

TWO THOUSAND African National Congress delegates meet in Durban today at the start of a five-day conference, the central objective of which is to elect a new, representative leadership capable of transforming a ramshackle liberation movement into a political organisation fit to challenge South Africa's streamlined state machine. Since the ANC was legalised last year, it has been outmanoeuvred and outclassed. President FW de Klerk's National Party has been in power without interruption since 1948, during which time the resources of the state - the budget, the security forces, the media - have been deployed with clear unity of political purpose. In contrast, the ANC has only had 17 months in which to channel the energies of an extraordinarily heterogeneous mass of people - black and white, educated and illiterate, Communist and Christian - towards a common political goal. Progress had been made. That half a million members have signed up and that each has had a say in nominating candidates for this week's elections for a new national executive committee is remarkable. It has been an exercise in internal democracy probably unprecedented in revolutionary organisations. But chaos and confusion have also reigned. It is hard to come across an ANC member who does not rage against the Organisation, and against the leadership in particular. Even Nelson Mandela has come crashing down to earth - no longer a redeemer in the eyes of many, more a flawed, autocratically inclined politician. Which is why the elections for an expanded NEC - from 34 to 90 - are so important. For the root of almost all the ANC's problems has been its incapacity to fuse a leadership virtually self-elected in exile with an internal mass movement whose acknowledged leaders have had uncomfortably and grudgingly to take a back seat. ' The NEC has come to be perceived From John Carlin in Durban, - as a dictatorial Johannesburg-based elite out of touch with and insensitive to the masses, to those it forged in struggle. Vital initiatives have simply dropped clown from on high, fuelling a generalised Mandela has been caught again and again in contradictions between his public and his private utterances. And thus the leadership has fallen far short in the challenge it suddenly faced in February last year of re-educating sense of grievance. Mr. the ANC constituency, of re-shaping a blunt instrument geared to confronting the blunt repression of P W Botha and his predecessors into a sharp tool capa-

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Tuesday 2 July 1991

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As preliminary results from the  
nominations in the branches have quite  
predictably indicated, the outcome of  
the elections will be a species of coup  
for the MDM - the Mass Democratic  
Movement which led the internal fight  
while the ANC was illegal. Mr  
Mandela's place is assured. Indeed, he  
will displace Oliver Tambo, who is  
chronically ill, and rise from deputy  
president to president The more dy-  
namic and better known of the old faces  
will remain prominent - notably Wal-  
ter Sisulu. Joe Slovo, Thabo Mbeki and  
Chris Hani.

But much dead wood - such as Al-  
fred N20. the secretary-general - will  
dy to sharpen up its act  
go. Strongly fancied to replace Mr N20  
is Cyril Ramaphosa, head of the Na-

tional Union of Mineworkers and one of the most widely respected political figures in the country, not least by the industrial bosses whom he forces to the negotiating table.

A host of other young MDM leaders, "known" - that is the point - nationally and regionally, will capture the heart of the ANC. The political direction will not change overnight. The old slogans will still fan the fires. But the foundations will at last have been laid on which the ANC may have a chance to build a political party, not an illusory insurrectionary movement.

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Mobutism

WHILE THERE are now more than 100 opposition parties in Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko has yet to set a date for elections. Opposition leaders claim that Mr Mobutu finances many of the parties in order to prevent any one from becoming too threatening. The newly free press describes this situation as "multi-Mobutism", or choosing between the many faces of the president. "The only thing we've won? one Zairean says somewhat bitterly his the right to wear ties." In the past Mobutu decreed that for the sake of llauthenticity" people should not wear ties, should give up their European names for African names (Sese Selto means .lthe big cockerelll), wear Mao-style jackets and call one another tlcitizen". One story doing the rounds in Kinshasa has Major-General t Juvcnul Hahyarimzmzt. the Pres- much greater than being killed by fireworks, tornadoes, volcanic eruptions. nuclear accidents or terrorism), The rain in Spain Julio Iglesias, the Spanish crooner, who has just appeared at a music festival in Chattanooga. Tennessee, says he first heard of the city 26 years ago when he had to learn to sing

Glenn Miller's "Chattanooga"

Friday 5 July 1991

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From Chris McGreal

in Durban

A CLOSED session of the African National Congress (ANC) national conference yesterday threw out a proposal to guarantee women a minimum number of leadership positions amid vehement and, at times, blatantly chauvinistic opposition from some of the male delegates. '

Nelson Mandela, the organisation's deputy leader, who favoured a clause in the new ANC constitution reserving one-third of 55 elected seats on the National Executive Committee (NEC) for women, left the stormy six-hour debate early, claiming a prior engagement. ' ' .

The ANC Women's League had fought for guaranteed representation as recognition of the role of women at the forefront of the campaign against apartheid, especially within South Africa itself. When it was clear the consensus of the largely male delegates was going against the proposal, Women's League members danced in the aisles and drowned out speeches opposing the quota. One male delegate caused a stir when he said that the reason low numbers of women make it on to the NEC is that all the women vote for men.

The ANC said it had not abandoned the principle of affirmative action in a post-apartheid society to increase opportunities for blacks, women and others who have suffered discrimination. But, the ANC said, the uproar at the conference reflected concern about the difficulties of setting quotas and fears that the present government might use the issue to guarantee whites a minimum number of official positions in the constitution of the new South Africa?

The conference had been considerably quieter during a stinging critique of the ANC by the General Secretary, Alfred Nzo, who is in grave danger of losing his post. In a secret speech to the delegates, he severely criticised the ANC for its failure to broaden its base of support and for alienating groups, such as civic organisations, that should be natural allies. Although Mr Mandela has spent weeks denying there are divisions within the ANC, Mr Nzo attributed some of the organisation's problems to factionalism and cliquism, lack of initiative,

and bureaucracy and lack of organisation at head office. There is, he said, a sense of complacency that nothing is at stake and ANC's ascendancy to power is already assured? Mr Nzo attributed the ANC's lack of appeal among whites, mixed-race coloureds and Indians to perceptions of it as primarily a black organisation, ignorance and complacency among its members, the continuing violence and the ANC's alliance with the Communist Party.

The dispute over women's representation helped set the conference back by nearly a day, along with a last-minute rush to add new candidates to the NEC elections. Several branches nominated the controversial coloured leader, Allan Boesak, without realising he is not an ANC member. Delegates urged the founder of the United Democratic Front to join on the spot but after talks with Mr Mandela, Mr Boesak decided not to stand for election.

His nomination nevertheless confirms reports that he intends to re-enter politics after he was forced to resign from his church after an affair with a married, white television producer. Mr Boesak said he will join the ANC next week at his local branch in the Cape.