

COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AFRICA

Newsletter No. 7 Fall 1994

INTRODUCTION

This issue of the CAFA Newsletter deals with two matters that have been of great concern for us during 1994: the Kenyan university teachers' strike and the campaign against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which are now celebrating their fiftieth anniversary.

The Kenyan university teachers began their strike on November 29, 1993. Their immediate demand was that the government register their union, the University Academic Staff Union (UASU). The administration of President Daniel Arap Moi arbitrarily refused to negotiate with the UASU leadership concerning any of their demands including the question of union registration, thus violating the most elementary of workers' rights and academic freedoms. Many strikers were either fired or had their pay withheld. Their leaders were repeatedly arrested by the police. CAFA, along with a number of other human rights organizations, helped organize a campaign in the U.S. to protest the Moi administration's intransigence and to support the UASU both morally and financially. On September 12, 1994, more than nine months after it began, the UASU leadership decided to suspend the strike. Our article on the strike gives a first-hand account of this latest phase of the struggle for academic freedom in Kenya and an assessment of its results.

The other article in this issue is an update on the campaign against the policies of the World Bank and IMF. In our last issue we published "1994: A Call to Action," urging our readers to support the anti-World Bank/IMF mobilization that was beginning to grow in the U.S. Since then, members of CAFA have organized or participated in a number of meetings concerning the World Bank and IMF and has joined the "50 Years are Enough" Campaign.

Our final piece is a modest contribution to the anti-World Bank struggle. It is an open letter asking academics and others interested in Africa to join CAFA in urging the African Studies Association (ASA) not to allow the World Bank to organize panels at its annual meetings as it presently does. For the World Bank uses venues like the ASA meetings not only to propagandize its destructive policies. Its presence in such academic venues allows the WB to present itself as an objective, scholarly institution which it is not. The World Bank is a bank. It is not a university nor is it a scholarly research institute. It does not respect its own staff's freedom of expression and it has been, through its structural adjustment policies, the greatest violator of academic freedom in Africa.

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Kenyan University Teachers' Strike: A Chronology and an Assessment

Introduction

When members of CAFA visited Kenya in late May and early June, the UASU strike was clearly effective on the campus of Nairobi University even after the official opening date of June 6. There were only a few students and staff on campus. On the other campuses there was more university activity, but the staff was under great economic and police pressure. The leadership of UASU was continually harassed and not allowed to meet with the membership. The leaders were frequently arrested and then released without charges being filed against them. It was rumored that even the police had begun to find the orders from above, requiring them to arrest union leaders like Adar on trumped up charges, ludicrous. Membership meetings, including prayer vigils, were continually broken up by the police. This made it difficult for the leadership to have direct consultation with members concerning strategy and tactics. It was obvious that many teachers in Moi and Kenyatta Universities had either returned to teaching or verbally abrogated their compliance with the strike, but there was an atmosphere of intense ambivalence and recrimination within the faculty. The Vice-chancellors of universities outside of Nairobi might have formally won, but CAFA's impression is that they were ruling over a shattered staff.

What follows is a chronology of the latter period of the strike, May 23-September 12, 1994.

Chronology

May 23, 1994: The Vice-chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Francis Gichaga, announced that police posts would be built on the campus. A defunct mortuary on the main campus begun to be converted into a police post the next day. Many university Senate members questioned the wisdom of building such posts in the middle of the teachers' strike. "Some lecturers expressed fears that the Government wanted to sneak repression into the university as in the 1970s and 1980s when lecturers' and students' academic activities were monitored by the Special Branch police." (Daily Nation, 5/24/94).

May 24, 1994: The registrar of the University of Nairobi, Mungai M. Gacuhi, announced the resumption of studies for the 1992/1993 academic year to begin on June 6th, 1994. 3rd year "A" level students were to report to campus on that date, other students would be "informed of the reporting dates in due course."

May 30, 1994: The Vice-chancellor of Moi University, Shelemiah Keya, said that Moi University had "been closing and opening as per our calendar which was approved by the Senate a long time ago." Lecturers countered that some departments had been paralyzed by the strike. Keya demanded the return of some students' examination papers which were in the possession of lecturers that had been sacked or had resigned.

June 4, 1994: The Daily Nation reported that many faculty members who had not overtly joined the strike were merely making "technical appearances" in order to avoid being suspended and losing their salaries. The result was that many students may have "passed" without going through the prescribed syllabus. The medical school of the University of Nairobi had canceled the entire semester on this ground. The strike at Moi University had largely been broken through a combination of sacking six strikers and withholding the salaries of about 80 of a teaching staff of 200. But the result has been many resignations and massive demoralization.

June 6, 1994: Only 200 of the 750 third and fifth year students who were called back to the University of Nairobi campus returned due to the continued strike of lecturers. The UASU leadership had agreed to end the strike if the government and university administration agreed to talk with them and if sacked strikers were reinstated. The government refused any conditionalities.

June 16, 1994: The police in riot gear were called to Moi University because of demonstrations of students who were demanding to obtain their results of the previous academic year and that the hostels be opened for them. An UASU official addressed the students declaring that it was unethical for the university to subject the students to unqualified lecturers. The students asked the university to enter into dialogue with the lecturers so that the teaching crisis can be resolved.

June 30, 1994: Three top officials of UASU--Adar, Onyango and Maranga--were again arrested by police, as they were meeting with colleagues at the Senior Common Room at the University of Nairobi's main campus. They were released in the following days.

July 1994: The U.S. Congress passed legislation that requires U.S. nominated directors on international or interregional banks like the World Bank or the IMF "to use their voice and vote" against loans for governments that violate "workers rights" including the refusal to recognize unions.

Late May-early September 1994: New strikes were called which the government also tried to stonewall, including a strike by the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Union and another by the locomotive crews of the national railroad system.

The Moi government renegotiated Kenya's status with the IMF and World Bank, and began to get new loans approved during this period.

September 12, 1994: The University of Nairobi reopened and the UASU leadership told the government that they would suspend the strike for the semester in order to give it time to reconsider its refusal to register the union. Thus, the strike is not over but only temporarily suspended. The decision to call off the strike temporarily is a tactical retreat that should enable the UASU members to assess their course of action and in particular evaluate what tactics can be implemented to circumvent the harsh way in which the government has responded to their demands.

Conclusion

Whatever the results of UASU's evaluation of the particular tactical steps made during the strike, it is already clear that the strike was a victory for the teachers on more than one level. First, the strike lasted nine months, demonstrating an unprecedented level of cohesion and determination among teachers. The length of the strike is particularly noteworthy considering the difficulties the teachers encountered--many were without pay for most of the duration of the strike, many were evicted from their homes and all, particularly the union leaders, faced a constant harassment by the government, which ranged from the formation of a rival association to repeated arrests and the implementation of measures intended to prevent communication among the strikers.

Further, the strike was a major, eye-opening lesson on the democratization process and the position of donor agencies and foreign governments on this account. Despite the seeming support on the side of the U.S. and other foreign governments for the democratization process, the foreign embassies did not support the strike, clearly because the teachers raised issues that went beyond the question of formal democracy.

At the center of the strikers' demands were, in fact, issues that called in question the role of the International Monetary Fund's and the World Bank's Structural Adjustment program in the shaping of Kenya's (and generally Africa's) education system. In addition

The U.S. Campaign Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

to demanding the registration of the teachers' union--a very legitimate demand which should have called for the staunch support of all the so-called friends of democracy--the Kenyan teachers placed in the forefront of their agenda questions that go to the core of the IMF, World Bank and USAID plans for Africa. For example, questions relating to IMF conditionalities, access to resources, and the academic work environment. In particular, they exposed the dismal conditions in which they are forced to work and the dramatic erosion of the educational system in the wake of the cuts to education that the World Bank has imposed on the Kenyan government as well as all the governments of the other debtor nations. It has also denounced the introduction of student fees--the academic equivalent of the much hailed "users fees"--on which the World Bank wants to build the future of education in Africa, but which teachers and students alike see as the death knell of higher education for the majority.

In challenging foreign agencies and foreign plans for education in Kenya, the teachers have joined hands with the doctors who, during the summer, went on strike pursuing similar objectives: the registration of their union, refusal to comply with a work environment that prevents them from carrying on their work and fulfilling their duty to the Kenyan people. But, as in the case of the doctors in the public hospitals, the teachers' efforts have failed to get any significant support from the foreign community. In this way, the strike has served to make evident in the eyes of Kenyans the hypocrisy of the "donors" when it comes to deciding between economic and political reform. It has also been a lesson on the substance of true democracy, thus clearing the smoke that has been raised on this issue during recent years and recent elections.

The suspension of the strike will certainly call for much rethinking as to the strategies to be pursued and in particular how to guarantee the communication between leadership and membership--one of the major difficulties the strikers have met. For the harassment to which the union leaders were particularly subjected to made it often impossible for them to consult with their members and have the type of feedback which is essential to the success of a strike.

The strike's suspension also poses serious issues for organizations like CAFA. How can CAFA be more effective in supporting African teachers' strikes in the future? Surely, organizing letter-writing and petition drives directed against repressive African governments and gathering material support for the strikers continue to be necessary steps. But we also need to act on the "home"--U.S.--front, since the World Bank and the IMF are the chief culprits in this situation and they are not in Africa at all. Their headquarters are located in downtown Washington DC and they are supported by the U.S. government. But they appear to be invulnerable to direct pressure from US-based groups like CAFA. However, an important development in the context occurred in July 199, the U.S. Congress approved Amendment 91 of the 1994 "Foreign Aid" Appropriations Bill. This legislation requires that "the Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the U.S. executive director of [the World Bank and IMF] to use their voice and vote to urge (1) the adoption of policies to encourage borrowing countries to guarantee internationally recognized worker rights and to include the status of such rights as an integral part of policy dialogue with each country, and (2) establishment of procedures to screen programs for negative impact on these rights." An annual report on the extent to which each borrowing country guarantees worker rights is also required by the Congress.

How seriously will this amendment be taken remains to be seen. But it certainly gives organizations like CAFA a direct domestic approach to the World Bank and IMF. The Kenyan university teachers' strike provides an application of this law. For at the very moment the Kenyan government chose to reopen its negotiations with the World Bank and IMF, the Moi administration was arresting the UASU leadership and giving the Vice-chancellors of the universities the green light to intimidate the striking faculty. Surely this constitutes a violation of "internationally recognized worker rights" by a government which borrowed from the WB and IMF and would certainly warrant action by the U.S. executive director in these banks. CAFA will explore such an approach in the coming months.

The previous issue of the CAFA Newsletter ended with "1994: A Call to Action." In that Call we stated that 1994, the fiftieth anniversary of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, should be a special year for us as well, one in which, together with other organizations, we explore ways of bringing pressure on the World Bank and IMF, so that they no longer impose on African countries "adjustments" that benefit a few investors and developers but are a death sentence for those to whom they are administered, including the African university system. In this article we will sketch the development of the "50 Years is Enough" Campaign--the main U.S. coalition directed against WB and IMF policies--and explain why CAFA has joined it.

Although unacknowledged by the US media an anti-World Bank and IMF movement has for years been growing world-wide. Uprisings against unemployment, currency devaluations, and the removal of subsidies for public transport and education, due to Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank and IMF, have become daily events in countries as diverse as Nigeria, Venezuela, Algeria, Bangladesh and Mexico throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1994, the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas, the anti-SAP riots in Northern Argentina and the clashes between police and peasants, protesting the foreign takeover of their seeds under the new SAP rules on "intellectual property," taking place in India are just some of the more notable, and quite self-conscious struggles in the movement against the WB and IMF.

This movement had no U.S. component until recently. The debates around NAFTA and GATT, as well as immigration, brought the impact of SAPs in the Third World and former communist countries into the center of public debate. The increased notoriety of the WB and IMF coincided with their fiftieth anniversary and the inauguration of the World Trade Organization. This conjuncture made it possible to launch a coalition of dozens of environment, human rights, religious, labor and student groups under the rubric of the "50 Years is Enough" Campaign. This campaign is putting forth a large agenda which includes the following demands:

**A halt to WB and IMF SAPs as currently constituted so as to limit further damage to poor and working people and the environment.*

**The immediate cancellation of 100 percent of the outstanding debt owed the WB and IMF by the Severely Indebted Low-Income Countries and 50 per cent of that owed by Severely Indebted Lower-Middle Income Countries.*

**The denial of future capital requests for the WB and the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF).*

Ways to Help CAFA

- *Become a member or a sponsor (membership is \$25 a year);**
- *Establish a chapter of CAFA at your institution;**
- *Contribute to the CAFA Newsletter;**
- *Gather, circulate, and publish relevant information in academic and non-academic journals, newsletters, and student papers;**
- *Help make CAFA's issues visible at conferences and meetings.**

If successful the "50 Years is Enough" Campaign would lead to the total cancellation of the African debt (since most African countries are categorized as "Low-Income") and the end of SAPs in Africa while seriously hampering the World Bank's and IMF's capacity to efficiently plan the recolonization of Africa. Since these results are central to the preservation and development of academic freedom in Africa as we see it, CAFA has joined this campaign.

Aside from a number of spectacular actions (like the draping of the new World Bank headquarters building with a giant "Bankenstein" banner), the campaign has been engaged in informational and lobbying work. It has been instrumental in significantly reducing the U.S. funding of the World Bank and of the IMF's ESAF and reducing the World Bank's and IMF's freedom of motion. For example, Congress allocated only \$25 million of the \$100 million the Clinton administration requested for ESAF, while it made the release of new funds to the World Bank contingent on the U.S. Treasury certifying that the Bank has improved its implementation of resettlement policies and disclosure procedures. Along with the "worker rights" restrictions mentioned in the previous article, these are small but significant steps in the struggle against SAPs, the World Bank and the IMF.

For more information about the "50 Years is Enough" Campaign contact the Campaign's Media Office: 10025 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 300, Washington DC 20005 USA. Tel: 202 879-3187, Fax: 202 879-3186, E-mail: wb50years@igc.apc.org

A good source of information about the WB and IMF is BankCheck Quarterly, c/o International Rivers Network, 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94703. Tel: 510 848-1155, Fax: 510 848-1008, Econet: irn@igc.apc.org

What Does CAFA Stand For?

The Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) consists of people teaching and studying in North America who are concerned with the increasing violations of academic freedom that are taking place in African universities and who believe that it is crucial that we support the struggle of our African colleagues are conducting to preserve their rights.

CAFA's objectives include:

- *informing our colleagues about the current situation of academic freedom on African campuses;**
- *setting up an urgent action network to respond promptly to emergency situations;**
- *mobilizing our unions and other academic organization so that we can put pressure on African academic authorities and governments;**
- *organize protests against agencies in North America like the World Bank and IMF that are implicated in the violation of academic freedom in Africa;**
- *organizing delegations that will make direct contact with teachers and students and their organizations in Africa.**

An Open Letter to All Involved in African Studies

Dear colleagues,

Join with us in urging the African Studies Association (ASA) to not allow the World Bank to participate in its annual meetings. The World Bank is becoming a substantial presence at the ASA gatherings. For example, in the 37th Annual Meeting of the ASA to be held in Toronto in November 1994, there are three panels chaired and staffed by World Bank employees. These panels give the World Bank the false appearance of being an objective, scholarly organization. The ASA should refuse to provide a stage for this charade. The following are the reasons why this we think this initiative is appropriate:

(1) The World Bank is a bank: it is a financial institution and not an academic organization. The World Bank's ability to finance or defund academic projects, and to purchase the services of academicians does not give it academic status.

(2) The research of many Africanists and other social scientists has shown beyond a doubt that the World Bank is responsible for the untold suffering of millions of people on this planet. From Africa to Asia to South America, the vast majority see in the World Bank and its allied organizations, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund, the powers that are condemning them to the loss of everything they have. The World Bank is guilty of forced resettlement and inhuman Structural Adjustment Programs whose only purpose is to uproot people from the land and force them to become cheap or even slave labor.

(3) The World Bank is responsible for the destruction of the educational systems in most countries of Africa, South America and Asia. Thousands of our colleagues worldwide have been forced to leave their countries and become permanent exiles because they resisted the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programs devised and administered by the Bank. Others have had to leave their teaching and research, because they could not survive on the starvation wages the Bank prescribed. Even more thousands of students have been pushed out of the universities because of "cost sharing" plans demanded by the World Bank.

Considering this record, we should not make ourselves accomplices of these policies by accepting the presence of the Bank at this and future ASA meetings. Let us not be discouraged by the power of the Bank. It controls immense resources, but everywhere people are mobilizing against it, in the United States as well. Presently, the Rainforest Action Network, the Fifty Years is Enough Campaign, Oxfam among other organizations are making it clear that they consider the World Bank responsible for the growing planetary misery. Let us support their effort by demanding a World Bank-free ASA.

Please sign the accompanying petition and return it to either Silvia Federici or George Caffentzis, coordinators of CAFA, and/or write a protest letter to the ASA and send a copy to CAFA. Do ask your colleagues who are academics and/or are involved in African studies or affairs to sign the petition as well.

Yours,

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COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN AFRICA

Petition

We, the undersigned, urge the Board of Directors of the African Studies Association (ASA) to review its policy which allows the World Bank to hold panels at the ASA's annual meetings. The World Bank is a bank; it is neither a scholarly nor an educational institution. It has been especially responsible for the degradation of the university system in Africa. Therefore it is neither academically nor morally qualified to participate at the ASA. Please send signed petitions to the coordinators of the Committee for Academic Freedom at one of the following addresses. They will send the signed petitions to ASA's Board of Directors. CAFA coordinators' addresses are:

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