De Klerk's Zaire trip postponed after protest

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — President Frederik de Klerk announced on Feb. 22, that a controversial weekend summit arranged by Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko has been postponed, following sharp criticism of the meeting by the African National Congress.

"A government source speaking on the condition he not be identified said Mr. Mobutu had failed to attract as many African leaders as he wanted for the meeting in the Zaire resort city of Goma. The ANC had urged the 32-nation Organization of African Unity to snub the affair.

"Leaders from fewer than five central African nations were expected to attend the summit and included none of the southern African "frontline" states whose ties with Pretoria are strained.

"I do not doubt that President Mobutu had arranged the meeting in good faith and in line with public statements by several African leaders to the effect that the time has come to normalize relations with South Africa," Mr. De Klerk said in a statement in Cape Town.

Long isolated by the world for its apartheid policies, the South African government has sought to cultivate its few existing ties with African nations, including Zaire, and hopes its racial reform initiatives will smooth a re-entry into African affairs. Mr. De Klerk recently lifted the ban on the ANC.

Previous visits by Mr. De Klerk and his predecessors into Black Africa have been heralded by Pretoria as events of major significance, drawing various proposals by South Africa for increased regional economic cooperation.

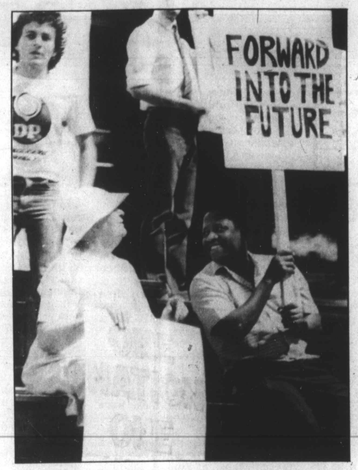
"I agree with the reported warning recently sounded by the (OAO secretary-general) concerning the necessity for African states to unite on a joint strategy to address the implications for Africa of European unity in 1992, as well as the consequences of the events in Eastern Europe," Mr. De Klerk said.

"Now is not the time to create further divisions. Africa cannot afford more controversy within its own ranks," he added.

The South African Broadcasting Corp. reported that the Foreign Minister Roelof "Pik" Botha had postponed a scheduled visit to Kenya and Angola this week. No details were provided for the scheduling changes.

Meanwhile, ANC representatives arrived in Durban on Feb. 22 for the first direct talks in South Africa with a rival tribal movement aimed at ending a bloody conflict that threatens Black unity in negotiations with the White government.

The protracted battle between supporters of the ANC-linked United Democratic Front and its allied Congress of South African Trade Unions and the rival Zulu Inkatha movement of Mangosuthu Buthelezi has left as many as 3,000 dead in Natal province since 1987.



TWO SOUTH AFRICANS share a moment during a pro-democracy rally at Johannesburg's City Hall. Demonstrations continue in the country as preparations are made for the government to hold talks with the African National Congress.

ANC to send team for S. Africa talks

LUSAKA, Zambia — The once-banned African National Congress announced on Feb. 16 it will send a delegation to South Africa for direct talks with President Frederik de Klerk on issues standing in the way of negotiations intended to end the country's racial conflict.

A statement issued by the National Executive Committee, the ANC's administrative body, at the end of a three-day conference, also announced plans to re-establish the movement in South Africa for the first time in 30 years and prepare for the return of exiles.

It was the ANC's first official response to Mr. De Klerk's Feb. 2 racial reform initiatives, following conflicting reactions from individual members, and brought it to the brink of the first direct talks with a South African president in the ANC's 78-year history.

ANC Secretary General and acting President Alfred Nzo, speaking at a news conference, said the talks would focus on the so-called Harare Declaration, a document approved by the ANC on Aug. 10, 1988, spelling preconditions the White government must meet before formal negotiations begin.

These include releasing all political prisoners, lifting bans and restrictions on all anti-apartheid organizations and activists, removing soldiers from Black townships, lifting a 43-month-old state of emergency, repealing various security laws and halting all political trials and executions.

Mr. De Klerk already has suspended executions, lifted all bans on anti-apartheid organizations, including a 30-year ban on the ANC, and repealed sections of the state of emergency.

He released Nelson Mandela from life imprisonment on Feb. 11 and another 77 prisoners qualified for release.

In Cape Town, South Africa, a presidential spokesman said Mr. De Klerk had not yet seen the ANC statement and had no immediate comment.

Mr. Mandela briefed some 50 diplomats, including Western ambassadors, in Johannesburg Feb. 16 on the preconditions for negotiations and urged the continued imposition of sanctions against Pretoria to maintain pressure for reform, according to diplomats who attended the meeting.

Activists have hailed Mr. De Klerk's moves but Mr. Nzo said, "the Pretoria government has not yet created a climate conducive to negotiations, as have been called for by the ... majority of South Africa and the international community."

"To help achieve these objectives in the shortest possible time, it (the National Executive Committee) resolved to meet Mr. De Klerk as soon as possible to discuss with him the need to address these issues so that a climate conducive to negotiations is created," Mr. Nzo said.

"Its delegation will be composed of leaders of the ANC within the country as well as members of the NEC based outside the country," he said.

On rebuilding a legal ANC in the country after a 30-year absence, Mr. Nzo said a five-man committee under the leadership of former ANC Secretary Walter Sisulu had been formed in South Africa to oversee arrangements.

Nigeria strengthens economic, political reforms

Recently, President Ibrahim B. Babangida of Nigeria met with President Bush.

This first official state visit between the two administrations included both formal and informal sessions with President Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, leading administration officials, members of Congress and prominent business and community leaders.

Mr. Babangida's announcement of a set timetable for the second popular election in that country's 28 year history, is based on a dual party structure and constitution similar to that of the United States.

In power since 1985, Mr. Babangida has embarked on a course of both political and economic restructuring and a strengthening of fundamental human rights.

Inheriting an economy that was both debt ridden and laced with ineffective remedial policy measures, the Babangida government launched an economic austerity program (SAP) hailed by the World Bank and the IMF as thoughtful and courageous.

The economic decline, brought on by the "spend syndrome" from the oil boom years, irregularities in government administration, and lack of foresight in industrial diversification prior to the oil market bottoming out, led to the October 1985 declaration of state of economic emergency. Sacrifice, self sufficiency and wise investment are the focal points of Nigeria's economic rebirth.

Mr. Babangida's most ambitious plan since the earliest days of his administration is the return to civilian rule.

Crucial to this are the reversing of unemployment and declining industrial output figures, debt reduction, and reversing a spiraling per capita income ratio that has plagued Nigeria since the early 1980s.

Ibrahim Babangida

Key elements of the Structural Readjustment Programme introduced by Mr. Babangida in 1986 are the strengthening of existing demand management policies, the design of complimentary measures to stimulate domestic production and employment generation, and faster movement toward a more realistic exchange rate for the - then greatly overvalued Nigerian currency, the Naira.

Commercialization and privatization of government - owned corporations, reduction of oil subsidies, and the rehabilitation of the country's vast network of roads have contributed greatly to the success of the SAP programme thus moving the country closer to Mr. Babangida's vision of a coordinated return to democracy.

Rebels hold frontier with Ivory Coast

GBE-NDA, Ivory Coast — Liberian rebels led by a former civil servant and allegedly backed by Libya still control key border crossings in the north of the country, two months after an attempt to overthrow President Samuel Doe, witnesses said.

Reporters for United Press International who traveled to Gbe-Nda on the Ivory Coast frontier with Liberia saw groups of the rebels, toting automatic rifles and wearing fatigues and headscarves, in the Liberian border village of Loguatuo, the main northern crossing point with Ivory Coast.

U.S. and Liberian officials have accused Libya of backing the rebels and providing them with arms from Eastern Europe.

Rebel leader Charles Taylor, a former Liberian civil servant who ran a state procurement agency, fled the country in 1984 after he was accused of embezzling $900,000 in government funds.

He was arrested in the United States, but escaped from a Boston jail and made his way back to Africa. In interviews with the British Broadcasting Corp., Taylor said he aims to topple Mr. Doe, a former master sergeant who seized power in a 1980 coup.

Haitian parties demand government resign

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Twelve political parties demanded the resignation of Gen. Prosper Avril's military government Feb. 20 as opposition leaders expelled during a state of siege last month began returning home.

The 12 political parties, in a joint communique read on Haitian radio, demanded the dismissal of the "personal government of Gen. Prosper Avril" and said power should be handed over to a transitional government.

Gen. Avril, who took power in a 1988 military coup, had promised to create a democratic system in the troubled Caribbean nation but he ordered the arrests of dozens of political opposition leaders last month during a state of siege — a move that made many observers doubt his commitment.

The parties also urged the independent Electoral Council, which is responsible for organizing a series of promised elections this year, to halt the electoral process.

"Elections are impossible for the moment because of the political situation," the communique said.

The political parties released their communique as some of the seven political leaders expelled during the state of siege in January began returning home from nearly a month in exile.

Antoine Izmery, a businessman, and Max Montreuil, the leader of a civic group in Haiti's second largest city, Cap Haitien, returned home Feb. 20 to a joyful welcome by hundreds of supporters at Port-au-Prince international airport.

"I am very happy to be back home and I hope that we will work for this situation not to happen again in our history," Mr. Montreuil told reporters at the airport. Mr. Izmery and Mr. Montreuil were both expelled Jan. 23 and spent nearly a month in the United States.

Gen. Avril imposed the state of siege in January after the assassination of a presidential guard, saying it was necessary to counteract terrorism. Dozens of opposition leaders were arrested during the siege and some of them were reportedly beaten.

Haitian radio reported that two people were found dead on the streets of the capital Tuesday, but it was not immediately clear whether the slayings were politically motivated.

Haiti is scheduled to hold a series of elections, beginning with polls for local officials April 29 and culminating in presidential elections in November.

A member of the Electoral Council, treasurer Jacques Jovin, said he wanted to change the electoral calendar and hold the presidential election as early as July.

Haiti has had a troubled road to democracy since former Haitian dictator Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier was overthrown in a popular rebellion in 1986.

Heavy fighting erupts around Ethiopia port

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Ethiopian rebels claimed on Feb. 12 they had sunk nine government naval ships in four days of heavy fighting for control of the Red Sea port of Massawa, the primary deep-water port for Ethiopian famine relief.

The Eritrean People's Liberation Front, which has been fighting a 29-year war for independence, said its forces launched a savage attack on government troops in Ethiopia's northern province in the pre-dawn hours.

The rebels said their objectives were Massawa and the main road to the Eritrean capital of Asmara, 450 miles north of the national capital of Addis Ababa.

Both have been declared crucial to the supply of food to areas at risk of major famine this year.

Only last month, the Marxist Ethiopian government reached an agreement with the three main churches of the country to supply thousands of tons of food to parts of Eritrea and Tigre via the Massawa - Asmara link.

4 government officials arrested in Lesotho

MASERU, Lesotho — Strongman Maj. Gen. Justin Lekhanya said his troops arrested four government ministers for insubordination and blamed them for a foreign policy impasse he said had diminished his country's image abroad.

Gen. Lekhanya, in power since he led a bloodless coup in 1986, announced he would assume the foreign affairs portfolio, formerly held by one of the detained ministers. He also said he ordered the arrest of the four ministers on Feb. 19 to prevent their possible interference in ongoing investigations.

The capital of Maseru was calm Feb. 2, a day after armed forces loyal to Gen. Lekhanya surrounded the government complex and arrested the four officials, three of whom belonged to the ruling six-man military council. The four men were held at an army barracks on the outskirts of Maseru.

Diplomatic sources said they believed Gen. Lekhanya orchestrated the move as part of an internal power struggle.

In a statement broadcast Feb. 20 on Radio Lesotho, Gen. Lekhanya said the four government ministers were arrested for "insubordination to army discipline as well as their divisive behavior against army unity."

He blamed those ousted for "a permanent state of impasse on foreign policy which had completely diminished Lesotho's image abroad, especially before the rest of Africa."

Bradley University students unite to protest the formation of a White Supremacy organization on the Peoria, Ill. campus. More than 200 students voiced their concerns to university administrators during a Feb. 7 rally.

Va. Beach council approves special planning committee

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — The City Council, carrying out its first policy action related to the 1989 Labor Day riots, on Feb. 20, voted to establish a special planning panel to prepare for the annual beachfront gathering.

The Labor Day Community Coordination Committee was proposed by Mayor Meyera Oberndorf, who called it a necessary step in the resort city's effort to avoid a repeat of last year's violence. The committee's primary purpose will be to centralize planning for the summer holiday, when up to 100,000 young people and students from predominantly Black East Coast colleges are expected to return.

The Council approved of the proposal 9-2 after hearing local leaders applaud the measure as a means of healing racial wounds opened last year, when riot police clashed with Black youths scattered along the resort strip. More than 100 Oceanfront businesses had been damaged or looted, causing $1.4 million in total property damage.

"I think this is a great opportunity for Virginia Beach," said Carolyn Bell, a Norfolk State University vice president. "The eyes of the world are on this city."

The proposal was approved after the council voted 9-2 to reject a substitute proposal by Councilwoman Reba McClanan, who believes a city-backed committee will open up the city to lawsuits if violence again breaks out. Mrs. McClanan proposed that the city allow a private group to come forward with a proposal for the beach party, to distance itself from possible liability.

"Liability in this city only goes as far as the taxpayers' pockets," Mrs. McClanan said.

Some local residents urged support for Mrs. McClanan's proposal, arguing the city should not reward those who caused random violence with a planning panel.

John Perry, the council's only Black member, was the only other councilmember to back Mrs. McClanan's proposal.

"I think it would be better to leave the city out," Mr. Perry said.

But Mr. Oberndorf noted that the city faces a $10 million lawsuit filed by a man who alleges the city's negligence and poor training of local authorities led officers to beat him and a police dog to bite him.

She and other council members noted the legal action was taken after a year when city officials implemented no formal policy toward the Labor Day event.

"Regardless of what happens, the buck stops here," Councilwoman Barbara Henley saids. "And there's no way we can escape that fact."

The coordination committee will be named in executive session and its membership will be voted on by the council next week, Mrs. Oberndorf said. The mayor has indicated it will largely be made up of officials from the Interracial Business and Civic Coalition.

The citizens' group has been in existence for more than four months and includes merchants, Black civic leaders and students.

Anniversary of slaying of Malcolm X marked

NEW YORK — Black activists on Feb. 21 commemorated the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, the fiery Black nationalist who inspired a generation of Black Americans to strive for self - reliance during the civil rights era.

As Black - oriented radio stations broadcast the powerful oratory of Malcolm X, a leader of the Nation of Islam, the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem prepared to hold an evening ceremony honoring him.

A number of organizations earlier in the day held rallies around the city to remember Malcolm X, who was killed on Feb. 21, 1965, by three members of the Nation of Islam angered that he had broken with the group.

The program at Abyssinian featured Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow; poet Amiri Baraka; filmmaker Spike Lee; Percy Sutton, the prominent lawyer who represented Malcolm X; and rapper Chuck D. of Public Enemy, which has invoked Malcolm X's ideology in its songs.

Interest in Malcolm X has undergone a resurgence in recent years, as Black youths who grew up after his death discover his work.

One of the rallies ended at the Audubon Ballroom in Washington Heights — the site of the assassination — where activities protested plans by Columbia University and the city and state to demolish the building and construct a $25 million research center.

Mae Rudolph, a Columbia spokeswoman, said the University had consulted with Mrs. Shabazz and was sensitive to the historical importance of the building. Mrs. Rudolph said a memorial to Malcolm X would be constructed on the site.

"Our community is very concerned that this important shrine not be demolished," said James Turner, the chairman of Cornell University's Afro - American studies department and a member of the National Malcolm X Commemoration Commission.

Mr. Turner said Malcolm X's ideology — which focused on Black self - defense and reliance — had become more relevant for Blacks in the 1990s.

Fletcher nominated to civil rights panel

WASHINGTON — President Bush, seeking to breathe new life into the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, will nominate Arthur Fletcher as the new chairman. His spokesman, announced on Feb. 23.

White House press secretary Martin Fitzwater said Mr. Bush would also meet with Mr. Fletcher, whose name has surfaced frequently in the past year as a candidate to head the beleaguered panel.

If Mr. Fletcher is confirmed by the Senate, the eight-member panel would have only one vacancy, Mr. Fitzwater said, "which we expect to fill very soon."

Four members are appointed by the President; four by Congress.

After much controversy over the effectiveness of the commission, which is charged with monitoring federal laws and government equal opportunity programs, it was reauthorized last year by Congress through fiscal year 1991.

Mr. Fitzwater denied there has been any administration delay in putting forward candidates for the rights board and said Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Bush would discuss the future of the panel, as well as administration proposals on civil rights legislation.

"We have said all along that we wanted to name a new chairman and reinvigorate the commission but we had to have a vacancy to do it," Mr. Fitzwater said. "They'll talk about the future of the commission. The president will emphasize his support for the work of the commission and his interest in seeing it as an effective institution.

Mr. Fitzwater added, "We have felt that it could be stronger and more forceful in representing the concerns of minorities and others and we expect it to operate in that fashion . . . We think it can do a better job."