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Pretoria forges even closer links with Francophone African states

FW upstages ANC

as he goes on safari

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PRESIDENT de Klerk's latest trip into Africa demonstrates again how his reforms are undercutting the African National Congress' influence in black Africa.

The ANC is still calling for African and all other countries to maintain sanctions on South Africa, including bans on diplomatic and cultural relations as well as trade. This means that every time Mr de Klerk is received openly and officially by an African head of state in his own capital the ANC's demands are being openly rejected.

It appears that African governments are increasingly taking the view that the reasons for ostracising South Africa have been removed by the de Klerk reforms.

Those that want direct access to South African trade, technology and aid would have little patience with sanctions barriers that they regarded as being no longer justified; or it could be that they needed only half an excuse to deal with South Africa in the first place and this is provided by the de Klerk reforms, even though the ANC says these are insufficient.

Some African countries had, after all, started dealing openly with South Africa even before Mr de Klerk took of-

Continuing his safaris into Africa, President de Klerk is this week opening major new contacts and making important advances in

fice, while P.W. Botha was still president.

A more extreme interpretation of developments is that the ANC could now have to face the possibility that some African governments suspect that its insistence on continued sanctions is aimed at gaining political power rather than seeking a solution acceptable to all South Africans.

Whatever the motivation of those governments opening their doors to the State President, the effect is to strengthen Pretoria's influence in Africa at the expense of the ANC.

The Moroccan government's motives in inviting Mr de Klerk to Rabat are perhaps even more open to speculation than were those of the governments of other African countries he has visited as president: Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Zaire, Zambia, Namibia and Madagascar.

Morocco largely follows an independent line in inter-African politics and has long been one of the strongest supporters of Dr Jonas Savimbi's rebel Unita movement in An-

gola. It is possible that South Africa's own close links with Unita may have led to contacts with Morocco.

What is important about Mr de Klerk's visit there is that these contacts are being openly formalised; and that they now give South Africa friendly relations with a country that is influential not only in African circles but especially among the Maghreb grouping of Arab states in North Africa and in the wider Arab world.

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy under King Hassan and is governed by a coalition of four parties. Its troubled economy has begun improving after the institution of reforms required by the International Monetary Fund. It has a relatively large mining industry and is the world's third largest producer of phosphates.

The Deputy Director-General of Foreign Affairs, Rusty Evans, sees the visit as "a reflection of the changing attitudes of African heads of state and government towards South Africa and a particular mark of respect for President

de Klerk and what he is doing."

He says his department is optimistic that this spirit of acceptance will spread wider in Africa. Mr Evans sees the Rabat visit also as "a reflection of the wider recognition that South Africa is getting in African capitals because of the fact that we identify with Africa."

Before he left there was speculation that Mr de Klerk would visit another African country in addition to Morocco during his present journey and observers considered it likely that this would be one of the Francophone countries.

These countries have usually had a more pragmatic attitude to South Africa than the former British territories. South Africa has long had informal relations of various kinds with the Ivory Coast and is known to have had dealings recently with Gabon and the Congo, where some of the negotiations that led to the 1988 Angola-Namibia settlement took place.

South Africa is believed to have had contacts also with Senegal, which has close relations with Morocco and has backed Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. Should Mr de Klerk visit Senegal it would be a major step in consolidating South Africa's acceptance in Francophone Africa.

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R70m ethanol plant for Natal



Jon Beverley

RICHARDS Bay has been chosen by the sugar industry for its planned R70 million ethanol distillery, Mr John Chance, chairman of the Sugar Association, said at an Agricultural Union function last night.

The project will use more than 10% of the sugar crop, saving jobs which are threatened because of American and Canadian sanctions, which led to the loss in exports of 150 000 tons of sugar.

Announcement of the site follows a long investigation overseas and talks with the Government and oil industry.

But there were two hurdles, Mr Chance said. These were agreement with the oil industry on mixing ethanol with petrol and 'support from the Government'. If these are forthcoming the plant will be producing by 1989.

Mr Chance said the industry had lost exports of 150 000 tons of sugar — the product was banned from entering Canada and the U S — which had to be replaced and in such a way that it would not be 'threatened by overseas politicians'.

The distillery would produce 150 million litres of ethanol a year — enough for blending and to supply Natal's needs — from 200 000 tons of export sugar and 150 000 tons of molasses.

It will use sugar cane from the region and will probably be built close to the giant Felixton sugar mill. There is considerable potential in the nearby KwaZulu area for expanding sugar production.

Skilled workers

Richards Bay is ideal for an ethanol distillery, which produces a lot of effluent which can be piped to sea through the existing system used by the Mondi pulp mill and the old Triomf fertiliser factory (now owned by Indian Ocean Investments).

It is understood that the distillery will be an industry project with the management put out to one of the sugar companies, as happens with the Transvaal sugar distribution depot.

The plant will be capital intensive, giving employment to 50 skilled technicians rather than to unskilled labour.

Mr Chance said the decision was vital to the future of the sugar industry.

'In a broader field it must also indicate whether the Government is willing to assist agriculture in planning its own salvation.

'We believe that the steps which it has already taken in regard to agriculture in general, will find a counterpart in its ability to assist the sugar industry.'

He considered that records had indicated that there should be no concern about a continuing security of supply, firstly to the consumer and secondly to the ethanol distillery.

While some critics considered that agricultural output was erratic, it was clear the sugar output during the Demoina cyclone and through the droughts and floods of the past six years had been totally sufficient for all consumer needs with enough available for an ethanol plant.

'Even after the recent floods the sugar industry was back in full production much sooner than the local oil refineries.'

Mr Chance said the industry had 25 000 farmers and provided a living for an estimated 1 000 000 people.

The loss of 200 000 tons out of total production of more than 2 000 000 is a severe blow to the industry, which owes its bankers more than R300 million.

Herald-Sun

NEWS - PICTORIAL

The key to Mandela

MELBOURNE City Council's decision to give South African black leader Nelson Mandela the Freedom of the City is an ill-considered abuse of a historic act that should be above politics.

No one could fairly detract from Mr Mandela's courageous stand against the evils of the white South African regime — which cost him 27 years of liberty. But the real substance of opposition to the council's decision is its unavoidable and intensely political overtones.

Already, Australia's aboriginal activists have attempted to link Mr Mandela's visit with their own grievances — an attempt the ANC leader has rejected, with an eye to the main chance — using Australia's homage as backdrop for pursuing the cause back home.

But understandable Aboriginal opportunism is not the real problem. The basic danger in the council's move is that it will be viewed not only around the world, but in South Africa, where his command of events shows signs of waning, as recognition for a man who, in reality, is leader of only one of several black factions increasingly at each other's throats in pursuit of their own agendas. South African President F.W. De Klerk freed Mandela without getting an undertaking that the ANC would renounce violence. The ANC's platform is for a socialised South Africa.

In Australia Mr Mandela has been accorded Guest of Government status. At taxpayers' expense, he will be swanned around the land and seems set to become the icon of every ratbag element trying to bathe its own peculiar ideological view in the reflection of his transcendent light.

At the Town Hall, the Labor Left were able to persuade enough councillors to enable it to award him the accolade. Two councillors boycotted the final vote, including Independent Cr Richard Meldrum, who has rightly argued the council has no business sticking its nose into international politics.

With their enthusiasm for Mr Mandela, the Lord Mayor and his supporters have risked politicising the council in the same damaging way that Ken "Red" Livingstone did when he ran the Greater London Council. As Livingstone's fate demonstrated, this is a risky road to tread.