

Quiet diplomacy

IN President Reagan's own words, the release of 16 South African detainees follows quiet diplomacy on America's part, and so far it has not been denied in this country. It is an indication of how seriously the Government's harsh crackdown on dissidence has been received in America and the outside world generally and of the sudden influence being wielded in America by Bishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, and anti-South African activists. It tends also to contradict Bishop Tutu's argument that "constructive engagement" yields paltry results. Every indication is that the Republican administration, impatient for reform in this country, will pile on the pressure. Quiet diplomacy is no less ef-

fective for its quietness.

Bishop Tutu himself admits that outside pressure has altogether removed apartheid from sport. It was achieved by total ostracism, true enough. But is total ostracism either possible or desirable in the economic field? And is the current diplomatic pressure not a great deal more powerful than anything ever exerted in the field of sport?

Our Washington ambassador tells American TV viewers that South Africa is embarked on sweeping reform. It would surely be better if all — Bishop Tutu included — addressed themselves to playing a role in this reform rather than talk vaguely of apocalyptic violence lying ahead.

Bishops' report

THE Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference is facing strong criticism from the Commissioner of Police, General Johan Coetzee, for failing to take their accusations to the police before publishing their report of alleged police irregularities in the townships during recent months of upheaval.

The bishops must, however, have been mindful of many official attempts in the past to block public debate on such issues. It is reasonable to suppose that they feared that this report would run into similar difficulties. It has

now received publicity both here and overseas, and its allegations could be either proved or disproved by the holding of a public inquiry, which is what the bishops have been seeking anyway.

The people of Durban, in particular, will recall the difficulties experienced by the Press in attempting to report on disturbances and allegations of police brutality in Lamontville and Chesterville last year. There were, in that case, even attempts to stifle reports of the subsequent Parliamentary debate.

Quirk may see NIC detainees freed

A QUIRK could secure the release of the 35 leading members of the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses and the United Democratic Front who are in detention for organising a boycott of the House of Delegates elections.

It is thought the men will be freed once appeals for their release are made from the floor of the very institution their parties are boycotting.

NIC vice-president Dr Farouk Meer, the party's only executive member not to have been detained, said such a move would appear to give credibility to the new tricameral system.

It would "look very good" for the leaders of the two main participating Indian political parties to request — and be granted — the 35 detainees' release, he said.

"Mr Rajbansi and Mr Reddy will then claim all credit ... that it was directly through their intervention that the releases were made.

"I can see how it has all been planned. It is a clever scheme — but the people should not be fooled," Dr Meer said.

Acting in their private capacities, Amichand Rajbansi, leader of the National People's Party, and Dr JN Reddy, leader of Solidarity, have already sought the detainees' release — but the Government cannot dismiss so easily official demands from the House of Delegates.

Dr Meer said the detainees were being held incommunicado under Section 50 of the Internal Security Act. Some were in Pietermaritzburg and others in Pretoria, he said.

It was not possible to petition for their release through the courts.

He intended to speak to the police about "certain conditions" in detention about which he was unhappy.

A police spokesman denied that the men were being held "simply because of their views".

"These people are being held because the Government believes they are furthering a revolutionary climate," he said.

Action would have had to be taken against them whether elections were on the cards or not.

The Vrystaater who makes a mockery of 'Coolie' law

By GAYE DAVIS

HARRY King David Kalyian Singh, an Indian businessman, lives with his family in Bethlehem despite the law banning Indians from the Free State.

"No Arab, Chinaman, Coolie or other Asiatic coloured person, except a Cape Malay, may settle or remain in the Free State for longer than two months without Government permission."

That's the letter of the Ordinance introduced in 1890 and adopted by the Provincial Administration after Union in 1910.

The key to Mr Singh's survival as the head of the only Indian family living in the province, is his adaptability.

Mr Singh's parents came from India to work on Natal's sugar plantations. He is a Hindu and worships at his local Dutch Reformed Church.

Indian "in his heart", he was forced to have himself reclassified coloured in order to house his family in Bethlehem's coloured township, Baaken Park, when it was proclaimed coloured.

Now he wants to be reclassified Indian, a move bound to cause bureaucratic headaches.

The official 1980 census states that there are no Indians in the Free State.

Whatever they say, Mr Singh is the exception.

Born in the Free State village of Ladybrand in 1927, he settled in Bethlehem in 1946 and in 1954 married a coloured, Jean Wilson.

They had three children, all of whom are classified Indian. Mr Singh's son, Deane, still lives in Bethlehem where he helps his father run the family's general dealer shop and cafe.

The family history is firmly rooted in the Free State.

His grandfather left the sugar plantations to help lay the railway line between Ladysmith and Harris-mith.

Mr Singh claims that either President Paul Kruger or President MT Steyn gave his grandfather permission, inscribed in black ink on heavy parchment, to remain in the Free State.

Charlie Kalyian Singh, Mr Singh's father, lived and worked in Bethlehem for 25 years and is buried there.

Mr Singh has never paid much attention to the fact that, until recently, Indians could not spend longer than 72 hours in the Free State unless they applied for 90-day permits, according to a section of the Admission of Persons to the Republic Regulation Act of 1972, which was repealed last year.

Nor has anyone ever pointed it out to him. A successful businessman, he is respected in his community and enjoys some social standing.

He has served on the Baaken Park Coloured Community Council and intends standing for re-election next year.

During the House of Representatives elections he fought for the Labour Party.

He won't consider leaving Bethlehem, although his daughters, one married to an Indian, both live in Natal.

But he would like to see the archaic ordinance barring Indians from the Free State scrapped so they could inject "a bit of life into the business scene".

This is a big issue facing the Government and the Free State Provincial Administration.

The Strydom Committee, investigating the Group areas Act, recommended in 1984 that the ban stay. It gave no reasons.

But Administrator of the Free State, Louis Botha, said the Free state would not be a stumbling block in the search for an ideal constitutional system.

tousness of the day's proceedings: "It is not total freedom yet, but we have moved the struggle to another level.

Downstairs, in the super-bowl-like auditorium, construction workers scurried about preparing things for today's plenary session. Fresh paint was slapped on, platforms dragged into place. Their deadline was every bit as urgent as that of the talkers in the council. Tuesday marked a small fin de siècle at the World Trade Centre.

Quick march into new SA

The negotiators have agreed to a complete overhaul of the police and defence force. Argus Correspondent ESTHER WAUGH reports.

THE negotiating council agreed today to a complete overhaul of the police and defence force.

But the PAC walked out of the chamber shortly after 1.30am labelling it a "farce".

Although it was prepared to debate "proper legislation", the PAC said, the proposals on the table for discussion amounted to agreements between the ANC and government.

PAC negotiators added that the document was tabled at 1.10am and no time had been given to consult on the proposals and the security forces were a subject of dispute between the organisation and the government.

In terms of the agreement, a post-apartheid South Africa will have a single national police force and defence force.

However, a clear role on policing has been agreed for provincial governments on appointments, administration and promotion.

The agreement on a future police force states that the State President will appoint a national police commissioner. Although the national commissioner will appoint regional commissioners, provincial governments will have a veto power over the appointments.

The chapter — to be included in the draft Interim Constitution — also provides for a single national defence force comprising all armed formations with no special status given to the SADF.

On a national level the powers of the South African Police Services include internal security; the investigation of organised crime; international police liaison; intelligence; training and recruitment; and the establishment of a national public order policing unit.

Provincial police commissioners will investigate and prevent crime; develop a community-policing service; maintain public order; provide visible policing services; and establish police

stations and crime reaction units.

A board of commissioners comprising the national and provincial commissioners will be established to promote co-operation.

An independent complaints mechanism under civilian control will be created to investigate complaints against policemen.

In terms of the agreement on a national defence force, the State President will appoint the chief of the defence force, which will comprise a permanent force and a part-time component.

PAC negotiators said today the organisation would not endorse the agreement when the plenary session of the multiparty negotiating process meets this afternoon.

Before the PAC's Patricia de Lille and Barney Desai left the chamber, she said the proposals were "a total farce not because of the lateness of the hour but because of the seriousness of the issue ... The PAC will not be part of this".

his own Hereford cattle d on 20 hectares of land south-eastern Queensland. d 29, he is keen to settle n and start a family. So far, ever, he has failed to find a ner.

Young, single women are an easily scarce commodity in the Australian outback, and opportunities to meet them are few. Social life in Batterham's local town - Cambooya, population 600 - is confined to pub, where only men drink. Now, however, help is at hand for Batterham and other men and stockmen leading lonely life on the land. A magazine, *Women's Weekly*, has decided to play matchmaker plans to publish details of eligible rural bachelors. It has been flooded with calls from men eager to be included in the list.

The venture was inspired by a similar initiative by *Countryside Living* magazine in Britain. By comparison with their

and the Northern Territory, a seven-hour drive from the nearest town, and it is not uncommon for land holders to go for three or four months without seeing another soul.

Sarah Dent, spokesperson

Single women don't last too long on the ground out here

for the National Farmers Federation, says the geographical isolation is exacerbated by long hours. "A lot of men have told us that they spend all day out in the paddocks, then go inside at night to cook a steak alone," she said. "They are so busy that they don't have time to go out and meet people."

The problem has become more acute over the years. Women who grew up in the

or teaching jobs in rural areas has dried up.

The shortage of potential partners troubles Charlie Hazelton, a 30-year-old cotton agronomist who lives near Narromine, in western New South Wales. "Single women don't last too long on the ground out here," said Hazelton, who will be among the men featured in *Women's Weekly*. "If they come into town, they're quickly snapped up."

Batterham will also appear in the magazine, but he has a head start; after his local newspaper ran an article about him, he received 44 telephone calls from women in one week. None proved compatible, though. "Some were doing it for a laugh, some were too old and some were what I would politely call strange."

"I'm looking for a tall, happy person," he said. "It would be a bonus if she had skills such as fencing or driving tractors." - *The Independent*, London

Yahoo began a feud last week over which firm has the most popular Internet search engine.

Microsoft claimed that its MSN Search site is now the most popular search engine in the US, with 36.6 million users, eclipsing Yahoo's 31.9 million users in November.

Microsoft cited figures reported by Jupiter Media Metrix, a popular online research service, for its claim.

But Yahoo spokesperson Joanna Stevens said Microsoft is counting online users who are inadvertently forced to Microsoft's search site.

She contends that those figures are being pumped up by Microsoft's "auto search" feature. Built into Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser, it automatically sends users to the Microsoft search engine when they mistype a Web address or when the search button on Explorer is clicked.

Microsoft is also claiming to be a leading search engine internationally. - Sapa-AFP

Moscow - The seedy 22-storey Intourist Hotel, a Moscow eyesore just a stone's throw from Red Square, has closed and is to be demolished to make way for a five-star hotel.

Built in 1970, the grey tower block boasts panoramic views of the Kremlin and central Moscow.

The last of a series of high-rises built as a Soviet answer to New York's skyscrapers, the 431-room hotel was long seen as an architectural disgrace for the city centre.

The hotel's lobby, which during Soviet times was crawling with KGB officers who kept ordinary Russians from meeting foreigners, and later became a haven for prostitution, is now deserted.

Deputy director Vladimir Viontsek, forced into retirement by the closure, readily admitted that the Intourist did nothing to make Moscow

beautiful but insisted that the affordable three-star hotel would be sorely missed.

"We had a niche market, we had no competitors in the centre of Moscow. We were the only place of its kind offering such cheap accommodation," he said.

Popular with Western tour groups, the Intourist had an occupancy rate of over 80%.

Nonetheless it fell far short of international standards, and its owner, the city government, has long wanted to replace it with a modern five-star hotel. A 49-year lease was recently sold for about R170-million to Superior Ventures, an offspring of the British investment company Rathbone Brothers.

Demolition is set to start in March and will take six months. The new hotel replacing it will be built in the following 18 months. - Sapa-AFP

Kabul - The Hotel Intercontinental still retains its five-star tag, but most rooms don't have running hot water, and wise guests carry torches to guard against the frequent power cuts.

The once luxurious hotel's fate has been intertwined with the twists and turns of Afghanistan's history in the past two decades.

"In the first half of the 1990s, 21 rockets fell on it," said hotel manager Mohammad Babarkarkhil, who was among the first employees when the hotel opened in 1969.

Then, under the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, it was the only place in Kabul where foreigners were allowed to stay.

The Islamic hardline militia even restored the first two storeys of the hotel on the eastern side to enable it to welcome guests. "The hotel was to be a symbol of pres-

tige," Babarkarkhil said.

Today the Intercontinental is once again experiencing a flurry of guests. It is playing host to no fewer than 15 ministers of the new interim administration, but journalists and workers with non-governmental organisations make up the bulk of its clientele.

Only 52 rooms in the 200-room hotel have running hot water, while 43 offer just cold water, making for a chilly start to the day in a city where temperatures plunge below zero during the winter.

Some guests can pay \$300 (R3 433) to install a boiler, which stays behind when they leave, but "for other guests we will gladly bring a kettle of hot water to their room", Babarkarkhil offered.

"We still have our five-star status," he said, "but we hope we will once again be officially able to earn it". - Sapa-AFP

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Quakes killed more than 21 000 in 2001

San Francisco - Earthquakes killed 21 436 people in 2001, an unusually high death toll for a year that scientists said was "normal" in terms of seismic activity.

The US Geological Survey said last week there were 65 "significant" earthquakes around the world last year, compared with around 82 in 2000.

A "significant" quake is defined as a quake of magnitude 6.5 or greater that causes fatalities, injuries, or substantial damage.

The USGS said that during a typical year, 18 major quakes, magnitude 7.0 to 7.9, and one "great" earthquake, 8.0 or higher, occur worldwide. But those quakes do not usually result in such a high number of deaths.

"Dense urban populations coupled with weak building structures near the epicentres are responsible for most of the fatalities in any year," said Waverly Person, director of

the USGS National Earthquake Information Centre in Colorado.

The deadliest quake of the year - accounting for the vast majority of the year's fatalities - was a magnitude 7.7 that hit the state of Gujarat in north-western India on January 26.

That earthquake killed 20 000 people, many of whom perished in collapsing buildings that had not been designed to withstand

quakes of that magnitude.

USGS officials said the average number of people killed annually by earthquakes is about 10 000, although the total can vary greatly from year to year. In 2000, only 231 people died in earthquakes, but in 1999 the death toll was 22 711 after major quakes struck Turkey and Taiwan.

The deadliest year in the past century was 1976, when at least

255 000 people, and perhaps more than 600 000, were killed after a quake hit near Tianjin, China.

The largest earthquake of 2001 was a magnitude 8.4 off the coast of Peru in June, the USGS said. It caused more than 100 deaths, but the impact of such a large quake was reduced because of its offshore location.

El Salvador may have broken records, having suffered two devastating earthquakes in one month.

"That could well be a record for back-to-back quakes occurring so close to each other," said Heidi Koehler Koontz, a USGS spokesperson.

On January 13, a magnitude 7.7 quake killed more than 5 000 people and destroyed more than 250 000 homes.

One month later, on February 13, a magnitude 6.6 earthquake killed or injured another 3 500 and damaged or destroyed an additional 55 000 homes. - Reuters

EARTHQUAKES IN 2001: 7.0 AND GREATER

	DATE	MAGNITUDE	REGION
1	Jan 1	7.5	Mindanao, Philippines
2	Jan 9	7.0	Vanuatu Islands
3	Jan 10	7.1	Kodiak Island Region, Alaska
4	Jan 13	7.7	Off coast of Central America
5	Jan 26	7.7	India
6	Feb 3	7.4	Southern Sumatra, Indonesia
7	Feb 24	7.1	Northern Molucca Sea
8	June 3	7.2	Kermadec Islands, New Zealand
9	June 23	8.4	Near coast of Peru
10	July 7	7.6	Near coast of Peru
11	Aug 21	7.0	East of North Island, New Zealand
12	Oct 12	7.0	South of Mariana Islands
13	Oct 19	7.5	Banda Sea
14	Nov 14	7.8	Qinghai-Xinjiang Border, China
15	Dec 12	7.1	South of Australia

INFO: US GEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY