

SOUTHERN AFRICA : REFLECTIONS ON  
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS, ECONOMIC  
ASSISTANCE AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES.

Easton MD, May 1979

In reflecting with you to-day on European Community relationships and policies towards Southern Africa, I should like to begin by making certain personal observations on the current situation in the region, and in particular on the apparent direction of South African policy. White South Africa and the National Party Government have of course been more than usually embattled, on the domestic and international scene in recent months, and it now appears that an accumulation of connected and unconnected events is leading Pretoria towards international positions which have potentially grave consequence for South Africa itself and for the whole Southern African region.

These international developments come at a time when significant domestic changes are about to be initiated in the apartheid system. The recommendations of the widely publicised Riekert and Wiehahn reports, which have been broadly accepted by the South African government, represent the first comprehensive statement of Pretoria's official response to Soweto, apart from teargas and bullets. They seek to grapple with the most basic issue in the apartheid system - the involvement of black labour in the white economy. If the recommendations of the two commissions are fully implemented, South African blacks should secure evident benefits, notably through the registration and acceptance of black trade unions, and the abandonment of statutory job reservation by race.

But however radical the proposals of Riekert and Wiehahn are in scrapping glaring examples of discrimination, both are set rigidly within the existing South African constitutional framework. They are not seeking to destroy the system, but to modernise and streamline it, and make it work more efficiently. Therefore before turning to the international issues affecting South Africa, it may be as well to recall that the response in the country's black community to the Riekert and Wiehahn reports has been much more cautious than that of white liberals. Thus the reaction to the Wiehahn report of the black trade unions, and of the ICFTU, has been guarded, with the existing unregistered unions questioning what criteria will be used to allow them to register. Then

migrant workers, accounting for almost a third of the black labour force may still be ineligible for union membership, and there will be no firm move to eliminate existing closed-shop arrangements, currently used by white trade unions as the most effective means of enforcing job discrimination in industry. Amongst black trade unionists, further suspicions focus on the continuing emphasis which both reports place on strengthening government controls.

At an international level, the withdrawal of secure supplies of crude oil from Iran, and the entirely predictable failure of any other oil source outside the spot market to make good the shortfall, have considerably diminished the benefits which South Africa derives from its somewhat ambiguous position within the Western bloc. Pretoria is now preparing to "go it alone" on oil. Plans are going ahead on the massive investment necessary to double the capacity of the existing oil-from-coal transformation plant. A special tax has been added to the price of petrol to help pay for it. Legislation has just been passed making it an offence to disclose or publish any information about South Africa's oil stocks or the origin of supplies, thus providing a degree of cover for the deals that are now being made.

Apart from oil supplies, South Africa, with its strategic and other raw materials, appears to be coming round to the view that the balance of interdependence with the West may be tipping in its favour. The fear of international sanctions has been lessened by this shift in perspective, by the prospect of a "softer" approach in London, and possibly of a more sympathetic administration in Washington after 1980.

Also of relevance to South Africa is the experience gained at close quarters, and over long years, from observing the ineffectual operation of sanctions against Rhodesia, and in simultaneously learning with Salisbury the ways to circumvent them. The continuing buoyant price of gold appears also to be bolstering Pretoria's confidence in its capacity to weather any storm at least as well as its enemies. Pretoria seems at any rate more willing to risk it.

The international pressure, which it has been possible to place on South Africa over the Namibia question, has accordingly lost something of its leverage. In the current deadlock, Pretoria is choosing to put the blame on the bad faith and double-dealing by the United Nations, and particularly the Western Five, thus further straining relations. At the same time, much of the momentum towards an international settlement in Namibia has been lost, and South Africa has had the opportunity to consider other options.

In Pretoria, the government is still trying to ride out the information department scandal, both domestically and internationally. The revelations, and the abiding suspicion that much more is being covered up, have struck deep at the South Africans' conscience. In particular they have blurred the Nationalists' cherished image of themselves, that whatever else they are a straight and upright race, whose leaders must in their turn be the very embodiment of moral rectitude. Whilst the liberal South African press has done its utmost to force the government's resignation, there seems little prospect of this happening, nor that a fresh election would result in any important change in the National Party's hold on the country or its basic policies. The reaction to the washing of dirty linen is still to try to draw the curtains. Domestically, with some vicious counter-smear tactics against the opposition, and threats to curb 'irresponsible' press reporting, this tactic seems to be succeeding. Internationally, the effect of the scandal might be to make it more difficult to maintain that sublime confidence in the inherent respectability and righteousness, which has been such a shield against international approbrium.

And for years South Africa survived amidst a rising chorus of international condemnation. It has nevertheless been allowed to hang about on the periphery of the Western family of nations like some leprous relative, at first indignantly denying the existence and then the seriousness of the disease, then attempting to treat the symptoms, whilst protesting that it needed time and sympathy to effect a cure. For the last thirty years a growing embarrassment,

South Africa has been tolerated, but only just, because of past ties, its continuing contribution to the family economy, and the lingering hope that it might somehow be cleansed. This position has become increasingly intolerable with South Africa's continuing failure to improve at a generally acceptable pace, and increasing complaints about the smell raised by newly independent, and economically important partners in the rest of Africa and the developing world.

The manifestations of international abhorrence for South Africa's political and economic system have spread to almost every field. One of the most wounding to a white society, where the importance of the competitive sports ethic is enormous, has been the sports boycott. The recent action by France, hitherto regarded as one of the "least-prejudiced" of the Western nations in slamming shut one of the few remaining doors by cancelling a provincial rugby tour, a golf tour, and in all probability the Springbok rugby tour of France later this year, has rubbed salt deep into the wounds. More pointedly, it has also served as an example of the gulf of incomprehensibility which still persists in the mind of large sections of the South African white population. There are still those sportsmen in South Africa, who believe that external political criticism can be met by including two, or three or some equally arbitrary number of black, or coloured or Asian players in this or that touring team. They simply cannot understand that decent, fellow white men can behave towards them as the Western nations are now doing. For many white South Africans, the only possible explanation lies in a resort to the popular and officially

encouraged demonology - the marxist and communist - influences by which the West has allowed itself to be infiltrated and undermined.

Against the background of all these factors, the signs are that on international issues the South African government no longer sees the need to continue making concessions and accepting affronts. It appears to have concluded that it may have little to gain from a further fruitless and humiliating dialogue with the United Nations and with the West, which are incapable of stopping what it sees as a communist takeover of the region and a direct threat to its own security. It is in a mood to take matters into its own hands.

An early indication of this was a speech made in Zurich in March by Mr. Pik Botha, the South African Foreign Minister, in which he said that Pretoria would in future be taking a more independent line in international affairs. Immediately afterwards came the government's exposure of the operations of the US surveillance plane, which has brought Pretoria's relations with the West to a particularly low ebb.

At the same time the South African government moved to support the internal settlement elections in Rhodesia and to encourage the emergence of the Muzorewa-Smith coalition. It also began to back further away from international discussions on Namibia, and moved with the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) to establish a national assembly and secure a possible internal settlement in Windhoek.

These moves were closely linked with a recent policy statement by Mr. Pik Botha in the South African parliament, proposing the creation of a Southern African "community." Whilst the concept was couched in rather vague and general terms, the intention was obviously to consolidate a South African sphere of influence which would embrace Namibia and Rhodesia, as well as other countries in the region such as Malawi and BLS states. Suggestions have also been made in the South African press that this sphere of influence would extend to Mozambique, Zambia and Zaïre.

I have sketched out these recent developments in Southern Africa, because they have a certain bearing on the Community's approach to Southern African issues which is shaped in two distinct but related ways.

Firstly, the European machinery for political cooperation has enabled our governments in the EEC member states to formulate common political positions on major issues in Southern Africa, as they do in relation to other parts of the world. Secondly the Lome Convention, which links the nine EEC states with fifty-six African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, has established close working relations between the European Community and majority-ruled Southern African states in the field of economic cooperation and trade.

In this context, I should like to mention briefly the political approach of Europe to the central issues of Southern Africa. Firstly the Nine have categorically condemned the apartheid system in South Africa, and have refused to recognize "internal settlements" in the Transkei and Bophutatswana. They have supported the arms embargo imposed by the United Nations Security Council in November 1977, and have set up a Code of Conduct for subsidiaries of European companies operating in South Africa. The Community believes that apartheid must be abandoned, and is committed to working for early fundamental change by peaceful means in South Africa.

In Rhodesia, the Nine have given their general support to United Nations resolutions, calling for elections under international supervision involving all political groups in that country. In Namibia, Europe has stood firmly behind the

proposals of the five Western members of the Security Council for an international solution to that country's constitutional future.

The positions adopted in political cooperation, which are also the subject of debate and reflection in the European Parliament, have in turn helped to shape the Community's approach to economic cooperation with the independent majority-ruled states in Southern Africa. Within the region, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zaire and Zambia are all members of the Lome Convention which was initiated in 1975. The current convention expires early in 1980, and negotiations are now well advanced for the conclusion of a new treaty, which will probably continue in force to 1985. Angola and Mozambique have been participating as observers in the present negotiations, and if they wish, would be eligible for membership of the new convention. Similarly Namibia and Zimbabwe governments, which were acceptable to the ACP countries and to the EEC, would be eligible for membership of the new convention.

Over the 1976-80 period total transfer commitments from the Community to independent countries in Southern Africa under Lome and other EEC aid arrangements will be of the order of \$ 900 M.

These transfers, which do not include the aid-programmes of the individual Member States for the region, take a number of different forms. Firstly, the Community provides financial and technical support for the ACP countries' national development programmes. This support is assigned to development priorities and projects proposed by the recipient governments, and much of this assistance in the Southern African states goes to rural development and agricultural production schemes, as well as economic and social infrastructure and related training programmes. Then a regional component of Lome, which will be enlarged significantly in the new convention, provides resources for joint development schemes between ACP countries, or between ACP states and other developing nations.

A programme for the stabilisation of export earnings (STABEX) supports incomes from a wide range of ACP raw material exports, mainly tropical agricultural products, during periods of depressed prices. In the new convention a modified form of this scheme will be extended to various mineral exports, which will be of particular interest to major copper-exporting countries such as Zaïre and Zambia.

An industrial cooperation chapter offers resources for ACP industrial projects with financial support from the European Investment Bank and technical help through the ACP-EEC Centre for Industrial Development.

Lome also includes exceptional aid resources to help ACP countries overcome natural catastrophies and economic emergencies , a scheme which has been particularly relevant and valuable in the Southern African context. Outside Lome, there are Community provisions for food aid, for assistance to non-governmental organisations, and for the support of developing countries such as Angola and Mozambique, which are not as yet linked with the Community under an international treaty relationship.

These latter states also enjoy access for their exports to Community markets on GSP terms, while the Lome countries have free and unrestricted entry to the EEC for the great bulk of their export trade.

I have described these aid and trade arrangements in some detail , because ultimately they offer the instruments and resources, which enable the Community to provide continuing assistance and support to the independent majority -ruled states of Southern Africa, whether in terms of development programmes, market opportunities, or emergency aid needs. These are the mechanisms that will be renewed and replenished in the new ACP convention of the 1980s, which will come into force early next year.

However Lome is not merely a trade and aid agreement. It is a relationship between Europe and Africa, and countries in the Caribbean and Pacific, which is governed by the provisions of an international treaty, and which includes arrangements for

continuing EEC-ACP consultations at a ministerial and official level.

There is also a Consultative Assembly and Joint Committee which enable Members of the European Parliament to meet regularly with representatives of ACP countries. These joint discussions, and particularly those in the Consultative Assembly offer the opportunity for a wideranging exchange of views on development, trade and political issues of relevance to ACP-EEC relations. Recently these joint discussions have come to touch increasingly on the problems of Southern Africa, and indeed in December 1977, the Joint Committee with some fifty-six members on each side met in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, a small enclave state within South Africa itself.

At this meeting ACP and EEC members together agreed on a series of resolutions on major political issues confronting Southern Africa, and on the urgent economic needs of frontline states. Resolutions of this kind and continuing consultations with the ACP governments have directed Community assistance to the most pressing requirements of the majority-ruled countries of Southern Africa.

Thus immediate emergency support was offered to Lesotho in the transport sector to help overcome pressures for the recognition of the neighbouring Transkei as an independent state. Under the emergency programme, substantial relief was provided to Botswana and Zambia to help resolve transport problems

created by Mozambique's application of international sanctions against Rhodesia. Further emergency assistance is currently on offer to Botswana to assist her overcome the ravages of foot and mouth disease, that have adversely affected her important beef exports which enjoy privileged access to the EEC market under Lome. A special assistance programme is currently under preparation for Tanzania, which has recently carried an exceptionally heavy financial burden in securing a greater measure of peace and stability in East Africa.

Again under the Community's emergency aid programme, an increasing degree of support has been given to the urgent needs of refugees in Southern Africa through the good offices of the World Food Programme and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Within the past month provision of some \$ 6.5 M. has been made to the UN High Commissioner for specific humanitarian needs throughout the region, but particularly for the requirements of Zimbabwe and South African refugees in Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia. The provision of essential food needs, has also come to form an increasingly important part of Community assistance in Southern Africa, and especially in the current year when there have been quite extensive harvest failures throughout the region. Whenever possible, the Community is now anxious to support inter-African food programmes. For example, last year the

Community funded the export of maize from Zambia to Zaire and Botswana; this year when Zambia is in particular difficulties, the Commission proposes to finance white maize exports from Malawi and Kenya to Lusaka. Requirements of this kind underline the need for strengthening regional storage facilities.

Amongst the majority-ruled states of Southern Africa, there is a steadily increasing interest in the implementation of regional projects which serve to strengthen their economic cooperation and interdependence. In the education and training field, the Community is supporting institutions such as the University of Botswana and Swaziland, and the UN Institute for Namibia, whilst the Commission hopes to play its part in the development of railway and telecommunication training programmes for the Southern African countries.

Increasing support has also been provided by the Community for regional communication links in Southern Africa, which include a new airport in Maseru to permit direct air communications between Lesotho and independent African states. Regional road links financed by the Community include the important Botzam route, which is Botswana's sole means of surface communication with Zambia and independent Africa, where the Community is complementing work initiated with the support of the USAID. Further to the north, preliminary studies are being made of potential road communications between Zambia and Angola.

Direct telecommunication links are also being developed from Mozambique to Tanzania and Zambia, again with Community assistance.

Also in a regional framework, the Community, together with the United Nations and other donors, including the USAID and CIDA, is about to convene a meeting with the Angola, Zaire and Zambia governments to further these countries' joint interest, in the revitalisation of the Benguela route. The eventual reinstatement of this railway service would restore a further degree of normality to the Angola economy, and reestablish an important outlet for Zaire and Zambia. Then on the other side of the continent, the Community would hope shortly to participate with Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia in discussions on the improvement and upgrading of their interconnected transport systems, including the development of harbour facilities at ports, such as Beira and Macala.

I have gone into the Community's development aid involvement in Southern Africa in some detail to give you an indication of the form and scope of the EEC assistance to the majority-ruled countries in the region. This in turn is related to my earlier comments on the South African scene. For past experience would suggest that if Pretoria persists in the imposition of "internal settlements" in Namibia and Rhodesia, without regard to international obligations, then tensions in these countries and in the frontline states could increase significantly in the months ahead, and open the way to wider political and military conflict. At the United Nations, this would inevitably lead to increased pressures for

extensive sanctions against South Africa and to enhanced demands for emergency support from the majority-ruled states in Southern Africa. At the same time, these developments would also serve to stimulate the Front Line States' interest and concern in strengthening their regional infrastructure and programmes for economic cooperation. Such initiatives would be directed towards reducing their current dependence on South Africa, rather than to forging new "community" links, as has been suggested by Pretoria:

For the EEC, it is already apparent that much of the resources assigned to Southern African countries under the new ACP Convention for the 1980s may require to be devoted to emergency needs, and also to regional development programmes, which help to forge closer economic and political unity between the independent majority-ruled states of Southern Africa. These countries are about to initiate important policy discussions in this field, and the European Community would intend to join with other donors in giving sympathetic consideration to regional economic proposals from the Front Line States.

In this context, I would wish to say how much we have admired the steps taken by the US Agency for International Development, and in particular by Mrs. Butcher, to assist informed discussion in this area by holding a colloquium in Washington last January on the subject of development needs and opportunities for cooperation in Southern Africa. The technical papers prepared for this colloquium and the perspectives opened up in the discussions, provide valuable insights into the possibilities for balanced regional development amongst the majority-ruled countries of Southern Africa. The results of

this colloquium should make a valuable contribution to the African and international debate, and lay the basis for concrete development programmes, which reflect the priorities and policy objectives of the African states. It is my conviction that the future of regional cooperation in Southern Africa lies here with the aspirations and concerns of independent Africa, rather than with the expansionary objectives of the apartheid administration in Pretoria.

But while continuing apprehension must inevitably surround recent South African initiatives in Namibia and Rhodesia, the new domestic policies and approaches advanced by the Riekert and Wiehahn commissions must give pause for reflection, and perhaps for some modest optimism. It is just possible that the proposals and new directions initiated by these commissions, and particularly those relating to the development of trade unions could turn out to be the thin end of the social wedge. Certainly management in South Africa will now be encouraged to press its demands for more and more blacks to take on skilled jobs and responsibilities - the need for which was the main economic impulse behind the Riekert and Wiehahn reports. Certainly too, the legal confirmation and strengthening of black trade unions in South Africa will open up much wider social and political perspectives for the country's black population. I would venture to suggest that these developments within South Africa could become of major interest to many independent African states, which are searching for a peaceful and orderly

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approach to political change in Southern Africa.

As South African ministers have been at pains to emphasise, the reforms introduced by Riekert and Wiehahn owe much to international pressures, and in particular to the different codes of business practice established by North American and West European countries with substantial investments in South Africa, which include the Sullivan code initiated by American companies, as well as the EEC code and similar schemes originating in Canada and Scandinavia. This is a development of consequence, for the impact of these measures demonstrates clearly that South Africa is ultimately susceptible to the pressures of international opinion.

If this consideration is relevant to domestic developments in South Africa, it must also apply in a wider regional context, including Pretoria's actions in Salisbury and Windhoek. And so in conclusion, I would suggest that we might reflect for a little on the possibilities for peaceful change, which could be carried forward in Southern Africa through regional initiatives and pressures emanating from the majority-ruled states and supported by the international community.