

BITS



PIECES

SOMALIA-SOUTH AFRICA ACCORD? During a secret trip to east Africa last month, South African Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha says he met two African presidents and discussed trade and air links, among other matters, with government officials. Although he has refused to name the countries, Somalia and Kenya have been mentioned in various press and diplomatic accounts. Botha reportedly said recently that despite campaigns to isolate the regime, Pretoria now has so many African contacts, it is unable to handle them. [AN]

MORE ON DEPO-PROVERA: According to a recent World Health Organization study, women using the contraceptive Depo-Provera for five or more years are twice as likely as non-users to develop cervical cancer. Manufactured by Upjohn, the injectable contraceptive is banned in many Western countries but is widely distributed in developing nations through family-planning programs. [AN/All Africa Press Service]

EGYPT'S POPE: Pope Shenuda III, who was released early this month by President Hosni Mubarak after an internal exile of 40 months, officiated at the Coptic Christmas Mass on Jan. 6, his first official act as the spiritual head of the six million-member Coptic Orthodox Church since his detention three years ago. The late President Anwar Sadat arrested Shenuda in 1981 during a crack-down on Muslim fundamentalists and political opponents. Sadat charged Shenuda with fomenting religious strife between the nation's Muslims and minority Christians. [AN]

MEDICAL NEEDS FOR LIVESTOCK: The International Livestock Center for Africa reports that shortages of veterinary manpower and inexpensive treatments are inflicting heavy losses on Africa's livestock production. Epidemic diseases such as babesiosis and tick-borne East Coast Fever (ECF) are among those taking the heaviest toll on the industry, killing thousands of dairy cattle. In Kenya alone, ECF kills between 15,000 and 80,000 animals annually. [AN/APS]

PRISONERS FREED IN NIGERIA AND GABON: In a New Year amnesty, Gabon's President Omar Bongo pardoned 1,800 prisoners,

including all first-time offenders and those serving sentences of less than six months. All other jail terms were reduced. In Nigeria, 144 detainees, mostly associated with the ousted regime of Shehu Shagari, were freed. Of these, 82 were released on the condition that they repay large sums of embezzled state funds. [AN]

ILL-GOTTEN: After a series of investigations, Nigeria has recovered the equivalent of \$8 million in misappropriated government funds. Head of State Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari has said the money will be used to finance social services and to purchase spare parts and industrial machinery. [AN/APS]

SEIZED PROPERTY RETURNED: The military government of Guinea on Jan. 1 restored to its legal owners the property that President Ahmed Sekou Toure's regime seized from political foes, according to reports from Conakry. More than 200 people, mostly heirs of nationals who died in Camp Boiro, where they were held without trial, will benefit from the decision. They include those of former ministers Keita Fodeba, Drame Alioune, Ousmane Balde, and Diallo Telli, the first OAU secretary general. [AN]

BANDA DISSOLVES CABINET: Malawi's President Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda on Jan. 3 announced a surprise dissolution of the Cabinet. A presidential statement said Banda had taken over all the ministerial positions. He appointed his latest team only eight months ago, after dismissing a 12-member Cabinet in which he had held the portfolios of agriculture, foreign affairs, interior, justice, and works and supplies. [AN]

RESCUE HALTED: The clandestine airlift of Ethiopian Jews from Sudan was abandoned abruptly on Jan. 7, after ferrying more than 7,000 persons to Israel. The Belgian-based Trans European Airways halted "Operation Moses," apparently worried about the scheme's potential to aggravate tensions in the volatile Middle East after the Israelis confirmed the evacuation on Jan. 3. It is estimated that more than 12,000 Ethiopian Jews are still in Ethiopia or Sudanese transit camps, and the Israeli government has vowed to bring them all "safely back home." About 13,000 Ethiopian Jews now live in Israel. [AN]

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