

## Talks on Somalia postponed for fourth time

NAIROBI, May 30: Talks between Somalia's warring factions scheduled to open here today have been postponed for the fourth time in two months, a UN official said, reports AFP.

A new date for the talks will be announced later, after further consultations between the United Nations and the Somali groups, said Huntley Anderson, an official of the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

The decision to postpone the negotiations was taken at a UN officials' meeting held here during the weekend and on Monday and attended by the UN Secretary-General's special representative to Somalia Lansana Kouyate.

Anderson could not give details on the reasons for the postponement. "We want to make sure the meal is well cooked before serving it," he said.

The talks, to prepare the ground for a national peace and reconciliation conference, were proposed after Somalia's two chief warlords, Mohamed Farah Aided and self-styled interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed, signed a UN-brokered national reconciliation agreement in Nairobi in March.

## Cuba blames US for Belgian embassy incident

MEXICO CITY, May 30: Cuba has accused the United States of inciting more than 100 asylum-seekers to storm the Belgian embassy, reports AP.

A total of 114 Cubans raced through an open door or hopped a wrought-iron fence to get into the embassy on Saturday. They displayed a placard appealing for asylum and denouncing President Fidel Castro, the Mexico City newspaper Excelsior reported from Havana.

# Rwandan rebels cut off army's last avenue of retreat

NAIROBI, May 30: rebels cut off the army's last avenue of retreat from Rwanda's capital Monday, just hours before the two sides were to begin UN mediated talks on a cease fire, reports AP.

Small arms fire near UN headquarters in Kigali delayed the start of the talks Monday morning. UN spokesman Abdul Kabia said shooting kept negotiators and their UN escorts from reaching the headquarters. He said they would try again later Monday.

Most of the fighting Monday was concentrated around Gaddafi Corner, a key intersection on the west side of Kigali where soldiers had controlled access to the highway to Gitarama.

A UN source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the insurgents captured and cut off the army's last avenue of retreat from the capital.

Rebels earlier had captured hills overlooking the highway to Gitarama, but despite rebel fire from the high ground the government was still able to move troops from Kigali to the seat of the interim government.

The UN source said the United Nations had received reports that the interim government had fled Gitarama over the weekend to Kibuye, a city in far western Rwanda on the shores of Lake Kivu. The source said UN officials in Gitarama had been unable to confirm the report.

Rebels reportedly were advancing on Gitarama from the east and the south. An associated Press photographer who was in Gitarama on Thursday saw government workers stacking boxes of files, equipment and luggage outside the door of the government buildings.

After a night of only light fighting in most parts of Kigali, the United Nations said it would resume its efforts to evacuate some of the displaced people stranded at the national stadium and the Milles Collines Hotel.

Before the evacuations began, there were more than 12,000 people who had sought refuge from the ethnic sav-



A young girl holds her sister in her arms on the roadside, 23 kms out of Kigali as they flee the war-ravaged Rwandan capital with their father on May 27. Their mother went missing in the fighting in Kigali and is believed to be dead. — AFP photo

agery at 11 locations in the capital that are protected by the United Nations.

About 200,000 people are estimated to have been killed and about 2 million displaced since the ethnic bloodletting began after Rwanda's president was killed in a suspicious plane crash April 6.

Most of the dead were minority Tutsis and Hutu opponents of the government. They were slaughtered by the Hutu presidential guard, some military units and civilian gangs organized by extreme Hutu politicians.

The massacres shattered a ceasefire signed in Tanzania last August by the government, which is dominated by the majority Hutus, and the Tutsi-led rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front.

Sporadic small arms and mortar fire Sunday thwarted UN plans to evacuate 800 of 4,800 people who have taken refuge for weeks with little food or water in the national stadium. About 1,180 people have been evacuated since Friday and another 1,500 left on their own.

A radio broadcast by the rebels on Sunday blamed government forces for a halt in the exchange of refugees. The radio report, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said the government forced the exchange to stop after it tried to change the terms of an agreement on how many people would be exchanged.

Kabia said the UN would try again Monday to evacuate 800 to 1,000 people from the stadium, the hotel and if possible from a church school.

Evacuated Hutus are opting to go to government-controlled western Rwanda, while Tutsis prefer to relocate in rebel-held areas, mostly in the north and east of Kigali.

## Prabhakaran's bodyguard commits suicide

COLOMBO, May 30: One of the elite bodyguards of LTTE leader V Prabhakaran has committed suicide having failed to obtain the LTTE supreme's consent to marry his beloved, newspaper reports said, according to PTI.

The body of Richard, who belonged to the highly trained 'Swarnam' group of the Tamil Tigers which is entrusted with the security of Prabhakaran, was found on the outskirts of the Tiger stronghold of Jaffna last month.

The LTTE was said to have pronounced that Richard died after swallowing cyanide.

Richard apparently had sought permission of Prabhakaran to marry his girlfriend. Prabhakaran who is married and has children does not permit cadres to have affairs or to marry for the fear of security leaks that might slacken his security.

Richard left the LTTE after he was told 'no' to his marriage plans. However, he was shadowed by the intelligence men of the Tigers which apparently led to him ending his life.

## N Yemen opposes UN debate on civil war

SANAA, May 30: Yemen's northern-based government said it opposed any United Nations debate on the civil war and described secession by its southern foes as "high treason," reports Reuters.

The UN Security Council is due to hold consultations on Yemen on Tuesday but Foreign Minister Mohammad Salem Basendwa said on Sunday that a debate would be an interference in the country's internal affairs.

"Discussing it in the UN Security Council is interference in Yemen's internal affairs and a dangerous precedent in the Council's history," state-run Sanaa television quote him as saying.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries are pressing for a UN resolution which calls for a ceasefire, an arms embargo and a fact-finding mission to Yemen, where civil war between northern and southern forces erupted on May 4.

Northern Yemenis say a ceasefire that is not based on Yemen's unity would be tantamount to recognition of southern secessionists led by Ali Salem Al-Baidh who declared a separate southern state on May 21.

The southern leadership says the North tried to erode any southern role in United Yemen.

It says secession is irreversible. Northern troops should withdraw to the old border between North and South Yemen and the Sanaa government must negotiate directly with it.

The Sanaa-based parliament, boycotted by southern deputies since the war, has denounced the South's secession as "high treason" and told other countries to keep out of the conflict.

## Ex-communists get absolute majority in Hungarian polls

BUDAPEST, May 30: Former communists won an absolute majority Sunday in run-off elections in Hungary after four years of conservative rule, the national election centre said, reports AFP.

With more than 99 per cent of the votes counted, the former communists, restyled as the Hungarian Socialist Party, have won at least 204 seats in the 386-member legislature, the centre said. An absolute majority is 194 seats. In the outgoing legislature the party had just 33 seats.

The Liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, the main opposition party in the outgoing parliament and a probable coalition partner of the Socialists, is assured of at least 68 seats, it added.

The Conservative Democratic Forum, the main party in the ruling coalition, took a beating, plummeting to 36 seats from 165.

## Off the Record



US movie star Sylvester Stallone arrives in a rickshaw pulled by girls in traditional Chinese dress for the opening of Planet Hollywood Restaurant in Hong Kong on May 29. An array of Western and Chinese movie stars attended the high-profile opening party for the Asia's first Planet Hollywood outlet. — AFP photo

## World's longest line of sandwiches

LIMA: Some 1,500 young volunteers slapped together a nearly three-mile (4.5 km) long line of sardine paste sandwiches along a Lima expressway Sunday in an effort to win Peru a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, reports Reuters.

The sandwiches, made from 10,000 loaves of bread and 13,200 pounds (6,000 kilos) of sardine paste assembled on 5,000 tables stretched out along the eight-lane highway, were to be donated to children in Lima's shantytowns, organisers said.

"This line of sandwiches represents five kilometres of Peruvian brotherhood," First Lady Susana Higuchi De Fujimori said shortly before the collective task began.

Tens of thousands of Peruvians gathered on footbridges over the highway and along the roadway itself to cheer the group on and offer advice.

On completion, the Swiss inspection firm SGS officially measured the line of sandwiches at 4,157 yard or 4.5 km. A Guinness representative was on hand to verify the record.

Shortly after the 19-minute, 40-second task was finished, chaos ensued when pedestrians made off with some loaves, but mounted police soon restored order.

More than 20 government and private sector entities, including Peru's navy, which baked and transported the loaves, sponsored the event that promises to put Peru into the record book for producing what organisers called "the world's longest line of sandwiches."

## Conference on toilet!

HONG KONG: Delegates from across Asia and the Pacific gathered in Hong Kong Monday with a dream in common, a world where public toilets are clean, sweet-smelling and lovable, reports Reuters.

"If children are to learn to keep toilets clean, they must love their public toilets," said Sachiko Azai, who heads a Japanese non-government action group set up to realise a dream of what she calls "toiletopia."

Concerned people from throughout the region are attending a three-day seminar entitled "public toilets 1994" the prelude to a full international symposium next year.

"It's not a laughing matter," Dr Ronald Leung, the straight-faced chairman of Hong Kong's urban council, told smirking reporters. "I know you press people all thin so — that's why you call me Dr Toilet."

## Congress consolidates majority in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, May 30: The ruling Congress Party has consolidated its majority in the Lok Sabha (house of people) by improving its strength to 269 with five victories in the by-elections held for seven seats on May 27, reports Xinhua.

Railway Minister CK Jaffer Sharief said here Sunday the impressive performance of the Congress in the by-elections to Lok Sabha and the assembly constituencies was a vindication of the people's support for the central government's economic policies and its overall approach to the socio-political issues confronting the society.

AFP says: Congress was celebrating today its strong showing in parliamentary by-elections as voters in India's most populous state prepared to go to the polls.

Several million voters in 12 states were eligible to cast their ballots in the by-elections seen as the final popularity test ahead of full state assembly polls later this year.

State assembly elections are to be held in Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's home state, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Sikkim by November and in Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Manipur and Orissa by March of next year.

Voters in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state with a population of around 140 million, go to the poll Tuesday to fill six seats in the state legislature.

The Congress performed dismally in state assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh in November, finishing a distant fourth behind a socialist party coalition, the right-wing Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party) and the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party).

Clinton's approval rating drops

WASHINGTON, May 30: President Clinton's job-approval rating dropped this month to its lowest level since August 1993, a poll indicates, reports AP.

Forty-two per cent of Americans now give Clinton a positive rating, down from 48 per cent in early April, according to a Harris Poll released Sunday. His negative rating, meanwhile, rose this month to 56 per cent, from 51 per cent in April.

Clinton's positive rating in June 1993 was 35 per cent; it was 41 per cent last August.

## BRIEFLY

### Indian president in Bucharest:

Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma arrived in Bucharest yesterday on a four-day official visit during which he is expected to sign several cooperation accords involving tourism and organised crime, local radio reported, AFP says from Bucharest.

Sharma was invited to Bucharest by his Romanian counterpart Ion Iliescu.

### Ex-Japanese minister jailed:

A former Cabinet minister was sentenced to three years in prison Monday for accepting bribes of 90 million yen (\$65,000 dollar) in one of the corruption cases that helped oust Japan's government last year, AP reports from Tokyo.

Fumio Abe, 71, was convicted of taking the bribes from Kyowa Co., a steel-frame maker, on seven occasions between 1989 and 1990 in return for favours while he headed the Hokkaido Development Agency, a Cabinet-level post.

### Niyazov arrives in Malaysia:

Turkmenistan's President Saparmurat A Niyazov arrived in Kuala Lumpur Monday for a three-day official visit during which he will hold talks on economic cooperation, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Niyazov, accompanied by five deputy prime ministers, five Cabinet ministers and five provincial governors, was given a plush ceremonial welcome that included a 103-member honour guard.

### Australian Everest climber dies:

An Australian mountain climber has died while descending Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, the Australian department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said yesterday, Reuters reports from Sydney.

Michael Rheinberger, 53, was one of two climbers in a large American-organised expedition who reached the summit but were trapped overnight by bad weather as they made their way down, a department spokesman said.

### Walesa to stand for re-election:

Polish President Lech Walesa said on Sunday he would stand for re-election in next year's presidential contest, Reuters reports from Warsaw.

State television showed Walesa moving into his new Warsaw residence, a historic 18th-century palace, and quipping that it would be his home for the next seven years.

A television reporter asked whether that meant he would stand for re-election. The President replied: "From what I see, it seems I shall have to." He did not elaborate.

### Agra totally literate district:

Agra was declared the first totally literate district in UP at a function held Sunday night, PTI reports from Agra.

Speaking at a function to award certificates to neoliterates, the Union Minister for human Resource Development, Arjun Singh said the total literacy programme, initiated by Rajiv Gandhi in 1988, had made great strides in the last six years.

### China executes 4 for smuggling:

In an attack on rampant smuggling by coastal officials, China executed three frontier police and a former trade officer for smuggling cigarettes, official newspapers said Monday, AP reports from Beijing.

Smuggling has become a multi-billion dollar business in recent years, with cigarettes, liquor, cars and other high-tariff items brought in from Hong Kong or from ships that anchor offshore.

## Two missing in Russian dam burst

MOSCOW, May 30: Two people were missing and several homes were washed away after a dam burst in a village in central Russia, a news agency reported Monday, reports AP.

Part of a major highway was also washed away near the village of Satis, 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of the city of Nizhny Novgorod on the Volga River, the Interfax news agency said.

The dam burst Sunday, washing away several houses in the village. Two people were reported missing, the agency said.

Repair work on the dam has begun, the agency said.

# Cold War divisions come alive again with death of Honecker

BONN, May 30: Cold war divisions between Germany's East and West came alive again with reactions to the death of former East German leader Erich Honecker. 4-1/2 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall he built, reports Reuters.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl and western commentators recalled the severity of Honecker's iron-fisted rule from 1971 until he was ousted by pro-democracy protests in 1989, paving the way for German unity one year later.

But former communists and a surprising number of East Berliners interviewed on the streets found good things to

say about the man who died of cancer on Sunday in self-imposed exile in Chile.

Kohl, who welcomed Honecker to West Germany in 1987 but shunned him after communism collapsed, issued a terse statement.

"Honecker had failed in his political goals," Kohl's spokesman Dieter Vogel said. "Respect in the face of death requires that we say very little at this time about his role in post-war German history."

The ARD public television network described Honecker as a functionary who ruled with the aid of Moscow and his own stasi security ministry and left

East Germany an economic ruin.

"His authority was based on instruments of power that caused fear among the people he called citizens and whom he treated as vassals without a will," ARD commentator Juergen Engert said.

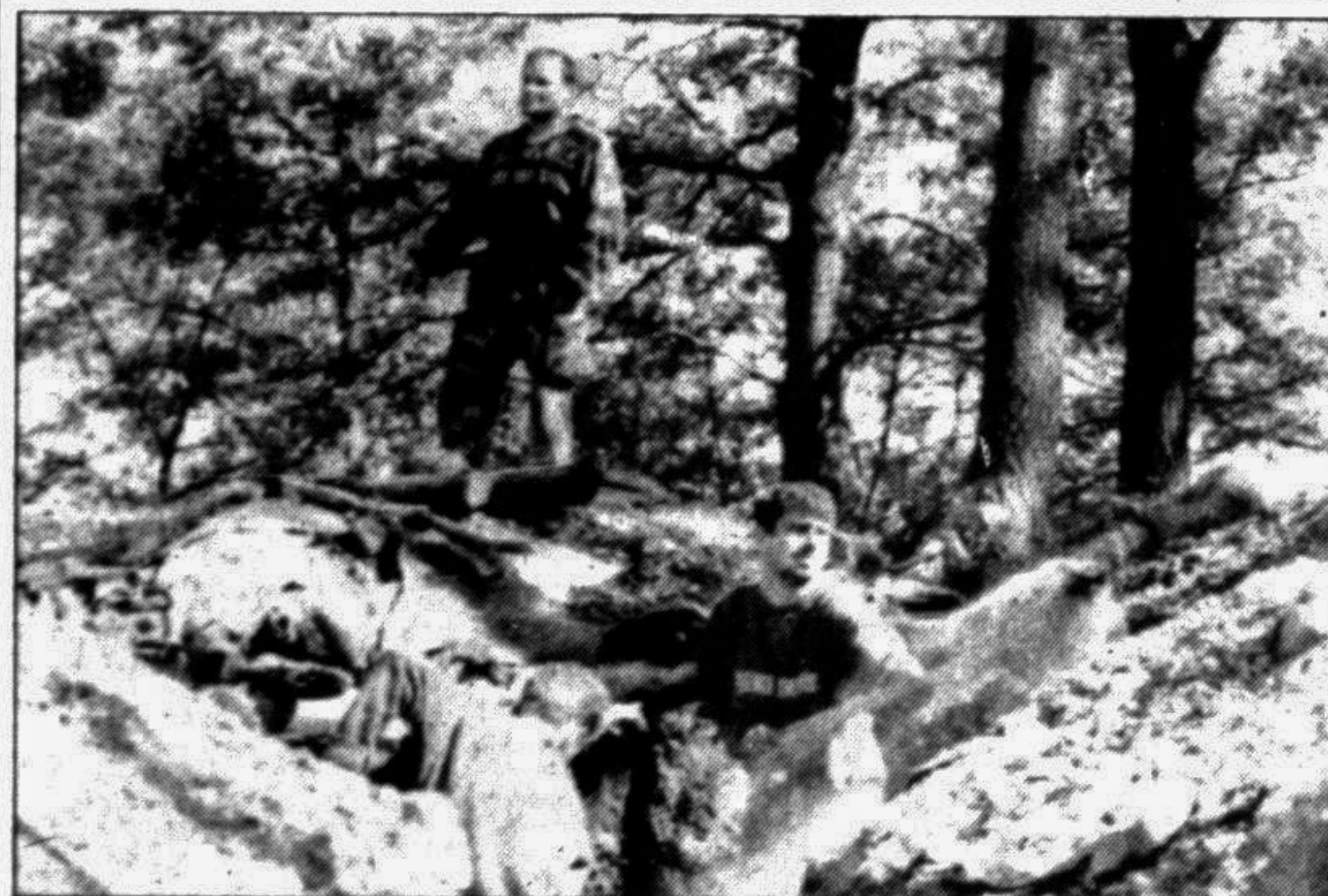
"When the fear was gone, East Germany's former number one was nothing more than a synonym for a bleak heritage."

Some eastern politicians who once suffered stasi persecution as human rights activists joined the western criticism of Honecker for never repenting his years in power. "He remained an overbear-

ing and unlearning potentate until his death," said Konrad Weiss, a member of Parliament from the eastern wing of the Greens Alliance 90 party.

But the reformed communist successors to Honecker's socialist Unity Party (SED), the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), and many East Berliners spoke of positive impressions.

"In our party, we will continue to recognise Erich Honecker's fight against the Hitler regime just as much as we do not want to excuse or play down his failure in creating a socialist society," PDS chairman Lothar Bisky said.



A Bosnian Serb guard (top) stands over Bosnian Muslim prisoners of war digging trenches on Mount Majevica overlooking the Northern Bosnian town of Tuzla on May 28. The UN is working towards a possible four-month ceasefire and has asked the warring parties to meet in Geneva. — AFP photo