

## The man goes hungry in Berlin

In early July 2007 we meet with his newest publisher, Thomas Reche, who for some time had insisted on doing a bibliophile version of Wole's long-poem OGUN ABIBIMAN of just 400 copies. With us the usual crowd of Kongi-fans in a very pleasant Café in the posh new Berlin. Thomas puts a big carton on the Café table, explaining that the bibliophile edition has not been finished after all. All he has are the big-format print-outs on expensive, hand-drawn paper, which still have to be cut, but would Wole 'please sign with a pencil, and with a pencil only, on the appropriate last page.' And that 400 hundred times, please.

Thomas takes those expensive pages with illustrations out of a large box with gloves and hands those pages one by one to Wole, whereas I am asked to, please, sharpen the pencil whenever it is 'a bit tired'.

And what would Wole like to drink and eat? As usual in an Italian place Wole's choice is any easy one: he goes for the best ROSSO and for seasoned Pasta. Wole keeps signing in his usual 'swingy' style, we engage in a 'conversation animée', and every 10 minutes or so I have to sharpen his pencil. And while Wole is busy with what he will later call his 'signa-torture' he keeps sipping his wine, until that torture is finally over.

After about 90 minutes Wole has 'done his job', it is almost time for him to rush to Tegel airport and fly to his next engagement. He looks around and sees that we have all had our fill, which makes him *explode* in his usual fashion:

"May I know what kind of German politeness this is now? You all have had your wine and your fill, and me, the only who was working all that time, I have NOT had s single bite. Buggers

**YOU all. May your German Gods punish you for that!”**

**True, the lady who had served us all had been very observing: she had seen ‘the man’ working and so had NOT given him the food he had earlier ordered, in fact, had NOT given him a single bite!**

**But then Thomas, who hails from Germany’s ‘wurst belt’ near the wurst capital Nuremberg, promised: “Next time when you come to my place, I promise you not just six but a full dozen of those famous Nürnberger Würstchen!”**

**I’m am sure that the Berlin incident – “those Germans made me work and left me hungry” – is one that Wole will be telling again when he is good company, of excellent Italian Ross included.**