

## Next German rally will have to be 'on a working day'

# PROTEST FROM HEART OF SOCIETY



Two dancing policewomen from Brandenburg, east Germany, take part in last Saturday's protest



Last Saturday's march against cuts in Germany

**A MASSIVE demonstration of 350,000 German trades unionists filled Bonn to bursting last Saturday in a national protest action against government spending cuts.**

Eighty-two special trains, 5,400 coaches, a Rhine cruise ship and a posse of 600 motorcyclists brought the demonstrators from every corner of

BY BOB ARCHER

Germany, east and west. The Bonn police praised the 'Prussian' organisational talent of the operation.

The DGB union confederation for the first time worked together with the white-collar union DAG and with the public support of the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

*Die Welt* newspaper estimates the unions spent up to 12 million marks (almost £4m) organising the demonstration.

Eight feeder marches brought the demonstrators from different parts of Bonn to the rally in the Hofgarten outside Marx's old university.

Thousands never got near the Hofgarten, and had to watch the speakers projected onto giant TV screens.

White collar union leader Roland Issen accused the government of providing jobs and prosperity only for those who are already rich.

'Profits are growing and it is keeping the rich in work counting their money', he added, saying that the government was 'ruthlessly beating up the weakest in society'.

He said the main threat to Germany's future as a business base came from the federal government.

Irmgard Jalowy of the Council of German Women accused the government of being 'anti-woman'.

Although the mood of the rally was mainly relaxed, there were angry whistles for DGB leader Dieter Schulte. He attacked the government's £30 billion cuts package as a 'catalogue of cruelty', but then most of the people there knew that already.

He only got applause when he attacked capitalists for damaging the economy. He mentioned by name the failed property tycoon Schneider, the chairman of the Mercedes-Benz board Reuter and the head of the bankrupt Vulkan shipyard, Hennemann.

The several hundred activ-

ists massed in front of the platform responded much more readily to Sonja Riedemann, a young student at Bochum University.

She called for 'resistance from below and unrest throughout the country; opposition, not partnership. The cuts package must fall. And the next step is that this Chancellor [Kohl] must go.'

But although the mood of most demonstrators is anger against the cuts and real fear of unemployment, the feelings are not yet crystallised into a specific series of steps.

Indeed, there are some signs that the national demonstration was hastily organised by union leaders to head off support for a rally called by a left-alternative

fanie Lang from Stralsund in the East 'wanted to do her bit' even though she is not in a union.

'It's like a happening', she told journalists, adding she would have been happier 'if everybody in Bonn has been brought out of their houses to sit here too.'

She had 'the still rather unclear feeling' (said the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*) 'that she wanted to do something politically'. The demonstration, she said 'is only my first step'.

Women were very prominent in the demonstration. Hildegard Raab from Aschaffenburg said: 'I didn't want to feel later on that I'd done nothing about it.'

She was furious about a CDU politician, Wolfgang



SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine on the prowl

'alliance for a march against the cuts'.

Union leaders like Horst Schmitthenner of the IG Metall all worked might and main to stop a 'revolutionary bloc' from participating in the march.

SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine did not speak at the rally, but captured the atmosphere rather well in a comment to the press that it was a 'protest from the heart of society'.

But despite a sometimes festive atmosphere, this is a movement which could well go beyond the limits which Lafontaine and the union leaders are trying to impose on it.

Demonstrators like 30-year-old social worker Ste-

Schaeuble, who had said he refused to 'give way to pressure from the streets'.

'We're not street people', said Hildegard, who works for a car delivery business and is a member of IG Metall.

'I don't want to see my children begging for jobs from country to country', she added.

Later this month the federal parliament, the Bundestag, is to take steps to stop opposition to the cuts by the Upper House made up of regional political leaders.

Two young postal workers from the Ruhr leaving last Saturday's rally are hoping for a climb-down. A more realistic demonstrator from Berlin told journalists the next rally would have to be 'on a working day'.

## International Trade Unionist Bulletin

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## Down with casualisation!

**Victory to the sacked Liverpool dockers!**

**Victory to the Hillingdon hospital workers!**

Conference: Saturday 22 June, 11am-5pm, £2 (£1 unwaged)

International Students House, 229 Great Portland St.

**Some Russian lessons**

**PERHAPS** the most remarkable thing about the Russian election result was the size of the vote for Gennady Zyuganov, candidate of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. With 32 per cent of the vote he came within less than 3 per cent of the vote of President Boris Yeltsin.

This despite the fact that Yeltsin and his camp had shamelessly used their near-monopoly of the media and other resources of the state to prosecute their cause, just as Yeltsin's acceptance of a 'cease fire' in Chechnya as the election approached was the shameless act of a reactionary vote-winning demagogue.

Millions of people, reportedly among Russia's poorest, voted for Zyuganov as the only means they saw at this stage of registering their opposition to the re-introduction of 'the market' (a euphemism for capitalism) into Russia.

They know from bitter experience that all the promises that have been made by Yeltsin and others about the supposed benefits that this 'market' would bring have turned out to be the cruellest deception.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MEANWHILE** those who have done best out of the attempted capitalist restriction — businessmen, speculators and open criminals — together with millions of others who have the bitterest memories of Stalinism, gave their support to Tsar Boris. That is why Yeltsin's backing came from the oil-rich regions and the big cities, Moscow in particular.

Zyuganov won his vote on the basis of a demagogic appeal to those who have seen their incomes and life expectancy fall in the face of the spread of capitalist market relations, while at the same time playing on nostalgia among many for the old Soviet regime.

But, like Yeltsin, Zyuganov supports 'the market' and advocates further ties with 'the West'. In other words he has no answer for the problems of millions of ordinary Russian people.

Third in the poll was the reactionary nationalist former Soviet general Alexander Lebed. His vote came on the basis of an unashamed appeal to Russian nationalism, through which he took many votes from the ultra-nationalist rabble-rouser and xenophobe, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The nature of Lebed's campaign is indicated by the fact that he called for the shooting of all criminals as dogs.

Yet immediately the result was declared, and despite all the wordy statements made during the campaign, Zyuganov invited Lebed to join his camp, asking him to name his job in any administration he formed should he beat Yeltsin in the second round of voting. (Zyuganov's offer was rejected, with the former general accepting a post in Yeltsin's government as minister of security.)

\* \* \* \* \*

**THE** high vote for Zyuganov is understandable. But it cannot provide any answer to the mounting problems of the Russian working class. The return to Stalinism (in any case impossible) would be a return to precisely that instrument that brought about the degeneration of the Soviet state.

The real, and far from easy task, is to establish the political and organisational independence of the working class against the Yeltsins, the Zyuganovs and the Lebeds. This is the essential lesson of last weekend's vote.

**Letters**

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**Reductio ad absurdum**

R. THURSTANS (Letter, 1 June) attacks my assertion that it is incorrect to claim that the laws of chemistry can be deduced from quantum mechanics.

I made this statement in my Science Column (18 May) when I drew attention to the dangers posed by the current fashion for 'biological reductionism' which is claiming, among other things, that human social behaviour can be attributed to genetics.

The claim that I am making is that levels of organisation in nature develop in a manner that cannot be predicted from a knowledge of more fundamental levels. For instance the existence of species of animals or plants can be studied, described and understood in the light of evolutionary development.

A knowledge of biology will contribute to understanding the processes at work, for instance it may clarify the limitations on species development that may occur, but it could never predict how and what species will actually emerge.

R. Thurstans suggests that chemical behaviour can be predicted from quantum mechanics,

at least in some areas. These issues are not just dry matters of scientific controversy.

Understanding how nature works is essential for understanding how humanity and society develop.

The trend toward biological reductionism is an illustration of the manner in which capitalism bends science to meeting its ideological needs. The idea that science is in some way neutral is a fallacy.

The Socialist Science Forum exists to argue around issues such as this and draw out their political implications. Through this letter I invite R. Thurstans to participate in this work — but I reserve the right to remain concerned about the fate of skylarks!

Daniel Robertson  
London NW6

**Superannuated universe**

A GROUP of scientists have raised further doubts about the age of the universe as popularly described by the 'Big Bang' theory. *Nature* (13 June) reports 'the discovery of the most perplexing case to date, a galaxy at a redshift of 1.5 with an apparent age of 3.5 billion years. The prob-

lem, if conventional cosmological models are correct, is that galaxies that old and that far away simply should not be there.'

The scientists based in Edinburgh, Berkeley in California, and Tucson, Arizona, first determined the distance of the galaxy according to its red shift and then analysed the spectral light of the galaxy. This produced an age for the galaxy which was greater than the proposed age of the universe at that distance and time.

According to various versions of the Big Bang theory, galaxies as such should not even exist at all at that time.

*Nature* adds: 'Many readers will recall that this is not the first instance of a cosmological "age problem".' It gives the example of luminous quasars with great red shifts that also 'should not be there'.

Several months ago Dr Gerry Gilmore of Cambridge University similarly dated some galaxies (among thousands of 'new' ones discovered by the Hubble space telescope in a previously 'empty' patch of space) at ages that meant they formed 'too early' on the Big Bang time scale, or even before it!

Last year, John Maddox wrote: 'For it is well known that some globular clusters in our galaxy contain stars whose age is esti-

mated to exceed 12 billion years, and which may be as great as 16 billion years. That belief is plainly at variance with larger estimates of the Hubble constant' (*Nature*, 27 July 1995).

Varying estimated values of the Hubble constant, according to which the red shift observed in stars indicates the rate of expansion of the universe, give an 'age' between 10 and 15 billion years since the universe is supposed to have begun.

The US astronomer Edwin Hubble proposed in 1927 that the red shift of stars indicated their speed of recession away from us and proposed a constant rate of expansion of the universe so that degree of red shift indicated distance also.

It was this model of the universe that enabled some theorists to propose that all the diverging stars could be traced back to an origin. (Einstein predicted the red shift in his 'General Theory of Relativity' (1916) giving electromagnetic and gravitational reasons for its cause.)

Modern 'Big Bang' theorists use 'neo-positivist' (an extreme empiricist) interpretation of quantum theory to explain how according to them all matter was created out of nothing!

Keith Scotcher  
Barking, Essex

**Condemn Manchester bombing!**

One of the many injured victims in Manchester

**Class rage**

Comment by **PETER JAGGER**

**TWO** convictions in the news last week speak volumes about the unfairness of British law and the consequences of media law-and-order scaremongering.

In the first conviction the defendant whom we will refer to as 'A' was a motorist who, in an incident described as 'road rage' assaulted a woman motorist whom he claims had got out of her car to abuse him. She was apparently critical of where he had parked his car.

This was a cowardly attack that left her with a broken rib and collapsed lung, but was clearly totally unprovoked and the result of momentary loss of temper. He deserved to be punished, but not to the extent of a six year sentence. The judge claimed it was to set an example to other motorists.

The second story concerned a defendant whom we shall refer to as 'B'. In this case he was on foot when he met an old age pensioner whom he incorrectly thought had

insulted him. The pensioner, who suffers from cancer, was beaten to the ground and left bleeding and badly shaken. The sentence in this case was a fine of £500.

Was this difference in punishment, which far exceeds the difference in the nature of the crimes, a reflection of the fact that 'A' was a motorist exhibiting the fashionable law-and-order scare behaviour of road rage and 'B' a simple pedestrian? I think not. 'A' was a black man, 'B' was the Marquess of Bath. Class and race injustice were here excused by the 'road-rage' phobia.

At a time when law-and-order scares, designed to create fear and insecurity, are a regular feature of the media, this seems to be the latest fashion. It neatly complements Jack Straw's gangs of criminal nine-year-olds and squeegees that are supposed to be bringing terror to the streets.

Angry black motorists make easier media fear figures than potty aristocrats, but a man is now in prison for six years for a few minutes loss of temper and an aged cancer victim has seen the perpetrator of a vicious assault let off with a fine that will be no more than loose change.

**BY THE EDITOR**

**MILLIONS** of workers reacted with horror and disgust at the bombing of central Manchester by members of the IRA. And rightly so. This was a brutal, cruel, action that could have killed literally hundreds of innocent Saturday shoppers in the centre of the city.

Business in Manchester may have been temporarily disrupted, but it will soon be back to normal with the insurance money collected, at least by the big firms that were hit in the blast.

That this should occur in a town where many are of Irish origin and one in which there has been a long, honourable tradition of sympathy with the Irish cause made this mindless act even more reactionary.

No doubt those elements in the British ruling class who want to step up the repression of the socialist and nationalist movement in Ireland will seize on this latest event to do precisely that.

At the same time the ruling class will use the Manchester incident as the occasion for whipping up anti-Irish reaction among working-class people throughout Britain. In short it

gives further encouragement to every bigot and racist.

Whether the Manchester bomb was left as a result of direction from the IRA leadership is not clear. But in any event the movement is in a severe crisis.

It proposes to meet with representatives of the British ruling class and the Dublin regime in talks which are clearly designed to provide a few worthless sops to the nationalists while maintaining the division of Ireland and the Irish working class.

At the same time other elements within the Republican movement propose to continue the campaign of terrorism which not only threatens the lives of ordinary working people but, just as important, sows confusion in the ranks of the working class.

These are the politics of the petty bourgeois — ones of despair and hopelessness.

The root cause of Ireland's problems is imperialism, British imperialism specifically. The liberation of Ireland, Britain's oldest colony, can be achieved only by the united action of workers in Ireland and in Britain, fighting for a socialist future.

The action last weekend in Manchester stands in complete opposition to this perspective.

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In **Workers' Liberty** 32, out now: Nick Salmon on 'Reclaiming William Morris'; Stan Crooke on Stalinism and the 1926 General Strike; Michel Warshawsky on Israel; editorial on Ireland; and more.

In **Workers' Liberty** 31, still available John O'Mahony traces Trotsky's path to his 1940 conclusion: "If the Jewish workers and peasants ask for an independent state... if they want it, the proletariat will give it". Each issue £1.20 for 40 pages, or subscription £12 for 12 issues, from WLP, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

**Workers' Liberty** 96 summer school — three days of socialist debate and discussion, in London, 28-30 June. More information: 0171-639 7965.

# GMB leaders ignore dockers

BY AN INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

EVERY effort was made to isolate supporters of the Liverpool dockers at this year's GMB general union conference (9 to 13 June).

Instead of drawing on the strength of the dockers' struggle the leadership sought to keep it away from the conference.

The experience of the Liverpool dockers was reduced to a bucket collection in which they were not involved, nor were they allowed to address the conference.

Every procedural manoeuvre was used to prevent the essential trade union experience of the dockers' struggle from being debated.

The bucket collection came to £500 which general secretary John Edmonds agreed to top up to £1,000. Welcome as this was, it was a far cry from what happened at the Communications Workers Union (CWU) conference a week before. That union of about 300,000 members agreed to

donate £35,000 immediately, thereby sponsoring the dispute for a week. The train drivers' union ASLEF (17,000 members) gave a further £5,000 at their conference. The GMB has over 800,000 members.

A resolution in support of aid to Bosnia, which sought the involvement of the rank and file, was only accepted by the leadership with the proviso that it was referred to the TUC and the Labour Party.

While Edmonds called for a culture change in which all members were to become involved in recruitment — to maintain existing GMB spending levels by adding 100,000 members by 1997 — the leadership's concern seems to be based on not rocking the boat at a time when an election is imminent and a Labour government possible.

While respecting the fact that this view is also held by many supporters of the dockers, we must find ways to explain that this is to cut ourselves off from the world around us and learn nothing from the experiences of

those at the forefront of defending trade union rights.

Ironically many of the issues debated by the GMB delegates are to be found in the Liverpool dockers' dispute — destruction of trade union rights, job insecurity, widespread casualisation and the anti-union laws.

By not allowing the connection to be made, the central executive committee was able to recommend opposition to a resolution calling for the right to take industrial action, whether primary, secondary or 'political'.

A composite resolution calling for the next Labour government to enter into discussions with the TUC to repeal employment laws which have an adverse effect on trade unions and working people was adopted.

No matter what their intention, the GMB leadership joined the media blackout that has been imposed on the Liverpool dockers. Many delegates found this policy unacceptable and there is the sign of a backlash with GMB members looking to join the national demonstration in Liver-

pool on 29 June. The dockers can be assured that this will not be the end of the struggle to bring their experiences into the GMB.

And the fact that the GMB in its own way has supported the dockers must be used to build trade union support groups in this union which is surely an aspect that must be considered at the London dockers' conference today.

■ London dockers' conference, Saturday 22 June, 11am-5pm, International Students House, 229 Great Portland Street.

■ Join the 3.30-6pm weekly pickets of Drake International, 96 High Holborn, WC1.

■ Two dockers are in London to raise funds and publicise the dispute. Tel: 0171-387 4771 (ask for Liverpool dockers).

■ Next Liverpool community march for the dockers, Saturday 29 June. Tel: 0956 138 496.

■ Support group meetings first and third Thursdays every month. Lucas Arms, 245A Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

National demonstration  
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## Support firefighters!

BY SYLVIA MOONEY

A LONG traditional link between Derbyshire's Labour county council and the local Fire Brigades Union has been broken.

The 960 firefighters began industrial action with a strike on Monday 10 June against cuts of £1.3 million in the brigade's budget. In the past the FBU has consistently opposed cuts but never taken strike action on the basis that they were government-imposed and that strikes hurt the council and the public.

However times have changed. The old formula of maintaining a 'shield', however 'dented', against government cuts has worn through.

Firefighters are no longer pre-

pared to put the safety of the public and their own colleagues at risk by accepting any more. The authority's cuts package has therefore been met by a package of strikes, lobbies and public campaigning.

However, rather than joining the fight against Tory cuts, the county council has effectively joined the government by attempting to secure a court injunction to stop the strike action.

This has failed, along with ACAS talks to halt the action. The authority also now has a bill for the FBU's court costs.

Each day of strike action will cost the council £45,000 and yet senior Labour county councillors persist in using scab 'Green Goddess' army fire engines and in

appealing for help from neighbouring authorities to break the strikes rather than resolving the issue by withdrawing the cuts package.

Firefighters in Nottingham and Manchester have pledged support and *will not cover* for striking Derbyshire firefighters on any of the series of nine-hour strikes that are set to continue. The Derbyshire FBU needs maximum support locally and nationally.

It is very important for the whole movement that this series of strikes will take place against a Labour authority that is carrying out Tory policies in what is effectively a pre-election period.

■ Phone/fax messages of support to Derbyshire FBU, 01773 540909.



Supporters of imprisoned Argentinian labour activists Horacio Panario and Alcides Christiansen

[Workers Press 8&15 June]

## Kurdish hunger strike solidarity

THIRTY-FIVE Kurdish workers last week entered the third week of a hunger strike in London in solidarity with thousands of political prisoners in Turkish jails.

The prisoners in Dyarbakir prison, where 19 were injured by security forces, began a hunger strike on 3 June, and it spread to 40 prisons. The prisoners' demands include prisoner of war status, medical care, the right to receive books and parcels, and an end to harassment of family visitors.

Those taking part include four jailed MPs from the Democracy Party, as well as Kurdish Workers party (PKK) militants and Turkish prisoners. As well as demands on prison conditions they have called on the Turkish government to accept the PKK's ceasefire, and stop attacking people.

On 8 June, while the international Habitat conference was on in Istanbul, police with armoured personnel carriers attacked a sit-in protest in Galatassary, on the main shopping street, Istiklal Caddesi, by families of the 'dis-

peared' — those abducted by security forces and never seen again.

The wife of Talat Turkoglu, a missing trade unionist, was among those injured. Hundreds were arrested, including journalists reporting the incident.

The offices of the Confederation of Public Workers Unions (TESK), the Human Rights Association and various parties were surrounded by police, and more arrests made.

### Busloads

Three busloads of trade unionists travelling to Ankara to take part in a TESK demonstration for the right to collective bargaining were arrested.

The London solidarity hunger strike, at the Halkevi centre in Stoke Newington, is one of several staged by Kurdish exiles in different European cities. Supporters of their struggle for democratic rights are asked to contact their MPs, and write to Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, Basbakanlik, 06573 Ankara, Turkey, fax 0090 312 217 0476.

## BSE: results and exports

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

THE government's claim that there is no scientific evidence to link BSE in cattle and CJD in humans has taken yet another hammering following research in France that found BSE material injected into monkeys caused them to develop symptoms very similar to human CJD.

Investigating the infectivity of BSE against monkey species was a critical experiment which British scientists have been criticised for not having done. Monkeys are far closer to human beings compared to the animals the British scientists were prepared to experiment on.

These French results add greatly to fears that the new form of human CJD, substantially only seen in Britain following the appearance of BSE in cattle, is due to consumption of contaminated beef.

Further anger has been prompted by the revelation that BSE contaminated feed continued to be exported from Britain to Europe even after its use as a cattle feed in Britain had been nominally banned (in reality it continued to be used for years).

The British government's defence has been to imply that the stupid Europeans should have known it was only meant for chicken and pig feed. But clearly these farmers would have

a right to assume that if it was being exported then it should be safe. Outbreaks of BSE in cattle in countries such as France can be attributed to this material, as well as imports of British livestock. A single case of the new BSE-related form of CJD has now been reported from France.

### Duplicity

The duplicity of the British government is making European sympathy for resolving the crisis in beef sales and exports increasingly unlikely. Anger is growing throughout Europe to what is seen to be an irresponsible attitude that puts profits before all other considerations.

This reflects the easy ride that the Tories have had from 'New Labour' in recent years — they know that when the profitability of the system is at stake Blair will come running to their help.

The prospect of eventually being held legally and politically responsible for the growing BSE disaster is panicking the British government which continues to hide behind a smokescreen of Europhobia.

The political and business leaders responsible for this horrific threat to human health must be made to pay for their irresponsibility. 'New Labour' will not ensure this — new political forces must be mobilised for this task.

## Detroit strikers vary tactics

THESE people plan to wipe you off the face of the Earth,' Eddie Burke, of the Teamsters' union told a striking newspaper workers' rally in Detroit. The only way to prevent that is to take the volume of what you're doing and turn it up.

That's what the workers are trying to do. After 200 strikers marched to the Detroit News building in drizzling rain and circled the company's garages, two old cars were driven into the garage driveway and abandoned without keys.

Strike supporters surrounded the cars and some clambered on top waving union placards before police made 17 arrests.

Some 2,000 employees of the News and Free Press, owned by the Gannett and Knight-Ridder chains, have been on strike since 13 July 1995. Unions involved include the Teamsters, Communication Workers, Graphic Communications Union and the Newspaper Guild.

Management and imported scabs are still producing papers, and hired union-busting security goons from Vance and Huffman are delivering them. But many people are boycotting the scab papers, and they have lost advertising.

Pickets have gone mobile, turning up each day at different places. Members of other unions,

most notably the Autoworkers, have been trained to join in civil disobedience as well.

Eight strikers handcuffed themselves to the Free Press front door on 22 May, while another 100 people marched onto the newspaper's back loading dock. The same day marchers, chanting and playing makeshift drums and blowing whistles, blocked several downtown intersections.

Strikers marched through Warren, a Detroit suburb, passing out 200 lawn signs and signing up 100 subscribers to the striker-produced Sunday Journal newspaper. They also demonstrated in

front of the homes of some newspaper executives and columnists chanting 'Scabs in the Hood'. They handed out leaflets directed at advertisers and stores that carry the scab-produced Free Press and News.

More than 500 delegates to the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists convention in Miami Beach joined striking workers and marched on Knight-Ridder's headquarters.

'It was wonderful. A lot of them had heard about the strike, but they didn't know what the issues were,' said Jocelyn Faniel-Heard, a striking TNG member. 'It was very encouraging for us to have them with us.'

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# Inside left

## 'Uncle' under guard

Indonesians refer affectionately to their Communist Party as 'our bearded uncle'. Marxist works have been officially banned for the past 30 years.

A year ago it was announced that Marxist works would be allowed to read in Jakarta. At the National Library in Jakarta, you must present a written permit from the Attorney-General to enter the special guarded section where Marxist books are kept.

Not everyone can have access to Marxist works, explains the curator, 'because it has to do with national security.' However, the Indonesian Human Rights Institute, says the Indonesian Armed Forces History Centre could not contact the books recently, because it did not produce its permit from the Attorney-General's office.

Indonesia's Home Affairs ministry has recently pronounced over a million Communist Party members politically suspected 'ideologically dangerous' and not to take part in elections, but said 20,000 were not.

It seems 'Uncle' is creeping out of his cage at night, however. *Tapol* reports that 20,000 Jakarta workers used tools on May Day.

## Reasonable men

According to Mick Hume of *Living Marxism*, Peter Handke, author of *The winter journey along the rivers of the Danube, Sava, Danube and Morava — Justice for Serbia*, a 'reasonable man', has been 'hounded by the media and literary critics' merely for 'publishing a catalogue of the former Yugoslavia which questions the demonisation of the Serbian people'.

*Living Marxism* claims Handke is a victim of 'the New Inquisition'; 'Europe's intelligentsia are burning books and they don't mean Sarajevo library, they mean Kradzic's incendiary shells'.

Handke was welcomed by the Serbian regime and nationalists. Sonja Markovic of the Serbian Helsinki Committee criticised him for ridiculing the existence of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Despite protests, the hounded Handke recently addressed the Austrian parliament. Chancellor Vranesky and MPs, obviously 'reasonable' men, listened while Handke read extracts from his book, and some applauded. Handke complains critics do not discuss his arguments, they 'blame, vilify and denounce'.

A report of the Austrian parliament committee says 'Only a few representatives were critical, among them Jürgen Huber (Greens) and M. Sunjic (HCR official) who said *Justice for Serbia* reminded them of a 1942 Nazi demand apology, but they were interrupted by Handke who screamed that they were behaving shamelessly.'

## We didn't return

Those like *Living Marxism* who attack fascists and apologists for genocide should have their 'rights' protected here's bad news from Croatia.

I am not referring to President Tudjman's assaults on papers and trade unions. He's quite partial to a bit of fascist revisionism, and wants to bring the body of World War II fascist leader Pavelic back for reburial.

On 25 May, however, the official birthday of Josif Broz Tito, a 'JB Tito Party' was founded in Zagreb.

Members say they respect the late Yugoslav president 'as a prominent member of anti-fascist people's liberation war and an important figure in Croatian history'. According to our informant, the president of the pro-fascist NHD (New Croatian Right) Milan Schwartz turned up uninvited, began shouting 'Down with Tito'.

The others said they would expel the provocateur, so they seized Schwartz, took him to the door, hit him several times and expelled him. Schwartz did not return after that. 'Oh, the next thing you know he'll be featured in *Living Marxism*.'

Charlie Pottins

# 'We create the conditions to defend'

An impressive 1,367 delegates attended the first Labor Party convention in the US between 6 and 9 June in Cleveland, Ohio. The delegates came from 44 states and represented 9 international unions, more than 300 local labour bodies, and 36 area chapters.

This important move to working-class independence from the main bourgeois parties in the US — the Republicans and Democrats — must be supported by the international movement.

We publish here extracts from the new party's programme, transcribed, from the original drafts and handwritten approved amendments, by a member of the Arizona delegation called Andrew English (aenglish@crl14.crl.com).

For a copy of the full programme send £1 to Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8. It will be included in the July issue of *The International*.

## Introduction

WE ARE the people who build and maintain the nation, but rarely enjoy the fruits of our labour. We are the employed and the unemployed. We are the people who make the country run but have little say in running the country.

We come together to create this Labor Party to defend our interests and aspirations from the greed of multinational corporate interests....

We offer an alternative vision of a just society that values working people, their families and communities.

We, the members of this Labor Party, see ourselves as keepers of the American Dream of opportunity, fairness and justice.

In our American Dream, we all have the right:

- to a decent paying job and a decent place to live;

- to join a union freely without fear of being fired or other retribution;

- to strike without fear of losing our job;

- not to be discriminated against because of our race, gender, ethnicity, disability, national origin, or sexual orientation, at work or in our communities;

- to free, quality public education for ourselves and our children;

- to universal access to publicly-funded, comprehensive, quality health care for all residents;

- to retire at a decent standard of living after a lifetime of work;

- to quality of life in our communities enhanced by a fully-funded public sector.

The Democratic and Republican parties serve the corporate interests that finance them.

- We oppose corporate power that undermines democratic institutions and governments.

- We oppose corporate politicians and parties that provide billions in corporate tax breaks and subsidies to the rich, selling themselves to the highest bidder.

- We reject the false choice of jobs versus environmental responsibility.

We will not be held hostage by corporate polluters who poison our workplaces and our communities.

- We reject the redistribution of billions of dollars of wealth from poor and working people to the rich.

- And we reject every opportunist who plays the race, gender, or immigrant card to keep us from addressing our real needs, and the needs of our families and communities.

Our Labor Party understands that our struggle for democracy pits us against a corporate elite that will fight hard to retain its powers and privileges.

This is the struggle of our generation. The future of our children and their children hangs in the balance. It is a struggle we cannot afford to lose.

## 1 Amend the Constitution to guarantee everyone a job at a living wage

CORPORATE America is systematically destroying millions of decent paying jobs for working people.

At the same time, the rich and powerful are leading an assault on the public sector and demanding cut-backs in government jobs that provide services for us all.

As a result, there are not enough good jobs to go around. Our public services are crumbling. Nearly one in four workers is either unemployed, involuntarily working part-time, or is working full-time at poverty-level wages.

Since World War II, the government has been committed on paper to a full-employment economy. But Corporate America and its army of pliable politicians have made a mockery of that idea....

The more subsidies and tax breaks for corporations the politicians give away, the more jobs that are destroyed — through mergers, run-away investments, automation, and subcontracting.

These give-aways and concessions must stop.

First and foremost everyone, both in the private and public sectors, needs a guarantee of a right to a job at a living wage — one that pays above poverty-level wages and is indexed to inflation. And in today's world that comes to about \$10 an hour.

We want this right written directly into the US Constitution....

## 2 Pay laid-off workers two months' severance for every year of service

EVERY time a corporation lays off workers the value of its stock rises and its executive officers reap rich rewards. Meanwhile laid-off workers and their communities pay the price.

On average, workers lose over \$100,000 of their lifetime earnings when they are laid off....

Communities also suffer from the

declining incomes and increasing social problems caused by lay-offs. This burden on our communities averages about \$25,000 per laid-off worker....

We therefore propose a job destruction penalty act....

- Under the act corporations with 100 or more employees globally will be required to pay each eligible laid-off worker two months' severance pay for every year of service.

- And they will be required to pay \$25,000 per eligible laid-off worker to the local community to offset rising social costs....

## 3 Restore workers' rights to organise, bargain and strike

THE right to organise unions and to bargain freely is being destroyed by employers. Today, nearly one out of ten workers involved in union-organising drives is illegally fired by employers who wage a campaign of fear, threats and slick propaganda to keep workers from exercising a genuinely free choice.

That is why union membership is declining. And as union membership falls so do the wages of all working people, union and non-union alike. (The buying power of the average worker's wage has declined 15 per cent over the last 25 years.)

As a Labor Party, we will support the courageous efforts of our brothers and sisters out in the streets and in the fields all over this nation to overcome these legal handicaps, especially in the South and South West where the laws are most hostile....

All employees of federal, state and local governments must have full collective bargaining rights....

All scabbing must be banned.

We oppose all attempts to legalise company unions....

We demand a law requiring employers who purchase or merge with other companies to honour all existing collective bargaining agreements and contracts.

While we support rehabilitation and the learning of skills, we oppose all use of prison labour for the production of goods and services....

## 4 End bigotry: an injury to one is an injury to all

FOR generations, bosses have profited by dividing working people on the basis of race, gender and national origin.

Rather than creating enough jobs, they force us to fight among ourselves for the few good ones that remain. Rather than creating enough opportunities for higher education, they force us and our children to quarrel over the available spots....

Real democracy includes all of us. We work in all kinds of occupations, and come from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. We are women as well as men.

- Every time a corporation pays a woman less for the same or comparable work, we are all paid less.

- Every time a minority worker



The buying power of the average years. This textile worker in New

is denied a decent job or promotion, we are all denied promotion.

- When immigrants are scapegoated and denied full labour rights and civil rights, we are all scapegoated and denied our rights.

We favour full rights for all, and we will tolerate no discrimination or other form of injustice based on race, gender, ethnicity, disability, national origin, age, creed, sexual orientation, or native tongue.

We oppose all forms of terrorism and hate crimes, including attacks against African-American churches, synagogues, or other places of worship. We also oppose police brutality and other forms of the criminalisation of dissent and poverty.

We support affirmative action and anti-discrimination programmes to take away the bosses' power to divide and conquer.

We support an immigration policy that does not discriminate on any basis, and a trade policy that supports international fair labour standards and works to alleviate the conditions that send people tramping around the globe in search of opportunity.

We also support comparable worth initiatives and strong sanctions against sexual harassment to make the workplace safe and fair for women workers....

## 5 Guarantee universal access to quality health care

HEALTH care is the most profitable industry in the nation. It is the most shameless example of unbridled corporate greed in the US. In the guise of cost-containment, it redistributes resources from sick people and their caregivers to wealthy businessmen

# This Labor Party and our interests'



worker's wage has declined 15 per cent over the last 25 years. New York earns \$1 (about 75p) an hour!

and shareholders. Forty-two million Americans have no health insurance, 80 per cent of the uninsured are working people and their dependants....

We call for:

■ Universal entitlement for all residents to comprehensive health care benefits...

■ Funding for research that serves the public good, not private gain. Academic health centres must have support for their research mission....

■ Strong representation and a decision-making role for health care recipients and health care workers in public planning and oversight bodies.

## 6 Less work, more money

■ A 32-hour, four-day work week  
■ Double-time minimum for all overtime

■ An hour off with pay for every two hours of overtime

■ Twenty mandatory paid vacation days for all

■ One year paid leave for every seven years of work

EACH year we become more and more productive at work. In a fair and just economy, increased productivity should allow us to work fewer hours, not more. Yet compared to the late 1960s, we are now working an average of more than one extra month annually....

## 7 Protect our families

WHILE politicians babble about family values, this Labor Party

intends to do something real to protect our families....

■ Twelve weeks' paid family leave for each newborn or adopted child, and for taking care of ill family members....

■ Mandatory minimum pensions for all workers, full, vested and portable, that do not reduce social security benefits.

■ Subsidised, high quality child care and elder care for all who need it....

Such benefits already exist in most European countries. But they are under attack by corporations who want benefits pushed down to the lower levels available in the US. We must end this race to the bottom by bringing our benefits up to more just and humane levels....

## 8 Ensure everyone access to high quality public education

WE ARE a nation of educational haves and have-nots.

The rich protect their children in elite private schools while our children suffer in increasingly crowded, dangerous, and under-funded public schools.

The rich send their children to the best colleges and universities, while more and more of our children are denied higher education due to rising tuition costs and deep cutbacks in our state universities....

We call for a renewed commitment to high quality public education for all, not voucher systems and other privatisation schemes...

## 9 Stop corporate abuse of trade

MULTINATIONAL corporations

and most of their hired politicians claim that free trade is good for us. But the corporate version of free trade is really about seeking the cheapest sources of labour and escaping labour and environmental standards wherever they interfere with profits.

We favour free and open trade, but only if the rights of all workers, both here and abroad, are strongly protected. Then trade will not only be free it will also be fair.

Trade is not free or fair if it pits us against workers who get paid pennies a day, work in horrid conditions, and enjoy no legal rights.

Trade is not free or fair if it makes it easier for corporations to pollute their workers and the environment.

We oppose the North America Free Trade Agreement and GATT in their current forms. We also reject narrowly nationalistic solutions to trade imbalances that scapegoat our fellow workers in other countries. We believe in trading freely with all trading partners who adhere to basic minimum labour and environmental standards.

■ We call for establishing strong international labour and environmental standards that improve conditions for low-wage workers, not ratchet ours down....

■ Teams of workers' representatives from different nations should regularly visit export-oriented facilities around the world to determine whether minimum standards are being met.

■ Only products meeting such standards would receive a 'fair trade' seal of approval and be eligible for free and open trade.

■ And we insist that workers themselves be able to enforce these sanctions, relying on traditional rights to refuse to handle 'unfair' products.

Our Labor Party will actively promote a strategy of international solidarity and cooperation with labour movements and labour parties in other nations to confront the global attack on our environment and living conditions. We oppose all policies instituted by corporate-dominated lending institutions like the World Bank that force developing nations to lower the wages of their workers....

Finally, we demand that our government stop doing the bidding of global corporations and stop using military and foreign policies to prop up anti-labour regimes that violate human rights.

## 10 End corporate welfare as we know it

CORPORATE WELFARE is a disgrace.

Today much of Corporate America is living on welfare in the form of tax breaks and direct government subsidies.

To divert us from this estimated \$200 billion-a-year corporate welfare rip-off, media pundits and corporate politicians aim their fire at the poor on low-income welfare (which amounts to less than one third of what corporations take from the treasury).  
■ State governments dole out bil-

ions in 'incentives' to lure business from other states or to keep the business that is already there from going elsewhere....

## 11 Make the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes

OVER the past 25 years, while we have suffered a decline in our standard of living, a staggering amount of wealth has been pumped up into the hands of a tiny elite....

From 1983 to 1989 alone the top 1 per cent of all families increased their wealth by over \$1.45 trillion. At the same time the national debt increased by \$1.49 trillion....

## 12 Revitalise the public sector

THE public sector has gotten a bad name because much of what passes for government today is a way to enrich the wealthy at our expense....

Corporate-backed politicians are using the anti-government sentiment they have so carefully engineered to kill vital programmes that many employers have always despised....

It's time for working people to put an end to this nonsense.

The Labor Party stands firmly opposed to the privatisation and contracting-out of traditional public services.

A government that works for us would provide critical goods and services that cannot, and should not, be run for profit....

## 13 End corporate domination of elections

THE current system of privately financed elections essentially takes away our right to vote....

It is virtually impossible to pass legislation that protects and empowers working people.

Instead we are forced to watch elected politicians of both parties routinely rob the public treasury of billions of dollars, giving their rich and powerful donors tax breaks, subsidies, bail-outs, and regulatory exemptions.

We demand an end to this robbery....

We support all efforts to enhance working people's political power and we oppose all efforts to dismantle majority Black or Brown electoral districts....

We want:

■ a financial cap on what any candidate can spend on elections;

■ full public financing of state and national elections based on the principle of 'one person, one vote' and 'government of, by and for the people';

■ full and equal public financing and media time for candidates who have proven popular support, rather than just access to big contributors;  
■ funds made available only to

those candidates who pledge not to raise and spend any private money whatsoever during the primary and general election periods....

Such a system would allow all of us a fair and equal voice in deciding who should represent us and what legislation should be passed. Such a system — and a Labor Party — would make democracy a reality.

## 14 Build a Just Transition Movement to protect jobs and the environment

THIS Labor Party affirms its commitment to a clean and safe environment. We all need clean workplaces, clean air, and clean water. But we also need our jobs....

What we produce and how we produce will change as steps are taken to protect people and the natural environment from harm.

The Labor Party will support taking such steps if and only if the livelihoods of working people endangered by environmental change are fully protected.

Therefore, the Labor Party calls for the creation of a new worker-oriented environmental movement — a 'Just Transition Movement' — that puts forth a fair and just transition programme to protect both jobs and the environment.

■ All workers with jobs endangered by steps taken to protect the environment are to receive full income and benefits as they make the difficult transition to alternative work.

■ The cost of this Just Transition Income Support programme will be paid for by taxes on corporate polluters.

## 15 Worker inspectors to enforce safety & health regulation

THE regulation of occupational safety and health hazards in our offices, factories, and fields is shamefully inadequate, and the enforcement of the standards we have is woefully neglected....

■ Thousands of untested new chemicals are introduced into use each year, exposing factory workers, office workers, and farm workers to unknown hazards.

■ Incidents take place without adequate investigations being conducted, and when incidents are investigated by impartial investigators their findings are rarely implemented....

We need the right to act and to enforce any and all safety and health regulations.

■ We call for national legislation to train and deputise workers to be on-the-job inspectors in each and every workplace....

■ Because we know our work sites, worker-inspectors would be better able to protect the workforce from exposure and the community from disaster. Worker-inspectors will save lives....

## How not to teach English grammar

## PERSONAL COLUMN

Here's another of these Latinistic fetishes. Some people insist that because the English word 'alternative' is derived from the Latin *alter*, which means 'one or other of two', you can never have more than two alternatives.

Here's yet another. A lot of people still think you ought not to end a sentence with a preposition. This silly prohibition originated solely because, broadly speaking, you can't put a preposition later than its word in Latin — and Dryden set an atrocious example by going through all his prefaces doing away with the final prepositions he had been guilty of in his youth.

In fact, English owes much of its flexibility to its tolerance of such a construction as 'people worth talking to' rather than the stiff and wooden 'people with whom it is worth while to talk'. And all the English writers considered great — all, without exception, from Chaucer, through Shakespeare, to Hazlitt and beyond — cheerfully ended clauses and sentences with prepositions.

One final pedantic fetish, and I shall have done. This is the nonsensical rule that it's 'bad English' to start a sentence with 'And' or 'But'.

I don't think this is a carry-over from Latin; in fact the Romans seem to have been rather fond of starting sentences with 'Et', and I suspect that we owe this particular ban to those pompous 19th-century grammarians who solemnly laid it down that 'laughable' ought to be changed to 'laugh-at-able', 'reliable' to 'reliable'.

NOW, if by teaching children English grammar we mean teaching them such barmy rules as 'Never split an infinitive', 'Don't end a sentence with a preposition', and 'Don't start a sentence with "And" or "But"', then we shall be doing them a great disservice.

Children whose writing is hemmed in by such prohibitions and are therefore condemned, as it were, to write while looking over their shoulders all the time, will never become fluent writers of their native tongue. Grammar should be a tool, not a strait jacket.

By all means let children be taught about the different parts of speech and what their functions are. (This knowledge, of course, is essential for the learning of a foreign language and should therefore be imparted before a second language is started.)

But this teaching should be based on English as it is in fact spoken and written. It should discard the false assumption that the parts of speech in English and their functions are identical with what they were in Latin.

By all means, too, let children learn to analyse sentences and describe accurately the various functions of the clauses and words of which they are composed. But heaven forbid that this be done in the dull, soulless, mechanical way in which 'parsing' used to be taught.

Language is a living thing and can be a delight for inquiring young minds to learn about and master. The old school, with its rigidity and formalism and rote-learning, turned the study of English into something dry and repellent.

So we should pay no heed to those Tory voices that call for the clock to be turned back. Their complaints are made in unconquerable ignorance of the advances there have been in linguistics, and in language-teaching, over the past half-century.

*Peter Fryer*

## International workers' conference

# Threatened with death

## Report from South Africa

ITUSC and Workers International (South Africa) member BONGANI MKHUNGO brought greetings from the comrades in Durban. He reported the events at the Congress of South African Trade Unions' tenth anniversary celebrations on 10 November last year where he was attacked by official stewards for giving out leaflets.

The leaflets demanded that COSATU broke its alliance with the Government of National Unity and that support be given to striking nurses.

The reason Bongani and his comrades were giving out leaflets was that they thought it was important to have an intervention at the event. It was important to be there for the workers.

Therefore the leaflet demanding that COSATU break with the Government of National Unity and that workers should pressurise it to support the nurses was drafted by the Durban comrades.

When they took the leaflets to the COSATU anniversary workers asked why they weren't in Zulu. Some of the comrades were having trouble with the stewards and they came to Bongani as the one in charge.

They asked Bongani why he was giving out the leaflet and he replied that it was what 'we feel we must do'.

## Burn

The stewards started to hit him. After throwing the leaflets on the ground and forcing Bongani to pick them up, they made him burn the leaflets and continued to kick him. They said: 'This man must be killed.' Police looked on.

While they wanted to take Bongani into the stadium, the black police officers would not allow this.

During the incident two comrades disappeared and there were worries about their safety. Eventually they turned up. They had run away and had been scared to go home.

Last week's Workers Press carried material from the international workers' conference on 8 and 9 June in London called by the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign and the African Liberation Support Campaign. This week we print reports from South African, Iran and Bangladesh and other material on this page and page 7.



The ANC came to government through workers' support

Bongani's wife and family had been frightened when comrades turned up as if looking for him.

The tenth anniversary was very important since COSATU had a very important role in the struggle against apartheid. The union organisation was the only opposition body at the time that wasn't banned.

Workers had played a significant role in the struggle. The rulers had seen that the only way out was to negotiate with the African National Congress that had the support of the workers. The ANC

had been brought to government office by workers.

The purpose of the tenth anniversary commemoration had been to strengthen the alliance between that ANC and the South African Communist Party. That was why the stewards were very upset when the leaflets had been distributed by Bongani and his comrades.

But the trade union movement in South Africa has now moved on. The Government of National Unity is in conflict with COSATU.

The ANC is committed to privatisation while workers thought that it was sympathetic to them and would not go against their wishes.

ANC leader and South African President Nelson Mandela went to Germany and came back and said that privatisation was the policy of the government.

This caught the COSATU leaders by surprise and they are now in a dilemma. They find it difficult to convince workers that the alliance should be preserved.

## Privatisation

The telecom and transport industries are to be transferred to para-state bodies in preparation for privatisation. Many will lose their jobs in the 'retrenchments'.

COSATU is talking of 'restructuring' but even they admit jobs are to be lost.

Despite lacking a resolute leadership workers are still prepared to fight.

On 26 June there are elections in Natal/KwaZulu (Durban is the capital). The violence is still going on with ten to 20 killed a day. Eleven election candidates from both the ANC and Inkatha parties have been killed.

The ANC have a problem in Natal. In West Durban it is divided with 15 members standing as independents against the official ANC candidates.

The ANC called a meeting and found that the people were disgruntled. Some of the independents had been chosen by the people but rejected by the ANC leadership.

One of Bongani's comrades was asked to stand but they decided that he mustn't because of the violence.

Members of the Unemployed Workers Union in South Africa came to the ITUSC asking to be part. They couldn't find any support in COSATU. Unemployment is set to increase.

The employers are moving out of South Africa to areas where workers are not organised like Mozambique and Angola. The ITUSC needs to organise there. There is a need to show solidarity with these comrades and the only way to do that is to organise with them.

## Support positive action for African liberation

### The African Liberation Support Campaign moved the following motion

THE international workers' conference convened jointly by the ITUSC and ALISC hereby resolves to:

1 SUPPORT the building of Pan-African Labour Internationalist Solidarity Network (PALISON) as an independent body affiliated to the ITUSC and embracing the core principles of ALISC and the ITUSC, in particular: trade unions independent of the state and employers; workers' democracy within trade unions; and, workers' internationalism.

2 SUPPORT the Nigerian International Labour Solidarity Link (NILSOL) and its initiative to mobilise international solidarity for the Campaign for Independent Unionism (CIU) in Nigeria as one of the cornerstones in building the People's Embargo for Democracy in Nigeria (PEDEN).

3 SUPPORT the ALISC platform of minimum demands of positive action for total African liberation:

■ smashing the debt bondage in which Africa is being held to ransom by international monopoly finance capital;

■ reparations for the enslavement of Africans and for the barbaric pillage, exploitation and underdevelopment of their mother continent by imperialism;

■ fair remuneration for African people's labour on their continent and in the diaspora as well as the good pricing of African commodities on the world market;

■ immediate scrapping of the harmful Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the IMF and the so-called World Bank that is in fact a neo-colonialist blueprint for perpetuating the robbery, underdevelopment and impoverishment of Africa by imperialism;

■ support for the UN-ECA's African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) as the starting point for an alternative programme for people's democratic self-empowerment for improving the quality of African life;

■ establishment of an equitable new democratic international order safeguarding the environment and promoting sustainable development based upon political, economic, social, cultural and moral principles enshrining eco-harmony, the equality of humanity, respect for the genuine self-determination of nations and the inviolability of the fundamental human rights, freedom and justice of all the peoples of Africa and the world.

4 APPLAUD the courageous efforts of those unions of workers, peasants, women, the unemployed, youth, students and others like the [oilworkers' unions] NUPENG and PENGASAN (Nigeria), FESCI and DIGNITE (Ivory Coast), that are defying repressive governmental bans to continue developing popular democratic resistance throughout Africa and the world; and support the urgent demands for immediate freedom to Frank Kokori (NUPENG general secretary, Nigeria), Milton Dabibi (NUPENG, Nigeria), Chima Ubani (Nigeria), Sangare Abou-dramanc (Ivory Coast), Freedom Neruda (Ivory Coast), Kala Beva (Congo-Zaire), Mumia Abu-Jamal (USA), Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt (USA), Fred Hampton Jr. (USA), the Move Nine (USA), Leonard Peltier (USA) and all other freedom fighters of the working class and 'wretched of the earth' throughout the world.

■ Conference affirms the right of workers to organise independently of the state and demands that COSATU makes a break in its alliance with the Government of National Unity in South Africa.

5 SUPPORT the establishment of the Pan-African Freedom Fighters' Asylum Campaign (PAFFAC) and other initiatives of the African Refugees and Migrants Monitoring Project (ARMMOP) in principled defence

of the inalienable right of all persecuted victims of imperialism, neocolonialism and reaction to safe haven wherever they choose for themselves, more so in Europe; and urges all progressive forces to heighten the resistance that ARMMOP and similar fighting organisations of refugees and migrants are working hard to galvanise in order to defeat the Gestapo-style asylum and immigration legislation and other racist and fascist measures being schemed by the atrocious regimes now erecting the anti-people's monstrosity of Fortress Europe.

6 SUPPORT the African Liberation Awareness Month (ALAM) celebrations every year, beginning with honouring William Davidson [the early black trade union leader hanged at Newgate for his part in the 'Cato Street conspiracy' on 1 May 1820] and other labour freedom-fighting martyrs by participating in May Day and continuing through the African Liberation Solidarity Convention (ALSOC) to support the African Liberation Day march and rally in London on the Saturday of the spring holiday weekend each year.

7 INSTITUTE a Triennial International Convention of Labour Activists (TRICLA) to be held during the last week of May, the next one to be held in London, Britain, in May 1999 for which preparations need to start globally now!

## International workers' conference

## Religion and the working class

## Report from Iran

**YADULLAH KHOSRASHAHI** spoke of his 40 years' experience as an oilworker in Iran since starting work at the age of 14. He had been in prison 'on and off' too.

He said that he came to socialism through the day-to-day fight with capitalism as a worker and not through reading books. He had started as an apprentice and eventually became the secretary of the oilworkers' union. He was five years in prison under the Shah and four years under the Islamic Republic.

'You can't sit between two chairs in the the working-class movement,' said Yaddulah. You were either with the workers or the bosses.

The Iranian oilworkers had

been the leading section of the working class in the Middle East. They had lost their struggle because there was no independent workers' organisation.

In 1979 the working class was the main force and organiser in the revolution that overthrew the Shah.

It had created workers' councils that had controlled working conditions to such an extent that they chose whether to send oil to a country.

For example, no oil went from Iran to Israel or South Africa.

## Problems

Yadullah had thought that the workers' could organise to do what they wanted in Iran.

But it turned out there were two problems in the working class with roots in the past:

■ The workers didn't have a socialist outlook and the political parties were separate and not

under the control of the working class.

■ The effect of religion among the workers and toiling people.

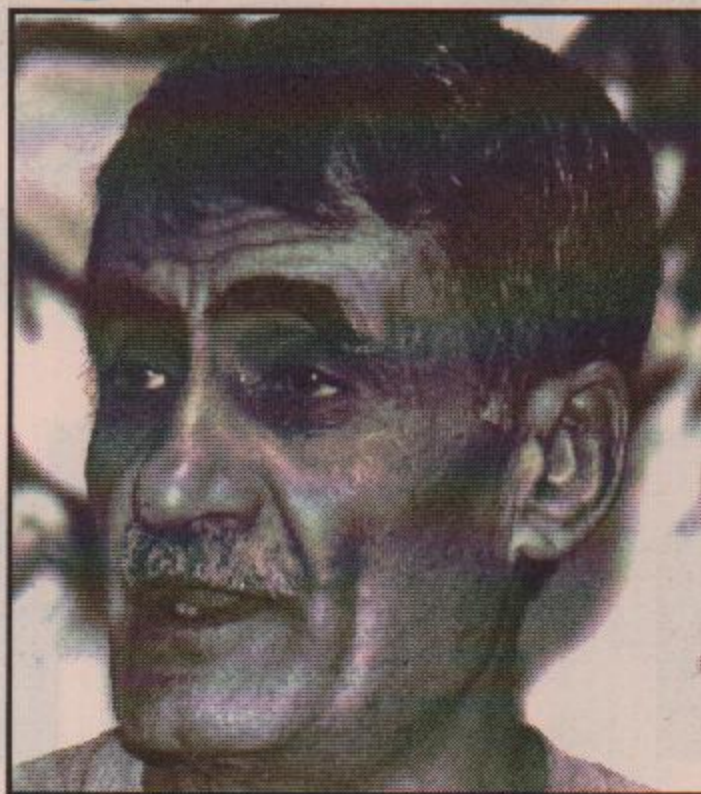
The lesson Yadullah drew from this was that every working-class movement had to have as part of its programme the separation of church and state.

The Iranian people hadn't known the effect of religion. They didn't understand that the Mullahs would lead in their own interests.

Only because of their illusions in religion, the workers' councils handed over their arms to the Mullahs — the representatives of capital in Iran.

Yadullah criticised Tony Benn MP when he took miners to church. He should have told them that religion was against them. The church wasn't separate from the army, they worked together.

Yadullah stressed that it was impossible for parliaments to



Yadullah Khosrashahi

rule in the interests of the working class — they were the instruments of the ruling class.

It was important not just to rely on step-by-step struggles, we had to look to the future. If we didn't tell workers that the church and parliament were against them we would have betrayed them.

## Condemn human rights violations in Iran

The Iranian Refugee Workers' proposed the following resolution to be put to all trade union organisations for submission to the British TUC's general council and similar bodies in other countries:

[NAME of organisation] notes the overwhelming support for the TUC 1994 amended resolution No.89 on Iran:

'Congress notes with deep concern the following regarding the Iranian regime:

'(i) the extensive and brutal repression of workers' protests and demonstrations in many

large industries, including the Jahan Chit (fabrics) Company, the Tabriz Tractor Manufacturing Company, Behshhehr Fabric Production Company, Shiraz Transport workers, Tehran Municipal workers, all of whom were involved in protests in various Iranian towns and cities against the violation of human rights by the ruling religious-dictatorship in Iran;

(ii) abuse and repression of workers and the degradation of having slave-like conditions imposed on them and denying their basic rights, including the right to participate in assemblies based on the Convention 87 and set up trade unions;

(iii) according to Kemali, the Minister for Labour: 'The Iranian workers' level of wages is at present a third of the minimum subsistence level'; and

(iv) the expulsion of a great number of workers, in particular women workers, without any payment of any compensation and with no security for their future.

In view of the above, Congress:

'(a) strongly condemns the systematic and extensive violation of human rights by the clerical regime in Iran, including the arbitrary arrest, torture and execution of workers and women, and while condemning the discrimination against workers, urges the Iranian regime to take immediate measures to improve their living conditions and increase their wages;

'(b) expresses its support for the struggle of the Iranian people for democracy;

'(c) urges the General Council to ask the ICFTU and the ILO to

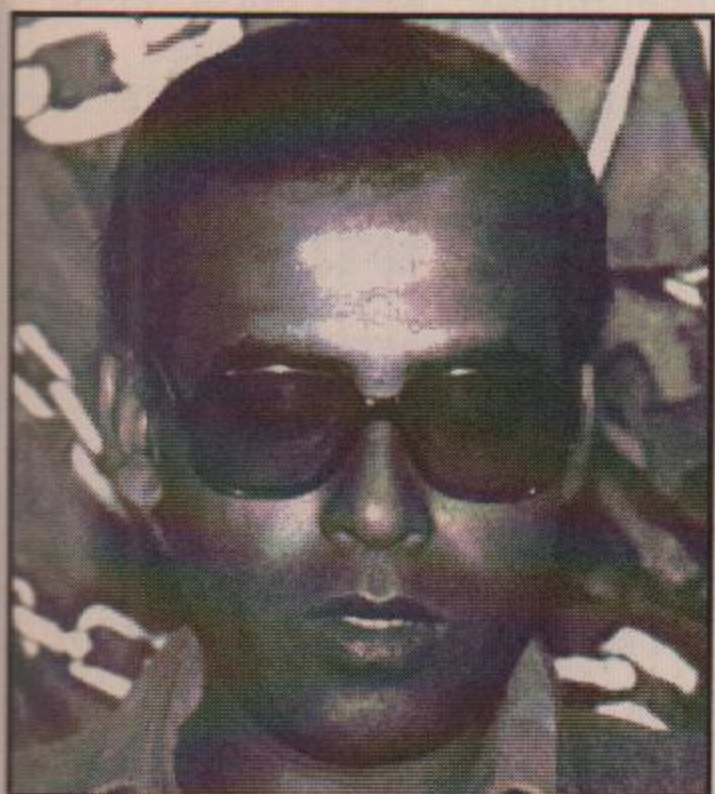
send a fact-finding delegation to investigate the condition of workers and to prepare a comprehensive report on the subject.'

In view of the further recent mass demonstrations and clashes of people with the Iranian regime in Tehran and Mashhad, we urge the TUC General Council to speedily pursue paragraph (c) of the resolution No.89 and recommend that a few Iranian trade unionists, currently in exile, with a long track record of organising in Iran accompany the fact-finding delegation.

The Iranian Refugee Workers Association confirms it is prepared to send a few organisers of workers' formations, with over 25 years of trade union activity in Iran, along with the fact-finding delegation.

## Unite on basis of workers' interests!

## Report from Bangladesh



Mojibur Rahman

**MOJIBUR RAHMAN** from the National Garment Workers' Federation of Bangladesh reported on the conditions in the industry his union represented. Workers generally earned about £7 to £8 a month.

Some employers wouldn't give

their workers their salary for two or three months. The average working week was around 80 to 100 hours.

Human rights were violated every moment of the day, said Mojibur.

The employers in Bangladesh were sub-contractors and the majority of the money made on the garments went into the pockets of the multinationals.

Workers needed to unite against the multinational compa-

nies — there was no other way to survive.

The National Garment Workers' Federation were trying to organise a trade union independent from the government and management.

In Bangladesh trade union organisations were currently divided on the basis of political parties. Mojibur thought they should be united on the basis of workers' interests and not on the basis of these political parties.

## 'Trade unions can't restrict struggle to "economics"'

**GEOFF PILLING** moved the main resolution of the conference (printed in last week's Workers Press). He said the trade union movement was in crisis:

- in some countries it was brutally suppressed;
- in others it was the catspaw of reactionary governments; and,
- in the imperial countries it was led by those who accepted the rule of capital.

The task of rebuilding the movement was not national but international. It wasn't that there weren't particular national tasks for the movement in each country, but capital was an interna-

tional force. The growth of multinationals, able to close and open production at will, meant that capital was completely mobile. This movement of capital was part of the war against the working class.

This trend was inaccurately called globalisation — capital was always international. But now it was more conspicuously so.

Why was the attack on trade unions so central to the needs of capital, Pilling asked. He answered by saying that capital needed a new relationship with the working class with workers

completely stripped of any rights or control over their lives.

This had long been so in the colonial and semi-colonial countries, but it was now becoming the case in the big capitalist countries.

The Liverpool dockers' fight against casualisation was international in scope — capital wanted to break all existing agreements with trade unions. Labour was to become an immediate source of profit with no ability to defend itself.

These trends were part of capital's decay. It even had to brutally exploit young children. It was a bankrupt system, but it was still there.

Trade unions couldn't restrict themselves to 'economic' questions. The question was posed how the whole working class could be united in political action against capital to defend itself.

Immigration laws could not be dealt with on an 'economic' level because the state was involved. The movement to repeal the anti-immigration laws was profoundly political.

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## City Lights

## Jobs fraud

The Tory so-called job 'training' programmes have been attacked from various quarters — mainly because they give little real training and are in reality one of the many devices for keeping the unemployment figures down.

But another aspect of these programmes has now come to light — the government's £1.3bn training programme has provided rich pickings for a number of the country's more fraudulent firms. So great is the extent of the fraud that the Department of Education and Employment has been forced to set up a special unit to keep track of a growing scandal.

Falsification of attendance records by employers, duplicate claims, forged certificates and claims for people who never attended courses have been uncovered in Durham, Merseyside, Leeds, Cumbria and elsewhere.

The investigation, originally opposed by the government, followed allegations concerning a company called UJHP Training after the firm had claimed money for students who had never attended courses.

As a result £165,000 has had to be repaid for training in Cumbria that never actually took place.

These findings come shortly after police were called in to investigate a private college in Greenwich to investigate an alleged fraud which netted the college concerned £1,000 a student.

Labour is hot on stamping out so-called benefit fraud. But, as you will not be shocked to learn, it has made little mention of this sort of fraudulent activity.

## Caveat emptor

AS YOU potential house buyers out there will no doubt have noticed, the building societies are now luring people with mortgages that temporarily cut borrowing rates, along with other bells and whistles such as cash-back offers.

The building societies are making these wonderful offers as a result of the money flooding into their coffers in anticipation of yet more take-overs and mergers.

For those carpetbaggers fortunate enough to hold deposits in the societies concerned this will bring big cash bonuses and share hand-outs. That is why they are keeping their money in the building societies likely to be involved in mergers, even though they may not be getting the rate of return they could get elsewhere.

This means that the societies are currently flooded with 'trapped' money and do not need to compete for savings against the banks and other financial institutions. Hence their generous offers. During 1995, £15bn in net retail savings flooded into the building societies, far in excess of the £9bn demanded for mortgages.

The dangers are obvious. House buyers tempted today could so easily be left high and dry tomorrow when current depositors have moved on, loan rates have jumped and house prices have declined.

Little wonder that the Bank of England recently directed a warning to the building societies that they could be fuelling the next bad debt crisis in the housing market. In central banking parlance the Old Lady warned that the societies should 'continue to assess carefully the terms on which they write business'.

## German payments cuts

THE size of last weekend's demonstration in Bonn should come as no surprise when the size of the cuts in welfare benefits now proposed by the Kohl government is considered.

Last week the German gov-

ernment announced cuts in unemployment pay alone that by the year 2000 will total £7.2bn.

Labour minister Norbert Blüm claimed that the cuts would create more flexibility at the workplace, encourage more people to take part-time working and create more jobs, though he refused to say how many.

In fact they aim to lessen the burden of taxation on the employers and impose it on those least able to bear it.

The measures, due to operate from next year will raise the age at which workers can draw unemployment benefit for an extended period.

Under present arrangements, those made unemployed at 42 are entitled to 18 months' full unemployment pay. If they have dependants that is 67 per cent of previous income, while for single people it is over 60 per cent.

The government proposes to raise that minimum age to 45 with a sliding scale that would provide full employment pay for longer periods the older a person became unemployed.

A 57-year-old would get 32 months' full unemployment pay while anyone below 45 would receive just one year's benefit and the much less generous unemployment assistance afterwards.

The idea is to keep as many as possible at work and thus contributing to the social security bill. But whatever else it does it will make it even harder for young people to enter the labour market.

Further government measures would also make it more difficult for an unemployed person to turn down a job offer, oblige many part-time, low-paid workers to make social security contributions and would count redundancy payments against social security benefits.

Much of the recent talk about a revival in the German economy was dampened last week with the Bundesbank's latest assessment of growth prospects for the economy.

The bank points to 'rays of hope' but says that there are no signs of any clear breakthrough to improved economic activity. It pointed to the continuing stagnation of investment, the low level of capacity utilisation, and poor levels of consumer demand as indications that the economic slump may well intensify during the rest of the year.

## Needless warning?

THE leaders of the Labour Party have received a new warning of the consequences of allowing public spending to rise should they form the next government.

Inflation at 25 per cent, public sector borrowing running at a tenth of the national income, together with rapidly rising unemployment will result from any attempt to restore employment levels to those of the 1960s.

The warning comes in a recent book (*Britain's Economic Problems Revisited*, Macmillan Press) by two Oxford economists who became famous for a brief period in the 1970s when they proposed that the ills of the British economy arose from too much public spending and too big a 'non-market' sector in the economy. This thesis, proposed by Robert Bacon and Walter Eltis, was greeted warmly in Thatcherite circles.

It provided the justification for much of government policy after 1979 — cut back state spending and switch the burden of taxes onto goods rather than incomes. It was a policy that led to a massive redistribution of income from poor to rich.

Despite the criticism that the original thesis met with, the authors, far from recanting, say that the crisis they pointed to in the mid-1970s lies lurking still, ready to return.

Whether the Labour leaders need to be warned about the dangers of a return to Keynesian-type policies I leave you to judge.

**Threadneedle**

# Right blocks Bosnia unity

# Abacha regime prime suspect for murder

**RIGHT-WING** Croat nationalists have rejected efforts to reunify Bosnia and Herzegovina, by declaring a new 'Herzeg-Bosna' government for the area they control, in western Herzegovina.

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

In an announcement broadcast last week from Mostar, still divided although municipal elections are due on 30 June, they named Pero Markovic, a headline separatist, as 'prime minister'.

Vladimir Soljic is to remain 'defence minister' — although he is supposed to be Defence Minister of the US-brokered Bosnian-Croat federation.

Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic denounced the move to renew the Herzeg-Bosna statelet as illegal.

Herzeg-Bosna was set up by Croat nationalists with backing from Croatia's President Tudjman, who conspired with Serbia's Milosevic to carve up Bosnia in line with UN partition plans. Muslims and Serbs were evicted from west Mostar, and mainly-Muslim east Mostar was subjected to ferocious bombardment. Croats who took a stand against the nationalists were assassinated.

Behind the HVO militia and Ustashe fascists, mafia gangsters like the notorious 'Tuta' got rich from extortion and racketeering, while doing Tudjman's dirty work, and don't intend to surrender their power.

Tudjman treated 'Herzeg-Bosna' as part of Croatia for last year's elections, whatever he promised at Dayton.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) team overseeing Bosnian elections rejected a joint list of candidates for Mostar put up by Bosnian opposition parties, saying the deadline had passed.

## Agreement

The Social-Democratic Party (SDP), the Union of Bosnia-Herzegovina Social Democrats (UBSD), Muslim Bosniak Organization (MBO), Croat Peasant Party (HSS) and Republican Party (RS) have agreed to run together in the upcoming general elections under the name Joint List For Bosnia.

Stjepan Klujic of the Republican Party said none of the parties had been properly informed of the final date for submitting lists of candidates. East Mostar Mayor Safet Orucevic appealed to the

EU administration in Mostar to enable the Joint List to run.

War crimes prosecutor Judge Richard Goldstone has criticised NATO's haste to get Bosnian elections over while failing to tackle war criminals like Radovan Karadzic. The right-wing Serb Radical Party leader Seselj has promised backing to Karadzic to hold his 'Republika Srpska'.

Karadzic's opponents are attacked, and Muslim refugees beaten up or killed if they try to return. Yet the Clinton administration is pressing OSCE to say everything's OK.

## Mess

'The only thing these elections are going to accomplish at this time is to seal into power the very people responsible for this mess in the first place,' said a critic. 'They seem to have the attitude that any elections are better than none at all... I thought to myself, how are you going to work out who votes where.'

'I mean, are refugees from Srebrenica going to vote in Tuzla? Are refugees from Serb Sarajevo going to vote in Zvornik? Their whole attitude struck me as let's just get on with it, let's get it over. I'm really afraid that they're going to just pass a ruling that people are going to vote in whatever district they have happened to land in.'

'How can we have elections in the present situation?' asks Mirsad, an elderly refugee from Serb-held Bijeljina, now in Tuzla. 'If they don't allow me to return to my home, how am I supposed to vote? It's all really a very bad joke. I can't vote in Tuzla because I am from Bijeljina, and even if I could go back the only choice I have to vote for is the seven bastards that did this to me in the first place. There is no way to have elections for me.'

'What these foreigners with their plans do, I do not care,' said another Bijeljina refugee. 'Sooner or later I will go home in war or peace, but I will go home.'

President Alia Izetbegovic's Muslim SDA party is ambivalent or divided over unification.

Rather than pursue the right of return for Muslim refugees, it wants to use them as voting fodder in areas like Sarajevo, and multi-ethnic Tuzla, where the Social Democrats led by Mayor Beslagic remains running the local council.

The SDA has begun bussing refugees from Srebrenica to Sarajevo, to take homes vacated by Serbs, thus conniving at 'ethnic cleansing'.

Some 7,000 Serbs remained in Sarajevo suburbs like Ilija, resisting Karadzic's supporters who tried to make them leave. Now there are reports of attacks and evictions by groups of Muslims, some of them from Serb-held areas elsewhere, looking for a home.

Unlike Beslagic, who went out personally to stop harassment around Tuzla, the authorities in Sarajevo have been slow to intervene, and there are reports police officers are involved.

Goran Kapor, a Serb opposed to Karadzic's nationalists, says people hoped for a return to the ethnic tolerance before the war.

'A lot of them stayed because I encouraged them to and because they saw that my wife and baby were staying. Now I am afraid that something will happen to them and I'll be responsible.'

Kapor sees a political motive in all this. He said the SDA wants to get rid of Serbs whose votes in the next elections are unreliable, and bring in Muslims who would be grateful for a home.



Detroit Free Press strikers — see page 3

## Farm union claims victory

ONE of the longest struggles in union history ended recently, with a contract for 450 farm workers at Bruce Church Inc., after almost 18 years of boycotts, lawsuits, rallies and marches. Workers who picked the company's Red Coach lettuce, mainly in Salinas Valley, California, came out on strike in 1979.

With backing from the AFL-CIO unions, the United Farm Workers (UFW) launched a national boycott which led 10 supermarket chains to stop selling Red Coach lettuce.

UFW President Cesar Chavez, who devoted much of his life to the fight, died of natural causes in Yuma, Arizona, on 23 April 1993, after two days of testimony in a lawsuit related to the strike. His son-in-law Arturo Rodriguez, current UFW president, said the agreement was the greatest monument to Chavez. Today's ceremony affirms that Cesar's dream of democracy and collective bargaining for farm workers is alive and well.

The five-year agreement provides for pay increases of four per cent in the first year, followed by two per cent in the second, third and fourth years and three per cent in the fifth, bringing the average wage to \$8.56 an hour, according to the union.

The deal also brings paid holidays, a pension fund, and medical

coverage, including dental and optical care. In some places workers will receive a \$1-an-hour housing allowance.

BCI has agreed the UFW will represent all its workers. There are to be labour-management safety committee limitations on the use of pesticides and promotion of the use of protective clothing. Rodriguez has promised the union will help the company compete with non-union firms.

## Janitors aim to sweep out poverty

MORE than 5,000 janitors in the San Francisco Bay area have been staging selective strikes affecting three-quarters of the area's office buildings in a fight for a better deal.

The janitors voted 30-1 for action after negotiations with the Western Management Alliance, representing eight contract cleaning companies, broke down on 1 June.

The contractors failed to meet any of the union's demands, which included family health insurance, training, and wage increases. The Service Employees' International Union (SEIU) estimates that two-thirds of its members fall below the federal poverty level.

'The contractors gave us no choice but to increase the pressure,' Local 1877 President Mike

Garcia said. 'They wouldn't offer anything near an acceptable proposal. We don't believe they are bargaining in good faith, and workers are reporting a campaign of interrogation and threats at work sites.'

The union filed more than a dozen unfair labor practice charges in the week leading up to the strike after workers reported threats, interrogation and interference with union activity.

'It's bad enough they won't pay us enough to make a decent life for our children,' said Luz Savala, a member of the bargaining committee. 'Now they're abusing our rights on top of it.'

About a dozen workers were arrested for blocking traffic after a 400-strong rally in downtown Oakland. Earlier some 300 had taken over the 'gateway to Silicon Valley' by blocking traffic into San Jose international airport.

Janitors marched through posh downtown Palo Alto to the gates of Stanford University, where some students joined in support.

The local has been promised backing by Labor Councils representing trade unionists around the Bay area. 'We are also contacting SEIU locals in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, Seattle and Denver,' said Jon Barton, organizing director for the Master Contract Campaign.

'The companies that employ our members have branches in those cities, and we are prepared to show them we are united.'

hospital, but died from head wounds.

The regime blamed the killings on 'hoodlums' at first, but on Friday 14 June police arrested family members including Abiola's brother Mubashiru, and Kola, his son by a previous marriage. The regime is trying to pretend that differences within the family amounted to a bloody feud.

But the exiled opposition paper *Forward Nigeria* comments in its first issue:

'For many Nigerians there can be no doubt whatsoever about the origins of this latest atrocity. All the high profile Nigerians murdered or nearly butchered in the last three years have been outspoken critics of Abacha and his gang. The fact that the self-styled head-of-state ordered the arrest of Kudirat Abiola on spurious charges only a month ago is known to all Nigerians.'

Chief Abiola was clear winner in the presidential election of 12 June 1993, on a reform programme, but the military held on to power. General Sani Abacha took over.

When Abiola returned and declared himself president in 1994 he was arrested and charged with treason. The trial has repeatedly been postponed, and he is kept in virtual solitary confinement in one room in Abuja.

Differences within the president's family were encouraged by Abacha, who suggested he might negotiate with a different lawyer.

## Confirmed

*Forward Nigeria* says Kudirat insisted that only her husband could confirm who represented him, whereas Kola let his own lawyer offer to do so. Abacha had meanwhile refused a court order to produce Abiola in court.

Now, with Kudirat out of the way the general will try to implicate Kola, thus killing two birds with one stone.

Having executed the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa in the face of worldwide protests, the Abacha regime behaved with similar brutal arrogance recently, arresting 13-year-old John Paul Mokuolo as a hostage for his father, who is related to a former head-of-state.

The boy is a British citizen, and the Foreign Office was forced to say something after his MP, Labour's Glenda Jackson, raised the case. But the regime continued to prevent him leaving Nigeria, and according to Yomi Ojetunde, an opposition activist, it is holding hundreds of youngsters in its dungeons.

'This is what we have been trying for years to sensitise the world to. This is the sort of barbaric behaviour that Nigerians have been subjected to in thirteen years of military rule.'

'There is only one word for the situation in Nigeria and that is grim,' Chief Anthony Enaharo, 73, an early campaigner for independence and co-chairman of the opposition National Democratic Coalition said in London last week. Enaharo, who said he was one of many in exile for fear of their lives, urged that sanctions be extended against Nigerian oil.

# Workers Press

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