims have also always resisted especially since the late 1970s. And we have learned a lot in the process.

So we are here, Compatriots, in one of the most massive, most inclusive, most ideologically homogenous gatherings of patriots in Nigeria's history since the Kings College gathering of 1944!

To be sure, overlapping generations of our forebears have struggled to resist the enslavement, subjugation, divide-and-rule, and exploitation of our peoples (at Opobo, Arochukwu, Bonny, Satiru, Iseyin on the Plateau, in Benin; to mention just a few). For over one-and-a-half centuries or so now, the labour movement generally, peasants, women, and students have resisted exploitation and repression (Aba 1929, General Strikes of 1945, 1965, 1981, June 4 1986 NLC-led mass protests against the killings of ABU Zaria students, the Enugu Miners' Strike of 1949, the Anti-SAP Movement of 1986-1989; the Peasants' Revolt [Agbekoya] of 1969 in Western Region, the Peasants' Protests at Bakolori, the Students' Protests of 1978, 1982, 1986).

We are therefore here, comrades and compatriots, in perhaps one of the most ideologically homogenous, most historically conscious, most patriotic, most generationally variegated gathering Nigerians have ever

seen, as we observed above, since 1944! And beyond these, we claim quite proudly, but with all humility and sense of responsibility, that this is a gathering of Nigerians who have stayed and worked consistently with, and among, the oppressed across the length and breadth of our country.

With the foregoing summary of our understanding of Nigeria's past and the evolution of the current crisis of mass poverty among the teeming majority of Nigerians, and legendary wealth among the ruling class, the patriotic allies of the oppressed have not only always known that **A NEW NIGERIA IS POSSIBLE**; they have always canvassed a program of actualising that possibility.

We are gathered here, comrades, all working people, youths and all patriots, to re-declare the program of a Peoples' Alternative Nigeria, to declare a popular campaign against ruling class program of looting, violence divide-and-rule, parasitism and barbarism.

And we are standing on the broad and patriotic shoulders of Nigeria's exemplars, especially revolutionary socialist fighters and organisers, and other progressives: young and old, women and men, especially in recent times, who had passed on. We remember, among others and in humility, **Michael Imuodu, Gambo Sawaba, Alao Aka-Bashorun, Mkwugo Okoye, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa, Emma Ezeazu, Abdulrahman Black, Chris Abashi, Bamidele Aturu,**

Wahab Goodluck, Chima Ubani, Gani Fawehinmi, Bala Usman, Festus Iyayi, Baguada Kaltho.

Comrades and Compatriots, the Nigerian ruling class have, especially in the last two decades or so, grouped and regrouped, conspiring with international capital to push Nigeria to the current economic and cultural brink that has also begun to threaten the very integrity of our country and the centuries-old solidarity among our peoples.

Let us reiterate that we are here to declare again that A NEW NIGERIA IS POSSIBLE; and to declare the imperative of pursuing and realising that POSSIBILITY!

We are here, today, to pursue the restoration of the sovereignty and the dignity of Nigeria's working masses; to pursue the restoration of the ownership of Nigeria to them!

We are here to pursue the restoration of the strength of the diversity in our country, and of our peoples! We are here to pursue the untethering of the liberating economic, social and cultural powers of solidarity among the dispossessed, impoverished, and humiliated masses of Nigeria.

We are not here to substitute ourselves for the masses and their self-organising power. We are here to pursue solidarity with them and with their organisations!

We thank you all for your attention!

Forward Ever, and Together!

Nigeria on the brink (of disintegration)
Remarks made at the People's Alternative Political
Summit (T-PAPS) Held in Abuja, 25-28 March, 2021
Idowu Awopetu

1. Protocol:

Nigeria in crisis, deep crisis and there appears to be a consensus on that. There is however a disagreement on how to resolve it. There was a lot of promise for Nigeria at independence. Many observers believed that the country would be a major player in the world within 2-3 decades after independence. But it was not to be. That promise died within half a decade after independence.

2. What followed was 13 years of military rule marked by a 3-year civil war and decline in the economic, social and political spheres of our lives. Corruption gradually crept into governance lawlessness and the abuse of power and authority. These vices grew during the military rule (1966-1979) and 1984-1999). Since 1999, we have seen these entrenched in all the institutions of state.

The situation we find ourselves in today is the culmination of the rot that had gone on in the past.

3. Another point I will like to make is that this is not the first crisis the country has faced (the 1963-1964 elections, the military coups particularly Jan and July 1966 coups, the many social and economic, political crises the military rule provoked, many constitutional issues, insurgencies, religious and ethnic crises, etc) What marks this out is that it is deep and affecting all facets of our lives.

It is economic, social, political, constitution, religious, all rolled into one. To solve it requires a leader/leadership that is politically savvy, bold and honest; one that has a deep knowledge and understanding of Nigeria's history. Unfortunately we not blessed with such a leader or leadership, In many ways, the leaders at all levels (LG, State, Federal) have aggravated the crisis.

The constitutional crisis is tricky, where we have unelected leaders, who are popular among the people, challenging the authority of the state.

4. Other features of this crisis, and why it is unique compared to previous ones are that the ruling class is in disarray, there is doubt within the security forces and the collapse of the middle class. Why the collapse of the middle class is ominous for the state is that there is no buffer between the ruling class and the masses.
5. The victims of this crisis are the workers and the working class. They bear the brunt, they always do. And now that every sector of society is affected workers are under siege- their conditions and rights are being violated (Unemployment, Casualization,

refusal to recognize the legality of minimum wage, inflation, de-unionization, lack of access to social services- education, health, clean water, power, etc)

6. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the deep disparities in society-inequality in wealth, wages and rights, Workers are also disadvantaged in the information section. They are fed with ideas of their problems of assault on their conditions and rights and the lack of an authentic organ to articulate their position.
7. To respond to these problems workers need a political party that represents their interests. The party must be mass based.

The question of the relationship between workers and power in a class society is a long standing one. However, recent world history has shown that for workers to free themselves from exploitation by the ruling classes, they need to have political power. Strikes, protests and civil disobedience on their own will not change the economic, social and political situation of workers. Therefore, the means to achieving power by the masses is through a working peoples' party. The working peoples' party will be the **organizer** and the **director** of the struggle for the political, economic, social and cultural freedoms of the people. The party, through its organs ensures that the working class becomes class conscious and in power, directs the policies of the party through systematic planning.

Since 1914, Nigerian working people had agreed that workers will belong and play active roles in the political and economic development of the country. Unfortunately the efforts of generations of labour leaders did not lead to the formation of a strong political party. Efforts in this direction started in the 1930s to 1960s until 1989 when through the active participation of the Nigeria Labour Congress, a working peoples party, which later became Nigeria Labour Party (NLP) in 2006, was formed. However, since its emergence, the party has not met the aspirations of Nigeria's working people.

The decision to form a party should not be based on 2023 or limited by it. The different small left wing parties combined cannot match the electoral power of the bourgeois parties. It is only the unity of the masses under the power of their party that can match their deep pockets.

The establishment of a media house should be considered.

The threat to Nigeria is real. While we are busy organizing for political engagement we must do our best to prevent war mongers from plunging us into another needless war. This is why while mobilizing for the party we must also mobilize against any war.

Time will not Permanently Remain on the Side of the Nigerian Left

I salute you all: Comrades, Compatriots and Friends.

I wish to support this People's Alternative Political Summit concretely with one proposition and three alternative political strategies – all of which are straightforward, none of which is completely new to the Nigerian left and all of which combine to give a revolutionary but none-adventuristic response to the published objective of the meeting.

The proposition is that Nigeria's capitalist ruling class and its state, as presently constituted and structured ideologically and politically cannot halt what now increasingly threatens to become a terminal crisis for the nation.

From this proposition emerge three alternative political strategies for the Nigerian Left at this point in our history: Either we embark on a strategy of assisting or allying with the ruling class to reconstitute and restructure itself ideologically and politically to halt the national crisis; Or we pose an alternative, but clear, concrete, responsible and bold popular-democratic programme of self-liberation, redemption and reconstruction to the working and toiling masses of Nigeria; Or we seek a middle-course between these two strategies.

By “concrete” in relation to a popular-democratic programme I mean one that is not abstract-academic, one that responds to what is burning on the ground in a manner that unites the masses rather than further divides, mystifies or alienates them.

This task is never simple because reality is always complex.

But whatever strategy we choose, we must thereafter allow that strategy to guide the development of our organisational forms, that is, we should now consciously make a small shift, not a leap, from organisation-in-general towards organisation-for-a-strategy, from being a revolutionary-at-large towards being a revolutionary-for-a-defined objective.

I do not intend to sound alarmist, a tendency I deliberately avoid, when I say that time cannot perpetually be on the side of the Nigerian left. But the lesson of history is that if you fail or refuse to seriously engage a problem to which you are seen, or you loudly and, sometimes noisily, claim to have a solution, you risk becoming part of the problem. And the latter will start seeking or attracting other solutions which may sound similar but are dangerously undesirable.

The choice is difficult; but it is squarely before us. However, from the range of serious and dedicated support lined up behind the Forum, I am confident the right choices will be made in the interest of the suffering masses across the length and breadth of this land.

I wish the Political Summit not the impossible, but the best of all possibilities.

Eddie Madunagu

23/3/2021