

NIGERIA - LABOUR

1980 - 1998

S.I.A.R. 14/8/80  
Two injured, 120 held  
in Nigeria factory riot 227

From the Financial Times

LAGOS — Michelin's Nigerian tyre manufacturing plant has been closed for four weeks after night-shift workers ransacked the factory and injured two management personnel, Mr George Rouzier, the managing director, has said in Lagos

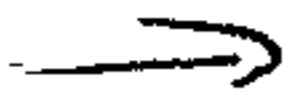
Hundreds of workers in the factory at Port Har-

court went on the rampage on the night of August 8-9, wrecked the laboratory, raided the administrative offices and threw papers on the floor

By the time anti-riot police arrived four hours after they had been called, windscreens of vehicles in the car park had been smashed and the hospital had been damaged

Police arrested 120 workers

Musi k e s e t i g i d  
(1) S i m u l t a n e o u s  
(2) G l o b a l l y i . e . t h r o u g h o u t t h e  
w h o l e e c o n o m y



# Nigerian strike enters fourth day

13/5/81

SI AN

227

**Own Correspondent**  
NIGERIA — The National Labour Congress, the country's chief union federation, is staking its future on a nationwide strike which enters its fourth day today. So far, the call to strike appears to have met with only a patchy response.

Mr Alex Ekinueme, the vice-President, met Mr Hassan Sunmonu, president of the Labour Congress yesterday and there were hopes that a compromise might be found to end the strike, observers in Lagos said.

But the action has reportedly had nothing like full support, because of

bad timing and a lack of co-ordination by the Labour Congress

The principal demand is for a trebling of the minimum wage to Naira 300

(N450) a month, but the congress has repeated other demands for additional housing and travel allowances, improved pensions and the abrogation of some restrictive legislation limiting the rights of certain workers to go on strike.

President Shehu Shagari had asked the congress to reconsider its strike threat because he said the minimum wage demand was unrealistic.

The President said Nigeria had lost 25-million man days in industrial disputes last year — the highest total for some years.

tract Nigerians. The very fact that their documentation was irregular made them prone to exploitation.

If they are to be replaced by indigenous employees, the wage bills of local business would be bound to rise. But in view of the international oil glut and the resulting economic downturn in Nigeria, some of the larger firms have refrained from shedding labour only because of trade union and political pressure. These concerns are unlikely to replace the departing aliens. Increased employment opportunities may therefore not result to the extent hoped for by some politicians.

Opinion varies about the economic effects of the measure. One expert claimed that the aliens were earning the equivalent of \$2.3 billion a year and that most of this money was being remitted to their home countries, constituting a foreign exchange drain. On the other hand, there were hidden export benefits for Nigeria which may have been greater. Many of the Ghanaians, in particular, were small traders, who bought goods supposedly for personal use from Nigerian outlets for resale in Ghana, where import restrictions prevail. No doubt Togo, Benin, Niger and Chad — all of which also had large numbers of nationals living in oil-rich Nigeria — provided similar unofficial export markets.

#### Public hostility

The Nigerian government has softened the terms of its original order by postponing the departure of qualified personnel until the end of February, to allow them to regularise their position. But most of them may leave all the same because of the popular hostility towards them in Nigeria. This could have adverse effects on Nigeria's education system. 35 000 teachers are known to be of Ghanaian origin.

The expulsion has been publicly deplored by ex-president Dr Azikiwe, now leader of one of the main opposition parties, and by a Muslim religious leader. The whole question may therefore become an election issue. As far as Ghana is concerned, its shattered economy may find it difficult to accommodate the returnees, whose numbers may amount to a tenth of the population.

Most of Nigeria's neighbours whose citizens have been expelled are fellow members of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), which is scheduled to hold a summit meeting in May. The Lagos government will presumably be asked to explain why it took this step without prior consultation.

While the legality of the act is not in dispute, the way in which it was done provides Nigeria's critics with ammunition. Ironically, the first protocol signed by Ecowas members was designed to ease travel restrictions between member states. More far-reaching provisions to allow free settlement throughout the community are currently under consideration.

## NIGERIA <sup>227</sup> Forced exodus

FM 11/2/83

Even SA, in the wildest moments of social engineering, has never tried anything like it. Yet Nigeria felt able to summarily expel an estimated 3m foreigners, largely as a vote-catching election manoeuvre. As a result, Lagos, one of Pretoria's harshest critics, attracted some of the international odium that usually comes SA's way.

"Foreigners" have been blamed for the lack of employment opportunities for the country's own young graduates and technicians. They have also been held responsible for other social ills. But it is doubtful whether the Lagos government appreciated the full extent of the odium it would incur among its neighbours, or even the numbers involved in the exodus, otherwise logistic preparations would have been made.

Most of the aliens are Ghanaians who, in many cases, have been settled in Nigeria for a number of years. They have performed skilled work or have laboured for wage rates lower than those likely to at-

**Big strike (22)**

LAGOS — A strike by Nigerian broadcasting workers is disrupting radio and television programmes throughout the country, newspapers reported yesterday.

The strike for higher pay and better working conditions forced the Nigerian Television Authority's Channel 5 to shut transmissions early on Tuesday after the evening news.

9819103

# Africa

## in brief

### Strikers (227) demands

**LAGOS** - Nigerian university lecturers on strike for more than three weeks have spelt out conditions for the resumption of negotiations tomorrow.

The lecturers went on indefinite strike on July 28 in support of demands for higher pay and allowances, improved funding and the autonomy of universities and academic freedom on campus.

The strike followed the breakdown of negotiations between the teachers and the government last May 12.

*Sowetan 12/8/92*

**General strike plan** *Sowetan*  
*30/6/93*

**LAGOS** — Supporters of the self-declared winner of Nigeria's presidential election are trying to mobilise workers for a general strike this week to protest against the military's decision to scrap the poll

(227)  
"There is a possibility of a general strike this week. It is just a matter of time," Fred Eko, an aide to candidate Moshood Abiola, said yesterday. Abiola (55) has claimed victory in the June 12 election over fellow Muslim businessman Bashir Tofa (45) — *Sowetan Correspondent and Sapa*

## AFRICA

# Biafra leader fears a divided Nigeria

WM 23-29/7/93 (227)

**E**MEKA OJUKWU was a young man, just 34, when he led Biafra to war and disaster. Close to a million people died in a struggle for the independence of eastern Nigeria that was doomed from the very first months of the three-year conflict. Now Ojukwu fears that in his retirement Nigeria's latest political crisis is sowing the seeds for another bloody secessionist bid, this time in the west.

Ojukwu holds the military government and Moshood Abiola, whose presidential election win last month was overturned by the army, equally responsible for pushing Nigeria closer to division.

He warns that the military, in calling new elections for August 14, has implicitly told Abiola's home ground in Yoruba-dominated south-western Nigeria that the powerful elite from the north will never relinquish power. "He fears the isolation situation is pregnant," Ojukwu said. "No one really knows when or what it will deliver but there are certain dangerous trends manifesting themselves and these trends are sufficiently frightening that any leader has to be very circumspect."

"I see a situation where one area is clearly moving in a different direction from the others. There's no doubt in my mind that already I see the beginnings of 1966."

Oxford-educated Ojukwu was already a lieutenant-colonel with a brilliant military career ahead of him when he led Biafra's Ibo people from the rest of Nigeria on May 30 1967. Even today there is considerable sympathy for his motive. After months of political turmoil in which 30 000 Ibos were murdered, principally in the north, Ojukwu feared his two million people faced annihilation.

As it turned out, annihilation almost came with the three-year civil war. No one knows the toll, but as much as half Biafra's population fell victim to the fighting and the Nigerian blockade and famine. Most of them were civilians.

Ojukwu, despite the slaughter, sees the war as an inevitable part of Nigeria's growing-up process. That is why the prospect of another saddens him. This time, he says, it is not inevitable.

Certainly, the forces behind the new secessionist rumblings are different. There is no wholesale persecution in Nigeria's south-west today. Some of the ethnic and regional divisions appear to have crumbled with June's election. About one third of northerners who voted did so for Abiola, most likely because he was the candidate best able to stand up to the military. But the army's refusal to recognise his victory has hardened the divisions in the south-west. The issue today is power, not survival. But it is no less dangerous.

*Biafran leader Emeka Ojukwu fears western Nigeria might embark on a secessionist bid as bloody as his three-year war.*

By **CHRIS MCGREAL** in Lagos

"People are digging their trenches and it will be a question of here we are, this is our last defence," said Ojukwu. "You know what happens in a situation like that. A very prominent westerner, traditional ruler, is talking of session. This enclave mentality of the west is the sort of feeling that brings about a break-up."

The trenches may be metaphorical but the battle lines are forming through national institutions, most notably the courts. On the heels of conflicting court decisions on the legality of blocking the presidential elections, the judiciary is dividing along regional political lines.

Last week, the government transferred prominent human rights activists to the capital, Abuja, for trial in courts widely recognised as strongly influenced by the military. Legally, they should be tried in Lagos but those courts were on strike in sympathy with Abiola. They reopened only to hear his suit to force the government to recognise his election victory. Ojukwu says this amounts to separate judicial systems.

"Already there is this feeling that there is a western judiciary. The courts sat to hear Abiola's suit when for the past two weeks the courts have been on strike to support Abiola. No cases, no judges, no lawyers. And then Abiola goes in for his case. Nine o'clock, everybody's there," he said.

Ojukwu sees the same mistake being repeated, especially a lack of real communication between rival leaders, and between leaders and the people. And although he will not admit it directly, implicit in what he says is his fear that a leader not unlike himself might today rise in the south-west.

He admits to falling back on "ethnic jingoism" during the civil war, a tactic he fears will work for any would-be demagogue in the absence of strong opposition leadership in the present crisis.

"One talks in rather primitive terms about the amount of blood we have sunk into the unity of this country, but it is a fact," he said.

"Sentimentally, we feel a break-up would be a loss. It would be starting all over again. But it is better to start all over again than to die and not be there. And if that is what Nigerians want, I hope they choose Czechoslovakia and not Yugoslavia." — The Guardian



**Nigerian oil strike off** (227)

LAGOS — Petroleum workers, whose strike action has paralysed socio-economic activities in Nigeria in the past few days, said here yesterday they were suspending their strike with immediate effect

Vertical text on the right edge of the page, possibly bleed-through or a margin note, consisting of several lines of small, illegible characters.

ns  
us

# 'Discrepancies' in Goniwe evidence

CT 21/9/93

227

Own Correspondent

ty  
ng  
th  
he  
si-  
ld  
et-  
ate  
of

PORT ELIZABETH — A former security policeman admitted in the Supreme Court here yesterday that he might have made mistakes in a statement he had made under oath about several aspects surrounding the death of Cradock activist Mr Matthew Goniwe in June 1985

ld  
le"  
to  
ity  
do  
ise  
is  
of

The re-opened Goniwe inquest sat through an entire day of cross-examination of retired Sergeant Fred Koni by counsel for the SA Police Mr Dup de Bruyn, SC

the  
hat  
ew

Mr De Bruyn pointed out several discrepancies between Mr Koni's sworn statement and his testimony in court last week when he was called as a surprise witness by Mr George Bizos, SC, counsel for the Goniwe family. Mr Koni testified in great detail last

week how Mr Goniwe was followed and kept under constant observation whenever he left Cradock. He admitted yesterday that he had never taken part in such operations but had come to conclusions on how they were done from what he had heard at meetings and seen in reports

Mr De Bruyn put it to Mr Koni that his testimony about the "constant following" of Mr Goniwe by security police was untrue. Mr Koni replied that police would otherwise not have known where Mr Goniwe was going

Mr De Bruyn said informants could have provided the information

Mr Koni admitted he might have made a mistake in his statement about the date he had retired from the police and dates he was supposed to have worked with certain colleagues

The inquest continues today



# Strike paralyzes Nigeria

227

WM 15-21/7/94

**B**USINESS ground to a halt and strikers threatened Nigeria's oil exports this week in the most dramatic show of dissent yet to General Sani Abacha's military regime.

Banks and shops closed, buses and ferries stopped running, and people who walked to work found their offices empty.

Armed police began patrolling streets in Lagos, home to 5-million people. Workers were reported to be staying at home in several other cities throughout southern Nigeria where opposition to the military dictatorship is strongest.

Most of Nigeria's commercial activity and all the petroleum fields, which provide 80 percent of government revenue, are in the south. The growing

shortage of fuel also caused a series of blackouts and water cuts in Lagos.

Kenneth Narebor, a senior official of the petroleum and natural gas senior staff association, said pipelines at two of the biggest export terminals off southern Port Harcourt and Warri should run dry today or tomorrow.

General Abacha appeared on television and said "All apologists of civil disobedience will be severely dealt with." Last week, his government said anyone who interfered with attempts to keep the oil industry going would face the death penalty.

Abacha has dissolved all elected governments and jailed journalists, human rights activists, politicians, and the 1993 presidential election winner, Moshood Abiola. — AP

# Nigerian oil workers strike

(227)  
James Jukwey

6/14/94  
**N**IGERIA'S main oil workers union went on strike on Monday to demand the release of opposition leader Moshood Abiola as the military government again refused to produce him in court.

For the second time in a week the government, which detained Abiola on June 23 on treason charges, disobeyed a judge's order to bring him to court in response to a suit challenging the arrest. The state prosecutor said he did not know the whereabouts of Abiola, the millionaire businessman adjudged to have won last year's presidential election till it was annulled by yet another new military ruler, General Sani Abacha.

Judge Tajudeen Odunowo, annoyed that his order had been disregarded for the second time, ordered that Justice Minister and Attorney-General Olu Onagoruwa should appear before him on Thursday to explain why Abiola was not brought to court.

The 150 000-strong union Nupeng ordered its members out on strike in support of Abiola. But oil companies said the walkout — by tanker drivers, clerks, data processors and others in menial jobs — was having no effect on oil production or shipping of crude, the lifeblood of the economy, bringing in 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange.

Frank Kokori, general secretary of NUPENG (the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers), said: "The strike has just started and the effect will start building up today."

The government says the strike is illegal and state-owned media have launched a vicious campaign against NUPENG saying its leaders had taken bribes from politicians to stage the strike. — *Reuter*

# Nigerian strike

227

## protests spread

APG 20/7/94

LAGOS — Protests have spread against Nigeria's military rulers as they cope with a strike against the nation's mainstay oil industry

Lagos, where pro-democracy protests killed up to 20 people on Monday, was calm today. But public transport was still paralysed and many offices and shops were shut in the city, the commercial capital.

Reports said protests spread to cities in southwest Nigeria, home region of opposition leader Moshood Abiola, whose detention sparked the unrest.

Homes of prominent people, including former head of state Olusegun Obasanjo and ex-interim leader Ernest Shonekan, were vandalised by demonstrators in Abeokuta, Mr Abiola's home town.

Protests also occurred in Akure, Nigeria's cocoa-growing centre, where university students calling for Mr Abiola's release clashed with riot police.

Nupeng, the junior oil workers' union, and its senior counterpart Pengassan are spearheading the strike, which is now in its 17th day and has affected fuel supplies, crippled transport and shut many businesses.

"The strike is continuing because our demands have not been met," said a Pengassan spokesman.

The military government said it would consider freeing political detainees including Mr Abiola, the undeclared winner of last year's annulled presidential vote. Mr Abiola faces treason charges for proclaiming himself president.

The government has since held discussions with prominent Nigerians, including Mr Obasanjo, on the crisis but has yet to say when detainees will be freed — Reuter

# Nigeria prepares for more oil strikes

ARL 26/7/94

LAGOS — Nigeria braced for more street protests today after marathon negotiations failed to end a pro-democracy strike in the oil industry

Participants at yesterday's talks between striking oil unions and government negotiators said no progress had been made to end the 23-day-old strike

Unions are demanding the release of Moshood Abiola, the undeclared winner of last year's annulled presidential vote, who has been detained since June 23 for declaring himself

president in defiance of Nigeria's military rulers. (227)

"They said they did not have the mandate to discuss the release of Abiola," the union official said

Strikes and protests have gripped the country for weeks over the campaign to force military ruler General Sani Abacha to cede power to Mr Abiola, who faces treason charges

Tension has been high in southwest Nigeria, Mr Abiola's home region, where police again fired teargas to disperse crowds marching to demand

his release and installation as president

The strike by the Nupeng and Pengassan oil unions has disrupted domestic supplies and crude oil production, although exports have been unaffected. Oil is Nigeria's main source of foreign income

Oil minister Don Etiebet, who led the government delegation in the negotiations, said both sides agreed to refer the outcome to principals and to meet tomorrow to sign a communiqué. He did not say what it would contain — Sapa-Reuter

# Pro-democracy Nigeria strike to continue after fatal clashes

LAGOS. — Nigeria's pro-democracy oil strike appeared certain to continue after violent disturbances outside the court where opposition leader Moshood Abiola was standing trial on treason charges

Wariebe Agamene, president of the junior oil workers' union, Nupeng, said his union, protesting against reported deaths in the clashes, would stay away from proposed talks with the military government today

Nupeng was disgusted at reports that police shot protesters in the inland capital of Abuja outside the court trying Mr Abiola, widely regarded as the winner of last year's annulled presidential election

Nupeng and the other striking oil union, Pengassan, are demanding Mr Abiola's unconditional release. It was not clear if Pengassan, which represents white collar workers, would attend today's meeting

The Abuja high court adjourned the case against Mr Abiola until Tuesday

Mr Abiola, who proclaimed himself president in defiance of the military authorities, was making his third appearance

Outside the court, a local journalist said he saw police shoot one person who later died. Unconfirmed reports said up to three people might have been killed in the clashes

(22+) ARG 29/7/94  
The Campaign for Democracy (CD) pressure group said police killed one of its members during a peaceful protest march in the Oworonshoki area of Lagos

American envoy Jesse Jackson, who arrived in Nigeria on Wednesday, said after meeting Mr Abiola and military ruler Sam Abacha that he detected no shift in the stand of the rival Nigerian leaders

Mr Abiola maintained that he was legally elected while General Abacha wanted to press on with a constitutional conference to draw up a new political agenda — Sapa-Reuter

# Nigeria's crippling oil strike enters fifth week

LAGOS — Nigeria's oil workers' strike to compel the military government to free detained politician Moshood Abiola and restore democracy entered its fifth week today with no sign of a quick end.

Oil unions Nupeng and Pengassan said in separate statements yesterday that they would stay away from talks with the government scheduled for today to try to end the strike.

The unions are in the vanguard of pro-democracy strikes to try to force the government to free Mr Abiola, the undeclared winner of last year's an-

nulled presidential election.

The crisis over the annulment of the poll by the previous military rulers deepened when Mr Abiola was arrested last month (227)

The strike has severely disrupted domestic fuel supplies, transport services and normal business, especially in Mr Abiola's Yoruba-speaking southwest ARLT 1/8/94

The 3.5 million-strong Nigeria Labour Congress, the central trade union organisation, said last week it would join the pro-democracy strike from Wednesday — Reuter.



# Lagos paralysed as all-out strike begins

ARG 3/8/94

227

□ Government offices deserted as crisis grows

LAGOS. — Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos, was at a standstill today, the first day of a general strike called to press the military government to free opposition leader Moshood Abiola

Many government offices in the city, including the federal secretariat where most officials work, were deserted

"Workers have not come in today, maybe because of the strike," said a security man at the secretariat

Mr Abiola, undeclared winner of last year's annulled presidential vote, was due to appear in court in the capital Abuja today on charges of treason for proclaiming himself president

The general strike, called by the umbrella Nigeria Labour Congress, adds to pressure on

the government brought by oil workers who are now in the fifth week of a strike.

It was not immediately clear if the strike was being observed in the north, where some local chapters of the NLC have dissociated themselves from the action as politically motivated.

In Lagos, youths stopped vehicles from moving about

Banks and many other businesses have long closed in Nigeria because of a fuel shortage caused by the oil strike, and there is bound to be further misery if the general strike lasts for long.

Yesterday General Sani Abacha, the military ruler, presided over a meeting of the Armed Forces Consultative Assembly, the ruling junta, to discuss the growing political and economic crisis. No statement was issued after the talks.

The oil strike was begun by Nupeng, the blue-collar oil-workers' union, on July 4 and it was later joined by white-collar workers from the sister union, Pengassan. The production of Shell, which extracts half the country's oil, has fallen by one third

Nupeng president Wariebe Agamene warned those who intended to carry on working "If they don't stop their treacherous activities, the next option will involve bodybags. We are prepared to deal with these people violently"

A Shell spokesman said local workers but not expatriates had been intimidated so far

The economy is being suffocated by the strike and more and more investors and traders are being frightened off by the possibility of a catastrophic political explosion — Sapa-Reuter-The Independent.

## Debate over Angolan 'mercenaries'

LEGAL action was being considered against Executive Outcomes, a Pretoria-based company which hires former defence force soldiers out to the Angolan government, Department of Foreign Affairs acting director-general Rusty Evans said today.

Although the Angolan government insists the 500 Executive Outcomes employees are utilised as guards and instructors, Unita alleges they are in Angola as mercenaries

Addressing the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Dr Evans said the matter had

been referred to the Department of Justice

"There is prima facie evidence that that particular operation is transgressing South African law and that steps must be taken against them," he said

Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister Aziz Pahad told the committee the government had intervened to save the lives of four South Africans employed by Executive Outcomes who had been captured by Unita, which had threatened to execute the men

Although it was not clear whether the execution had

gone ahead, there had been no news and it was presumed they were still alive

Mr Pahad said the government opposed mercenaries being recruited from South Africa

"We are trying to ensure that South Africans do not get involved as mercenaries"

Mr Pahad said South Africa was approaching the Angolan question within the framework of the United Nations peace initiative. However, an invitation had been extended to Unita leader Jonas Savimbi to visit South Africa — Sapa

# Nigeria faces fresh unrest after deaths

□ Strikers, protesters demand Abiola's release

227 ARG 4/8/94

LAGOS — Nigeria, shaken by an oil workers' stoppage that has mushroomed into a general strike, looked set for more unrest after three people were killed in demonstrations demanding the release of presidential claimant Moshood Abiola

Mr Abiola, widely considered the winner of last year's annulled election, is being tried for treason and yesterday the court in the capital of Abuja adjourned the hearing until August 16

Mr Abiola faces life impris-

onment if convicted. He was charged after proclaiming himself president in June in defiance of Nigeria's army rulers

An earlier adjournment had already angered pro-democracy activists, who thought the military government could drop the case to reduce tension

Witnesses said at least three people were killed yesterday in Lagos, the biggest city in Africa's most populous country, during protests that coincided with the beginning of a general strike aimed at putting pressure on the military government to free Mr Abiola

Apart from the clashes between police and pro-democracy protesters, much of the city of six million people was deserted as the strike bit

The general strike, called by the umbrella Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), brought further misery to a country where the stoppage by oil workers, now in its fifth week, has disrupted fuel supplies and forced many businesses including banks to close

Flights were disrupted and many government hospitals shut, especially in south-west Nigeria, Mr Abiola's home region, where the strike appeared to have been almost totally observed

Residents in several states of the north, where some branches of the NLC have dissociated themselves from the strike, saying it was politically motivated, said work went on there as usual. But NLC deputy national president Adams Oshiomole said the strike had begun successfully

The NLC's decision-making central working committee was scheduled to meet in Lagos yesterday to decide a further line of action but Mr Oshiomole said this was not possible because there was no quorum

"We will meet tomorrow," he said

The NLC is calling for Mr Abiola's release but the oil unions that initiated the strikes also want an immediate return to democracy and reforms to Nigeria's chaotic oil industry

Industry sources said oil production and exports, which account for more than 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange income, had been severely affected. — Sapa-Reuter

## Police end Nigerian protests

CT 4/8/94  
LAGOS — Police fired on 7 000 peaceful protesters and battled violent gangs yesterday as the nation's biggest labour group joined the strikes aimed at toppling the military government. At least five people were killed. (221)

Lagos, the main commercial centre, was the scene of two peaceful protests broken up violently by police, and rampages by youths trying to keep small shops from opening. Strikers want Mr Mashood Abiola, apparent winner of the June 1993 presidential election, released from detention.  
— Sapa-AP

# Nigeria: Union in talks with military rulers

(227) CTS/8/94

LAGOS — Nigeria's biggest labour federation suspended its general strike yesterday, but oil unions vowed to continue the industrial campaign in pursuit of democracy

Both the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), which called off its two-day-old action, and the oil unions are demanding the immediate release of detained presidential claimant Mr Moshood Abiola

The 3.5 million-strong NLC told members to return to work while negotiations continued with Nigeria's military rulers. A spokesman said he was hopeful Mr Abiola would be released

The two oil workers unions said their strike would continue. Oil is Nigeria's economic mainstay and strike action has disrupted fuel supplies and exports, and pushed up world oil prices

The NLC strike had taken firm root in southwestern Nigeria, Mr Abiola's home region

But it was largely ignored in the north and east, raising fears that sharp regional and ethnic divisions could escalate the Nigerian crisis

Mr Abiola is on trial for treason for declaring himself president in defiance of Nigeria's army rulers. He is next due in court on August 16 — Sapa-  
Reuter

# Nigeria invites oil unions to new talks

LAGOS — Nigeria's military government, which is under severe pressure because of a month-long oil workers' strike, has invited unions to separate talks on ending their action

The unions, which want the government to release and hand power to detained presidential claimant Moshood Abiola, agreed to attend but said they expected little to emerge from the meetings tomorrow and Friday

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), which launched a general strike last week then suspended it after a day, said it was confident the military government would drop treason charges against Mr Abiola and free him

"The meeting (on Friday) will be more or less exploratory," said Milton Dabibi, secretary-general of the white-collar oil workers' union,

Pengassan

227

"It is unlikely to resolve any issue that will influence the strike" *ARCT 10/8/94*

Wariebi Aagamene, president of the blue-collar union Nupeng, said "I hold no high hopes for the meeting"

Industry sources said the strike had caused a cut of at least 25 percent in crude oil production and exports, Nigeria's main source of hard currency earnings

Trade sources said yesterday that state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation had cancelled crude oil deliveries due to be exported this month — Reuter

The two unions are demanding the release of Mr Abiola, who is widely believed to have won last year's annulled presidential election. They also want better management of the oil sector

# More strikes threatened in Nigeria

Tunde Obadina and  
Thalia Griffiths in Lagos

**T**HE powerful Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) threatened on Monday to resume its suspended general strike if the military government did not free presidential claimant Moshhood Abiola.

"The labour movement will not hesitate to call workers out on strike if the government does not release MKO Abiola unconditionally," an NLC spokesman, Chris Uyo, said.

The warning of possible further unrest was made as the country's crippling oil strike entered a sixth week with no sign of an end to the crisis over workers' demands that Chief Abiola should be freed and installed as president.

Abiola, widely believed to be the winner of last year's annulled presidential election, remained in police custody in the capital Abuja after

rejecting bail conditions imposed by a court trying him on treason charges. He was arrested on June 23 after proclaiming himself president in defiance of the military rulers.

The court offered to free Abiola on condition he agreed to keep the peace, did not address political meetings and did not leave Nigeria without permission.

The offer followed talks between the government and the NLC which last week suspended a brief general strike to allow the talks on its demand for Abiola's unconditional release. NLC officials say the government agreed to free him unconditionally.

A meeting of the NLC's central working committee to discuss its next move was postponed to Wednesday.

US civil rights leader Jesse Jackson, who visited Nigeria last month as President Bill Clinton's envoy, said in a television interview in Washing-

ton on Monday that the United States and others should begin "assertive, aggressive diplomacy" to prevent civil war in Nigeria and protect its oil industry.

"One tenth of Opec's oil production, the finest grade of oil, comes out of Nigeria and so in fact if that oil does not flow, if it is sabotaged, that will have ramifications for the whole world community," Jackson said.

The oil workers, whose strike has been the most devastating of the efforts to get Abiola released, are stepping up their campaign to stop the production and export of crude oil, the country's main source of foreign exchange.

"We are intensifying our campaign to stop crude oil production. We don't want money to come in into the pockets of the military junta," Warribe Agamene, national president of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (Nupeng), said on Monday.

The 150,000-strong Nupeng began the strike on July 4 and was joined two weeks later by the 50,000-member white-collar oil union PENGASAN.

The strike has disrupted business activity, domestic fuel supplies and bitten into the country's crude oil production and exports, which provide more than 90 percent of its hard currency earnings.

Strikes linked to Nigeria's political crisis have brought more chaos to the streets of the main city, Lagos.

A bank strike means there is no cash. Rubbish is piling up on the streets. Fuel and transport prices have soared, and those workers who are not on strike often find it too difficult to get to work.

Banks have been closed since July 11 and many firms are running out of money. Even blackmarket money changers are feeling the pinch. "With the banks closed, we have no money and we can't trade. It's a big prob-

lem," said trader Mukhtar Ilwan. "I haven't sold a shirt since last month," market trader Justin Obi complained. "There's no money in this country."

One Lagos company flew one of its staff to the northern town of Kano, where the strike is not being observed, to get cash.

Many areas of the city of 6 million people have no power or water. A minibuses ride to work which was 15 naira (\$0.40) now costs up to 45 (\$1.20) and many workers are staying at home. A cylinder of cooking gas has risen from 400 naira (\$10) to 1,000 (\$27), while a gallon of kerosene has gone from 50 naira (\$1.30) to 180 (\$5). The average wage for a blue-collar worker is about 2,000 naira (\$54) a month.

But the chaos caused to people's daily lives here appears in no way to have diminished their support for Chief Abiola. — *Reuters*

● Tai Solarin, scourge of the Nigerian establishment, has died, aged 71. Solarin, who was detained by a series of military leaders in his fight against injustice, headed a "walk for justice" three days before his death.

WMM 12-18/8 194

227

# Nigerian oil strike crisis deepens

LAGOS — The president of Nigeria's striking blue-collar oil union Nupeng said today he expected military ruler Sani Abacha to ban the 150 000-strong union when he addressed the nation this evening

Waribe Agamene said "We are watching with keen interest"

A senior government official said yesterday General Abacha's broadcast would "address the strike by Nupeng and Pengassah"

"No responsible leader watches his country's base being ruined and takes no action," the official said

Nupeng and its white-collar counterpart Pengassan, on strike for six weeks to force

the government to free opposition politician Moshood Abiola, would meet later to review action, Mr Agamene said

Last week Nupeng said it would respond violently to a ban

"God knows what will happen if we are proscribed," Mr Agamene said today

His union was prepared to remain on strike for as long as necessary, he said

"The strike can go on for as long as government remains deaf," he said

Mr Abiola, who is widely believed to have won last year's annulled presidential election, proclaimed himself president

in June and was arrested on a charge of treason

General Abacha's government may also face a renewed general strike by the umbrella labour federation over its failure to drop the charge against Mr Abiola as it promised to do yesterday

Instead of quashing the charge when the case resumed

in the capital Abuja, the presiding judge abruptly stepped down, dashing all hopes of a quick end to Nigeria's worst political crisis

The strikes have crippled Nigerian industry and transport and led to a fall in production and exports of crude oil, its main foreign exchange earner. The crisis has also sparked riots and raised fears of violence along ethnic lines — Reuter

APL 17/8/94

227

# Oil strike

goes on,

(227)

## unions say

APR 18/8/94

LAGOS — The leaders of Nigeria's oil workers' unions, sacked by military ruler Sani Abacha in a clampdown on their six-week-old strike, said today they would press on with the crippling stoppage.

"We are going underground to continue with the strike. The strike has not been called off," said Wariebi Agamene, sacked president of the main oil workers union Nupeng.

His counterpart in the white-collar union Pengassan, Bola Owodunni, said, "We are still forging ahead with our strike and we are going to contest Abacha's action in court."

General Abacha, in a broadcast last night, dismissed the executives of the two unions and of the umbrella Nigeria Labour Congress. The government is appointing administrators to run the unions.

Today, hundreds of people marched through the streets of the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna in protest against General Abacha's decision.

The oil unions want opposition politician Moshood Abiola, widely believed to have won last year's annulled presidential vote, freed from jail and installed as president.

Their strike has choked off fuel supplies and cut the export of crude oil, Nigeria's main source of foreign exchange — Sapa-Reuter



# Nigerian labour leadership ousted

LAGOS — Nigeria's military ruler said yesterday he was dissolving the leadership councils of the nation's three major labour groups

These include the two oil unions that have waged a devastating strike aimed at toppling him

The harsh move by General Sani Abacha, who seized power from a civilian head of

state in November, is the latest escalation in a showdown between the military and a growing opposition movement

In a speech broadcast nationally, Gen Abacha said he was ousting the executive councils of the two national oil unions and the Nigerian Labour Council, which represents five million industrial workers

He said he was replacing them with military-appointed administrators

Oil union leaders who have been anticipating such a ban have warned they would react violently by organising an underground resistance to the government

Protesters firebombed two mansions belonging to the labour minister, witnesses said,

signalling the country's fight for democracy is turning violent

The attack in Benin state came after trade union leaders said they were reviewing their suspension of a general strike for democracy

Last week, the home of Transport Minister Mr Ebenezer Babatope was struck by a grenade blast — Sapa-AP

# Nigeria calls up retired oil workers

APR 19/8/94 (227)

**LAGOS.** — Nigeria's military government — fighting a six-week-old strike by oil workers — has called up retired oil sector employees, state radio said today.

Military ruler Sani Abacha earlier sacked the leaders of the oil unions as well as those of the central labour federation and appointed administrators to run the affairs of the unions.

The radio said labour minister Samuel Ogbemudia had directed former oil officials to

register for work with a view to being offered jobs.

Police also sealed off key trade union buildings in Lagos.

The vital oil industry has been hit hard by the strike — demanding the release and installation of Moshood Abiola as president.

Oil minister Don Etiebet yesterday urged oil workers to return to work by Monday.

The sacked union leaders have vowed to continue the strike, which has disrupted fuel

deliveries and cut oil output by about 20 percent.

The National Democratic Coalition, the main opposition group supporting Chief Abiola, said there would be no economic progress in Nigeria until the winner of last year's annulled election was installed as head of state.

The Campaign for Democracy, an alliance of groups, urged the oil workers not to back down and called for stepped-up street protests. — Reuter.

# Oil strikers <sup>(227)</sup> trickle back to work in Nigeria

ARU 22/8/94

LAGOS — Some of Nigeria's striking oil workers returned to their jobs today for the first time since their pro-democracy stoppage began more than six weeks ago

Oil industry officials said it was too early to assess whether the strike had been broken by military ruler Sani Abacha who sacked leaders of the oil unions last week and ordered their members back to work

"There are a few more people here today than for some time," said a spokesman for a major oil-producing company

"We are still assessing the situation. It takes time," said another

Police yesterday detained five strike leaders, including Frank Kokori, the sacked general secretary of the main oil union Nupeng

Mr Kokori has been a powerful force behind the six-week-old strike aimed at forcing the military to hand over power to presidential claimant Moshood Abiola, who is on trial for treason

Wariebi Agamene, sacked president of the union, said yesterday that Mr Kokori was arrested on Saturday

The strikers were dismissed by General Abacha last Wednesday with leaders of another oil union and the umbrella labour federation

The strike has put pressure on General Abacha, who seized power in November during the confusion caused when the pre-

vious military regime annulled a June 1993 presidential election which Mr Abiola was believed to have won

Mr Abiola was arrested after declaring himself president in June. His detention provoked street protests as well as the strikes and in a broadcast last week General Abacha threatened tough action against his opponents

Nearly a dozen people were arrested in a nationwide swoop on Friday

Among them was Anthony Enahoro, 71, vice-chairman of the National Democratic Coalition (Nadeco)

Others were a former deputy state governor Cornelius Adeniyi-Adele, a Nadeco chieftain and two aides of Mr Abiola — his spokesman Fred Eno and Ademola Adeniyi-Adele

In his broadcast, General Abacha ordered the striking oil workers back to work. Offering no concessions, he made clear his government would not stop Mr Abiola's treason trial

"Something must give this week," said a spokesman for Nadeco, which backed Mr Abiola's presidential campaign

General Abacha said he was taking stern action because the government could not allow the economy to be ruined

Oil exports contribute more than 90 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings and the strike has reduced crude oil output by about 20 percent — Sapa-Reuter

## Oil strikers defy Lagos regime

LAGOS. — Nigeria's striking oil workers appear to be defying a government order to return to their jobs, officials said today.

"They are not here," a senior executive with a major multinational oil firm said "On Monday some came in, yesterday even fewer people turned up. Today there's no one."

Military ruler General Sani

Abacha, responding to the seven-week stoppage demanding he frees presidential claimant Moshood Abiola and cede power to him, last week sacked the oil union leader and ordered strikers back to work.

Workers have until tomorrow to resume or be sacked and the government, taking a hard line, says it is ready to employ foreigners to replace strikers — Reuter

(227) ARG 24/8/94

## Petrol strike (227) wanes in Lagos

LAGOS. — The effects of a two-month-old strike by Nigerian oil workers demanding the release of presidential claimant Mr Moshood Abiola were waning yesterday although leaders of the action said the stoppage was still on.

The long queues for petrol at pump stations, the most visible evidence of the strike in the cities, appeared to be getting shorter.

Taxi drivers said the wait was now down to two hours. — Sapa-Reuter

CT 3/9/94

## Petrol strike 227

### wanes in Lagos

Lagos — The effects of a two-month-old strike by Nigerian oil workers demanding the release of presidential claimant Mr. Moshood Abiola were waning yesterday although leaders of the action said the stoppage was still on.

The long queues for petrol at pump stations, the most visible evidence of the strike in the cities, appeared to be getting shorter.

Taxi drivers said the wait was now down to two hours — Sapa-Reuter

CT 3/9/94

## Nigerian oil unionists disagree about strike

LAGOS — The sacked leaders of Nigeria's striking oil unions were divided yesterday over whether a two-month-old walkout in support of presidential claimant Mr Moshood Abiola had been suspended.

"There is a meeting tomorrow to decide whether or not to suspend the strike, and until then it is wrong to say the strike has been suspended," said Mr Milton Dabibi, secretary-general of the white-collar oil union Pengassan.

Earlier, the union's spokesman, Mr Arthur Onoviran, said executives of both Pengassan and its junior blue collar partner Nupeng, who were sacked in mid-August by military ruler General Sani Abacha, had decided to suspend the strike.

# Oil strike (227) collapses ARG 5/9/94 in victory for army

LAGOS — Thousands of oil workers returned to their posts today, abandoning a two-month strike for democracy hours before union leaders were to meet to discuss suspending the protest for lack of public support

The collapse of the strike signalled a victory for General Sani Abacha's military regime and its hardline tactics

"We are fully back at work today," said Diji Egwaoje, spokesman for Shell-Nigeria

Hundreds of frustrated oil workers returned to work last week and reports indicated nearly all of the 100 000-strong petroleum workforce were at their posts this morning

"We have done our best," Arthur Onoviran, spokesman for one of the striking unions, said. "We knew when it started that it was up to all Nigerians to save the country and not the oil workers alone"

The strikers demanded General Abacha surrender power to Moshood K O Abiola, the man widely believed to have won the annulled 1993 presidential election

● The respected Nigerian Medical Association said Mr Abiola was critically ill in jail, with severe high blood pressure and excruciating pain from neurological and muscular-skeletal ailments

The 10 000-strong association warned that if Mr Abiola was not released for treatment by Saturday they would consider "appropriate exceptional measures" — believed to mean strike action — Sapa-AP



17 20 1996 11 14 1996

(227)

## Nigerian lecturers go on strike

CJ (BR) 11/4/96

Lagos — Lecturers in Nigerian universities had begun an indefinite strike to press for better working conditions, union officials said yesterday. The strikers are demanding that the government review the agreement it signed with the union in September 1992. The agreement was based on conditions of service, improved funding and autonomy status for the universities.

Union officials said teachers in nearly all of Nigeria's 38 universities were taking part in the strike, which began on Tuesday. Lecturers at the University of Lagos, however, said they were not participating in the action because of their disagreement with the national body, the Academic Staff Union of Universities.

According to Asisi Asobie, the president of the union, Nigerian lecturers earn about 3 000 naira (about R147) a month, one of the lowest rates in Africa. Last week, the military government set up an independent eight-man committee to negotiate with the union. — Reuter

# Nigerian oil ministry workers threaten to strike

(227) ET(OR)27/2/97

FROM REUTERS

Lagos — Workers at Nigeria's petroleum resources department, which processes export documents for oil shipments, have threatened to go on strike from tomorrow if the backlog of their salaries was not paid, oil ministry sources said on Tuesday.

"They have told the minister of petroleum resources they will strike if their January pay is not forthcoming by Friday," a ministry official said.

"The minister is working to resolve the situation," he said.

The petroleum resources department's staff had been unhappy since last summer when the Nigerian military government contracted outside inspec-

## Dunlop closes Lagos plant after riots

Lagos — Nigerian tyre manufacturer Dunlop said yesterday that it had closed its factory following a disruption by some of its workers.

The company said in a statement that it took the action on Tuesday after some of its 1 000 staff molested and intimidated management over a recent pay increase for the workers.

"Management is quite surprised that the salary increase, which was a management initiative to improve the workers'

tors to check oil shipments after allegations of overloading tankers to rob the government of

standard of living, is being used by dissatisfied workers, who are being instigated by external forces to disrupt the company's operations," the company said.

Local newspapers said riot police were called into the company's factory on the outskirts of Lagos.

They quoted a spokesman for the staff union as saying they were offered increases of between 20 percent and 40 percent, instead of the 100 percent they had demanded.

oil revenues. The official said salaries from January for the petroleum resources department

workers were pending. It was expected they would be paid along with those for this month.

The oil unions had been powerless since 1994, when General Sani Abacha's military government sacked and detained their leaders over a two-month strike in support of presidential claimant Moshood Abiola.

"The strike threat involves the petroleum resources department staff and not unions," the official said.

He said it was not clear whether oil exports would be disrupted if the strike materialised.

"It is possible there are other staff who can take over documentation but we have to wait and see," the official said.

# ILO cites six nations including Swaziland for abuses of labour

BD 26/6/97 (225) ~~225~~  
GENEVA — Swaziland is one of six countries cited for labour abuses by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) application of standards committee.

In its report to this year's ILO conference in Geneva, the committee "determined that the nonapplication by Iran, Myanmar, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan and Swaziland of fundamental international labour standards, including through forced labour, discrimination and denial of the right to organise, were a cause of special concern", the organisation said.

Under the heading "Swaziland — C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention," the committee noted with concern that provisions of Swaziland's Industrial Relations Act "contained provisions that violated the fundamental principles of Freedom of Association, despite a direct contacts mission undertaken to the country in October 1996."

"In response to accusations of an overall climate of fear and intimidation (relating to ) trade union activity, including such acts as violence against, and administrative dissolution of, trade union organisations, the committee expressed its deep concern for the numerous and major discrepancies between national law and practice on the one hand, and the provisions of ILO Convention 87 on the other," the organisation said.

The committee urged Swaziland's government to respect the civil liberties essential to implementation of the convention "and to take all measures necessary to eliminate the restrictions on the right of workers to constitute organisations of their free choice, to hold meetings and to demonstrate peacefully".

The committee cited three of the six countries — Myanmar, Nigeria and Sudan — as cases of "continued failure to implement ratified conventions". However, the committee "also noted with satisfaction that in a number of cases, including many involving basic human rights, governments had introduced changes to their law and practice".

In response to serious and long-standing accusations of forced and slave labour in Sudan, the committee said: "The accusations against Sudan involve trading in slaves and the imposition of slavery, servitude and forced labour on people from the Dinka, Shilluk and Nuer tribes and the tribes of the Nuba mountains in southern Sudan."

Committee members cited evidence from witnesses and first-hand accounts which testified to gross human rights abuses encouraged or directly inflicted by the Sudanese government and its security forces.

"The committee said it had often been called upon to respond to the accusations that forced labour was being imposed with the complicity or indifference of the government and that the same allegations had been made in the various reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation in Sudan, and in comments made by the World Confederation of Labour," the statement said.

On Iran, the ILO said that in the committee hearings, it was alleged the "Islamic Republic of Iran continued to practise systematic discrimination in employment on the basis of sex, religion and political opinion". In light of the gravity of the accusations, the committee strongly urged Iran's government to accept a direct contacts mission as soon as possible.

Regarding Morocco, the committee said it "regretted with deep concern the large number of complaints concerning measures of antiunion discrimination and interference in trade union activities, despite the government having undertaken to submit a draft labour code to parliament in order to bring Morocco's legislation into full conformity" with the relevant convention.

Nigeria was cited in a special paragraph for nonobservance of Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and for continued failure to implement the relevant convention.

The committee called on the Nigerian government to accept without delay a direct contacts mission to examine the trade union situation in that country, including the situation of imprisoned union leaders, the ILO said. — Sapa

File 11

### Call for sanctions as repression continues

The article discusses the ongoing repression and the need for international sanctions. It mentions the impact on the population and the role of the international community in addressing these issues.

(227) e.T (BR) 24/6/97

## Elf workers launch strike

*207*  
LAGOS — Nigerian employees of French oil company Elf Petroleum had gone on strike in Lagos and the southern city of Port Harcourt to protest over working conditions, sources close to the company said.

*BD 4/10/79*  
The sources said the employees, whose main gripe is over salaries, have occupied the administrative offices of the company in both cities since Monday and refused entry to foreign employees.

The strikers believe that working conditions are influenced negatively by the large number of foreign workers employed by the company, local newspapers said.

Reports said the company's oil production had so far not been affected by the strike.

Company officials were unavailable for comment. — Sapa-AFP.

NIGERIA

(207)

CT (BE) 4/12/97

### Elf employees on strike over salaries

Nigerian employees of the French oil company Elf Petroleum had launched a strike in Lagos and the southern city of Port Harcourt to protest against working conditions, sources close to the company said yesterday.

The sources said the employees, whose main gripe is over salaries, had occupied the administrative offices of the company in both cities since Monday and were refusing entry to foreign employees. The strikers believed their working conditions were **negatively influenced** by the large number of foreign employees. The company local newspapers said. Press reports said the company's oil production had so far not been affected by the strike. Company officials were unavailable for comment.

Sapa AFP Lagos

# Nigeria, Benin desperate for managers

Kingsley Kubeyinje

LAGOS — Nigeria and its next-door neighbour, Benin, are in desperate search of competent international managers to run their two ailing joint-venture companies

The two parastatal firms, Onigbolo Cement Company (OCC) and Save Sugar Company (SSC), shut since 1996, need what competent industry sources described as "an urgent survival pill".

Nigeria and Benin are, therefore, in search of reputable international companies to take over

BD 17/3/98  
the firms and manage them on lease agreement basis

Benin's industry ministry and small-scale enterprises, on behalf of the owner-governments, have begun scouting for interested international management organisations that will run the two sick firms

Both OCC and SSC are in Benin

They were established in the 1970s with funds largely provided by the Nigerian government, in the era of its oil boom, in the spirit of regional integration and bilateral harmony

If managers are eventually se-

cured for the firms, the lessee will be required to pay the two owner governments fixed amounts yearly.

The two moribund companies have enormous subregional market potential, given their proximity to Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation.

With an asset base put at 7.5-billion naira, the OCC has an installed capacity of 500 000 tons of cement yearly

In 1993 it was recommended for offer to private investors when its capacity utilisation plummeted to 20%, amid mounting creditors' bills.

# Nigeria lifts union ban

(227)

Lagos - General  
Abdusalam Abubakar yesterday lifted a ban on  
trade union  
predecessor

order

body the

Star 12/8/98



# Lagos sends a message by easing curbs on unions

Hilary Andersson

(227)

DD 13/8/98

LAGOS — The Nigerian military government's move to scrap three major decrees banning trade union activity is aimed at proving to the international community that it is serious about democratic reform, and seeks to reconcile aggrieved groups in the country.

Tuesday's announcements have been widely welcomed because the decrees had in effect crippled Nigeria's trade unions for the past four years.

A decree passed in 1994, which has now been repealed, had scrapped the national executive councils of the two major oil unions, while another decree had dissolved the Nigeria Labour Congress

The draconian decrees were passed by the late Gen Sani Abacha to crush the political strikes of 1994, held as a protest against annulment of the 1993 elections.

Key union leaders, including Frank Kokori and Milton Dabibi, were imprisoned in the Abacha era, and have only recently been released by the new government.

At the same time as repealing the anti-union decrees, Nigeria's military leader Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar inaugurated the country's new electoral commission at a ceremony in Abuja.

Abubakar called on commission members to ensure that elections were held in a free and fair atmosphere. He reiterated the government's promise to hand over power to a civilian administration next May.

In eight other decrees also passed on Tuesday, the new government formalised its scrapping of Abacha's entire political transition programme and all elections held under him over the past two years.

Within the next two weeks the military is expected to announce a precise timetable for fresh elections, and eventually new political parties will be registered by the electoral commission.

The government has taken significant steps towards ushering in a new democracy and its transition programme has won the support of all major sections of political opinion in the country, even though a number of tough military decrees — including a decree which allows for indefinite detention without trial — still remain in place.

# Nigerians on strike over new salary structures

(217)  
Kingsley Kubeyinje

LAGOS — State governments across Nigeria's 36 states and their employees are at loggerheads over the new salary structure for public servants.

Already public servants in Lagos — the most buoyant of the states — as well as their counterparts in Rivers state have embarked on an indefinite strike to press their respective governments to pay them the minimum 5 200 naira approved for federal workers.

While the federal government has approved 5 200 naira monthly for its least-paid worker, it "recommended" 2 800 naira for the lowest-paid employee in the state public service. Until now both federal and state workers were earning equal pay, with the minimum being 1 200 naira monthly.

In Lagos, more than 600 000 state employees began an indefinite strike last week to press the government to concede to their demand for equal pay with federal workers.

The state government had, in a surprise move described as "panicky", fired the chairman of the state public service negotiating council, Ayodele Akele, from service, ostensibly on the grounds of engaging in "partisan politics".

In oil-rich Rivers state the police have rolled out tanks and banned public processions to control the restive workers who had earlier gone on the rampage to demand parity of pay with federal workers. Rivers public servants argue that it would be unfair for them to earn less than their colleagues in the federal service, since their state single-handedly produces about 40% of the national wealth.

Across the country state governments are throwing open their account books to convince workers that they cannot even pay the "recommended" 2 800 naira without increased subvention from the federal government.

Lagos Administrator Col Mohammed Marwa said while the state earned only 930-million naira monthly, it would require 850m naira of it to pay the new salary structure for employees.

□ Sapa-AFP reports that Nigerian Labour Minister Emmanuel Udogwu will meet the bosses of the country's main trade unions to discuss "democratising" the national labour movement's umbrella body, radio reports said.

Udogwu will meet leaders of the labour movement today to discuss how to best reconstitute the leadership of the Nigeria Labour Congress, dissolved by the late dictator Gen Sam Abacha, the national radio said.

Different factions within the labour movement disagree on how the body should be run and also on who should be represented in its leadership.

NIGERIA - LABOUR  
1999

## Labour leaders issue stern warning

Kingsley Kubeyinje (227)

LAGOS — A major labour crisis may soon engulf Nigeria as the nation's umbrella labour body, the Nigeria Labour Congress, has given the federal government 10 days in which to conclude talks with it or face the workers' wrath

Two issues which labour wants resolved in two weeks are a proposed cut in the pay of public servants and a 127% hike in the price of petrol

Rising from a crucial meeting in Lagos, the leaders of the 29 industrial unions affiliated to the central labour body condemned in "its entirety" government's decision to reduce the salaries of public servants and the increase in the price of petroleum products

Under the proposed pay cut owing to declining earnings from crude oil sales,

the lowest paid worker would now take home 3 000 naira, down from the 5 200 naira approved last September

Godwin Wokeh, the chairman of the congress's caretaker committee, said Nigerian public servants were the "poorest paid workers" in the world and did not deserve the type of treatment being meted to them by the government

Nigerian public servants have urged the government not to tamper with their pay, insisting that even the minimum 5 200 naira was enough to meet their growing demands

The hike in the prices of petroleum products has also drawn the ire of Nigerians. The people took to the streets in massive street demonstrations in the financial capital, Lagos, last Monday to protest against the hike, which they said had resulted in price increases

# Nigerian workers get pay rise to avert strike

ABUJA - The Nigerian government late on Saturday struck a pay deal with public sector trade unions averting a nationwide strike planned for today, representatives of the two sides said in a joint statement

Under the terms of the deal, the government agreed to a new minimum wage for federal workers of 3 500 naira (R240) a month and 3 000 naira (R210) for state and local government workers, backdated to January 1

"In view of this agreement, all on-going strike actions in the states and local governments are hereby called off while the contemplated nationwide strike action called by Nigeria Labour Congress for today is hereby put off," they said in the statement

The deal came after months of arguing over what even military ruler General Abdulsalam Abubakar admitted was the "poverty level" of

public sector wages in Nigeria

Last September, Abubakar himself announced a long-awaited increase in the federal minimum wage to 5 200 naira (R450), with other increases promised for state workers

But, citing a collapse in oil revenue, he withdrew the increase at the end of the year saying the government could not afford it

The states meanwhile said they could not afford almost any increase, arguing they have too many people on the payroll, many of them "ghost workers" and too little revenue coming in from the federal government, to pay higher wages

Exasperated, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the main trades union umbrella group, last week announced plans for a nationwide general strike starting today if no deal was struck - *Sapa-AFP*

# Nigeria strike threat

(227)

Lagos - The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the main trade unions' federation, has launched a strike over a minimum wage and said it expects "solid support" in two thirds of Nigeria's 36 states.

The NLC last week called for a strike to press for application of an agreed minimum wage which the governments of 24 states say they cannot afford to pay

However 12 states, including the economic capital Lagos and oil-producing Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers in the south all agreed to pay the new wages

The NLC, Nigeria's

largest and most powerful trade union, called for a strike last week to begin a month after it suspended a planned nationwide strike

The union suspended that earlier strike after an eleventh-hour agreement with the government on the new minimum wage for federal workers of 3 500 naira (about R235) and 3 000 naira (about R205) for state workers

"But to date, 24 states have not implemented the new wage and public sector workers have waited long enough," NLC president Adams Oshiomole said - Sapa-

AFP

RAW 14/4/99

**Nigerian minimum pay a 'slave wage':** The minimum wage being demanded by public sector workers on strike in Nigeria is a "slave wage", former Kaduna State governor Abdulkadri Balarabe Musa said at the weekend. The public sector strike in Nigeria — to press for demands that state governments must pay a negotiated minimum of \$33 dollars a month to all workers — enters its third week

(227) CT26/4/99

Vertical text on the right edge of the page, possibly a scanning artifact or bleed-through from the reverse side. It appears to contain a list of small, illegible characters and symbols.

# Nigeria's teachers on general strike (227)

APG 28/4/99

Lagos - Thousands of schools across Nigeria have been closed by strike action as teachers joined other public workers in pressing the government to pay a new public minimum wage

This week's strike adds weight to a general public-sector strike launched to force payment of the minimum wage

The labour unrest comes at a difficult time, just weeks ahead of the May 29 handover by the military government to a civilian regime after more than 15 years of military rule

A striking teacher who declined to give his name said all teachers would stay on strike until told otherwise by their union, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT)

The teachers are demanding a 3 000 naira (R198) wage, a R66 increase, agreed for all public sector workers on March 13.

However, Babs Animashaun, president of the National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, said teachers should allow government more time to pay - Sapa-AFP



*Thousands to be dismissed before May 29*

# Nigeria starts civil sackings

FROM AP

Abuja - Nigeria's outgoing military government had begun a programme of sweeping job-cuts in the bloated public sector, government officials said yesterday.

They said the job cuts started after Gidado Idriss, the secretary to the government of the federation and Nigeria's top civil servant, sent a circular two weeks ago to all ministries and parastatals ordering them to make immediate cuts in staffing.

The dismissals, which could run into the thousands, were supposed to be implemented before the military handover to the country's incoming civilian government on May 29, officials said.

The memo said all those who had done more than the maximum allowed 35 years of service, those with "declining productivity" and those with bad work records should be dismissed.

Already this week, almost 1 000 employees had received dismissal notices at the ministry of the federal capital territory, Abuja. At the same time, 285 of the 715 employees of the Abuja Environmental Protection Board were handed dismissal notices.

Ninety-one staff at the National Maritime Authority had

been dismissed along with 40 at the Nigerian Shippers Council

Dismissal notices had also gone out at the ministries of aviation, communication and health, officials said.

Staff at other ministries were also believed to have received dismissal letters, while more dismissals had been reported at Nitel, the state telecommunications firm, and other parastatals. Ismaila Usman, the finance minister, said last week that major job cuts were inevitable with the decision to implement public sector pay rises and reform.

"The current size of the civil service is no longer sustainable, hence expenditure, restructuring and civil service reform should go hand-in-hand," he said.

Public sector unions are already on strike in many states across the country to force the payment of the minimum wage agreed in March, but not implemented in states which claim a shortage of funds.

Union leaders, who accept the need for dismissals of ghost workers and other "dead wood" in the public service, warned on Tuesday that they would extend the strike to the private sector if sweeping job cuts were made.

(227) ET(MR) 29/4/99

204/5/99  
**Minimum pay  
means loss of  
jobs for many**

(227)  
LAGOS — More Nigerian public sector workers are to lose their jobs so that the government can pay minimum wages

Col Aminu Kotangora, administrator of northern Nigeria's Kano state, says his government has to cut its 37 000-strong workforce to 20 000 to pay the new monthly minimum of \$30. "About 17 000 workers have to go. Government simply doesn't have funds to pay everybody."

The ministries of finance, aviation and transport and telecoms, parastatal Nitel recently ordered dozens to go home

Three weeks ago the main trades union federation, the Nigeria Labour Congress, called a public sector strike in 24 states to push demands for the minimum wage agreed in March. The union called a general strike starting on Thursday if the states refuse to comply and says the strike will go on until all states order payment

Many states say that lack of funds makes it impossible for them to pay the increases. The main Nigerian teachers' trade union has joined the action — Sapa-AFP

## Nigerian labour targets Asian firms

Kingsley Kubeyinje (227)

LAGOS — Nigeria's powerful co-ordinating labour body, the Nigeria Labour Congress, has denounced Asian-owned companies in the country for keeping the bulk of their workers labelled as "casual labourers"

The congress, which represents all 29 organised labour bodies in the country, has established a committee to fight this trend that denies many basic rights. The congress says it is gearing up to fight for the "proper restitution" of wages in the private sector.

It is believed that more than 40% of Nigerians in paid jobs are casuals, while Asian firms have up to 90% of their workforce employed as casuals.

Congress president, Adams Oshiomhole, says Asian employers will be the key "target" of the committee, al-

though Lebanese and Syrian companies also employ an inappropriately high proportion of casual workers.

He names some big hotels, breweries and textile firms as major culprits.

Adams says the congress will not tolerate "foreigners converting Nigerian workers into slaves whose services can be done away with at will."

He claims that rather than give Nigerians permanent and pensionable employment, many Asian managers keep workers classified as casual employees to block unions from calling them out on strike to press for better service conditions.

Adams deplores the lack of contractual terms for casuals, and says labour unions will fight business on the issue.

Asian-owned businesses play an influential role in Nigeria and operate in almost all sectors of the economy.

BD 411199