

Note to our readers

move seen as an attempt to gain support for his government's recent constitutional reforms, South Africa's Prime Minister P.W. Botha called a surprise general election in January. The country will go to the polls on April 29, 1981. The two articles that follow, one analyzing the economic interdependence of southern African states and the other assessing the recently implemented constitutional reforms, were written before the election announcement.

Hope for Southern Africa in growing regional ties

by Gordon F. Boreham

Africa, a land that has been called by some anthropologists "the cradle of mankind", is in a state of greater turmoil now than at any other time in its modern history. Politically, it has superseded South America as the continent of coups, assassinations and authoritarianism, and is a domain of often capricious and conflicting ideologies. Economically, much of it is worse off than in the colonial era. Militarily, it is a growing arsenal of weapons mainly held in ill-trained and irresponsible hands. In brief, one does not have to be very perceptive to hear the apocalyptic hoofbeats of famine, pestilence, war and death in Africa today.

There are, however, some hopeful portents. There is slowly taking shape in South Africa a constructive and immensely promising movement to create closer cooperation in economic and other areas between the independent sovereign states in the southern African region. Nine other countries in southern Africa have created a new economic bloc of their own to uplift the area's welfare and reduce their economic dependence on the Republic of South Africa (RSA).

Meeting with Botha

South African Prime Minister Pieter Botha's meeting with leading businessmen at the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg on November 22, 1979 must be regarded as the major catalyst for the changes now taking place in the RSA. In his address, Mr. Botha called for a voluntary grouping of all those nations that are centred in the southern part of the African continent in order to strengthen and improve existing economic cooperation and combat common military threats such as foreign invasion, insurgency and terrorism. As a practical step in the implementation of his vision of a "geoeconomic community of interests", Botha undertook to reduce government spending and taxation and inter-

ference in the marketplace, as well as to deregulate price, rent and foreign exchange controls. The purpose of these proposals was to release more capital and skilled manpower for the creation of new income and jobs by the private sector. The Prime Minister also promised to open certain industrial and trading areas to all population groups.

In brief, Mr. Botha correctly linked the growth of private enterprise, the easing of obstacles to self-employment, and his new policy for regional cooperation, generally known as the constellation of southern African states, as essential parts of a coordinated development strategy.

Pretoria conference

The first step towards a new regional dispensation was taken on July 23, 1980 when Prime Minister Botha and the leaders of the three ex-homelands — Bophuthatswana, Transkei and Venda — agreed to:

- 1) create and develop a number of regional growth points which could serve as balancing growth poles against the four large metropolitan areas within the RSA. (The four existing growth points cover four per cent of the Republic's surface area but account for 80 percent of industrial production.)

- 2) establish a multicultural development bank with membership open to all the countries of Southern Africa, as a vehicle for mobilizing resources for development in close association with the private sector;

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