

Unity test as the ANC

SOUTH AFRICA

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Mr Mandela ... the new unopposed president.

DURBAN, Friday: The African National Congress entered the final phase of its crucial conference today with intensified efforts to unite its diverse membership under new leaders.

More than 2,200 delegates started voting this morning for candidates ranging from communists — including one unrepentant Stalinist — to committed Christians.

However, the organisation ducked the issue of choosing a successor to Mr Nelson Mandela, who was elected unopposed to the presidency, by nominating reluc-

tant compromise candidate Mr Walter Sisulu as his deputy.

The 79-year-old Mr Sisulu entered the fray to avoid a damaging showdown between moderate Foreign Affairs spokesman Mr Thabo Mbeki and the more radical Mr Chris Hani, widely regarded as a hawk because of his top position in the ANC's guerilla army.

Although Mr Mbeki was nominated for the deputy presidency, he withdrew yesterday to make way for the ailing Mr Sisulu.

In spite of Mr Sisulu's near-certain victory, the ANC took the shrewd step of also nominating Mr Harry Gwala, a militant Natal communist who still refuses to repudiate the excesses of former Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

Mr Gwala's candidacy had the

dual advantage of giving the appearance of a contest to the deputy presidency poll and of indicating the extent of support for Mr Gwala's anti-negotiation stance among the rank and file.

The result will also show whether ANC members are affected by outside criticism of the organisation's close alliance with the South African Communist Party.

The ties — which date back three decades when the two organisations were in exile — have resulted in SACP leaders, such as Mr Joe Slovo, holding senior positions in both organisations.

The relationship has caused considerable international unease, with the US Congress last month trying to block funds

Although Justice Basson found that only one of the accused, Basie Beke Beke, had delivered the ... in prison, with the rest due to be released today.

Agence France Press

elects new leaders

allocated to the ANC because of its SACP links.

The controversy resurfaced again this week after the Secretary-General, Mr Alfred Nzo, warned that the alliance was hampering ANC recruitment in non-black communities.

The final results of the election — expected to be announced in the early hours of Sunday (Sunday afternoon, Sydney time) — will also indicate the ANC's attitude towards women's rights. No women have been nominated to the organisation's top five positions and many feel that it has failed to move beyond the patriarchal views of conservative African communities.

An attempt to bolster the women's position failed yesterday

after vehement protests by male delegates forced the organisation to abandon a constitutional amendment setting aside 15 seats on the executive for women.

Women delegates led by Mrs Adelaide Tambo, wife of the retiring president, Mr Oliver Tambo, brought the conference to a temporary halt with vehement protests against the decision.

The controversial Mrs Winnie Mandela, nominated earlier this week for an executive post, is among the women who will now find it harder to win a seat on the committee.

In another development, the ANC created the post of national chairman for Mr Tambo, who suffered a stroke shortly before the ANC was legalised 17 months ago.



Mr Tambo ... new national chairman.

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