

Holding aloft the banner of the struggle

Awareness League, Sam Mbah

May 2001

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Dear Comrades:

We send our fraternal greetings to you all out there in New York in particular and the United States in general. It has indeed been a long time since the Awareness League last communicated with the WSA. Suffice it to say that the AL holds the WSA in special esteem and will continue to. We continue to look forward to improved relations and a deepening of our ties through future co-operation/collaboration.

The past two years have been a trying period for our organisation. There has been a noticeable fatigue after years of sustained struggle against the military dictatorship in Nigeria. With the advent of civil rule, many in our ranks have tended to lower their guards. The philosophical and ideological underpinning of the struggle for a truly free society remains at best, underdeveloped in these parts. And this coupled with the fact that life here is an everyday struggle, to be able to eke out a living or survive.

AL has entered a new phase in the struggle against the state, its institutions and structures, as the high hopes and expectations of transition to civil rule give way to frustration, cynicism, despair and discontent threatening to boil over. We are gradually and steadily returning to the trenches once again.

[During the month of March], we joined in the mobilisations of all Nigerian workers, activists and left groups against the government's planned deregulation of the downstream sector of the oil industry, an euphemism for steep price increases. The protests [were] building towards a crescendo, with the University Teachers Union (ASUU) embarking on a nationwide strike from 2nd April, leading to a closure of the country's 38 universities. More protests are in the offing, and AL is participating actively in these protests in Enugu, Owerri, Calabar, Umuahia, Lagos and Abuja. The tempo and scope of our struggle are bound to find a new lease in the next couple of months.

2. AFIKPO COMMUNITY RADIO

Afikpo Community Radio, a project undertaken with active support of groups and individuals intake United States and Canada has finally gone on air. The radio project has been stalled all the while by bureaucratic bottlenecks. We hope we have been able to summmont them for good. The radio transmits for between 4 to 6 hours daily, but power supply remains epileptic and highly unreliable We are trying to grapple with programming logistics difficulties. The radio is currently being run with collaboration with the Afikpo Town Union, a community-based organisation. They provide us with cartridges/CDs of local music in addition to other consumables at times diesel for power.

3. THE CHATTANOOGA 3

We ... received with disgust and trepidation the ... travails off Comrades Komboa Ervin, Damon Mc Gee and Ralph P. Mitchell, allowing a protest against the killings of two black men in 1998. Our members are fairly familiar with their case. At a personal level, I cannot forget in a hurry the wonderful reception accorded me in Chattanooga November 1998 by the duo of Lorenzo Komboa and Damon Mc Gee, in the course of my last tour of the United States. We held a solidarity rally

in Enugu on their behalf of Saturday March 10, since we could not meet with the February 24 rally date. Our rally was attended by 19 persons at such short notice.

We condemn and denounce the unjust verdicts and sentencing in the Chattanooga 3 case. We uphold the fundamental right to freedom of the comrades.

4. CONCLUSION

We shall continue to count on your support as we commence the processes of repositioning the Awareness League for the challenges of the post-military era. It promises to be as daunting as the struggle against military rule itself. We look forward to your suggestions in this regard.

Kindest regards.

In solidarity

For Awareness League

SAM MBAH

Enugu, Nigeria.

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This document was sent in May 2001 by the Awareness League to the Workers Solidarity Alliance, the United States of America's section of the IWA, of which the Awareness League are also members. It reports on the League's activities since the end of military rule in mid-1999

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