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"The man who's out to sink the TCU"
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Patrick "Terror" Lekota ... organising the campaign against the All Blacks

Arlene Getz 21-APR 1985

The man who's out to sink the tour

PATRICK "Terror" Lekota, the publicity secretary of the United Democratic Front, detests unfairness.

That was why, as a young boy growing up in the Free State town of Kroonstad, he was furious when he heard his mother and grandparents called "girls" and "boys".

"To me these people were so important I was sometimes afraid to talk to them, but here were these white children ordering them around and talking about them like that," he recalls.

"They weren't polite to my parents, but I - coming from a background which instilled respect for other human beings - was expected to be polite to theirs."

The fireside stories about his people and their history fired in the young Free Stater a feeling so deep that today he works 18 hours a day and travels up to 10 000 km a month in a bid to fight some of the indignities suffered by his people.

"These things are just wrong. They've got to be stopped and somebody has to stop it," he said this week.

Mr Lekota is currently immersed in arrangements to protest against the forthcoming tour by New Zealand's All Blacks.

A passionate sports-lover - his nickname comes from the days he was known as a mean soccer player - he believes the Blacks should keep away because apartheid is still alive and kicking in South Africa.

It's a stance which has earned Mr Lekota and the UDF the hatred of many South African whites, who have come to regard him in the same light they once saw British anti-apartheid campaigner Peter Hain.

Mr Lekota, however, is convinced he had adopted the correct course of action.

"It is the task of the Front to continue to push the Government to a democratic order, and our campaign against the tour is part of the campaign against apartheid," he said.

The campaign has not given him an easy life. Articulate and impressive, the leader dubbed a gentle giant spent three months in detention last year. He emerged from hiding earlier this month after lying low since eight other UDF leaders were arrested in February.

He said he had come out of hiding because the UDF's work was suffering - not because he thought the danger was over. Besides, at the UDF operated at a non-violent level, it was important for its leaders to be seen acting legally, he said.

21 APRIL 1985

Ariene Getz

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