

# Carry on spying?

*De Klerk and Mandela are talking, but intelligence operations against the ANC seem to be continuing, says Duncan Campbell*

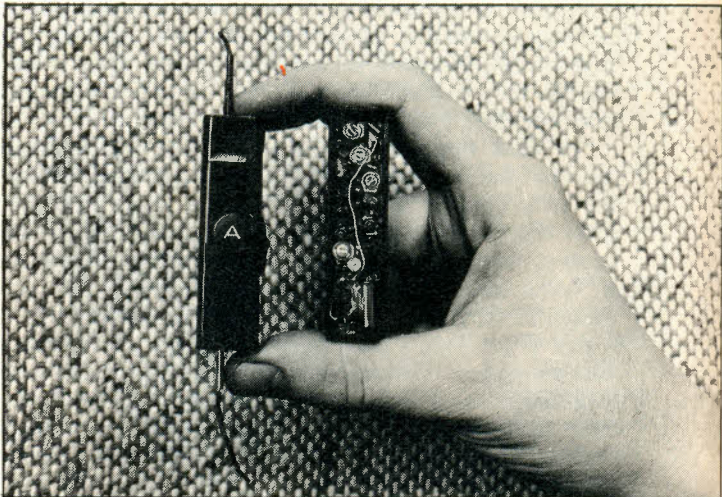
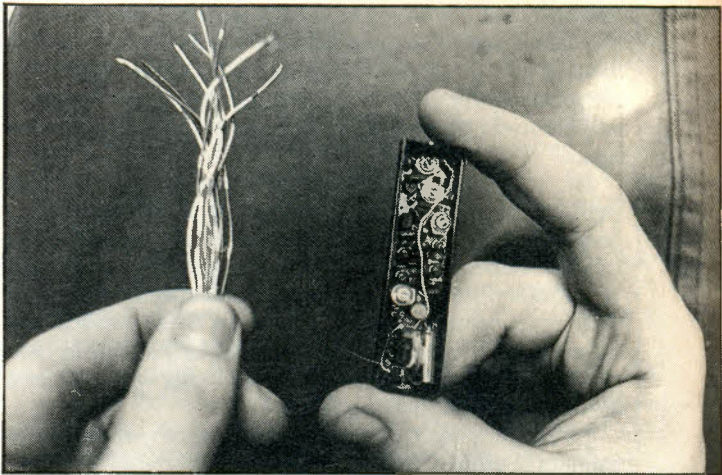
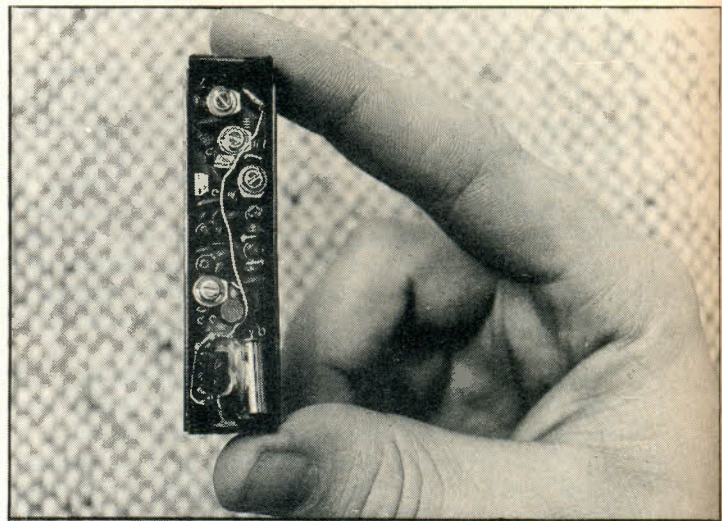
**H**opes that South Africa's long international "dirty tricks" campaign against the African National Congress might have come to an end were dashed this week by the discovery of a surveillance operation against an ANC member living in London. Harold Wolpe, who legally assisted Nelson Mandela at his first trial in the early 1960s and is now a major ANC intellectual, has just discovered that his telephone has been bugged secretly for at least 15 months, and perhaps for far longer.

White South Africa has financed and directed surveillance operations and attacks on its enemies in London, principally the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, for more than 20 years. Wolpe, now reader in sociology at Essex University, is very active in the movement and is frequently visited by ANC figures and officials. He has long been a close friend of Joe Slovo, another leading expatriate ANC member, who is also the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party. In August 1982, Wolpe himself was lucky not to be present when a South African bomb murdered Slovo's wife, Ruth First, in Maputo, Mozambique. Slovo, like other ANC figures who have featured on discovered South African hit lists, often stays in Wolpe's London home, most recently this spring.

Wolpe and a fellow lawyer, Arthur Goldreich, caused grave embarrassment to Pretoria when they escaped from Johannesburg police cells in 1963. The two had played major roles in helping the ANC covertly purchase a farm at Rivonia for insurrectionary purposes, a plan for which Nelson Mandela and many other leading ANC figures were jailed in 1964. Had they not escaped, Wolpe and Goldreich could have faced life imprisonment or the death sentence. After his escape from gaol, and then South Africa, Wolpe became one of the major Marxist theoreticians of South African nationalism, and has recently been one of the intellectuals representing the ANC in discussions with leading Afrikaners.

This weekend at Wolpe's house in Muswell Hill, London, I discovered two telephone tap transmitter "bugs" which had secretly been attached to the lines to his house. Wolpe and his family did not know about the bugs, but had been alerted to the possible surveillance three weeks earlier, when they were mysteriously sent tapes of telephone calls they had made from their home during June 1989.

The two transmitter bugs were concealed inside a small, watertight package connected by two metres of cable to British Telecom's junction box, on the outside front wall of Wolpe's house. The extra cables were tied to genuine TV and phone cables, and members of the family had believed that the package was an amplifier for their TV. Inside the package were two square black boxes, 6cm long. When either telephone line was used, the bugs transmitted a signal which, in turn, activated a tape recorder at a listening post and recorded all that was said. One of the bugs was marked as transmitting on channel "A", the other on channel "D". Each would be received by a separate radio, with its own



tape recorder.

The bugs gave no direct clue as to their country of origin or manufacturer, but are likely to have been produced commercially in Britain or Europe. They are typical of telephone-tapping equipment sold by a small group of firms in London and the home counties. The surveillance equipment had been fitted relatively professionally, although it was not well concealed. The use of such bugs is an offence against both the Interception of Communications Act and the Wireless Telegraphy Act. Nonetheless, they are sold openly, usually through mail order. Industrial espionage and computer "hacking" expert Hugo Cornwall estimates from published accounts that more than 5,000 bugs a year are sold by each of the biggest London bugging firms. "There's a lot of commercial activity in this area," he said. "We do not know where they're all going and who's using them."

Wolpe has not yet reported the bugging operations to the

attack the ANC. The only question in the minds of senior ANC officials this week is which intelligence faction in Pretoria might be responsible. "Generally, these operations are official," a senior ANC source said, "but there are different sections. At another level there is a sort of open contract for any freelancer who wants to have a go."

In 1987, four men were charged in London with conspiracy to kidnap ANC officials. The Director of Public Prosecutions dropped the case before trial, claiming that there was insufficient evidence. The ANC's chief representative in London tried to bring a civil action against the would-be kidnapers, who were found in possession of a kidnap "hit list", which named Joe Slovo. The kidnap plot revelations confirmed information obtained two years before, when an Irishman approached the ANC with what appeared to be official South African information about their targets. He told them that a bounty of £100,000 was on offer for killing or kidnapping Slovo.

In 1982, two agents hired by South Africa were jailed at the Old Bailey. Edward Aspinall, a burglar, had been recruited to burgle the ANC's offices in London. Police suspected that the second man jailed, Peter Caselton, was connected with a terrorist bomb attack on the ANC's offices earlier the same year. Two years later, another bomb was detonated at the Penton Street offices. Fortunately, no one was killed or injured. The Anti-apartheid Movement's headquarters in Mandela Street, Camden, has also been the subject of burglaries and arson attacks.

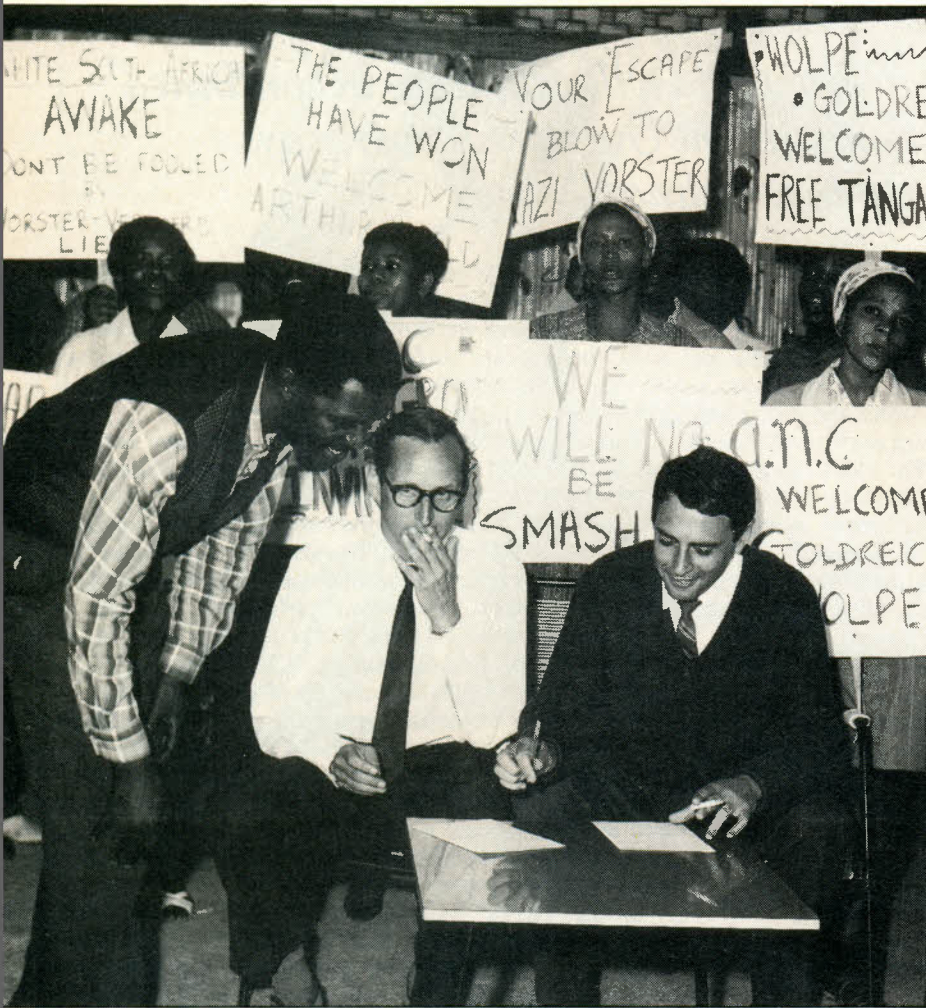
In November last year, South African intelligence defector Captain Dirk Coetzee—the man who revealed the operations of South African death squads—told newspapers that explosives for the ANC bomb attack had been smuggled to London in the diplomatic bag. The South African agent who had planted the bomb had been decorated for his work, although he was in gaol in Britain for burglary at the time.

Remarkably, the South Africans must have conducted their surveillance operation against Wolpe under the nose of police anti-terrorist checks in the street. Education Secretary John MacGregor lives only a few doors away from the Wolpe family and MacGregor's home is continually watched. Despite the police presence, the agents were able to plant their bugs, undetected, on at least two occasions, on the front wall of Wolpe's house. A second set of bugging cables, which were also attached to the wall, showed that the bugs found last week had replaced an earlier installation. Paint on the cables showed that the new bugs had been installed before June this year, when pipework was repainted.

The discovery of the bugs follows an anonymous phone call to the Wolpes early in September by a man who said he had discovered two tape cassettes on moving into a new house. He had listened to conversations on the tapes which had identified the Wolpe family. "They seem to be tapes of your telephone calls," the caller explained. He refused to reveal his identity or where he had found the tapes. Two weeks later, two cassettes arrived, each marked with dates in June 1989. There is no doubt that the tapes are authentic, as the family recognised calls they had then made. The person who found the tapes, who has so far identified himself only as "Mike", claimed in a note that he had "no idea how it came to be in my house". He has not been traced.

In an apparently unconnected incident, Harold Wolpe recalls that, at the start of 1989, two long recordings were left on his answering machine. The recordings appeared to have been made through listening bugs placed in the ANC's offices in Islington, London.

Like this month's incident, it is not entirely clear whether the recordings were meant to intimidate Wolpe, or warn him. But both events have brought back unpleasant memories. When he escaped from Marshall Square police station in Johannesburg, with the assistance of his wife Anne-Marie, the South African establishment was enraged. Interrogating Anne-Marie the next day, the police commander said, "It doesn't matter where he goes, we'll get him one day." ●



police or the Special Branch. The ANC had never seen fruitful results from such police inquiries in the past, he said. On previous occasions, they just "took the equipment and the evidence away and you never heard from them again".

Technical tests earlier this week indicated that each bug transmits a short-range UHF signal that might be received up to 100 metres away. But extensive enquiries among Wolpe's neighbours have not so far revealed the location of the listening post. The area now includes many rented flats, several of which have recently been empty or could have been used to direct surveillance plots. Wolpe's house backs directly on to a large area of woodland.

Although there is not yet any direct evidence as to who planted the bug, it is entirely consistent with a pattern of South African intelligence activities in London discovered over the past 15 years, in which Embassy-based intelligence staff have used private detectives and criminals to spy on or

**Left, the bugs found concealed on an outside wall of Harold Wolpe's house. Above (sitting, left to right), Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich, who escaped from the South African police in 1963**