



# The-PEOPLE

- Mass Organ of the Amilcar Cabral Ideological School [ACIS] - **SPECIAL EDITION : February 2016**

## **JAF on Comrade ESKOR ADIEU Comrade Professor Eskor Toyo**

- A Giant of Working Class Struggle & Icon in ASUU!

22nd February 2016

**The Joint Action Front (JAF)** - a pro-Labour civil society platform of socialist and non-socialist groups focused on the socialist transformation of Nigeria, commiserates with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over the exit on December 7, 2015 of Comrade Professor Eskor Toyo at the age of 86.

**Comrade Eskor** - a distinction student with Grade 1 in Cambridge Examination in 1945, first class Economist and scholar with B.Sc Economics London (1957) and M.Sc. (1971) & Ph.D. (1973) Economics from Central School of Planning and Statistics Poland, astute teacher and uncompromising working class intellectual and organiser; lived an unparalleled and exemplary life of struggle from his teens in the mid-1940s till his last breath. His was a life of irreproachable commitment to Socialism and struggle in the Nigerian Labour movement for the birth of a working class party.

**Comrade Eskor** was an outstanding anti-imperialist, Pan-Africanist, Marxist theoretician and Socialist fighter who started his imprint in the Nigerian university system with his appointment as a Lecturer in University of Maiduguri in 1973 - 77 and then University of Calabar in 1977 till his retirement.

**Since his entry** into the University system, Comrade Eskor was in the forefront of liberation education, in the promotion of academic scholarship, in the defence of autonomy of the university system and its democratic management, and above all, his deep involvement in the struggle of ASUU for adequate funding and proper resourcing of education at all levels. His invaluable

contribution to the working class struggle generally and the academic development specifically, probably informed his enrolment by ASUU as one of the Trustees, a position he held till the end of his life.

**We in JAF** will live to struggle with inspiration and memories of struggle drawn from Comrade Eskor as a shining example of an irreplaceable organiser and fighter in the Nigerian Youth Movement, in the 1950 Strike of the Amalgamated Union of the United African Workers, in the Labour Party of 1950, 64, 89 & 2000, in Socialist conferences and alliances from 1950 till his demise, in the struggle of Labour under the leadership of Comrade M.A.O Imoudu - Labour leader No 1 from 1940s to 77; in the Nigerian Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and the Patrice Lumumba Academy (1960s); in the Anti-Apartheid struggle and Solidarity with the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa; in the principled struggle of ASUU, in the All-Nigeria Socialist Alliance (ANSA) and the birth of the Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN), in the People's Redemption Party (PRP) led by Aminu Kano and later the Imoudu led PRP faction, his oratory, stimulating and liberating teachings and lectures at several fora, his resilience for the emergence of a working class party and the birth of a socialist world order.

Let us live to the true memory of Eskor by dedicating ourselves to the struggle to liberate the oppressed in our country and the whole world.

**Long live Comrade Eskor Toyo, Long live Socialism! Long live ASUU, Long live the Working Class!!**



### **Eskor Toyo: A life of struggle By Owei Lakemfa, 21st January, 2016**

The name, Asuquo Ita may not ring a bell in the country. But, Eskor Toyo does amongst intellectuals, academics, economists, trade unionists, human rights activists, leftists and in university campuses across the country. However, both names refer to the same person. The real name of this revolutionary professor of Economics and moral leader of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is the former, while Eskor Toyo was his nom de plume which stuck and under which he became a professor.

**In colonial and immediate post-colonial Nigeria, it was a crime to be a socialist, read leftist literature or travel to a socialist country.** Nationalist, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, mother of the famous Kuti brothers; Olikoye, Fela and Beko, was denied renewal of her passport by the Tafawa-Balewa government because she travelled to a socialist country. A young, Lasisi Osunde, later, an economist and lecturer like Eskor, and former General Secretary of the Nigeria Labour Congress, was tried by the British colonialists for treason because as a postal worker, he let socialist literature into the country.

Given the level of persecution of socialists in the 1940s to early 60s, some socialists used aliases to beat security and escape persecution. For example, in the early 80s, I read polemical works by two authors, Baba Omojola, and Baba Oluwide not realizing that it was one and the same person. And after I linked both names, I was to be shocked in later years to learn that both were aliases as Baba's real name was Babarinde Adewole Ajibola.

Such was the level of commitment and sacrifice of Nigerian socialist leaders of old; they were ready, like Comrade Ola Oni - whose real surname was Oniororo - to sacrifice family, name, leisure, career and life for the liberation of Nigeria from poverty, backwardness and underdevelopment.

Eskor was a teacher who taught the famous Peoples Advocate, Chief Gani Fawehinmi at

Victory College, Ikare and was a Personnel Manager at Lever Brothers/UAC before plunging into full revolutionary work especially in the trade unions where he was a consummate organizer along with people like Michael Imoudu, Wahab Goodluck, M.E. Kolagbodi and Baba Omojola.

He went for further studies in Eastern Europe and returned home with a doctorate. While being an academic and revolutionary, Eskor participated in partisan national politics, joining the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in the Second Republic in what was called 'Entrism'. This was the term used for revolutionaries who while advocating that the 'decadent capitalist system should be overthrown' enter or join liberal or 'bourgeois' non revolutionary parties. It was in the heat of the debates in the Labour Movement over the appropriateness of 'Entrism' that Eskor in dismissing the arguments of his opponents, was quoted as uttering his popular remark "Eskor shall not pontificate; Eskor shall polemicise!" This was seen as an attempt to dispel an assumed Eskor trait; the tendency to pontificate and make declarations rather than make arguments. But this was not true of Eskor as he was wont to make painstaking arguments and go to great lengths to convince.

One point I noted about him was that in his forceful way of speaking with a ringing voice, he was less lucid and understood than when he wrote. His disdain for the dishonest, the opportunist and labour bureaucracy made him seem intolerant. But it was his nature to be unable to disguise his dislike for people on the Left and the labour leaders who betray the working people.

He worked for the formation of a number of leftist groups and pro-workers parties like the Labour Party, but he was disillusioned by the high level of opportunism in many of these organisations. In my analysis, it was in ASUU he seemed most comfortable; experiencing few disappointments and finding people he could argue and work with. It was mainly, amongst the committed intellectuals he found people he could trust.

To him, ASUU was like a baby to be protected and guided to make contributions for the sustainable political and intellectual development of Nigeria. He did not like ASUU funds being spent except on things that are absolutely essential. This was to the extent that even while on official assignments for the union, he would prefer to travel by road rather than air in order to save money for the union. Dr. Dipo Fashina, a former ASUU President described Eskor as "the ideological, moral and patriotic conscience of ASUU"

Eskor, after one of his extensive road travels that took him to different parts of the country, suffered a stroke. ASUU decided to take care of the needs of a man who had helped to nurture it into maturity and guide it through rough and difficult times especially during the long years of military rule when the union was repeatedly banned.

Eskor set out early in his youth to contribute to an independent, prosperous Nigeria based on egalitarianism and social justice. He struggled for a country that will be a leading light for the rest of Africa. A Nigeria where nobody will go to bed hungry; every child will have a right to education and every citizen, the right to basic needs including a roof over the head.

His dream of a prosperous Nigeria and Africa were not fulfilled before he passed away on December 7, 2015 at 86. But his life is an example of exemplary dedication and patriotism. Those who may snigger that the ideology he dedicated his life to, is outdated which was why the Socialist bloc collapsed, are mistaken. The fractious, confused, unequal and dangerous world we live in today cannot be the alternative. Humanity will need to rise above the prevailing ideas which have produced chaos, terrorism, mass misery, cyclic global financial problems and unimaginable refugee crises, to build an egalitarian world based on freedom, peace and social justice. These are precisely the principles Eskor Toyo lived and died for. These are the reasons why selfless people like him will not die in our hearts.

## WHAT WE (in ACIS) MEAN BY THE PEOPLE!

### Paraphrasing FIDEL CASTRO & FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI as the MIRROR:

When we speak of the PEOPLE we are not talking about those who live in comfort or those who profit from the looting of our society, who glorify the class of looters, who welcome and obey any repressive regime and impunity in government, and those who prostrate before the rulers of the moment because of selfish gains.

When we speak of the PEOPLE we are not talking about those who will say "we no wan die, we no wan wound, we no wan quench, we no wan go; I get one child, Mama dey for house, Papa dey for house, I wan build house, I don build house; We no wan quench, I wan enjoy, We no wan go, So policeman go slap your face, you no go talk; Army man go whip your yansh, u go dey look like donkey! Dem leave Sorrow, Tears and Blood".

When we speak of STRUGGLE and we mention the PEOPLE we mean the working people and the oppressed masses, those to whom everyone makes promises and who are deceived by all.

We mean the PEOPLE who want a better, more dignified and humane society; who are moved by profound commitment to justice, because they have suffered injustice, humiliation and mockery from every regimes – military & civilian.

We mean the PEOPLE who long for true and upright changes in all aspects of their life; PEOPLE who, to attain their FREEDOM, they believe in themselves and are ready to give even the very last breadth they have to bring about the desired humane society".

### THE CHANGE WE SHOULD DESIRE!

- We desire a society that should displace the present unjust order, where the few super-rich reigns in looted wealth, while the majority wallow in sub-human conditions.
- We desire a new society that should guarantee ALL the people the rights and opportunities to meet their NEEDS and DESIRES.
- The change we desire is not just about fulfilment of our material conditions but essentially about building an ethical values that would make the people fearless, just, selfless, contented and dignified.
- Our desired change should prepare us to RESIST all forms of foreign domination and to build friendship with other peoples across the world based on solidarity, mutual respect and humane values.
- We want a new Nigeria and a new Africa whose leadership should not be slave to economic and political dictates of foreign powers.
- We desire a new Nigerian State that shall be driven by collective interests and democratic management of the economy.

### THE PEOPLE TO MAKE THE CHANGE!

Without the people, we cannot attain the change we want. When we speak of the people, whether as Nigerian or as African, we mean:

- "the working population [workers, farmers, professionals, traders, artisans, etc) in the formal & informal sectors who are subjected to indecent work conditions and living,
- the millions of youth without education, jobs, and social security.
- Women, aged, physically challenged and all those who are victims of one form of oppression and the other.

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## DEMOCRACY, HUMANISM AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE:

An Address [extempore parts in italic] by Professor Eskor Toyo at the First Nigeria-South Africa Dialogue, Feb 13, 1999

I suppose with your permission I should make my own opening remark as the chair of this opening session. I feel very much emotionally enthused by the occasion. We are just talking about renaissance and working together. Working together for what? I have been involved in liberation struggle since I was 18 years and I am going to address you as such.

I am here out of respect for the organisers who are untiring champions of democracy and human rights in Nigeria. I am here also in order to greet the people of South Africa who have won a resounding victory for the first stage of their great struggle for freedom, democracy, humanity and equality. An organisation which I started in 1975, namely, the National Committee on Southern Africa (NACSA), was the first Nigerian organisation to launch organised popular solidarity with the people of South Africa and Southern Africa. The activity of this organisation placed the issue of Southern Africa on the shop window of Nigerian politics. This was the reason or one of the reasons for the later sponsoring by the Nigerian Federal Government of a body called National Committee Against Apartheid (NACAAP).

The struggles of the blacks and other non-white people of South Africa are among the most stubborn and the most educative in history. I am pronouncing this with all authority. I have read a lot of history, history of armed struggles. The African National Congress, the Pan African Congress and other liberation movements in South Africa and Southern Africa deserve to be warmly congratulated. It is these leaders that are the real leaders of democracy and human rights today and not self-appointed world-policemen like Bill Clinton and their shadows in Great Britain. I can repeat that 20,000 times because of their arrogance. Millions of dollars and big newspaper rhetoric do not give democracy.

Among the nations of the world, only the socialist states and the revolutionary nations of the Third World, like Cuba and Libya, showed any palpable, firm and consistent solidarity with the masses of South Africa. Today, so-called 'international community' means only the President of the United States with or without imperialist allies in Great Britain. What a shame for those so-called Nigerians who accept this beastly notion of 'international community' which is nothing but imperialist dollar arrogance. Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Imoudu, Obafemi Awolowo, Eyo Ita, Aminu Kano, Abubakar Zukogi, etc. would never, I repeat, never, have accepted this thoroughly colonial version of 'international community'.

The ANC is a selflessly principled movement with leaders long tested in the crucible of unflinching struggle for high principles, Nigerian parties are marriages of convenience

among office seekers to whom self-seeking is the principal interests in politics. The ideology of the ANC is humane; what inspires Nigeria's political faction is the urge to exploit, to get rich quick by any method, to copy Rockefeller rather than emulate Abraham Lincoln, Pandit Nehru, Herbert Macaulay, Aminu Kano or Nelson Mandela. Nigerians should not be deceived, and many of them are not deceived, by a few agents of imperialism strolling in here as so-called 'international observer' to endorse one election as 'free' and 'fair', another as 'unfree' and 'unfair', etc. It is Herbert Macaulay, Eyo Ita, Aminu Kano, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Imoudu, Mbonu Ojike, H.O. Davies, Obafemi Awolowo, Gambo Sawaba, etc., who taught the Nigerian people how to seek democracy and human rights and led them to do so. The Nigerians should listen to their own conscience and use their own day-to-day experiences and observations. Imperialism is imperialism, no matter the changes in its propaganda themes.

Imagine the American President insulting Nelson Mandela and South Africa by taking it upon himself to instruct Mandela on whom to invite to South Africa and whom not to invite! Let everyone tell Bill Clinton and politicians like him everywhere that they are not fit to be clerks in the political office of Nelson Mandela. Not everyone outside the United States of America and Western Europe is Michael Gorbachev or Boris Yeltsin. Flyers of the dollar kite should stop insulting the ANC and the masses of South Africa. I cannot know of any example of selflessness in history that will equal that of Mandela. That is why I asked, working together towards what? Toward high principles or opportunism? I repeat these people (Bill Clinton and his likes) are not fit to be clerks in the political office of Nelson Mandela. I have read the history of the South African people. The only person you can compare with Nelson Mandela is George Washington. I don't play second fiddle to anybody in the world when it comes to this matter. People like Bill Clinton had better take care. I must repeat that if anyone is looking for the meanings of democracy and human rights today he should look for them in the movements led for years by Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro. If anyone is looking for a personal embodiment of democracy and humanism today, it is not in Bill Clinton or anyone like him in Europe that he will find it. He will find it in Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro. We cannot turn away from real living embodiments of the mass struggle for democracy and human rights to fly all sorts of kites with merchant adventurers using the trade mark 'democracy' to advance their dollar empires.

Given the experiences of mankind in the last three centuries, democracy today and in the next century must be seen as going beyond a mere election, however conducted, and the mere presence of a government called 'elected'. Who owns what in the country, who has or lacks money power, who can employ or sack whom, who owns big business and who is unemployed, who owns

big estates and who has little or no land, who owns the press, who can go to the university and who cannot, who can and who cannot make big tides of money flow in an election, who finds it easy to seek redress in court and who does not – all these questions must today be asked and answered before we can pronounce that a regime is or is not a democracy. Regimes that are, in fact, governments by the rich, that is plutocracies, cannot be accepted as democracies whatever misleading noises imperialism makes to whitewash them. The concepts of democracy and human rights must move as mankind gathers experience.

The South African people have barely begun their journey to democracy. Nigeria started the journey, but it was aborted. No matter who governs Nigeria after current military rule, what will happen is not a democracy in view of the heavy handicaps that democracy has in this country, including the self-enriching greed of so-called politicians. If we are lucky we may see progress towards democracy but there will be no automatic democracy given to you on the strength of an election. The other day it was Tofa and Abiola and somebody else, we have to be careful. If Eskor Toyo is too poor to contest presidential election in Nigeria he cannot call what exist in Nigeria a democracy, I worked for democracy all my life. When we were not under millionaire dictatorships was when people like Azikiwe, Awolowo were in politics.

There is need for South Africans and Nigerians to define democracy. Those in Africa who merely echo imperialist notions of 'democracy', 'human rights' and 'international community' are today's Uncle Toms doing a great deal of harm to the continent of Africa. Surely the African people must combat the wave of militarism on the continent, but we must dismiss from our minds the Washington-sponsored notion that the end of military rule and the mere conduct of elections, provided millionaires are the candidates, give us democracy. There may be one or two Nigerians who joined this race out of conscience. But I am talking of the so-called vast majority of this new breed politicians, we know they were mere instruments of fascism.

Uncle Toms parroting the latest cliches of the so-called Washington will help neither the South African nor the Nigerian people. I will like to ask Bill Clinton what is the state of the black man in America? What is the state of the original Indian in that state? Only Eskor Toyo can ask that question. He has to answer those questions before he can go around the world pontificating about democracy and human rights. Since the 1920s the South African masses and the Nigerian masses have been finding their own roads to freedom, independence, democracy, human rights, human dignity and social equality. They have won victories but still have a long way to go. All along they must be wary of the campaigns of imperialism and the treacherous

**- PRELUDE to a TRIBUTE to a Working Class Fighter - Comrade Abiodun Aremu, December 09, 2015 @ 10.00hr**

Adieu Comrade Eskor - outstanding Marxist intellectual, theoretician, and teacher of the highest hue, a Great Pan Africanist, unrepentant socialist advocate and fighter, foremost political economist and first class scholar, revolutionary organiser of the working class and youth, ideologue and longest serving staff-confidant (in collaboration with Comrades M.E. Kolagbodi and Baba Omojola) of Comrade MAO Imoudu; a Giant in the struggle of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and icon of several anti-imperialist and socialist struggle.

As far back as 1992, listening to Comrade Eskor's Testament on Comrade M.E. Kolagbodi, I said to Comrade Benedict Edherue (who we lost 4 years ago) that Comrade Eskor is writing his own tributes because no one would be capable of doing that for him. Comrade Baba Omojola who died Oct 19, 2013 could have done that because, drinking from the intellectual and ideological fountains of both, one knows, that virtually all Comrade Eskor's intellectual contribution to humanity, including his revolutionary writings and letters were deposited by Comrade Eskor himself in Comrade Baba's memory & Library - Frederick Engels Memorial Library.

From Comrade Eskor's Tribute to Kolagbodi, he must have dedicated 70 years of his life consistently to working class struggle.

Comrade Eskor speaks: "It was in 1950 that I first met this friend and comrade to whom all arrogance was out of court. We were then very young. I met him during the great strike of the famous amalgamated Union of the United African Workers (UNAMAG). This was the very first strike in an organised private enterprise in Nigeria, a strike that shook British imperialism at its core. Comrade Kolagbodi was then a very young activist in the Public Works Department Workers' Union and I was then a very young teacher.... The PWD Workers' Union lent its young activist, M.E. Kolagbodi, to the strike secretariat of the UNAMAG, I, a small, fledgling teacher, joined the strike secretariat of the UNAMAG. It is in this way I met M.E. Kolagbodi. From that time to now (1992), we have been friends and comrades. Ours has been the longest, most consistently cordial and most enduring comradeship in the Nigerian labour movement. This is apart from our shared cordial comradeship with the formidable M.A.O Imoudu, which has also lasted from that time to now".

Comrade Eskor's love for humanity and socialism was unparalleled. His passion for a new Nigeria could be seen from his experiences of the decolonisation struggles in the 1940s with the Imoudu led Labour Movement, the Herbert Macaulay led NCNC, and the Zikist Movement with committed revolutionaries such as Raji Abdallah, Mokwugo Okoye, Osita Agwuna, etc

As Comrade Eskor breathed his last in the mid-evening of Monday December 7, 2015, one burden am certain he died with was reflected in his Tribute to Kolagbodi and he would wish someone say such to him at his graveside as he did on August 2, 1992 in Ughoton Delta State to the remains of Kolagbodi: "We who live after him must now bow our heads and reflect on the painful fact that a comrade of this calibre, lived among us and for over forty years dedicated his toil to the total liberation of the working people from exploitation and oppression, yet has passed away without even a working people's party, open or underground, as a hope that this prospect will be realised".

Comrade Eskor will smile to a "New Life" IF & ONLY we REFLECT on his words: "From 1984 I was resolved that a formidable party of the working people, led by the working class, must emerge and face the bourgeoisie in the contest for power and the determination of the destiny of this country".

IT CONTINUES .....

**December 12, 2015 @ 10.45hr**

This is the 2nd and concluding Part of "PRELUDE to a TRIBUTE to COMRADE ESKOR - the Working Class Fighter. The TRIBUTE itself, to be entitled "ESKOR: TRIBUTE TO IDEAS & HISTORY"; shall be published as a monograph later. As noted in the preceding paragraphs, Comrade Eskor has largely written his own Tributes in the battle of ideas, which will endure eternally.

On January 17, 2010, as usual in our mentor-comrade relationship, Comrade Baba "summoned" me: "AAA", you should come around to rendezvous at the Lodge with

Comrade Eskor. And I was there to listen to Comrade Eskor, who shared with us his principal reason for coming to Lagos: to honour Herbert Macaulay and address the world on Nigeria.

On January 19, 2010, Comrade Eskor at the TOMB of Herbert Macaulay at Ikoyi Cemetery (with very few people around) read his written address. The extracts read:

"Real Nigerians, I must at this hour address the country. I have listened in silence for many years to the rot and scandal going on called governance of the country. I am completely fed up. When from about 1930, the patriots fought for the self government on independence of Nigeria, what passes for Nigeria today is a far cry from the kind of country they wanted". First, let me touch on Herbert Macaulay. He began Nigerian nationalism. He got imprisoned in this struggle but remained a defiant patriot. In 1944, he became the President of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which was a united front of all patriotic organisations".

".... The cardinal significance of the reference to Herbert Macaulay and the basic reason why I came to his tomb is that the Nigerian nation exists and he was the originator of the founding of the nation. I have listened to mistaken declarations that a Nigerian nation does not exist because that country Nigeria was an artificial colonial creation. This is a gross error. What Lord Lugard and his colonial successors created was a colony for Britain called Nigeria. It is the Nigerian patriots led by Herbert Macaulay, that converted that colony into a nation. None of the ethnic groups present in Nigeria resisted that conversion".

"If the incurable ethnicist and greedy competitors do not have a nation in Nigeria, the workers and their trade unions, the students at all levels, the peasants who have

never themselves renounced Nigeria as their country, and members of the Nigerian Civil Service, the Nigerian Armed Forces, and all university workers in Nigeria have a country. It does not require any great intelligence to see why only those whose politics is a grabbing game, claim in their cake sharing contest, that there is no nation. In actual fact, people of this kind have no nation of people. Their nation is a well of mineral oil and money from the territory called Nigeria".

ESKOR TOYO - the most engaging intellectual of the working class was his fiery best when at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kolagbodi Memorial Lecture in 1996:

ESKOR REJECTS CAPITALISM: Let me tell you why I reject capitalism. I left school with Cambridge School Certificate Grade 1. I roamed the streets of Lagos for over two years looking for a job and had no job. I reject completely any social system that does not guarantee a job so that at least each citizen has a right to live. A right to live, without a means of life is useless. That is an essential socialist position. Socialism guarantees the right to a job. That is why if Soviet Union collapses, China collapses and all socialist countries collapse, I Eskor Toyo will remain and die as a socialist.

ESKOR ON PARTY: Between 1980 and 1990 I worked myself to complete exhaustion. I actually collapsed. When the doctor revived me, he told me I collapsed out of exhaustion. I am prepared to die provided a party of the working class emerged in Nigeria; a substantial party not two or three people gathering together calling themselves a working class party. I wanted to challenge the Nigerian workers to know whether they wanted power or not or whether they wanted to be ruled by illiterates forever. The workers answered me resoundingly; they said they wanted power.