**A SHORT PROFILE OF THE PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION PARTY (PRP)**

The origin of the People's Redemption Party goes directly back to the establishment of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) on 26th August, 1944. The NCNC was the first national political party in Nigeria. It was the first political party to consciously shift party politics and party political agitation out of Lagos and Calabar. It was also the first party to attempt to mobilize ordinary people in all parts of Nigeria, and to organize and channel their grievances against British colonial domination. The NCNC's appointment of Mallam Sa'ad Zungur in 1948, as its Federal Secretary, to succeed Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and its conscious effort to form a nationally representative executive council, were revolutionary in the context of Nigerian politics. The party quickly consolidated itself as a genuine national political party, and above all challenged the colonial strategy of divide and rule, which insisted on the so-called irreconcilable differences between northerners and southerners in Nigerian politics.

The establishment of the NCNC in 1944 was followed by the General Strike of 1945, which lasted for 44 days and was the first nation-wide strike in Nigerian history. The strike, apart from shaking the very foundation of the colonial economy, exposed the vulnerability of colonialism in the face of a united front by the people of Nigeria. This strike was led by Michael Imodu who was a member of the NCNC's executive council, and who later became the Deputy National President of the Peoples Redemption Party from 1978-1983.

The NCNC led a nation-wide campaign tour in 1946 to mobilize and obtain the mandate of ordinary Nigerians to lead a delegation to London to protest against certain provisions of the Richard's Constitution considered to be obnoxious. The Richard's Constitution had been promulgated without due regard to the opinions of the people of Nigeria. The rallies organized by the NCNC in the course of this campaign were the first of their kind in most parts of Nigeria. During these rallies, Nigerians were seen and heard denouncing the white man, in public, and getting away with it.

Out of these developments emerged the Northern Elements Progressive Association, the NEPA, in Kano, on 1st December, 1946 as the first political party from Northern Nigeria. The party's political outlook was clearly radical. The emergence of a political party with such a radical outlook in Kano whose leaders, like Habib Raji Abddallah, Abubakar Zukogi and Abdurrahman Bida, were openly associated with the Zikist Movement shocked the British.

The British responded to these developments by promulgating the Richards Constitution, with dispatch, in 1947. The most important objective of that constitution was to divide the ranks of Nigeria nationalists, not just along the north-south line, but now into three regions, which were made the new centers of power, under the new dispensation. This was clearly aimed at breaking the ranks of those struggling to consolidate the pan-Nigerian anti-colonial movement.

The British moved swiftly to disband the Northern Elements Progressive Association by dismissing those of its leaders and members who were government workers. But even those of them who were Native Authority employees, and were not therefore affected by General Order 40B, such as Abdurrahman Bida, the President of NEPA, were dismissed. But when most of the NEPA leadership moved to Lagos and joined the ranks of the Zikist Movement, and intensified their nationalist activities, the British moved swiftly to also ban the Zikist Movement in 1950.

The reshaping of the Richards Constitution into the Macpherson Constitution at the Ibadan General Conference in January 1950, was used to launch a vicious attack on the unity of Nigeria. The Northern Region's delegates at the conference, made up almost entirely of members of the emirate aristocracies, including a powerful presence of the emirs, threatened secession on the grounds of religion, tradition and cultural differences between the Northern Region and the rest of Nigeria.

It was in this context that the Northern Elements Progressive Union, the NEPU, emerged, when eight young Nigerians, with Mallam Sa'ad Zungur, the NCNC Federal Secretary, and Mallam Aminu Kano, Headmaster of Maru Teachers College, acting in the background, launched the party, on Tuesday, 8th August, 1950. These historic eight were: Bello Ijumu, Abba Maikwaru, Mudi Sipikin, Magaji Danbatta, Babaliya Manaja, Musa Kaula, Abdulkadir Danjaji and Garba Bida. The party therefore took off as a Northern-based political party, with a deeply Nigerian nationalist outlook. The NEPU's profound commitment to democracy and social progress found its most articulate expression in the **Sawaba Declaration** of 1950, which heralded its birth. The **Sawaba Declaration** asserted that:

"*...at present, the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exist only to conserve the privilege of this selfish minority group. The* ***talakawa*** *must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government both nationally and locally in order that this machinery of government, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of bureaucracy and autocratic privilege...all political parties are but the expression of class interest and as the interest of the* ***talakawa*** *is diametrically opposed to the interest of all sections of the master class, both white and black, therefore the party seeking the emancipation of the* ***talakawa*** *must naturally be hostile to the party of the oppressors. The Northern Elements Progressive Union, therefore, being the only political party of the* ***talakawa*** *enters the field of political action determined to reduce to nonentity any party of hypocrites and traitors to our mother country...”*

This ringing declaration announced the birth of one of the most dedicated movements for national and social liberation in our history, which also planted deep roots within the oppressed masses of this country, wherever it was active. From 1950 to 1966, the leaders, militants and cadres of the NEPU, alongside other patriots and revolutionaries, sacrificed all they had, including their lives, to ensure that our national independence was complete, our unity as Nigerians defended, and our democratic rights asserted.

The onset of the civil war and the attempt to balkanize Nigeria in 1966-70 was a major setback to these efforts. But in various organisations and positions members of the NEPU played a key role in uniting the patriotic forces that came together to save Nigeria from disintegration and continued in the years after the war to struggle to chart an alternative path of genuine national independence and socialism for Nigeria.

The sacrifices of these leaders, militants and cadres of the NEPU have not been in vain, for directly out of the NEPU emerged the People's Redemption Party, which was launched on 28th October, 1978. The twenty one who attended the inaugural meeting of the PRP included S.G. Ikoku. Una Akpan, Dr Kolagbode, Balarabe Musa, A.D. Yahaya and others. In its General Programme the PRP declared that:

*"...in the last analysis, the people are the motive power of history. The people are the salt of the earth ",* and that: *"In order to build an independent, balanced, self-sustained and people-oriented national economy there is the need to eliminate foreign dominance in the economy; there is the need to get rid of productive relations based on exploitation: there is the need to vest the commanding heights of the national economy in the State".*

The struggles of the PRP and its two state governments of Kaduna and Kano over democracy, national unity, taxation, land reform, industrialization, mass literacy, and dependence on the World Bank, which example, continued what started with the early NCNC, the NEPA and the NEPU.

The military coup of December, 1983 did not terminate this political movement which by then had had almost four decades of struggle for independence, unity and democracy, and which had got deep roots in the country. In 1986, the PRP group launched the *Analyst* and *Fitila* monthly magazines, with the declared intention of continuing with the struggle of the NEPU and the PRP by other means under new conditions.

When the ban on politics was lifted in 1989, a party known as the People's Liberation Party was launched on 5th May, 1989, with an explicit commitment to continue with the work of the NEPU and the PRP. Alongside the PLP were other groupings also committed to the continuation of the PRP. This included the NEPU History Committee, under the chairmanship of Alhaji Mudi Sipikin.

All these came together at the launching of the book *The Politics of Mallam Aminu Kano,* on 8th August, 1994, held on that day to mark, the 44th anniversary of the founding of the NEPU. During that occasion it was proposed and resolved with acclamation that whenever the ban on politics is lifted the People's Redemption Party should come out again and continue with the struggle it has inherited from the early NCNC, the NEPA and the NEPU.

With the partial lifting of the ban on political activity, the People's Redemption Party emerged again, under the name NEPU-PRP, and its structures all over the country were revived. A National Organizing Committee with state, local government and ward coordinating committees were established to bring together all those committed to continuing with the ideals of the NEPU and the PRP. The meeting of the National Sub-Committee on Organization at Kaduna, on Monday 24th June, 1996, authorized the decision to seek for the registration of the People's Redemption Party with the National Electoral Commission.

Presently, the PRP is the oldest existing registered political party in Nigeria. There had been attempts to deregister it in the recent past, but these attempts have been resisted, fought and defeated legally. The Party, and its leadership and membership, are determined to continue the struggle until its mission – the socialist reconstruction of the Nigerian Society and State – is attained.