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Shot on video: Piet Rudolph, centre, appealing for an uprising against the South African government

Fugitive calls on Boers to rise up against de Klerk

By Peter Taylor in Johannesburg

A FUGITIVE Right-wing maverick, 'Piet "Skiet" (Shoot) Rudolph, had a price of 50,000 Rand (£12,500) placed on his head yesterday after he threatened President F W de Klerk's government with violent and bloody insurrection. Rudolph is wanted in connection with the theft of weapons from an air force arsenal.

He sent an appeal on video cassette for the overthrow of the government to an Afrikaans morning newspaper and a radio station. Mr Adriaan Vlok, Minister for Law and Order, responded by offering the reward for information leading to his arrest.

He said that Rudolph, a former deputy leader of the Boerestaat (Boer State) party, was "in a flagrant and utterly irresponsible manner busy inflaming the emotions of people".

Surrounded by masked gunmen, Rudolph said: "There is no longer time for talking. If ever it was necessary to follow a policy of scorched earth, it is now."

He urged the defence forces and police to join his cause, saying: "All that is needed is about 500 committed Boers who are prepared to sacrifice their lives on the altar of this ideal. It is better to die glorious than to live in degradation."

Rudolph's following is thought to be tiny, but his appeal to members of the armed forces and policemen is sensitive. Many are thought to be deeply unhappy about President de Klerk's reforms, and his willingness to negotiate with the African National Congress. They are also worried about their jobs.

waiting for the right moment. They are not an asset, but a millstone around the neck. They will wait until it is too late."

Rudolph has been evading the police since the raid on the Pretoria arsenal at Easter. He is one of a number of extreme Right-wingers who argue for the reinstatement of the old white Boer republics. Although he has sent messages to the media before, this is the first time that the government has been stung into responding.

• The South African Communist party will be formally launched as a legal political organisation at a rally in Soweto on July 29, the party's general secretary, Mr Jee Slovo, said yesterday.

The ban on the party was lifted in February after 40 years of underground existence.

It has not yet, however, surfaced in a formal fashion.

There has been increasing criticism of the SACP for not declaring its true colours. One recent estimate suggested that only eight of the 35 members of the African National Congress's National Executive were not members of the Communist party, and that its real