

# Crown prince primed for ANC

From PETER YOUNGHUSBAND in Cape Town

THE African National Congress, widely regarded as the alternative government of South Africa, is facing a leadership crisis.

The president of the ANC, Mr Oliver Tambo, is recuperating from a recent stroke and is regarded within the organisation as being unlikely to be able to continue effective leadership.

Mr Tambo is now able to lift his right leg and arm and to communicate. A week ago, he was unable to move even his right foot.

He was moved, last weekend, from the nursing home in Devonshire, England, where he was first treated after being flown from Zambia, to another "place in the country" where he is receiving intensive physiotherapy.

Mr Tambo's illness has more serious consequences for the ANC than previously realised.

There are rumours again that the movement's leader, 71-year-old Mr Nelson Mandela, may be freed from prison within a week - but there have been many such rumours put about by the South African Government over the past two years.

Archbishop Tutu said earlier this week that the Government should engage in reform before freeing Mr Mandela.

However, recognising that an ageing Mr Mandela might be a purely titular or honorary president, the ANC is anxiously casting around for a long-term leader who would also fill the gap until Mr Mandela's release.

The ANC executive knows this is a crucial time and that the right choice for a Mandela "shadow" may either enhance or irreparably damage their negotiating position.

Ambition and power-hunger are being detected among the top leadership and the man who succeeds Mr Tambo could find himself having to deal with a divided movement.

Past events have shown that only two issues stand in the way of the ANC gaining unqualified support from the West. These are the links with the South African Communist Party and policy regarding armed struggle.

Most candidates for the post of president who are on the national executive council are also members of the South African Communist Party.

These include the acting president, Mr Alfred Nzo, the deputy chief of information and publicity, Mr Pallo Jordan, the secretary of

the political committee, Mr Mac Maharah, and the chief of staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation, the military wing also known as MK), Mr Chris Hani.

Other possibilities include a member of the political military committee, Mr Jacob Zuma, who, like Mr Hani, favours a hardline approach but would not be acceptable to most Western opinion.

The person most favoured to take over as president is the head of the ANC's department of international affairs, Mr Thabo Mbeki.

Mr Mbeki was in Australia last week. But for the ANC the appointment of Mr Mbeki would create problems of its own.

Mr Mbeki left South Africa in the late 1960s and went to London where he studied economics at the University of Sussex. When members of MK started complaining that they had to endure hardship while some ANC members lived in grandiose style, he was sent to Moscow for military training.

What makes Mr Mbeki particularly suitable for the job as president is that through the years he has held many senior positions within the ANC.

For some time he was director of the department of information and publicity and was later elected as a member of the executive council.

In 1989 he was appointed head of

of the Anglo-American Corporation in Lusaka, Zambia.

At that time it was still regarded as wrong for South African whites to talk to the ANC. According to Mr Mbeki it was the chairman of Anglo-American, Mr Gavin Relly, who initiated the talks.

After a further meeting with a wider range of prominent white South Africans in Dakar in 1987, Mr Mbeki was placed on the map as "crown prince" of the ANC.

Delegates said that Mr Mbeki's performance made the visiting South African politicians look like amateurs. Since Dakar, not one meeting with white South Africans has been held without Mr Mbeki.

Africa, Mr Mbeki has emerged as the main exponent of a new approach.

Sentiments he expressed as early as 1985 that the time for negotiation was near were put into practice in the form of an intensified diplomatic offensive.

But because of indecision regarding the way forward for the ANC, this left a gap for hardliners such as the political commissar of MK, Mr Steve Tswete, and Mr Hani to propagate their views.

At the time Mr Mbeki was meeting a high-level white South African delegation in Leverkusen, West Germany, MK commanders apparently ordered cadres inside South Africa to attack soft targets.

Political commentators saw this as the surfacing of conflict between Mr Hani and Mr Mbeki.

Soon afterwards the international newsletter Africa Confidential published an article entitled Hani's Rise, in which the authors argued that Mr Hani was now the most powerful person in the ANC. Successes by MK in South Africa seemed to indicate that Mr Hani's views would thus set the pace within the ANC.

But then came the tripartite agreement on Namibia, which underlined that a new international climate had been established in which the emphasis was on the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts.

Within this context the Soviet Union, traditional ally of the African National Congress, indicated that it would prefer a peaceful settlement in South Africa - and no one can deny that when the Soviets and Americans work in concert the world moves in the direction they indicate.

This favoured the direction Mr Mbeki had chosen and by mid-1989 it was clear that Mr Mbeki had gained the upper hand.

This manifested itself in the ANC drawing up a discussion paper on negotiation. The paper was circulated inside South Africa and eventually adopted by the Organisation of African Unity's ad hoc committee on southern Africa.

The stage seems set for Mr Mbeki to take over as president of the ANC.

**'The minute he is allowed to speak on television people will be eating out of his hands'**

— Archbishop Tutu



Mr Mbeki

His credentials as a diplomat are impeccable, thereby making him eminently suitable for the job. But on the other hand, nobody knows Mr Mbeki's ideology.

He has been described as a nationalist, a pragmatist and a member of the South African Communist Party. But his support among rank and file members of the ANC has been questioned.

Mr Mbeki is the son of Mr Govan Mbeki, a founder member of the ANC who was released from Robben Island, a South African political prison, in 1987.

Mr Thabo Mbeki is seen as an acceptable leader also because of his Xhosa tribal origin.

Tribalism is an aspect that the ANC says does not exist within the organisation. However, Xhosa dominance within the ANC has been obvious and tacitly accepted through the years.

the department of international affairs, arguably the most important post in the organisation.

But Mr Mbeki's rise began early in the '80s when it became clear he had the ear of Mr Tambo.

By 1983 Mr Mbeki privately told some ANC members that Mr Tambo was growing old and that he (Mr Mbeki) was actively campaigning to take over the job.

In 1984 it was rumoured that Mr Mbeki was one of the candidates to take over as general secretary of the South African Communist Party.

However, he declined the candidacy. What followed can either be described as a well orchestrated campaign to prime Mr Mbeki for the presidency or as a natural leader quickly progressing through the ranks of his organisation.

In 1985 Mr Mbeki met prominent business leaders including members

Mr Mbeki thus successfully opened a new front for the ANC. He has become acceptable to white South Africans as a negotiator and to some extent can be credited with dividing the ruling white power bloc.

This year Archbishop Tutu said: "The minute he (Mr Mbeki) appears on television and is allowed to speak, most people in this country are going to be eating out of his hands."

Mr Mbeki has also been described as confident and intelligent.

Within Africa Mr Mbeki's word is accepted as ANC policy. Senior United States officials have indicated that they regard him as one of the most promising and acceptable ANC members.

With the strategic success of the state of emergency in South Africa, the refusal by other African States to allow ANC bases on their territory and the MK's failure to alter the balance of power within South

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