

There is no British solution, Mr Adams!

'WHEN things are getting slow and boring, what you must do is have a man come into the room with a gun in his hand'. The advice of the great thriller writer Raymond Chandler on how to keep a crime novel moving along at an exciting pace might have been a comment on Irish politics this century. Only for Ireland you would have to amend it to read: "... with a gun or a bomb in his hand". The Provisional IRA's bomb in East London has certainly moved things along nicely. Where before the bomb there had been a year and a half of stalemate, stagnation and political immobility, now Britain and Dublin have set 10 June as a firm date for the opening of "all-party talks".

The Provisional IRA set off the Docklands bomb; but politically the responsibility for the breakdown of the 17-month Provisional IRA ceasefire must be laid squarely at the feet of John Major and the Tory Party. They negotiated a ceasefire — and then, instead of proceeding to all-party talks, raised the ante again and again. The Tories made the additional demand that, first, the Provisional IRA must "decommission" its arms. This demand was understood by the Provisional IRA as a demand for surrender. Stalemate followed.

In November 1995 a Commission under US Senator Mitchell was set up to ensure that President Clinton had a smooth, "triumphant" and electorally lucrative visit to Belfast. Mitchell took on the job of finding a formula to ending the stalemate. His commission's essential work was to adjudicate between the hostile positions of the Provisional IRA and its "pan-nationalist" allies on one side and the British government and the Unionists on the other: could all-party talks go ahead before the Provisional IRA "decommissioned" its arms? Mitchell proposed evading the issue, and advocated simultaneous talks and (token) decommissioning. It was an implicit rejection of the Tory line of the previous 17 months. Immediately, the Tories changed tack again.

Instead of Mitchell's main recommendation they opted for elections in the Six Counties — that is, to throw the entire "peace process" back into the bearpit where the majority and minority positions are fixed and have, for decades, proved immovable. They acted without consulting Dublin, although they were obliged to consult under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, which is a binding international treaty. This appeared to be a jerky change of direction. The new departure in the last decade has been the creation of a much broader London/Dublin/European framework in which to try to adjust the Northern Ireland imbroglio.

The British government decision for Northern Ireland elections ignalled to the Provisional IRA yet again that Britain would raise roadblock after roadblock to progress



Major, Bruton et al try to find an Anglo-Irish solution

in the way the Provisional IRA leaders had thought (and told their supporters) things were moving in August 1994. Ostentatiously the British government rode roughshod over the views of the Catholic-Irish constitutional-nationalists — the Dublin government and the Northern Ireland SDLP — on whose influence, as part of the "pan-nationalist alliance", the Provisionals counted for assistance.

The Provisionals went into the ceasefire not because they had been defeated in war, or because they thought they had already won the core of what they fought for, but because they bought the delusion that the "Pan-Nationalist Alliance" of Dublin, the SDLP and Irish-US politicians could force Britain to "persuade" — that is, coerce — the Unionists into accepting the essentials of what they wanted.

It was a delusion. The British government was unwilling to coerce the Protestants. It would probably be unable to coerce them even if wanted to. Nor, indeed, could it be desirable for the British government to coerce them into submitting to the core Provisional IRA demand for a united Ireland. A change from half a million alienated Catholics in the Six Counties to approximately one million alienated Protestants in a 32 county state would not be progress on any level.

Even if the Unionists could be got to all-party talks, the talks could not satisfy both sides. The longer the truce lasted without talks, the better — so the British government probably reasoned. That is why they disappointed, and were bound to disappoint, the Provisionals.

The Provisional IRA, who had made their ceasefire in the expectation of quick gains secured by the political pressure of Dublin and the Irish-Americans, were thus faced first with the demand for what they saw as surrender, and then with what looked like a lurch back to a new phase of Belfast self-rule, with an immovable built-in majority

against them.

The essence of the situation is that the Six Counties of Northern Ireland is an artificial, historically unviable entity. Catholics in the Six Counties number about 42%, and were never less than 35%, of the population. They are the majority in perhaps half the land area. They have always been a bigger minority in the Six Counties than that which the whole Protestant-Unionist population would be in a 32-county Ireland. In Northern Ireland, the historic all-Ireland Catholic-Protestant conflict is reproduced in vicious miniature, with the minority-majority roles artificially reversed. As a solution to the all-Ireland minority-majority problem, the Six-Counties entity is undemocratic nonsense. That is the underlying rationale for which the Provisional IRA is doing. That is why it is hypocritical rant and cant for Tories and Blairites to give them lectures on "democracy". The imprisoned nationalist minority can not win by head-counting with the Six Counties.

But the Provisionals cannot win by war, either. Theirs is a tragic late remnant of a national war of liberation, fought by a fragment of the Catholic Irish people, locked within the Six-Counties bearpit state in murderous conflict with the Protestant-Unionist Irish minority. The only way to solve the bloody and destructive impasse in Northern Ireland is to unite substantial sections of the two communities around a programme which can be recognised as reasonable and democratic by both — and Provisional IRA bombs and bullets necessarily, inevitably, make that task more difficult.

In what they do, the Provisional IRA ignore the wishes of the overwhelming majority in Ireland, including the will of the Six Counties Catholic majority, which is mainly SDLP — constitutional nationalist — in its politics. The Provisional IRA is an enemy of all rational, democratic, working-class solutions.

Partition is now a 75-year old fact. The ▶

Israel-Palestine

The way to peace is equal rights

By Michel Warshawsky

UNBEARABLE, THESE images of mutilated bodies, little girls covered with blood, and mutilated children, images which the television channels abuse and the politicians of all stripes abuse.

Deaths claimed by Hamas, but predictable too. You would have to be very short-sighted to believe that the assassination by the Israel secret service of the most famous of the military activists of Hamas, Yihya Ayash, would pass without a spectacular backlash.

This is not the end of the Israeli-Palestinian talks and cooperation. We are likely to see more of the same. The Israelis will put pressure on the Palestinian national authorities and on the Palestinian people in general.

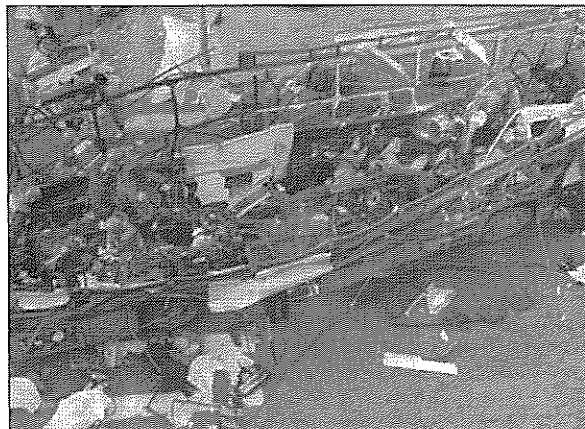
This will be futile pressure, with collective punishment and hostage-taking used against the Palestinians without any reference to whether or not this will work to stop the suicide bombings. There is no reason whatsoever why the Israeli army should need to re-enter Gaza permanently. The whole process will continue.

Arafat will do what the Israelis ask him to,

though he knows that he has a better alternative which has already been blocked by the Israeli government on three occasions, namely, to reach an agreement with Hamas. That is why so much of the responsibility for what has happened lies with the Israeli state.

We blame the Israeli government totally for the suicide operations. They have tried to use military methods to deal with what is essentially a political problem. Everything has gone as if the Israeli government were taken in by its own propaganda and believed naively that James Bond type operations could really put an end to the outrages — that peace could be imposed on the Palestinians by military methods and humiliating dictates.

The real way to protect the population is a genuine policy of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation, which has got nothing to do with the present talks known as the "peace process".



Hamas bomb attack

What is needed is respect for the Palestinians, full equality, and reorientation towards total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and the dismantling of the settlements.

● Michel Warshawsky is a leader of the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen) in Israel.

From page 3 Protestant minority will not be coerced into a united Ireland — neither by the Provisional IRA nor by the British. The Provisional IRA campaign has mainly had the effect of retarding conciliation of the two communities and driving them further apart than they were 25 years ago. Pursuing the mechanical state-level unification of Ireland with guns and bombs for 25 years, the Provisional IRA has worked great harm to the cause of uniting the people of Ireland. It is one of the most malignant causes of present Irish disunity.

Unless the Provisional IRA declares a new ceasefire, Sinn Fein will be excluded from the peace talks. That is ironic. In their 17-month agitation for "all-party talks" to proceed despite a Protestant boycott, and in their demand that the British be "persuaders" of the Protestants, the Provisionals were demanding in effect that the British should proceed without the Protestants and, at the next stage, coerce them.

The political and moral decadence of the Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein form of "republicanism" is proclaimed by this fact: when the conventional "republican" double-talk is stripped away, they are trying to unite "Ireland" by coercing the British government into using the British army to force one million Irish people to accept Irish Catholic majority rule!

It is fantasy — reactionary, anti-republican fantasy — and a throwback to the old Irish-Unionist position, "the British solution is the only solution". The old all-Ireland

Unionists were rational, however, aiming for a "British solution" within the UK; the Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein are fantasists looking for a British solution to intra-Irish division to be embodied in an independent Ireland!

But there is no British solution to the division in the Irish people. There can only be an intra-Irish solution, a solution made by the people of Ireland.

Therefore, we say that the Provisionals are reactionaries. They are not republicans. Real Irish republicanism is now what it was when Wolfe Tone defined it: "to unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter". For us, the whole question is the unity of the Irish working class, "Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter."

We are entirely against the Provisional IRA campaign. Socialists should support neither Provisional IRA militarism nor any of their multifarious political fronts ("peace", "release the prisoners", etc.)

Is there a way forward? The Northern Ireland statelet, created by a nonsensical and undemocratic partition of Ireland, is unviable as a political unit. It denies the right of self-determination to a Catholic community numbering over 40 per cent of its population. But coercing the Protestant community into a united Ireland under Catholic domination — as the Provisionals would — can bring no progress. The demo-

cratic rights of both communities must be accommodated. This can be done only in a free federal united Ireland, with local autonomy for the Protestant-majority area, and with confederal links with Britain.

The job of Marxists, therefore, is to work for workers from both communities to unite around a programme of social advance (public investment and shorter hours for full employment, levelling-up of social provision, etc.) and consistent democracy.

We should assist any moves to establish a Labour Party in Northern Ireland based on the trade unions and uniting workers from both communities. The only real solution to Irish workers' problems, the only Irish Republic that is other than a mockery of all the past struggles of the Irish majority, is the Workers' Republic; and that Workers' Republic can be created only by a united working class, led by revolutionary Marxists.

In the first place, then, we must seek to mend the fragmentation and marginalisation of the left in Ireland by dialogue and debate. By dialogue and debate, also, we must seek to wake up the British left, which in our view has settled back into flaccid reveries and fantasies about a largely imaginary Ireland and scarcely relates to the existing Ireland and its real problems. With these aims, we publish a symposium presenting a wide range of Irish socialist opinion on the new situation after the breakdown of the ceasefire. Our pages will be open for further contributions to the debate. ■

Australia: Labor and the Accord swept away

Janet Burstall and Tony Brown report on the Australian election.

THE AUSTRALIAN Labor Party (ALP)'s nine seat majority has been wiped out in one of its biggest electoral defeats this century.

Nine Ministers lost their seats and the new Parliament will have a Coalition [Liberal/National] majority of around 45 in the 148 seat House of Representatives. Not since the massive anti-Labor landslides of 1975 and 1977 has Labor been so decimated at the polls.

Labor recorded its lowest primary vote (35%) since World War II. In Queensland Labor now holds only one seat while in South Australia there are two. In New South Wales, an ALP stronghold, large swings were recorded everywhere. Even in ultra safe working class seats there were heavy swings against Labor. Paul Keating suffered a 9% swing in his western Sydney seat.

After Saturday 2 March Labor has been reduced to representing only parts of metropolitan Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. It has no regional or rural representation to speak of.

Why?

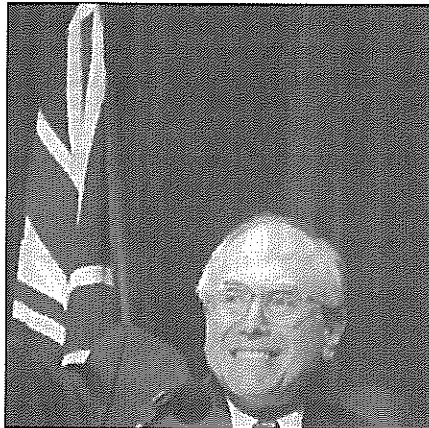
There are many young people who have grown up thinking that the ALP is the natural party of government. Some on the left have even encouraged this view. Yet Labor has only governed for thirty-three of the ninety-five years of this century. It has only won government thirteen times, including five since 1983.

Historically Labor in Australia has governed in times of national crisis — in both world wars, during the Depression, and again in 1983 following the deepest recession this century after the 1930s. Labor's role has been to restore social and economic calm in times of stress, to manage working class discontent, to put things back on an even keel.

During these last thirteen years Labor was once again the crisis manager, but it did more. Australia never had a bourgeois revolution, or industrial revolution. It had no feudal relations to overthrow and agriculture commenced on a capitalist basis. Indeed there was hardly any industrial development until between the first and second world wars. It had not developed a culture of innovative capitalist industrialisation. The industry that did develop was largely the result of state support through protection barriers and state supported arbitration.

A strong statist culture has developed in the absence of a strong modernising capitalist leadership.

Both the ALP and the ACTU (trade union) leaders proudly boasted in the mid



John Howard

1980s that as business and capital could not be relied on to provide economic leadership in the face of both a technological revolution and the dramatic realignment of production around the world, labour would step in and provide that leadership.

Labor deregulated the finance industry, cut tariffs, watered down the award system, eventually laying the foundations for enterprise bargaining to replace industry bargaining. It cut back social spending in order to produce budget surpluses. It privatised state owned businesses and introduced competition into telecommunications.

The leaders of the labour movement took the responsibility for being the best, most efficient of the capitalist managers.

In the process Labor managed three major economic recessions. The one it inherited in 1982/83 which led to hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs in manufacturing; in 1987 with the international stock market collapse; and, again in 1991, when interest rates hit 20%, more workers lost their jobs and many small businesses went bust.

Placing itself in the middle, trying to serve the interests of business while smoothing out the rough edges for workers caught in the restructuring of capitalism, Labor failed to satisfy either business or its working class constituency.

Labor opened up the economy by increasing its competitiveness, that is by enabling higher rates of profit for capital invested in Australia and for opening the way for Australian capital to invest overseas, and particularly in Asia, but business has wanted more.

Even though the profit share of GDP is at an historic high, and even though wages have been kept low, working conditions renegotiated everywhere and industrial action suppressed, inflation is low and taxation is the second lowest of all OECD countries, capital is not satisfied.

It now believes (although not unanimously, and not with overwhelming conviction in the Coalition's competence) that the Accord — the agreement between

Labor and the ACTU to keep wages down — has outlived its purpose. The Coalition's plans to extend industrial relations deregulation by emasculating the arbitration system, introducing individual contracts, further cutting social spending and privatising one third of Telstra will result in increased profit-taking.

The Coalition believes, and with some good reason, that it has little to fear from a weakened trade union movement. Union membership has fallen from 50% when Hawke won in 1983 to 35% today. In some new growth industries there is barely any union representation.

The ACTU's Accord has left the organised working class demobilised and out of practice at campaigning for their interests. Independent action has virtually ceased and there is little rank and file activity to speak of. It is a poor position to begin a fight against the attacks that are now being planned.

Falling wages and living standards

Workers have been hardest hit. Average wages for most categories of workers have fallen. Job security is rare and the average number of hours worked per week continues to rise.

Enterprise bargaining was introduced along with changes to the industrial law which were designed to foster a loyalty by workers to their employer. Increased productivity and improved international competitiveness were the goal, breaking down broader solidarity the means.

But there is large-scale suspicion on the shop and office floor to workplace reform. A government report by the Department of Industrial Relations, Enterprise Bargaining at Work, reported workers referring to a number of problems.

They included trading pay rises for changes in rosters, shift arrangements and the like. These deals might have increased pay but had also led to a downside such as a deteriorating sense of job security, higher stress levels, reduced input into decision making and waning employer-employee relations.

Many workers feel they are spending more time at work than they did before, placing more stress on their families.

So when Paul Keating said that "this is as good as it gets", or that growth, recovery and the good times are just around the corner, workers firstly stopped believing him, then switched off and finally began to wonder if Howard could do a better job.

Yet ironically Keating is probably right. In the context of Australian capitalism at the end of the twentieth century, this probably is as good as it gets.

Making wages dependent on industry profitability and national competitiveness makes it inevitable that living standards will decline.

For the past twelve months Labor has desperately tried to portray the Coalition as something equivalent to the vandals at the gates of national harmony. But Labor was compromised on so many issues.

It opposed Howard's plans to part privatise Telstra, yet it had privatised the Commonwealth Bank and QANTAS; it opposed the Coalition's deregulationist industrial relations policy, but it had introduced enterprise bargaining and effectively made awards (agreements processed through the public arbitration system) redundant for many workers. It claimed that the Liberals were working only in the interests of big business, but throughout the 1980s the ALP leaders went out of their way to demonstrate their commitment to the powerful such as Murdoch, Bond, Connell and Rivkin.

Labor should have heeded Joseph Schumpeter's old saying that "entrepreneurs generate gales of destruction." Instead they have reaped a bitter electoral harvest.

Who will write the history?

This defeat has been coming for some time. Only the Coalition's ineptness stopped them winning in 1987, 1990 and 1993. Each ALP election win seemed a reprieve from the inevitable and this is probably one of the reasons for the size of this defeat. It represents a lot of pent up frustration all being let loose at once.

Now the race is on within the labour movement to write the reasons for the

loss. The right know better than anyone that those who write the history set the agenda for the next period.

The surviving core of ex-Ministers are saying that the policies were all OK, it was just a matter of Labor being in office too long, that defeat had to come some time. They argue that with some reflection and perhaps some tinkering Labor should take up where it left off.

There are others in the right who are saying that Labor needs to go back to its base. They are equally committed to Labor's managerialism and offer no alternatives to the Hawke and Keating economic policies.

"Howard will try to imply that public servants are privileged fat cats, who want to keep their jobs at the expense of much needed services."

Thousands of members who identified themselves with the left simply walked out through the 1980s and 1990s. They flirted with supposedly left-wing alternatives. Those "progressive" parties set

themselves up as electoral alternatives and judging them on that criteria have proved to be miserable failures.

The left within and without the party is seriously weakened. It is time to realise that the labour movement as it exists, warts and all, is the labour movement that must be taken seriously. It is a fantasy and a dead-end to believe that an alternative labour movement can be manufactured.

The next stage

For now the battle will be taken up by the trade unions. Howard's war will be first and foremost against the unions. Enterprise agreements, individual contracts and anti-union laws and a showdown with the waterfront unions will be the starting point of the Howard government's policies, even though they were barely mentioned during the campaign. This is how the more combative companies hope to wring out more profits.

Howard's other main goal will be privatisation and cuts to jobs and conditions in what remains of the public sector. He will try to imply that public servants are privileged fat cats, who want to keep their jobs at the expense of much needed services despite the report published on the eve of the election that it was only because public pay rises had been so low that overall wages growth had come within the government's budget target.

His social conservatism will be bad news for all people already oppressed in this society, especially if the unions fail to resist Howard's attacks. "The family is the greatest system of social welfare devised by any society" will be translated into welfare cuts.

The family, read women, will be pressured to meet the needs of the elderly, frail, disabled and pre-school children. Migrants will be denied support they are now entitled to, once more at the expense of their families.

And the strong seam of racism that was tapped during the campaign will encourage attempts to turn back the modest recognition of Aboriginal needs under Labor.

ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty appears to be throwing down the gauntlet. Two days after the election he said the Accord was finished and with it the wage restraint that endured for thirteen years.

"If they declare war we too will fight. There is no way that I will ever turn my back on the union movement. This is about as exciting as it's going to get, and I'm going to be there."

For thirteen years Labor assisted the ruling class through a crisis. What has taken place during that time has been nothing less than the renegotiation of the political economy of Australian capitalism. The new government will step up the pace.

Kelty's willingness to fight could be a starting point to remobilise the labour movement, and for the left to revitalise itself and build a militant rank and file movement. We can begin by campaigning to hold him to his promise. ■

Ford's workers stand by their man

By Janine Booth

WORKERS at Ford's car plant in Dagenham are prepared to strike in defence of a gay colleague. Tom Atherton was the victim of a homophobic assault by a foreman, but now faces the sack.

The foreman threw Atherton through a plate glass window after shouting at him "What the fuck do you want, you big fucking queer?"

The attack resulted in heavy blood loss, and a doctor was called to counsel other workers on the dangers of HIV transmission. Although the company claims that a doctor is always called in cases of blood spillage, assembly workers say this is not true, and protested over the "HIV panic reaction" in calling the doctor.

When a supervisor when to help him, Atherton — dazed through blood loss — lashed out. He now faces discipline and dismissal. The foreman who attacked him keeps his job, being reinstated after an investigative suspension.

This incident sees Ford completing

a hat-trick of hatred: within the last month, they have been caught out being both racist and sexist.

Black workers had their faces "air-brushed" white in a photograph in an advertising brochure: although black workers are good enough to make cares, Ford seems to think they are not good enough to advertise them.

Ford also published a sexist advert in their in-house magazine which was then pulped following complaints.

The car workers' union, TGWU is backing the victimised gay worker. Panel beaters and welders have said they will strike. Atherton has sworn he will take his case to tribunal.

Atherton claims never to have experience homophobic abuse previously in his ten years working at Ford. The homophobic assault by the foreman, and the subsequent victimisation by Ford, has prompted workers to unite in solidarity with their gay colleague.

They probably don't got to Pride every year or join Outrage! zapping closet clergy, but they won't stand for a fellow worker being attacked and victimised by his bosses.

The new workers' movement in South Korea

MINJU-MOCHONG, the new umbrella organisation of the democratic trade union movement in South Korea, was founded on 11 November 1995 and has more than 400,000 members.

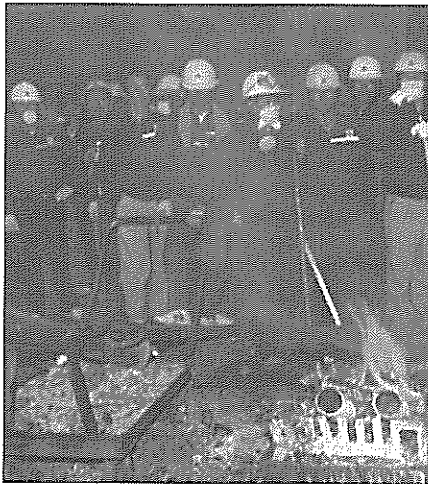
After the Korean war (of 1950-3), under the military regime, enterprise unions were introduced, under the control of the loyalist Federation of Korean Trade Unions. The trade union movement revived again after 1970. A symbol for this revival was a young textile worker, Chun Tael-Il, who burned himself to death in 1972. Textiles were then the most important branch of the South Korean economy.

Chun Tael-Il set fire to himself with the labour law on his knees. His declaration: "We are people, not machines" gave the orientation for the slowly-forming workers' movement. In the 1970s there were repeated strike movements, but they were defeated. Then came the social unrest of 1979-80.

The popular uprising in Kwangju in 1980 and its bloody suppression led to the transition to a further phase of dictatorship, which lasted until 1987. Set off by the death under torture of a student in a police station, the bourgeois-democratic movement developed. In the summer the movement spread to the factories and the workers. The strike waves lasted three months. In this struggle arose new, democratic trade unions in the workplaces, independent from the FKTU. In 1990 the National Council of democratic trade unions, Chon No Hyop, was founded. But a large section of the trade unions, especially in the big enterprises, remained outside it, because they feared that they would be illegalised if they joined the national federation. The industrial unions like those on the railways, the Underground, print, and hospitals, stayed outside one same grounds.

However, in 1994 a preparatory committee was set up to prepare the founding of an umbrella organisation for 1995. The state power tried to hinder this project. A string of activists were arrested and convicted. On the basis of the law on "Banning the Intervention of Third Parties", trade unionists active across or outside workplaces were persecuted.

On 11 November 1995 the new umbrella organisation, the KCTU (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions), was founded. The founding congress took place on the campus of Yonsei University. Trade union banners were put up all over the campus. The evening belonged to the masses: the university grounds were turned into a great people's festival, with 20,000 attending. As it was reported that the labour minister declared the new federation illegal, the speaker commented that the labour laws could not stop the movement. If all the workers stopped work for just one hour, the laws would become ineffective. More



Korean workers are becoming a powerful force

and more new groups came from workplace trade unions, some in work clothes, demonstrating their participation with huge trade union banners. Celebrations went on through the night. The next morning there was a big demonstration in Seoul, to which over 70,000 people came from across the country.

The police held back during the celebrations, although precisely in recent months strikes and demonstrations have been beaten down with great brutality. Obviously the Kim Young Sam regime wanted to maintain the appearance of its democratic legitimacy, and did not want to stir up too much dust through open action.

Because of the threatening criminalisation of the new trade union movement, international support and solidarity is especially important. IG Metall (the giant German metalworkers' union) has promised to support the new federation politically.

On 23 November the new president of the KCTU was arrested when he delivered the new federation's application for recognition to the labour ministry.

The struggle of the south Korean trade unions has firmly outlined immediate political goals: the abrogation of the "Ban on the Intervention of the Third Parties", the recognition of the new trade unions, the liberation of all jailed trade unionists, the reinstatement of all workers sacked for trade union and strike activities.

In January three South Korean trade unionists, Kyu Hyung Zin, Sik Hwa Jung and Kwon Heon Kook, visited Germany and spoke to the socialist newspaper *Sozialistische Zeitung*. They are employed at Kefico, an electronics company in which the German firm Bosch has an interest.

"Since 1987", they said, "wages have clearly increased. However, even in the big enterprises the basic wage only covers minimal subsistence. The workers in small and middle-sized enterprises get much less.

"Working hours have repeatedly been

shortened since 1987.

"Korean workers work on average 50 hours a week, although the legal working week is 44 hours. In workplaces with bad conditions they work almost 60 hours a week. Besides, there is hardly any welfare system. About 2,700 workers died through accidents in the workplace in 1994, that is, about seven or eight a day.

"Our trade union at Kefico was founded in 1987. The process of democratisation in South Korea was very helpful for us. Our trade union has fought very actively and successfully for the improvement of work conditions and increases in wages. Of course we have also fought politically for a better system of society.

"There are three important laws against the workers' movement in South Korea. The first is the "Ban on the Intervention of Third Parties in Labour Disputes"; the second is the ban on political activity by trade unions; and finally there is the ban on dual trade unions, that is, if the FKTU is present, no other trade union can be established.

"Since 1987 we have fought successfully for wage increases. Therefore we have a relatively high level of wages. So South Korean businesses want to bring in foreign workers because they do not want such high wages as we do. Foreign workers are supposed to come to Korea only as probationers on industrial training programmes, where they get low wages. About 100,000 foreign workers are in South Korea. They mostly work in small enterprises under very bad conditions. Their wages are only 40 per cent of Korean workers. Various social groups campaign for the foreign employees to have equal rights... Up to now the trade unions have not yet bothered very much with this. But in future we will stand up for equal rights for these people."

Sozialistische Zeitung asked about Korean capital moving to other countries with lower wage rates.

"Up to now we did not think about this. Our work conditions were very bad. But in future we will practise international solidarity." *SoZ* also asked about the Korean trade unionists' impressions of the German labour movement.

"On the one hand we were very satisfied, but on the other somewhat disappointed. We have seen that IG Metall is really very strong and thus confirms our idea that it signifies a great power for the workers against capital. On the other hand we have an impression of the big German trade unions being bureaucratised. There is only a defensive strategy against Lean Production and Team Working."

● Translated, abridged and adapted from *Sozialistische Zeitung* of 25 January 1996 and 8 February 1996. Contact *SoZ* at Daselstrasse 75-77, 5064 Köln, Germany.