Conyers says legal system fails Black elected officials

WASHINGTON — Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., told Attorney General Dick Thornburgh he no longer believes that Black public officials are treated fairly by the American legal system.

Mr. Conyers and Mr. Thornburgh got into a sometimes heated discussion when the attorney general testifed before the House Judiciary Committee.

Black elected public officials are being systematically harassed, Mr. Conyers told Mr. Thornburgh, citing recent investigations or prosecutions of Rep. Harold Ford, D-Tenn.; Marion Barry, mayor of the District of Columbia, and Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

Black leaders face wiretapping and persistent, illegal "leaks" involving grand jury proceedings, Mr. Conyers said. He urged Mr. Thornburgh to begin "direct oversight" of the activities of federal prosecutors.

Mr. Conyers, who is Black, is a member of the House Judiciary Committee. Mr. Thornburgh, former governor of Pennsylvania, is White.

The attorney general denied that Black leaders are being singled out for prosecution and said no investigations occur without some evidence of "criminal wrongdoing."

"I trust our judicial system" to treat people fairly, regardless of race, he said.

"I use to believe that," Mr. Conyers responded. "I don't believe that any more."

Mr. Conyers also sharply criticized Mr. Thornburgh for urging president Bush to veto a new civil rights proposal that has been attacked by business interests.

The measure has broad support in Congress and is designed to reverse a series of Supreme Court decisions last year that made it more difficult to win job discrimination suits.

A group of demonstrators in New York carried an empty casket outside state Supreme Court in Brooklyn after a White Brooklyn man, Joseph Fama, convicted of second-degree murder of Black teenager Yusef Hawkins.

African-American agenda subject of Va. summit session

RICHMOND, Va. — An African - American summit on issues of importance to Blacks got under way May 18, giving an opportunity for Gov. L. Douglas Wilder to rebut criticism from some political analysts who say he has ignored his Black constituency.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who also was scheduled to address the event, canceled his appearance so he could attend the funeral of entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr.

Dr. John Kenney, dean - designate of the school of theology at Virginia Union University, where the summit was held, will substitute for Jackson.

The Rev. Paul Matthews, Jr., a member of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, one of the sponsors of the event, said earlier the two - day Virginian African American Summit will seek to develop a 1990s agenda for Black Virginians.

The event will include a series of five sessions on the family, drugs and the criminal justice system, economic development, education and politics.

The other principal sponsors of the summit include the Legislative Black Caucus and the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, the state's largest Black religious organization.

The summit would have provided an interesting forum for Gov. Wilder and Mr. Jackson, potential political rivals.

Rev. Jackson twice has failed to capture the Democratic presidential nomination, while Gov. Wilder is showing signs that he is considering a bid for national office.

Gov. Wilder has made a number of appearances around the country promoting his "new mainstream" political philosophy, a moderate approach to governing, and recently he took his message to a Rainbow Coalition gathering.

He is being viewed by some within the Democratic Party as an alternative to Mr. Jackson, a liberal who once made disparaging remarks about Gov. Wilder's philosophy.

Fama jury delayed by panelist unsure of murder evidence

NEW YORK — Jurors who spent 11 days deliberating the fate of accused Bensonhurst triggerman Joseph Fama said there was simply not enough evidence to convict the Brooklyn man of firing the shots that killed Yusef Hawkins.

One panelist who wanted to acquit Fama of both murder counts said he changed his mind after state Justice Thaddeus Owens explained the legal definition of "acting in concert" by using an all too common New York experience: getting mugged.

"I was unsure of the law, and it was that example and that clarification that made it clear that by the law we had no choice (but to convict)," said Steven Bequist, the juror who changed his vote.

His reversal made the vote of guilty on second - degree murder with "depraved indifference to human life" unanimous.

Justice Owens had told the jury if one of two people mugging a third person pulls out a gun and kills the victim — without the second mugger knowing his accomplice had a weapon — that second mugger can be found guilty of second - degree murder.

Fama was acquitted of intentional murder, the most serious of the two second - degree murder counts, but convicted of the second murder count charging him with "depraved indifference of human life."

"I personally decided that (Fama) was (the gunman), but there was not enough evidence to convict him of that," said juror Tonya Bailey. "To act with the mob is depraved indifference to me. A mob becomes an entity instead of individuals, and I feel that's depraved."

Marie DeStefano, a first-grade teacher from Canarsie, wept as her fellow jurors met with reporters after the verdict. "We've had a very difficult 11 days. I was just very emotional," she said.

5 guards to be fired after student melee

PHILADELPHIA — Five Temple University security guards involved in a campus melee last month between Black and White students have been suspended and will be fired, a university spokeswoman said.

The guards, both White and Black, were criticized by Black students who said they had used excessive force in breaking up a fight between White fraternity members and Black students they believed were breaking windows at their frat house.

Temple spokeswoman Kathy Gosliner said letters were sent last week to the five guards, whom she declined to name, saying they were suspended with the intent to dismiss, pending the outcome of the grievance procedure.

She also would not say what the five were charged with because of a possible grievance hearing.

The suspensions were the result of a university investigation into the April 26 incident. More than 80 people were interviewed and two days of private disciplinary hearings for 10 students involved in the brawl were scheduled.

The incident began when baseball bat - wielding members of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity chased three Blacks they suspected of vandalizing their house. The incident quickly escalated and attracted several hundred students.

Some witnesses accused campus police of using excessive force in breaking up the fight and of treating Black students differently from Whites.

Mixed reaction to verdict

NEW YORK — Residents of the predominantly White Brooklyn neighborhood where 16-year-old Yusef Hawkins was slain greeted the news of his accused killer's conviction peacefully, though few expressed joy at the verdict.

News that Joseph Fama, 19, had been convicted of second -degree murder and depraved indifference to human life, but acquitted on a separate count of intentional murder, in the Aug. 23 slaying of Hawkins reached the Bensonhurst area shortly after 7 p.m. May 17.

At the intersection of 67th Street and 20th Avenue, near where Hawkins was shot by one member of a band of bat - wielding White youths, small clusters of residents gathered and bemoaned the tension the killing had brought to their neighborhood.

"I hope (the verdict) was fair. The whole situation was depressing," said Luci Anaya, a divorcee in her 40s raising three children in Bensonhurst. "It caused a lot of heartache and confusion and static, which we never had before in Bensonhurst. I hope things will calm down in Bensonhurst."

"This whole thing is blown out of proportion. It was all caused by Gina (Feliciano)," Barbara Rosentreter said, referring to the young woman blamed by many Bensonhurst residents for touching off the violence that led to Hawkins' death by inviting Black and Hispanic men to parties in the neighborhood.

Cries of "Yusef! Yusef!" broke out outside the Brooklyn courthouse with word that the jury found Fama guilty.

"I'm just happy that justice has been served," said Ramona Bennett, 40, the owner of a temporary employment agency. "People realized that situations like this can't go on, and the jury showed that there are still people with reasonable hearts and stable minds willing to do the right thing."

Sunlight filtered through rain clouds as demonstrators carried a mock coffin outside the courthouse.

The crush of television cameras and reporters was skirted by the parents of the victim, Diane Hawkins and Moses Stewart, as they rushed to a waiting car.

Fama, 19, faces 25 years to life in prison for his conviction of second-degree murder charges.

Police also had worried about possible repercussions from the verdict, and outnumbered by two to one by the nearly 150 peaceful demonstrators.

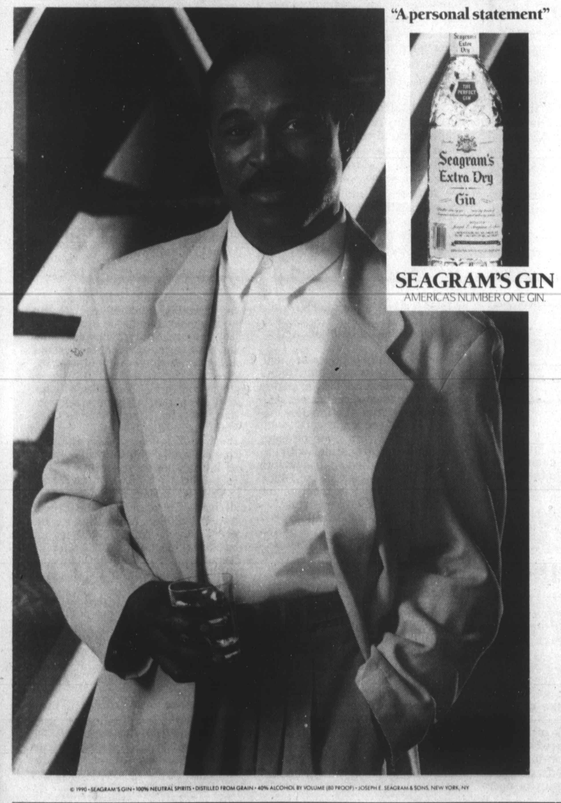
The Hawkins' murder on Aug. 23 opened deep wounds still present from the infamous 1986 racial attack in Howard Beach, Queens, where White teenagers chased a young Black man to his death on a highway.

As in the Howard Beach incident, White youths in Bensonhurst reacted violently to the presence of Blacks in their neighborhood.

Comedian Bill Cosby has a hearty laugh as he holds his honorary degree of law after joking: "I'm outa here" drawing a jovial response from graduates in the audience during ceremonies at the University of Pennsylvania.

MELLOW

"A personal statement"



SEAGRAM'S GIN
AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE GIN

© 1990 • SEAGRAM'S GIN • 100% NEUTRAL SPIRITS • DISTILLED FROM GRAIN • 40% ALCOHOL BY VOLUME (80 PROOF) • JOSEPH E. SEAGRAM & SONS, NEW YORK, NY

Mandela visits Libya

TRIPOLI, Libya — African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela, saying, "We consider ourselves comrades in arms," thanked Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi for military training he gave ANC fighters.

About 3,000 cheering students greeted Mr. Mandela when he arrived in Tripoli from Algiers May 18 as part of an African tour he's taking with his wife, Winnie.

The anti-apartheid leader was whisked to Mr. Gadhafi's Bedouin tent residence inside the heavily armed Babel Azizya barracks in the north African capital.

"This is a very unbelievable moment," Mr. Mandela, dressed in a dark gray suit, told the Libyan strongman, who was wearing traditional white Arab robes laced with gold and a white turban.

"You have given military training to South Africans who wanted to obtain their liberation through armed struggle," Mr. Mandela said after embracing Mr. Gadhafi outside his tent. "In our situation, as in other countries, an armed struggle is one of the most effective ways for fighting for political change in our country.

"Your readiness to provide us with the facilities of forming an army of liberation indicated your commitment to the fight for peace and human rights in the world," Mr. Mandela said. "We consider ourselves comrades in arms."

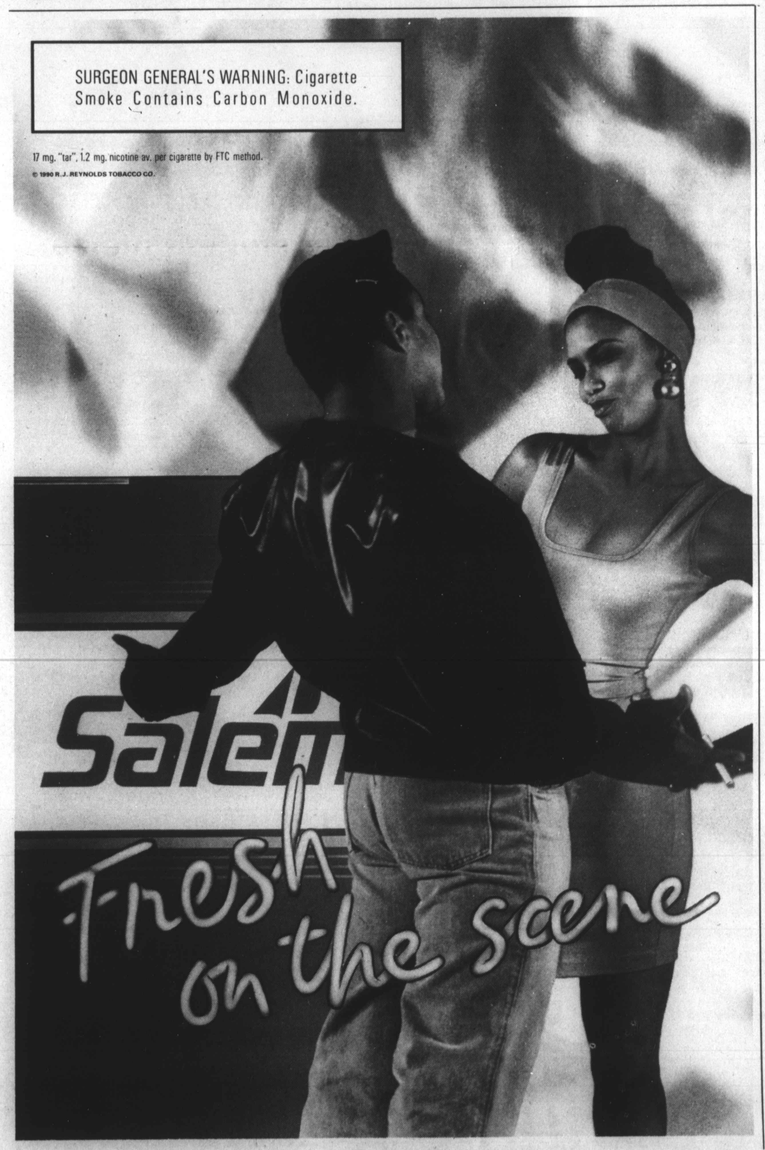
Mr. Mandela's visit was a diplomatic triumph for Mr. Gadhafi, who has made support of liberation movements from around the world a major plank of his controversial foreign policy since he seized power in a bloodless coup in 1969.

Diplomats say Libyan officials regard Mr. Mandela's visit as a triumphant symbol of Libyan policy that will considerably boost Tripoli's prestige in the African world.

The sand-swept streets of Tripoli were decked with brightly colored lights in anticipation of Mr. Mandela's visit.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Tripoli May 17 for talks with Libyan officials, but it was not known if he also met with Mr. Mandela.

Nelson Mandela visited Tripoli recently where he thanked Libya's leader, Col. Gadhafi for his help in the African National Congress' struggle against apartheid.



S. Africa right wing preparing for 'war'

VENTERSDORP, South Africa — A White extremist movement bracing for civil war and accusing President Frederik de Klerk of selling out the Afrikaner lifted a veil of secrecy recently over its commando units training deep in the country's farmland.

Khaki-clad men and women, wearing the Swastika-like emblem of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement — AWB — and defending a "holy war" against Mr. de Klerk's reform initiatives, for the first time opened their weekend training sessions to reporters and photographers.

Gunfire rumbled across the veld on the outskirts of Ventersdorp, the AWB's stronghold 110 miles west of Johannesburg, as both young women and grandmothers, some wearing stylish red shoes and jewels with their uniforms, took target practice.

Militant AWB leader Eugene Terre-Blanche proudly declared his people will be ready for war.

"Sixteen years ago I committed myself to one single task . . . that I could talk to my people, so that when the government gave away our country we would defend ourselves with violence," said the fiery orator, who founded the AWB in 1973.

Opening of the weekend commando training sessions to public scrutiny coincides with a growing right-wing backlash over Mr. de Klerk's reform program that included lifting a 3-year ban on the African National Congress, releasing Nelson Mandela and proposing full-blown power-sharing talks to end the country's racial crisis.

Th AWB is the largest of the extreme right-wing groups demanding an exclusively White homeland for the Afrikaner Boer, descendants of South Africa's original Dutch settlers who have fought both Zulus and the British in bloody wars since the 1800s.

Denouncing the ANC as "communist-inspired murderers," Mr. Terre-Blanche told reporters the Black movement was "preparing for a revolution."

"We are sure we are heading for a Black revolution and we will meet it," he said. "We are getting ourselves in shape to meet the revolution, to fight it, to win it," he said.

Sudan holds peace talks

NAIROBI, Kenya — Sudanese rebel leaders held talks with U.S. officials in the Kenyan capital May 17 aimed at paving the way for a cease-fire in Sudan's bloody 7-year-old civil war, European diplomats said.

Herman Cohen, assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, was in Kenya to put his plan for an internationally supervised cease-fire in southern Sudan to Col. John Garang, leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, according to the diplomats, who declined to be identified.

Mr. Cohen told journalists he expected to meet Col. Garang face to face, but declined to give details of what he hoped to achieve. He also expressed optimism for peace efforts in Ethiopia and Angola, and welcomed Kenya's role in mediating the civil war in Mozambique.

The rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army last year held two abortive sets of talks with the government of Gen. Omar al Bashir, but failed to agree on even a basis for more talks at their last meeting in Nairobi.

Mr. Cohen has proposed a cease-fire, the separation of the government and rebel sides prior to their disarmament and supervision of the cease-fire by a U.N.-style multinational force.

Diplomats were optimistic after his statement that the Sudanese government was prepared to negotiate on the basis of Cohen's plan.

The civil war in Sudan, which began in 1983 as a southern rebellion against the dominance of the Islamic north, has claimed over half a million lives in the past four years alone, partly through fighting and partly through war-related famines.

Kenya tourism down

NAIROBI, Kenya — One year after Kenya declared a war on elephant poachers with a public burning of ivory, the threat from poachers continues to hurt tourism, delegates to a tourist conference said.

Kenya's Indian Ocean coast, meanwhile, has lost European tourists after a series of health scares about cerebral malaria, AIDS and even cholera. The death last year of an Italian diplomat from malaria sharply reduced the large number of Italian tourists who normally visit the coast. Exact figures were not available.

Kenya plans to attract 1.1 million tourists to visit its game parks and coastal resorts by 1993. This year, the government projects 890,000 people will visit the country.

Dominican vote unclear

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — President Joaquin Balaguer, 82, held a narrow lead in election vote-counting, but rival octagenarian Juan Bosch claimed fraud and urged supporters to take to the streets.

With 79 percent of polling stations reporting, the Central Election Board said Mr. Balaguer — a five-term incumbent who is blind — held a narrow lead over Mr. Bosch, a Marxist former president.

In balloting monitored by former President Jimmy Carter and other international observers, the board said Mr. Balaguer led with 516,938 votes to Mr. Bosch's 507,663 with 1.5 million votes counted, or 34.9 percent to 34.2 percent.

Jose Francisco Pena Gomez of the Dominican Revolutionary Party had 343,197 votes, or 23 percent, and Jacobo Majluta of the Independent Revolutionary Party 99,721 votes, or 6 percent. Four other candidates also ran in the presidential election.

"We announce that the PLD is going to come out on the streets for the people who have been defrauded by the Central Electoral Board and by Dr. Balaguer," said Mr. Bosch, the 80-year-old leader of the Dominican Liberation Party.

"Whatever life I have left will be no use if I accept this fraud," Mr. Bosch said at an earlier news conference.

"If there is violence, they will have provoked it," he said. "Yes sir, there will be confrontations and in those confrontations whoever's turn it is to die, will die."