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Peaceful Change in South Africa – Too Late?

In October 1974 INTERECONOMICS published in this very same position an article under the headline "Southern Africa – A Risk for World Politics". In this article we warned against the risk of an armed conflict in and around Southern Africa, while at the same time indicating certain conditions on which a convention might be concluded with a view to avoiding the threatening conflict through neutralisation. Admittedly, the suggestion was accompanied by the anxious question whether the so called "Realpolitiker" in the OAU and in the South African Republic would be prepared to accept such a solution.

In view of recent developments in Angola, Rhodesia, South-West Africa (Namibia) and also in South Africa this is an opportune moment to repeat our question. Is there still a chance to arrive at an internationally guaranteed "good neighbour convention" in Southern Africa on the conditions we mentioned at that time, the main condition being a change in South Africa's "internal order"? Or is it now too late for the steps to be taken which should have been taken long ago but in 1974 appeared to the "Realpolitiker" in Africa and outside to be too unrealistic – too unrealistic to Western politicians because they evidently did not regard what might happen as a real "risk for world politics"?

This question whether the chance for a "peaceful change" has been missed is one that concerns us all. It is addressed not only to the immediately affected populations, though it is of course primarily put to them; nor is it solely addressed to governments in Africa and certainly not exclusively to governments outside Africa – governments which feel themselves called upon to demonstrate their "solidarity" with African peoples and freedom fighters by dispatching expeditionary forces and massive arms aid, thinking that sooner or later there will be an opportunity to present the bill for services rendered. The price to be exacted later will largely depend on the stake, and the stake "Southern Africa" is after all closely linked with highly interesting strategic raw materials. It would be wrong to think only of gold and uranium and forget about iron ore, copper, coal, manganese, chromium, vanadium, asbestos, platinum, tin and many other attractive

minerals, including those which are still awaiting exploitation in coastal waters.

"Peaceful change" in Southern Africa means first of all avoiding war, means guarding against destruction of human lives and property; it means further improving the conditions of production, while maintaining and raising productivity in conditions of security. Security also for the shipping routes round the Cape of Good Hope – an aspect which should interest all nations of the world, in whatever regions they may be domiciled, all those which believe in the peaceful exchange of goods and services whether on a multilateral or bilateral basis.

The problem of Southern Africa is much more a global question than any of the sub-regional conflicts the politicians of the world have had to deal with on an international basis so far. Thus it is a "test case", whose outcome will show whether or not the world is capable of arriving at peaceful solutions. If one allows a solution by violence to take its course – and here we address a special warning to the European Community – the whole of the dialogue between North and South will become a farce. The Lomé Convention too will be affected. If so far it was looked upon as a promising attempt at cooperation on an equal footing in the field of development and trade, it would, after an armed conflict in Southern Africa, stand for nothing more than the dead relic of an unsuccessful attempt at cooperation. Like Mali and Zambia, Lesotho and Botswana became associated states in the framework of the Convention of Lomé, the involved countries of Southern Africa will – with the exception of South Africa – sooner or later have to be regarded as associables by the European Community. The EC must take an interest in entering now into a discussion with its Lomé partners of all the points that the Community regards as important from a development political as well as a political point of view.

For many weeks now it has been the turn of the EC to make the next move – in the direction of a "peaceful change" in Southern Africa; it is still its turn and the Community cannot acquit itself of its responsibility by a sanctimonious plea of "too late".

Günther Jantzen