478

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Democratic Anti-Militarist Coalition — Nigeria

EDITORIALS

Call For Redoubled Sanctions

"I don't think we've come to full grips with the degree and extent of repression there. The daily arrests and disappearing of opposition people in Nigeria is rampant. They're just eliminating anybody who disagrees."

Lloyd Axworthy,
Canadian Foreign Minister

In November it will be three years since Sanni Abacha seized power in Nigeria for himself [previously, he had helped seize power for other military dictators before him]. On the face of it, Abacha seems to have consolidated his grip on power and he seems willing and able to go the whole way to maintain that grip — turning Nigeria into a vast prison for its populace or, a charnelhouse. The usually ebullient and robustly independent Nigerian press seems cowed. Many of the most prominent dissidents are either in Abacha's prison dungeons, or they've been hounded into exile, or they are in hiding — or they've been simply "wasted". Moreover, Abacha has even closed in on his own base within the armed forces as he has implemented successive waves of purges and retirements and, most ominously, sent previously iconic retired military strongmen like Generals Obasanjo and Yar'Adua to long prison terms for trumped-up charges of coup plots against him. Amid the ever-widening circle of internal and external opposition to his regime, Abacha has sought to project an image of utter and unremitting ruthlessness and inflexibility. Nigeria now seems "pacified" by this diminutive megalomaniac behind the ubiquitous, signifying dark glasses.

But this is only one side of the unfolding scenario of the fate of Nigeria and Nigerians under this dictator. Let all Nigerians and our foreign friends, and lovers of freedom and justice everywhere, note the equally determined, uncompromising action of those who have risen up against this monstrous regime, which includes Nigerians, other Africans and prominent individuals and organisations in the international community. Thanks to the actions and words of this coalition of forces of [illegible]cy, the Abacha junta is in fact far from secure [illegible]in power. Indeed, every week, every month that [illegible]he desperation, insecurity, ineptitude and mediocrity of this regime, some of which we highlight in this maiden issue of this publication. Thus we now have the paradox that while the Abacha dictatorship is definitely the most brutal, repressive and corrupt of the anti-people military rule that Nigeria has had in its postindependence history, it has also inspired action and reflection of a very high order against military dictatorship and militarism which we have seldom seen in West Africa, the historical "coup belt" of postcolonial Africa. In other words, the Abacha dictatorship, in just under three years, has fostered what Nigeria's military rulers before him could not generate: the revelation of the total bankruptcy of military dictatorship and the terminal nature of the crisis which now engulfs it. And this is due largely to the determined, courageous and principled opposition of all those individuals and organisations, Nigerian and non-Nigerian, who have said No! to the Abacha dictatorship in particular, and to military and civilian dictatorship more generally. We salute you all, and we urge a redoubling of actions against the junta. Thanks to your actions and efforts, the junta is finding its aspirations either to perpetuate itself indefinitely, or to prolong military rule indirectly by replacing itself with a weak, compromised and mediocre civilian regime, more and more costly, illusory and unrealisable.

In This Issue:

The June 12 Mandate: 2 "Northern" Views;
African Americans and Abacha's Nigeria;
Nigeria's Human Rights Hell, 1995
Poems

CBS
3/885