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Partial Victory for Nigerian Anarchists

Bob McGlynn

1993

Anarchist/revolutionary syndicalist prisoners from Nigeria's Awareness League (AL)- Udemba Chuks, Garba Adu, Kingsley Etioni, and James Ndubuisi- won some reprieve January 29th when they were unconditionally released on bail (they must report to the State Security Service each week). Arrested seven months ago during a wave of student/worker unrest protesting IMF/World Bank imposed austerity plans , they were detained under the notorious "Decree no.2"- a catch-all "preventative detention" law.

At a Calabar court hearing on Jan. 25th their lawyer, Ifeanyi Nnajofofor, demanded a grant of bail. On hand were a 100 AL members plus (according to a Feb.1 AL communique) "scores of journalists, activists, members of the Nigerian Bar Association, and interested members of the public." Then on Jan. 29th "we won our greatest legal battle yet ... (when for) the first time we set our eyes on them in seven months. They looked badly emaciated, weak and sick." Setting a legal precedent poking a whole in Decree #2, the judge granted bail, and set the next court appearance for February 18th. Then as the four left court

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“there was an attempt to have our colleagues rearrested outside the premises, but this was stoutly resisted by the crowd.” They were then promptly hospitalized and advised to have a two week stay.

AL has info that the military may try to have the men rearrested once again. This would not be uncommon in Nigeria where the judiciary and the military are constantly at odds.

At press time in our letter from the AL Feb. 28 the 4 have had their bail extended but must report to the State Security Service daily. One of them still remains hospitalised. The AL says “Judgement in the main suit is not expected before the end of April 1993.” The central suit maintains that the State action in dealing with the 4 without charge was illegal and that Decree #2 against them should be dropped.

“We thank you immensley for your solidarity so far in our struggle to free our four colleagues. We can only ask you not to relent in your efforts.”- from AL letter Feb. 28.

The U.S. Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA) and Neither East Nor West- NYC (NENW-NYC) have successfully spearheaded a worldwide campaign for the AL. A week of protests at Nigerian embassies was called for Feb. 22–26 with confirmations of actions by Anarchists in Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Dublin, New York, London, Berlin and Hamburg. (Anarchists were ready to demonstrate in countries like Bulgaria and Norway but lacked Nigerian targets). Petitions and protest letters have been recieved from Argentina, Japan, Turkey, South Korea, Russia, Italy, Brazil, Canada, Estonia, India, Norway, Ireland, Holland, Spain, Poland, U.S., South Africa, Bulgaria (almost 700 names on petitions!), Germany, and the U.K. Anarchist publications worldwide have covered the story. Special thanks to Love and Rage newspaper who mailed an international appeal for AL, and the International Workers Association and Spain’s National Confederation of Labour for sending \$500 each to AL for legal fees.

The question of money is of special priority. Ifeanyi Nnaji-for, the AL’s lawyer, must travel 1000 kilometers from Lagos to Calabar, Nigeria. As of last Dec., the AL had a \$12,000 debt for legal and other fees. Ifeanyi is being extremely helpful and generous according to the AL, but his expenses are obvious and he must be paid. WSA and NENW-NYC know that over \$1000 has been recieved by AL from Anarchists abroad, and since that has helped keep Ifeanyi afloat, it’s no exaggeration to claim that the international campaign has played a part in AL’s bail victory, possibly saving the lives of these men (you don’t get fed in Nigerian jails).