

# AFRICA NEWS

## A Weekly Digest Of African Affairs

### NIGERIA

#### Shagari Faces Labor Unrest

[AN] A tenuous compromise last April between Nigeria's political and labor leaders forestalled the threat of a crippling nation-wide strike, but tensions have remained high.

Labor leaders had presented an ultimatum to Federal and State governments, which expired March 31. Although the general strike was averted, the atmosphere of uncertainty created by the threat has remained. Nigerians are sensitive about the failures of previous civilian governments, and any actions perceived as jeopardizing stability easily cause apprehension.

"The politicians are now frightened that the labor movement could undermine their authority," notes Umoh James Umoh in *African Business*.

The labor demands were presented earlier this year by the Nigeria Labour Congress, representing 42 industrial unions with organized membership of about three million workers. The NLC proposals included demands that the minimum wage be raised to N300 (\$180) per month — a level that NLC President Hassan Adebayo Sumonu claims nonetheless would leave many Nigerians living at the poverty level — and that housing and transportation supplements be restored, along with other benefits.

The concession to NLC demands was a temporary one, in the unions' view. Shagari fulfilled an electoral promise to increase the minimum wage to N100 (\$36), and agreed to set up a tripartite committee of government, industry and labor representatives to consider a larger increase. He also gave in to labor on some of the benefits issues, promising that housing and transport costs will be underwritten by supplementary payments on a sliding scale. And, in a further liberalization of the wage-freeze policy, limited collective bargaining will be restored, with ceilings predetermined for wages and benefits.

Worker pressure for increased wages and benefits had been expected. Nigerian workers have been held to a pay freeze since 1976, while inflation, slowed to a current estimated twelve per cent from a raging 34% prior to 1978, viciously undercut buying power.

Most of Nigeria's workers have been paid the N60 per month minimum, although it has been the costs of basic necessities like food, clothing and shelter that have risen most. One recent visitor reports that, while most Nigerians are floundering, some businessmen routinely spend N200 (\$120) or more on weekday lunches.

Labor leaders, however, are not only pressing for greater benefits, but criticizing the very founda-

tions of the Nigerian economy, and it is this that politicians find disquieting. The "Worker's Charter of Demands" released by the NLC in February, for example, rejects the "indigenization" mandated by the Enterprises Promotion Decree — under which at least sixty per cent of all companies operating in the country be owned by citizens — as only ensuring transfer of wealth from expatriate exploiters to a Nigerian ruling class. The Charter then calls for "fundamental structural changes within the national economy with a view to establishing... the liberation of the workers and the broad masses from conditions of exploitation, misery and poverty."

NLC President Sumonu reiterated the ideas of the Charter in his May Day speech, emphasizing that "workers will not achieve anything except through struggle, unity and solidarity."

"In the final end of the struggle," Sumonu concluded, "there should be no poverty because there will be no capitalism."

Such militance is incompatible with the conservative perspective of the ruling National Party of Nigeria. President Shagari's reserved style of leadership fits the party well, and he has remained true to his "minimal government" concept, changing civilian government policies little from those of the military regime that handed over power last October.

The president's 1980 budget follows this precedent. Few new expenditures were authorized, with ongoing projects or those furthering current investments receiving most of the funding.

Shagari has announced, however, some new programs aimed at curbing housing and food costs. A new National Council on Housing has been set up to oversee construction of low cost homes for workers. And, with much fanfare, the president unveiled a "Green Revolution" program targeting food self-sufficiency as a goal — replacing "Operation Feed the Nation" launched by the Obasanjo military government. Some of the measures to be included are aimed at easing loan arrangements for agriculture and making Nigerian acreage more favorable for multinational agribusiness.

Shagari, a farmer himself at one time, has also spoken of the critical need to make rural life more attractive in order to keep Nigeria's population "down on the farm" — and to entice families back to the farms from the towns.

In an 'urban drift' paralleling worldwide trends, half of Nigeria's population has moved from rural areas to cities since the early 1970s. People arrive in the town seeking white collar or other employment opportunities, along with electricity, good homes,

schools and roads. Instead they often find unemployment, high living costs, overcrowded conditions and — increasingly — crime.

Violent crime and armed robbery, spreading from the cities to rural areas as contact increases between them, has been called "Nigeria's most pressing problem," by *West Africa* magazine. A recent report by a BBC correspondent described the capital, Lagos, as "suffering from a nearly total breakdown of law and order."

Economic and political injustice is the root of armed robbery," wrote Aaron Gana in *West Africa* last January. He and other commentators coincide with labor leaders in their analysis of Nigeria's troubles, often condemning the modified capitalism trusted by many of Nigeria's political and business leaders.

government. Many religious organizations around the world have denounced South Africa's racial policies. In the U.S. two traditionally conservative denominations with historical involvements in southern Africa are reconsidering their policies:

In a meeting last month, the General Synod, the governing body of the Reformed Church in America, overwhelmingly approved resolutions calling for withdrawal of investments in banks and corporations doing business with South Africa. In addition, the church leaders decided in favor of financial support for the programs in health, education and welfare as well as for the diplomatic activities of the South African liberation movements recognized by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations.

### ZIMBABWE

#### Mounting Tension

[AN] Prime Minister Robert Mugabe met last week with Minister of Home Affairs Joshua Nkomo and former Prime Minister Ian Smith in an effort to defuse growing tensions which increasingly threaten the future of the new country. But even while the meeting took place, fighting broke out between Nkomo and Mugabe partisans in Salisbury, the capital.

The clash took place when several hundred Nkomo supporters demonstrated outside the house of Finance Minister



Cummings and Reagan

Ronald Reagan raises hands with Jim Cummings, president of the National Black Republican Council, during a reception with the group last Tuesday. UPI Photo

Enos Nkala, who the previous weekend had delivered a stinging denunciation of Nkomo's party at a meeting in Bulawayo. Nkala, who does not have a reputation for tact, accused Nkomo of not supporting the coalition government, called for a one-party state based on Mugabe's ZANU, and announced, "If I remain in the government, I will crush Joshua Nkomo."

Nkomo had earlier criticized the government for failure to include him in the delegation to the Organization of African Unity summit, and he charged that important decisions were being made in the ZANU central com-

### Duke News Service Wins Award

The Duke University News Service has won a national award from the

Committee instead of by the coalition government Cabinet. Many of Zimbabwe's whites, for their part, are reported upset by the deteriorating relations between Zimbabwe and South Africa. At the OAU summit, Mugabe announced that diplomatic relations with Pretoria would be cut off, and last week South Africa withdrew its diplomats from Salisbury.

Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, a Washington-based organization whose membership includes educational institutions from throughout the country.

The award, a Citation Award, was presented in recognition of the overall quality of news bureau programs, with special emphasis on non-traditional methods.

Duke was one of eight colleges and universities nationally to be honored

this year for its overall program.

The program included news releases, faculty news-source lists, joint sponsorship with UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University of an economics briefing for newsmen, sponsorship of a tour by newsmen and scientists of trouble spots on the N.C. coast and special handling of a major press conference on the finding of a long-lost Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece

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