

INTERNATIONAL

Africa trip opens door to nation's future

By John William Templeton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Welcomed by 500,000 people, President Clinton was moved to proclaim a "New African Renaissance" upon arriving for the first extended trip to the continent by an American president.

However, Clinton's trip was not so much the beginning of that "renaissance" as it was the confirmation of Africa's impact on the world.

In the same way that a pool of warmer water in the Pacific has affected climate around the globe, the increased integration and purpose of sub-Saharan African nations is destined to reshape the world agenda.

Clinton discovered not that he could put Africa on the map, but that he, even as the "leader of the free world," could disappear into the invisibility of the continent for two weeks. Most Americans only know that he was almost crushed in Ghana, danced in Uganda,

visited Nelson Mandela's jail cell in South Africa and saw some wild animals in Botswana. The news media's attention only perked up on the last stop of the visit when Clinton made the symbolic step of visiting Goree Island. Critics consider his atonement for slavery an embarrassment to the United States.

The media response indicates why the 650 million permanent residents of Africa are so invisible. There are too many hard questions to ponder if their full story is told on the world stage. Puppet regimes and international isolation have stoked that invisibility for a half-century. But, the end of political colonialism has created in the 1990s the ability for African governments to look inward and to each other for the first time in the modern era.

From an African perspective, the ascension of first Boutros Boutros-Ghali and

now Kofi Annan to United Nations Secretary-General is a bigger milestone in the new African renaissance. The political effort to achieve those appointments, following a successful three-decades-long battle against White minority rule in Southern Africa, has given African leaders a road map of success through regional and continental cooperation. The final step in that integration was the unified thrust of central and southern African nations to unseat Mobutu Sese Seko, the henchman for the industrial interests plundering the continent. More formally, the Economic Community of West Africa ended conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gabon.

President Clinton came to an Africa now confident of its ability to handle its own affairs. This Africa met Clinton as an equal, aware that there are many nations seeking access

to its resources and, increasingly, its markets.

Clinton was well-prepared by staff and advisors and responded with the proper tones of respect and a willingness to listen.

Although criticized, Clinton was correct to come to Africa and learn from both heads of state and common people.

The trip's shortcoming was that Clinton came to Africa with his hands tied, unable to make significant changes in the sad state of American trade and foreign aid to the continent. This was due to the looming presence of Jesse Helms in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

However, the president did achieve some significant progress with the limited steps he was able to take through executive authority. At his first stop, his transportation department was able to

(See Clinton, Page 16)

P.W. Botha's trial begins despite health concerns

Special to Sentinel-Voice

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — In a case symbolic of the lingering remnants of South Africa's racial division — produced by apartheid — the trial of P.W. Botha, the last hard-line apartheid president, began Tuesday.

A black judge, Victor Lugaju, will preside over the

trial, an ironic twist considering that Botha sought to prevent blacks from ever gaining such positions when he was president.

The 82-year-old former South African president has pleaded innocent to contempt charges for ignoring a subpoena to testify before the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, a group charged with investigating human rights atrocities committed by all sides during the apartheid era. The commission has no judicial power, but can absolve parties if they tell the truth.

Botha, hampered by ill health, has become a symbol of defiance for right-wing whites critical of the African

National Congress-led government — headed by current South African president Nelson Mandela — that took power after the nation's first all-race election in 1994.

Blacks remember Botha as a finger-wagging ruler who cracked down on liberation fighters during the 1980s, when

(See Botha, Page 14)

Clinton's trip places Africa on American agenda

By Jerome Hule

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK (PANA) — President Bill Clinton's 11-day swing across sub-Saharan Africa marked just the beginning of the struggle to position Africa on the policy agenda of the United States, Africa specialists say.

Now back home after their trip with Clinton, some members of the Congressional Black Caucus have indicated their intention to map out follow up actions to the trip.

This, they said, would be done in consultation with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Clinton's special envoy on democracy to Africa.

Among the African and the African-American community in the United States, the trip was historic for two reasons: It was the longest by a sitting U.S. president and it marked a policy change toward Africa. A move from arrogance to engagement, Africa specialists said.

In Africa, Clinton and his entourage of more than 800 people visited Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal; they

were received enthusiastically.

The president discussed, with African leaders, issues surrounding investment, trade, democracy, human rights, security, peace and preserving the environment. He also promised some aid for education in Uganda and unearthing power sources in Ghana.

Mora McLean, president of the New York-based African American Institute, said Clinton's trip was significant for focusing the attention of American people on Africa.

While the American media might have failed to reveal realistic pictures of the countries visited, she said that they had the opportunity to present more than the negative stereotypes about Africa.

From this point on, she said, it becomes the responsibility of people and organizations involved in African issues to tell the American people and its leadership why Africa is a viable economic partner.

"The issue is trade and aid, not just either of them," she said.

No strategy to strengthen trade and investment linkages

with Africa would succeed, she said, unless the United States was also ready to invest in training and human resource development in Africa.

More than that, she said the United States also has to show interest in seeing that African peoples' human rights are respected and peace permeates the continent.

McLean said there is good news in this area: Africa has already set up internal mechanisms for resolving its conflicts. Therefore, the United States only needs to lend its support.

"Now that the United States has stated its desire to get acquainted with Africa, it is incumbent on African scholars

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WORLD BRIEFS

ANC OPPOSES COMMISSION'S DECISION TO GIVE 37 AMNESTY

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (PANA) - The African National Congress of South Africa has filed a notice of opposition with the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's application to have amnesties granted to 37 party leaders, including deputy president Thabo Mbeki, turned down. The commission has claimed that the amnesty applications were irregular because the officials failed to fully disclose the events for which they were applying for amnesty. Meanwhile, 11 other congress members have also applied to the commission for amnesty relating to a spate of high-profile bombings, abductions and killings in the former Transkei prior to the 1994 elections. Four are applying for amnesty for their role in the ambush killings of Alistair and Glenn Weakly near the popular holiday resort town of Port St. Johns in 1993. Three of the applicants were convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison for the incident while the fourth was a witness at the trial. Mlungisi Nyembezi, Luzuko Mpiyakhe, Solomzi Nomatshizolo and Luyanda Ntinkinca are applying for amnesty for their role in the abduction and killing of two policemen in Kokstad in 1993. Ranking Inkatha Freedom Party officials are also likely to be implicated when seven members of the party's hit squad apply for amnesty for a spate of massacres in KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

WORLD BANK'S \$35 MILLION LOAN TO BOOST GHANA'S AID SERVICES

ACCRA, Ghana (PANA) — The Ministry of Health has signed an agreement with the World Bank to provide \$35 million to increase access, quality and efficiency of health services for Ghanaians, especially the poor. The loan, which is to be re-paid over 40 years with no interest, will finance the ministry's five-year Medium Health Term Strategy which aims to provide universal access to a basic package of health services. Under the program, the ministry, in collaboration with other sectors, hopes to reduce population growth and malnutrition, increase female education, provide access to water and sanitation, and reduce poverty. The World Bank sponsored two projects for the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the training of health personnel between 1986 and 1997. The objectives of the MTHS and Vision 2020 are in line with the bank's assistance program for the country. World Bank officials said from their experience they have learned that it's better to utilize local capacity, facilitate systematic reform and harmonize funding sources into a coherent framework. They said the bank has shifted from a "donor-oriented system" to become a "share-holder," adding that the credit agreement is the first to be signed in Ghana with a beneficiary ministry rather than the Finance Ministry.

U.S. AMBASSADOR URGES ZIMBABWEANS TO INVEST MORE IN ARTS

HARARE, Zimbabwe (PANA) — United States Ambassador to Zimbabwe Tom McDonald has called on Zimbabweans to invest more in the arts as they educate the young, promote growth and tourism, create social relationships and push civic pride, the country's news agency Ziana reports. Officially opening the 12th Zimbabwe Heritage Exhibition, McDonald said the arts were critical to the education of children and society at large, hence they should be promoted and sponsored to ensure the preservation of the country's cultural heritage. He said art was also essential for building community pride, enriching people's lives and creating jobs. "In addition, research shows that dollars invested in the arts generate a substantial return on investment in the form of employment, admission receipts, tourism and development facilities," he said. National Gallery of Zimbabwe executive director George Kahari said Zimbabwean artists would soon spread their activities to other countries in the region due to their improving creativity.

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