

Spies keep eyes on ANC — MP

GOVERNMENT spy networks are strongly suspected of infiltrating the African National Congress with secret agents despite its unbanning three years ago.

Evidence pointing to ongoing penetration of the ANC and other extra-parliamentary organisations was revealed in parliament this week by Democratic Party MP Mr Kobus Jordaan, a former senior government constitutional official.

And the ANC said it was aware the government was still infiltrating the organisation. The ANC revealed it had recently protested to the government about the ongoing use of double agents.

"As far as we are concerned it does not level the playing fields. We are concerned at why this should continue to happen when we are in the process of negotiation," ANC spokesman Mr Ronnie Ma-moepa said.

The government has been accused of continuing to infiltrate the ANC more than three years after unbanning the organisation.

DAVID BREIER, Political Staff

The ANC says it is especially aware government agents are still operating in its armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe and in the self-defence units.

But there are also growing suspicions in political circles that the government has infiltrated the ANC at a much higher level, including the National Executive Committee (NEC) and even the National Working Committee (NWC).

Mr Jordaan's anonymous Deep Throat tipoffs led to the exposure of the Inkathagate scandal in 1991 and more recently included allegations that government agents were working for Inkatha and the Bophuthatswana government.

He told parliament his latest tipoff was that "infiltration of extra-parliamentary organisations and homelands is still very good".

The government was kept well informed on other parties' programmes and strategies, Mr Jordaan's Deep Throat told him.

President FW de Klerk has said abnormal covert activities had ended. And he fired a number of senior Military Intelligence officers last year after the Goldstone Commission raided an MI front involved in anti-ANC activities.

Mr Jordaan said he accepted Mr De Klerk's assurance that covert activities were used for security reasons, not to gain an advantage over political rivals.

But Mr Jordaan suspects Mr De Klerk is not being told the whole truth by members of his government.

He said the government could be classified into two groups — the hawkish Mr Her-nus Kriel (Minister of Law and Order) and Mr Tertius Delport (Minister of Local Government) group and the doveish Mr Roelf Meyer (Minister of Constitutional Development) group.

"Will people with a Delport/Kriel orientation feed everything to the State President if they don't agree with what Mr Meyer is doing? I have my doubts," said Mr Jordaan.

He said the government's ability to infiltrate the ANC's NEC and NWC depended on the effectiveness of the government's security system. "One must be realistic; over the years it has been shown to be effective," he said.

ANC admits efficacy of 'swart gevaar'

DENNIS CRUYWAGEN
Political Staff

IN one of the frankest assessments of the effects of National Party propaganda on the coloured community in the Western Cape, a senior ANC member has admitted that the "swart gevaar" tactic has found some resonance.

Former United Democratic Front (Western Cape) executive member Mr Ebrahim Rasool, writing in the April edition of the ANC publication Mayibuye, said some coloured people viewed the ANC as an African organisation.

"Historically and perceptually it is seen as a 'them' rather than an 'us' organisation."

One of the problems facing the ANC was that, unlike the UDF, it was not seen as having risen organically out of the struggles in coloured communities.

"Its culture and many of its traditions are seen as African with no cultural or linguistic roots in much of the Western Cape."

Violence was another issue which had an adverse affect on confidence in the ANC.

"The government has been fairly successful in its attempt to communicate the conflict and bloodshed as a result of a simple battle for power between the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party."

The result was a vision of a violent and frightening future, characterised by inexplicable and bloody conflicts.

Another common perception, according to Mr Rasool, was that an ANC government would benefit only Africans and that coloured people would have been be worse off than before.

"This attitude is exacerbated by the attitude of business which, despite our efforts to the contrary, continues to inform coloured people that the ANC is insisting on the employment of Africans at their expense."

Some of the most serious results of years of anti-ANC propaganda could be found in religion, Mr Rasool wrote, adding that the "possibly ineradicable" impression was the ANC belonged to communists, said to be evil and godless.

WEEKEND ARGUS 3/4/93

Bending rules for our future!

There has been an atmosphere of sweet reasonableness this week at the multiparty talks at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg.

JOHN MacLENNAN
Political Staff

ALL the country's political groups came to grips with each other on serious issues for the first time this week and discovered something called give and take.

They also found — from the CP on the right, to the PAC and SACP on the left — that it was exciting to break out of the mould of our conventional politics.

Up to now the Nats and the CP have been confronting each other with sterile old arguments in the House of Assembly and the only forums available to those outside parliament have been Press conferences and rallies.

Now, if the progress measured this week is a yardstick, many of them will soon be confronting each other in parliament and already they seem to be practising for the day.

Delegates to the talks at the World Trade Centre have started using parliamentary terms. They wanted to know whether the "house" would agree to this or that; one referred to "honourable members"; they used points of order and some were ruled out of order.

The most heartening development from the forum is that it has charted a way ahead. Every delegation professed itself delighted with the progress.

This was achieved only through a new and unifying sense of compromise. Delegates sensed Rome was burning. They knew that the process would be damaged, perhaps irreparably, if they failed to move ahead. That's why they were all prepared to bend the rules, terminology of resolutions and procedure to ensure there was something for everybody.

Inkatha won agreement, for example, that the form of state we are to have will take precedence over all other business before the negotiating council. Instead of talking about the re-incorporation of the TBVC states, the resolution on transition raises their "future". The council will also address self-determination, thus satisfying the rightwingers, and the ANC managed to get approval for the use of the term "constituent assembly".

With only two exceptions there was no tough talk and the chairmen kept appealing to the delegations not to use emotive language. Both speakers rose on the issue of violence and many expected there would be walkouts as they lashed the ANC and PAC.

Mr Leon Wessels of the NP (Minister of Manpower) took on all delegations who talked peace while endorsing violence. He said: "The peace must be won against those whose words and deeds sustain a climate of intimidation and violence."

The other speaker was provided by the CP, which seems to have a serious schism. First deputy leader Dr Ferdi Hartzenberg agreed to abide by the chairman's request that one of the party's thorny resolutions

be referred to a committee, rather than have it hold up proceedings. But then the CP's steaming rightwinger Mr Schalk Pienaar flew off on a tirade with all those ringing phrases which the NP can no longer afford to use ... "murder machines" ... "terrorists".

He said: "We detest the fact that they are here. We are appalled and abhor their callous killings. Their deeds fill us with outrage and repugnance."

The CP would like to see the talks scuppered and there was speculation that he hoped his attack would so enrage the PAC,

especially, that it would depart in a huff. He failed.

But the PAC was forced off its soap box in a leveling process which is one of the main features of the parliamentary legacy which is now starting to feature at the multi-party talks. Mr Barney Desai of the PAC said that when it came to violence his organisation had the "cleanest hands". When the delegates guffawed he said: "I hear laughter ...", and ploughed on with a defence.

Critics of the talks will say that nothing of real importance was agreed. For example, delegates could not even agree on the name of the forum, what to do about violence or on details about the way ahead. All these are being referred to the planning committee and the negotiating council — the engine-room of the forum.

But the critics are wrong. There was broad, sincere and determined agreement that the forum marked a last chance opportunity and that every effort had to be made to keep the show on the road.

That's why the chairmen were so anxious to prevent fighting talk and why delegation leaders were so keen to compromise. It was especially Mr Cyril Ramaphosa of the ANC who made efforts to ensure that piffle did not thwart headway. So you saw him

suggesting that "self-determination" be written into a resolution (to satisfy the rightwingers) and going along with the Inkatha insistence that the form of the new state — unitary, federal or whatever — take top priority in the follow-up talks.

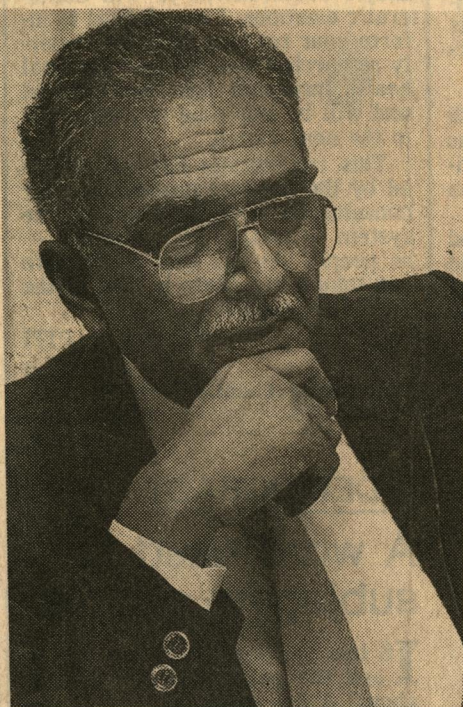
Mr Ramaphosa referred to a new spirit beginning to unfold and urged delegates to be responsive to IFP concerns. For this he was thanked sincerely by the man whom many would regard as his political enemy, IFP chairman Dr Frank Mdlalose.

The talks were fascinating also for the glimpse they gave of the future parliament. Several indications were provided at the World Trade Centre. The new parliament will have only a very small sprinkling of whites; the fringe crazies on the far left and far right — if they make it — will have very little impact on the increasingly moderate majority where the ANC, NP and even IFP now find themselves; there will be a lot more women in the seats of power — even if they are not allowed to say very much, and the rough edges will be shaved off those who make the most aggressive noises in and outside parliament at the moment.

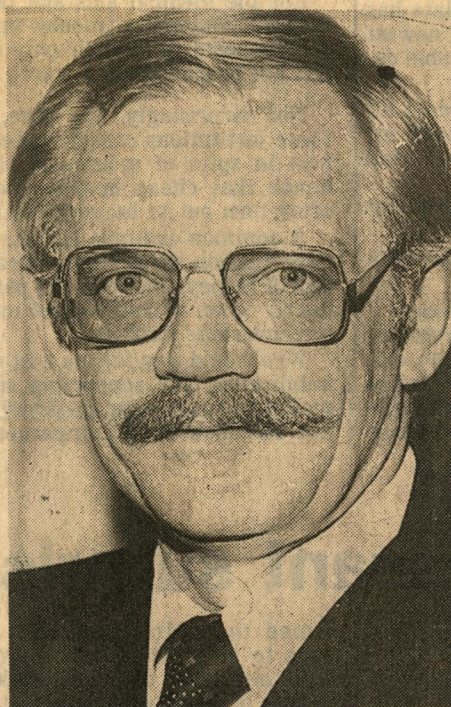
The forum is also putting the focus increasingly on the leaders of tomorrow. We are now seeing their capacity for political wisdom, brokerage and statesmanlike behaviour. Stars include people like the IFP's Mr Joe Matthews and Dr Frank Mdlalose, the ANC's Mr Ramaphosa, Mr Thabo Mbeki and Mr Mac Maharaj and the Afrikaner Volksunie's Mr Andries Beyers. Even those who are sometimes painted as ogres, "Uncle" Joe Slovo of the SACP and the PAC's Mr Bennie Alexander, sounded eminently reasonable most of the time.

Look forward now to rapid movement. The hard work completed at Codesa forms the foundation for the first transitional structures by mid-year and the process is right on schedule.

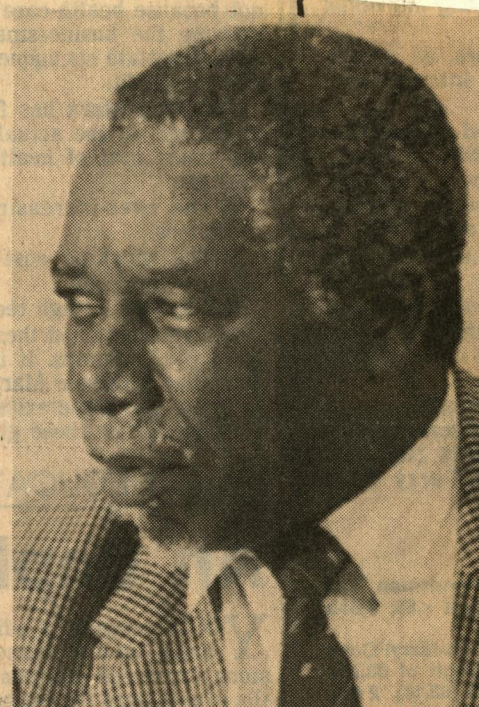
At the end of it all, the NP's Dr Dawie de Villiers described the events as very encouraging, "especially the goodwill, the willingness to compromise, to give and take. If that carries on we will make progress."



Mr Barney Desai of the PAC raised a laugh with talk of 'clean hands'.



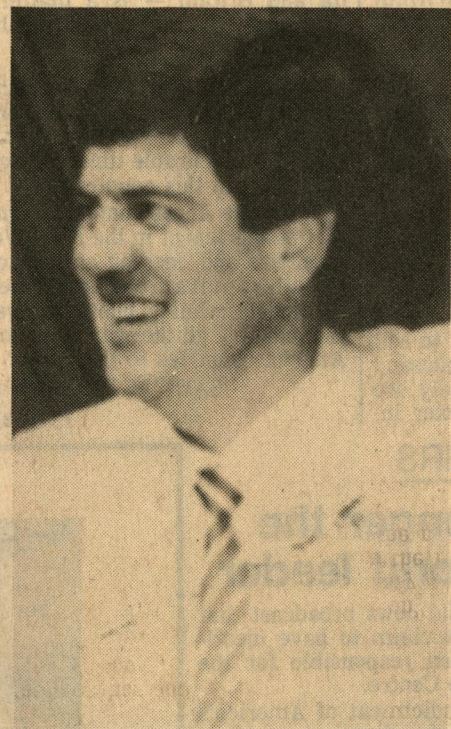
Dr Ferdi Hartzenberg agreed to referral of a thorny CP resolution.



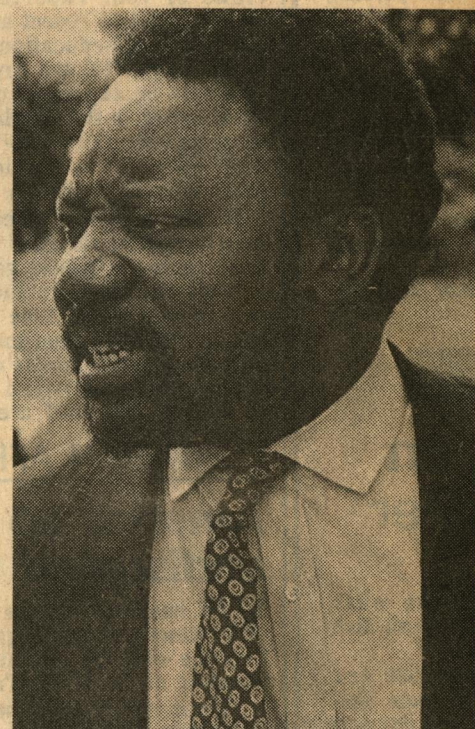
Dr Frank Mdlalose of the IFP — one of tomorrow's leaders?



Dr Dawie de Villiers described events as encouraging.



Minister of Manpower Leon Wesels hit at ambiguity on violence.



Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC, made efforts to keep up the headway.

And Mr Ramaphosa said one of the major achievements had been the determination to keep all parties on board, in spite of provocation. "The spirit of co-operation made it difficult if not impossible for those parties who wanted to spoil the process to jump ship. Some parties wanted to make things difficult, but when they realised we were serious they had to change their minds. We are happy all this will underpin negotiations on the way ahead."

THE ARGUS 3/4/93

—All SA parties should be reassured—

TWELVE or so years ago, when the US Secretary of State, Mr Warren Christopher, and the National Security Council's specialist on South Africa, Mr Tony Lake, were scions of the Carter administration, their statements on the country would spur many in the National Party leadership to reach for their Mausers, so to speak.

At the time, there was little love lost between the NP government and those who have now returned to positions of power in the US administration, and the deplorable election campaign which Prime Minister John Vorster waged with the Carter administration as the focal point of his vituperative outrage stands as testimony to the fact.

In all they now say and do, Mr Christopher and Mr Lake, and others of that era, appear not to have changed their views one iota. This week, when the new Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Mr George Moose, went through his confirmation hearing in the Senate Africa sub-committee, his general statements of policy were vintage Carterian utterances which a little more than a decade ago would have caused paroxysms of anxiety, if not rage, in Pretoria.

Yet by many accounts relations between Washington and Pretoria today are better than they have ever been. It would be glib to ascribe this solely to the fact that the NP has at last come to accept the wisdom of men like Jimmy Carter, Andrew Young, Cyrus Vance, Warren Christopher, Tony Lake and the many others who set in place the first truly aggressive anti-apartheid policy in the US.

The plodding evolution of NP thinking towards enlightenment simply does not explain the atmosphere of trust and confidence which now seems to permeate relations with the Clinton administration.

And so one is drawn to the possibility that it is precisely because the foreign policy leaders of Washington today have not changed their views, have demonstrated a com-



HUGH ROBERTON in Washington

mendable commitment to their principles in their time out of power and, indeed, are saying exactly what they always have said about South Africa, that makes them trustworthy and reliable people to do business with.

And if the Clinton administration can be trusted to keep its word on policies and principles, then what its foreign policy leaders were saying more than a decade ago and what Mr Moose said in his statement to the Senate this week have a reassuring ring for all parties in South Africa, but especially for many whites who have been discouraged by Africa's recent political history and who may view with some misgivings the prospects of democracy, human rights and free enterprise under a black majority government.

Some excerpts from Mr Moose's testimony make the point: "In Africa, it is clear to me that our top priority must be to encourage and consolidate the spread of democracy.

"It is imperative that we use our influence and our material support to encourage in Africa governments that recognise and ensure the basic human rights which are the necessary foundation of democracy.

"We will not allow our assistance to be used for the support of dictators and we will use the full weight of our influence to end dictatorial practices.

"It is important that we continue to work with African governments that are sincerely trying to reform their econ-

omies and are replacing statist policies with free market systems."

If all this sounds too altruistic to be coming from either a diplomat or a politician, Mr Moose allowed some self-interest to reveal itself: "An Africa made up of stable democratic governments is important to American prosperity because of the potential markets it represents for increased American exports, which in turn means additional American jobs.

"We need to be concerned about Africa because what happens in Africa affects us."

What Mr Moose had to say underpinned the broad foreign policy guidelines which President Clinton has already drawn — and which President Carter before him made the pinion of his foreign policy. But, some might ask, what faith can be placed in a foreign policy establishment which rose to prominence under the inept administration of Mr Carter?

While Mr Carter had many faults, standing up for principles was not one of them. His provincial outlook often limited his understanding of the power at his disposal, and how to use it, but nevertheless he achieved some historic foreign policy breakthroughs — the Camp David Accords among them. Then, as now, there was a pervasive acknowledgment of Mr Christopher's diplomatic skills and Mr Lake's analytical talents.

But way above all this is a recognition in Washington, as much among Republicans as Democrats, that in guiding the US through the difficult aftermath of the Cold War will be a set of unvarying principles.

They ought to provide as much reassurance to South Africans as they do to Americans, the more so because those who espouse them have held to them steadfastly for far longer than the NP leadership has found comfort in democracy, human rights and real free enterprise.

WEEKEND Argus

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Strange reaction from the ANC

SOUTH Africans attempting to travel through the Transkei in recent days — particularly those who believe the territory has never been anything but part of the country at large — would have been rightfully indignant at the border chaos.

However, the indignation expressed by the ANC about the blockade of the "homeland", and its protestation that the TBVC territories should only be reincorporated once the tricameral system is removed and a new constitutional dispensation has been agreed on, is less than honest.

The ANC, the PAC and, in fact, all opposition parties were opposed to the original development of the Bantustans. Nothing should have changed to reduce that opposition which, basically, was anti-apartheid.

Since then, the stark realities of the homelands scheme have demonstrated that the plan was not only racist. It was unworkable, economically unfair. And it offered a playground for corruption.

Billions paid in tax by South Africans of all races have been swallowed up by administrations which have shown little regard for accountability about how that money has been spent.

In the case of the Transkei, the Goldstone Commission has found evidence — as yet uncontested — that the PAC's Apla military wing has been operating from the territory and has established bases and arms caches there.

One would have thought that finding would have been a strike in the ANC's favour. The notion of the PAC fuelling violence from an "illegal" homeland could surely have been used by the organisation for its own propaganda.

Instead, the ANC appears to be defending the autonomy of General Bantu Holomisa in a most curious way. Is it because the general sheltered Chris Hani when he was on the run from the security forces those months ago? Or is it anxious not to antagonise Transkeians, who could be a considerable source of support in the first multi-party elections?

Those Transkeians, however, will have to be returned to the fold before they may be of any use to any party as voters. And, surely, the sooner that happens the better for their own future and the future of a re-united South Africa.

For the ANC to argue that the homelands should only be reincorporated once the present "apartheid" constitution is replaced by one negotiated after multi-party talks shows another flaw. If the homelands are to be brought back into a unitary South Africa, their leaders — or, better yet, the proper representatives of their people — need to be part of the total negotiation process. And soon.

Plot? It's bulldust, says General Tienie

Weekend Argus Correspondent

FORMER Military Intelligence head General Tienie Groenewald has rejected as "bulldust" allegations that he was the power behind a covert plot to manipulate homeland leaders.

The allegations were levelled by Democratic Party MP Kobus Jordaan in parliament this week. He claimed he had been given information which proved General Groenewald had used politicians like Mr Rowan Cronje and Mr Walter Felgate in attempts to control homeland leaders.

Mr Jordaan claimed Mr Cronje unsuccessfully tried to influence Ciskei leader Mr Lennox Sebe but "had more success" with Bophuthatswana President Lucas Mangope, when he was appointed adviser to the Mmabatho government.

Mr Felgate was said to have been used by Military Intelligence to manipulate Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

General Groenewald, a member of the federalist anti-ANC alliance Cosag (Concerned South Africans Group), said Mr

Jordaan had been "fed disinformation" as part of a plot to drive a wedge between Cosag members. Both Chief Buthelezi and President Mangope are involved in the alliance.

"To think a very liberal person like Walter Felgate could be used by MI is laughable. And to suggest that a strong character like Chief Buthelezi can be manipulated by anyone is just as ridiculous."

The general said he had not seen Chief Buthelezi "in more than a year" and met Mr Cronje only during Cosag sessions.

He would like to see Mr Jordaan's documentary "proof" and would like to know where the information came from.

"He hasn't got it in him to get that sort of information. It has been fed to him."

General Groenewald said he met Mr Jordaan when the MP was involved in constitutional planning in the mid-80s.

At one such meeting Mr Jordaan told a group of the SADF's top brass neither he nor the government "had the faintest idea" about where the reform process was headed.

Who will replace Hani?

A CENTRAL committee meeting of the South African Communist Party tomorrow is likely to give the first clues as to who will succeed slain general secretary Chris Hani.

Whoever assumes Hani's mantle may preside over an upsurge in support for the SACP, which is riding a wave of sympathy after the assassination.

A Markinor survey of political opinion shows that 31 percent of blacks would perhaps vote communist in an election, while eight percent would definitely vote for the SACP. The figures for the Pan Africanist Congress are 23 and six percent respectively.

Officially, the SACP leadership has not begun to think about who will be the next general secretary. The issue is likely to appear on the agenda of the party's strategy conference in May, but party sources say initial discussions will take place at this weekend's political bureau and central committee sessions.

The short list will probably include the following:

Sam Shilowa. Highly articulate, he has been the assistant general secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions since 1991 after a meteoric rise through the ranks of the Transport and General Workers' Union. His massive shaven head and deep, resonant voice were much in evidence during the Hani memorial march and the lying-in-state in the FNB stadium. Whether exhorting marchers to

remain peaceful, or leading 70 000 people in the singing of *Hamba Kahle Umkhonto*, he looked the leader.

But Shilowa is reportedly being groomed for Cosatu's top job when Jay Naidoo stands down.

Raymond Mhlaba. An old party stalwart who was a Rivonia trialist and a member of Nelson Mandela's inner circle on Robben Island, Mhlaba is a popular figure regarded as a solid party man. But because of his age, his appointment as general secretary would be no more than a stop-gap measure.

Jeremy Cronin. Politburo member Cronin, an able speaker and the party's leading theoretician, is also unlikely to

W/ Mail 23-4-93
A number of contenders could replace Chris Hani as SACP chief, but his deputy, Charles Nqakula, is the frontrunner.

By **STEPHEN LAUFER**

make the running. He is an academic, and he is not an African. He has said on more than one occasion that he is "happy being an intellectual".

Thenjiwe Mthintso. Once a close confidante of Steve Biko's, Mthintso is well-liked, not least for her credentials which include a stint in Umkhonto weSizwe and as ANC representative in

Uganda. A member of the SACP's inner circle, she has been tipped by observers as a "woman to watch".

She is a good public speaker and a member of the party's negotiating team at the multi-party talks. But she is unlikely to make the top position because she is still "ideologically immature", as one observer put it.

Blade Nzimande. Described as "very articulate and an exceptionally clear thinker who takes the crowd along with him", Nzimande is deputy ANC chairman in the Natal Midlands.

But Nzimande is also described as being ideologically close to hardliner Harry Gwala. As one party insider put

it, "he lacks the roundness and stature required of a general secretary".

Charles Nqakula. The party's deputy general secretary. Described as "a very able organiser," Nqakula is said to lack oratorical brilliance. Colleagues say he is most suited to the role of the number two, as anchor and backstop to more charismatic figures like Hani or Shilowa. But they feel confident that he would grow with the task, and he is being tipped to emerge as the frontrunner. He is likely to accept the job, if somewhat reluctantly.

Nqakula was banned in the 1980s and confined to Ciskei. Having become involved in ANC and SACP underground work, he was sent for military training in the Soviet Union, later taking charge of the MK operations in Lesotho set up by Hani.

16/1/11

Hani slams PAC on 'armed struggle'

SOUTH African Communist Party general secretary, Mr Chris Hani, yesterday criticised the Pan Africanist Congress for continuing the armed struggle and called for the political isolation of those disrupting the peace process.

Mr Hani was addressing thousands of African National Congress supporters on the East Rand before a march to Modderbee Prison where a memorandum was delivered to prison authorities demanding the release of political activists.

He was reacting to Monday's SABC-TV interview of Azanian Peoples Liberation Army chief, Sabelo Phama, who said 1993 would be the "year of the great

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Hani slams PAC

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storm" in which APLA (the PAC's military wing) would step up the armed struggle.

"I don't accept people calling for war and I don't accept the PAC's talks of the years of the great storms, because I feel we have achieved something in this country, where those who oppressed us in the past are actually talking to us and showing readiness to negotiate for democratic elections.

"The ambushing of ordinary White kids and women along some of the highways, is something that is not acceptable. And, I am saying to these comrades (ANC supporters) here that every member of the ANC should be a combatant, a fighter for peace," Mr Hani said.

The PAC's national organiser, Mr Maxwell Nemadzivhanani reiterated the stand of (APLA) that armed ac-

tion would be intensified this year.

Mr Nemadzivhanani told PAC supporters at the Border region that there was nothing to be gained from the negotiation table which "we have not gained from the battlefield".

"That is why we must intensify the armed struggle as we negotiate," he said

APLA yesterday warned South Africa to "keep away" from Tanzania or "face the consequences".

Speaking from the Tanzanian capital of Dar es Salaam, APLA spokesman Romero Daniels, said in a telephone interview that the South African Government would achieve nothing by asking Tanzania to stop supporting APLA.

Tanzania has been used as a base for more than 30 years by APLA

and its political wing, the Pan Africanist Congress, as well as by the African National Congress and its armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe.

"The regime is only up to its dirty tricks of harassing and destabilising African countries north of the Limpopo.

"They have tried to intimidate Transkei with failure, now they are coming here. We have our roots here and Pretoria cannot have things their way. Their time is over," said Mr Romero. —Sapa.

NO ONE has developed a theory of how one can deal with what is clearly one of the most difficult tasks in all contemporary multi-ethnic societies — how to reduce disparities among ethnic communities and how to reduce ethnic conflict, two goals that are not always compatible.

Broadly speaking, affirmative action means laws, regulations, administrative rules, court orders and other public interventions and private actions to provide certain public and private goods on the basis of membership of a particular ethnic or racial group. Affirmative action is not intended to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, but rather to bridge the gap between groups.

Four countries that have adopted affirmative action programmes are India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the US. In all four, these policies have become controversial. Some opposition comes from those who are racist, who believe that one group is superior to another, but their criticisms are of no serious concern.

The more serious concerns come from those who want to build a non-racial, colour-blind society and who are therefore uncomfortable with the idea that benefits should be allocated on the basis of race or caste or ethnic identity.

There are also objections from those concerned that individual merit will be downgraded when admissions to universities and jobs are given out on the basis of group membership. These are genuine concerns that need to be addressed.

The kinds of interventions adopted in each of these countries were wide-ranging. Basically, there are two somewhat differently orientated affirmative action policies.

We might call one affirmative action for expanding opportunities. This includes all policies to eliminate discrimination, race/ethnic-conscious policies intended to expand the pool of qualified individuals, such as training programmes to upgrade skills of workers, special bridging programmes in higher education that enable students who lack adequate preparation to catch up,

Affirmative action quotas do not solve the basic problem

MYRON WEINER

financial aid to students qualified for tertiary education but who could not otherwise attend universities, loans to businessmen in disadvantaged communities, subcontracts to minority businesses, and so on.

These policies improve access to education and employment; they entail positive efforts by universities, government and the private sector affirmatively to include groups that had been previously excluded, and the beneficiaries are intended to be members of those groups.

A second set of affirmative action policies emphasises fixed outcomes based upon designated quotas. They set out to ensure that distribution of education, employment, income and wealth among individuals will be in proportion to the population of each ethnic group or race in the country. According to this view of affirmative action, every group would ideally be proportionately represented in universities and in professional schools, in legislative bodies, in high levels of bureaucracy, in medicine, law and teaching and as CEOs of corporations, and in boardrooms.

Under this model, targets are set and the goal of affirmative action is not achieved until there is proportional representation. If necessary, and it usually is necessary, requirements for admissions and skills and standards of performance would be lowered to achieve these targets.

In the haste to fill quotas, standards are lowered and preferences for some begin to erode the notion of equality of opportunity for all. The performance of institutions decline as a downward levelling occurs. Moreover, when beneficiaries constitute a majority of the population, as in the case of Sri Lanka, the response of the excluded social strata can impair the political order.

A second set of issues raised in each of these cases is the relationship between affirmative action and other policies intended to reduce disparities among groups. In several of these countries there was a tendency to regard affirmative action as the intervention to deal with inequalities. Affirmative action policies often addressed needs of aspiring middle classes to the neglect of policies and programmes aimed at needs of the lower social classes.

In India, for example, the government did little to create a compulsory universal elementary school education system which would have improved the wellbeing of the poor as well as expand the pool of scheduled castes and tribals who could have entered universities adequately prepared and who could then have

moved into the modern professions and into the middle class on their own. Similarly, in the US affirmative action did not address needs of the inner city, of unemployed black youth and single mothers.

Affirmative action can become a substitute for addressing the large issue of inequality.

A third issue is the impact of preferences on identities and on the way in which people organise to make demands. Once preferences or quotas are established, people will choose an identity if there are benefits to be derived.

The system of preferences invariably strengthens identities on the basis of race, religion, language and caste. It is in the self-interest of politicians to mobilise group claims and group lines, and for individuals to assert group claims and group identities. The creation of a caste-blind, colour-blind society — difficult to achieve under the best of circumstances — is made more difficult when the government allocates benefits in education and employment on the basis of group membership.

In the US, affirmative action was initially intended for blacks, but other groups subsequently demanded that they too be included among the beneficiaries — native American Indians, Hispanics, Asian Americans and then women.

Although each of these groups suffered from discrimination, or more accurately some members of these groups suffered from discrimination, they were included on the list of beneficiaries.

But the beneficiaries included very diverse communities, from disadvantaged Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, to better educated more prosperous Cubans, Asian Americans were included on the basis of historical discrimination, though a large part of the Asian American community today includes educated migrants who came to the country after 1965 and who themselves did not suffer from the disadvantages of an earlier generation.

Similarly, in India benefits were extended to backward classes who do not share the same disabilities as the scheduled castes and tribes and who are often among the prosperous rural landowners.

These costs of affirmative action are made higher when policy-makers neglect a central feature of any programme to reduce inequality: what Andre Beteille, quoting the British social historian Tawney, described as not just eliminating disabilities but creating abilities.

All too often affirmative action programmes were directed at mechanically filling slots with people of the appropriate colour, or language, or sex without regard for enabling those chosen to have skills needed to perform satisfactorily.

All too often well meaning people have selected people for benefits with little regard for whether they are adequately prepared. Universities cannot and should not provide education that should be delivered in secondary schools. And employers should not be asked to hire people who lack at least minimal skills. However, employers, medical schools, engineering schools and universities can often provide the additional skills through bridge programmes and in house training programmes to enable those who fall short to meet the standards of universities and employers.

These are edited excerpts from an address by MIT political sciences professor Weiner to an Urban Foundation symposium on Monday.