After all, as long as the service fee is paid in full, why should it matter if the couple does not "live happily ever after?

Well, Hanna Maroun cares. The 71 year-old lawyer, who practises in Beirut, has been through enough divorce cases to last him a lifetime and is contemptuous of the way marriages are arranged in his part of the world. He believes there must be a way to make couples, who are about to step into the "golden cage," enjoy wedded bliss forever and after.

enough. A man who wishes to get married enters Mr Maroun's office and submits himself to a three-stage investigation of his persona. Total expenses for everything is ting to know each other down US\$150.

prospective groom's personal etc. condition. What is his educa-



Happy Ever After for US\$150

he a clerk, manager, a landowner, a member of parliament?

This information is then compiled and shown to a prospective bride who had earlier also sought Mr Maroun's help in finding a husband. She is shown the His system is simple man's picture and the two, assuming that the man also approves of the lady, are brought together at the marriage office. There they get to see each other's tiles, which means getto the minutest detail: charac-The first set of the probing ter, education, tastes, financial questions deals with the situation health future plans.

Ordinarily, the girl meets tional attainment? Does he the man and falls in love with have any degree? What school him, without really knowing did he go to and what other anything about him. Mr languages, if any, does he Maroun explained. She does speak? Does he work now? Is not ask him about his finances.

the state of his health, etc. for fear of losing him. To her, he is THE man. At the wedding she convinces herself she's happy. But is she? If she follows the Maroun Method, her chances of happiness might improve. Mr Maroun says: "I have one condition, that every applicant should be frank with

"If everyone is frank, theh Maroun will be able to determine the characteristics of each applicant and choose the right girl for the right man."

So far, there have been quite a number of applications coming from different social classes, but all of them looking for the "martial bliss" Mr Maroun promises.

tectural conservation is gain-

The trouble is, the lawyer complained, most of the applicants so far are men, although the whole idea behind this of-

fice is to serve the girls as

He pointed out that there are many gullible girls ready to fall for any wolf that crosses their path, "but I'm here to offer my protection." He added that he was also protecting young men from getting entangled in the nets of wily se-

ductresses.

The girls who had initially called at the marriage office came alone, mostly without their parents knowing anything about it. They were hesitant and shy, but that's to be understood as a marriage office is a completely new idea in the Middle East and it'll take some time for people to get used to

But already, several couples have been brought together to take a look at each other's files. Will these lead to model marriages? "Can't tell yet," Mr Maroun says. "We're still in the first stages."

The lawyer considers his task a humane undertaking out of which he wants no profit.

"I have an income of my own," he explained, "and I only want to cover my expenses. Later on, when business flourishes, he plans to offer his services free of charge to people who cannot pay.

Until then, if anyone wishes to live happily after, it will cost him US\$150.

made it look as though Mandela

went to discuss issues such as

debt relief, but the carefully-

worded statement issued by his

office when he returned to

South Africa showed clearly

that his concerns had primarily

on Monday night [November

28]," the statement said,

"President Nelson Mandela

stopped over in Abuja for talks

with General Sani Abacha.

President Mandela once more

brought it to the attention of

General Abacha that he has

been approached by the family

of Chief (M.K.O.) Abiola and his

supporters to help secure his

release from prison. The two

leaders agreed that discussions

which have already commenced

towards realising this objective.

should continue. Issues of bi-

lateral interest between the Re-

publics of South Africa and

called "interfering in the inter-

nal affairs" of a sovereign state. Yet if trouble does break out

and refugees begin to stream

out into neighbouring countries.

the whole idea of a country's politics being a matter of concern only to its leaders be-

comes exposed for the fiction

the "brotherhood" whose mem-

bers "see no evil, hear no evil

nor smell any evil" in each

One leader who denounced

that it is.

Such initiatives are usually

Nigeria were also discussed."

"On his return from Morocco

been humanitarian.

Design with a Human Face

by Pierre Michel

Philippe Starck is without doubt one of the most gifted designers of his generation. At any rate, he is one of the most famous. Since the mid-70s, his career has been studded with major creations both in the area of design (furniture, industrial design and decoration) and, more recently, in that of architecture.

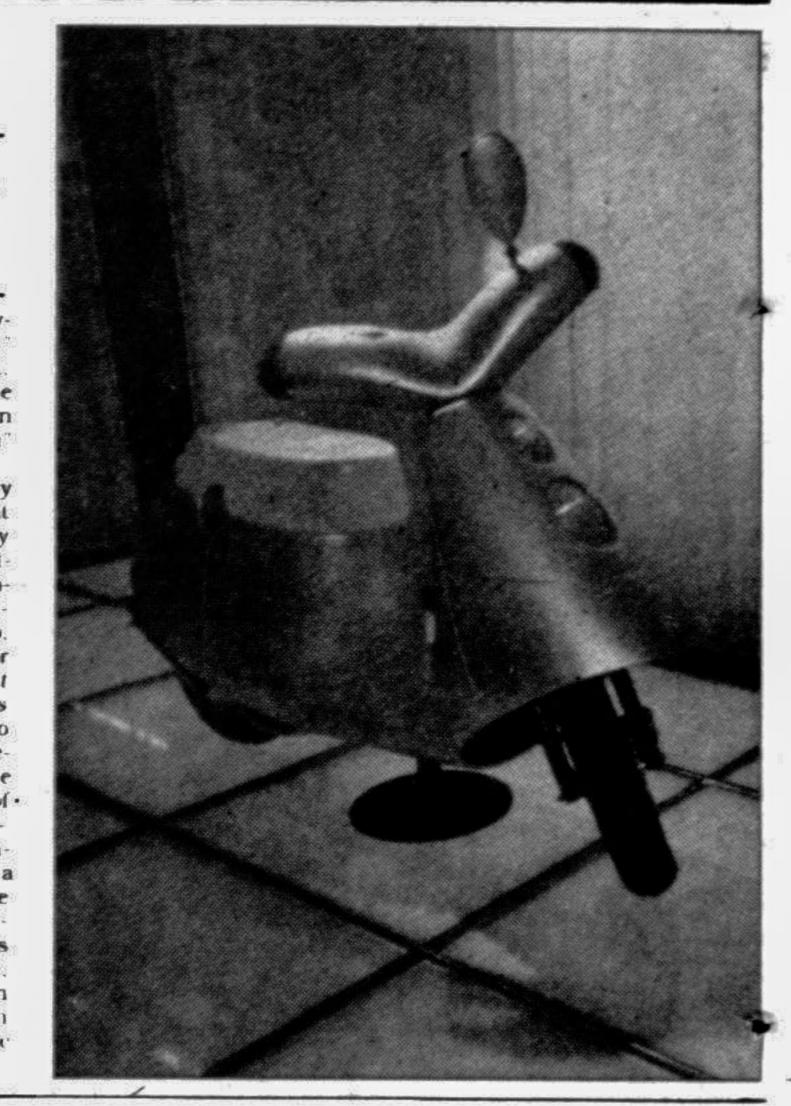
HAT distinguishes Philippe Starck from any other designer is the way that the objects that he creates fit into their period, the ability they have to escape their creator and to blend into the use for which they are intended. Therein lies the whole of Starck's ambiguousness and genius. Each of the creations of this myth-making media star is independent and has the ability to make its own success and its own myth. But, at the same time, it fits into another perspective, one that, through all his other achievements. contributes to constructing a story or a work.

Philippe Starck set up his own agency at the beginning of the 1980s. He wanted to have a small staff and a flexible structure in order to maintain a haute-couture spirit. He made his first, and maybe most prestigious, creations in the area of interior design, first of all in Paris with the "Bains-- Depthnews Asia | Douches" nightclub, the pres-

ident's apartments in the Elvsee Palace and the "Costes" cafe near the "Halles" district. and then in Tokyo with the "Manin" restaurant, and in New York with the "Royalton"

His second area of activity is, in chronological order, that of furniture design. He is very prolific in this sector. His bestknown pieces of furniture include the Dole Melipone folding table, the Ray Menta lamp, the Jack Lang collection or his collection for the Habitat store and for the 3 Suisses catalogue. The agency's two departments are industrial design and architecture. The former includes a new line of Laquiole knives, a revolutionary lemon-squeezer, a toothbrush which has now become a classic, and very recently, the latest range of Thomson television sets. Philippe Starck's architectural activities have, above all, developed in Japan the Nani Nani building in Tokyo). In France, people are

Continued on page 11

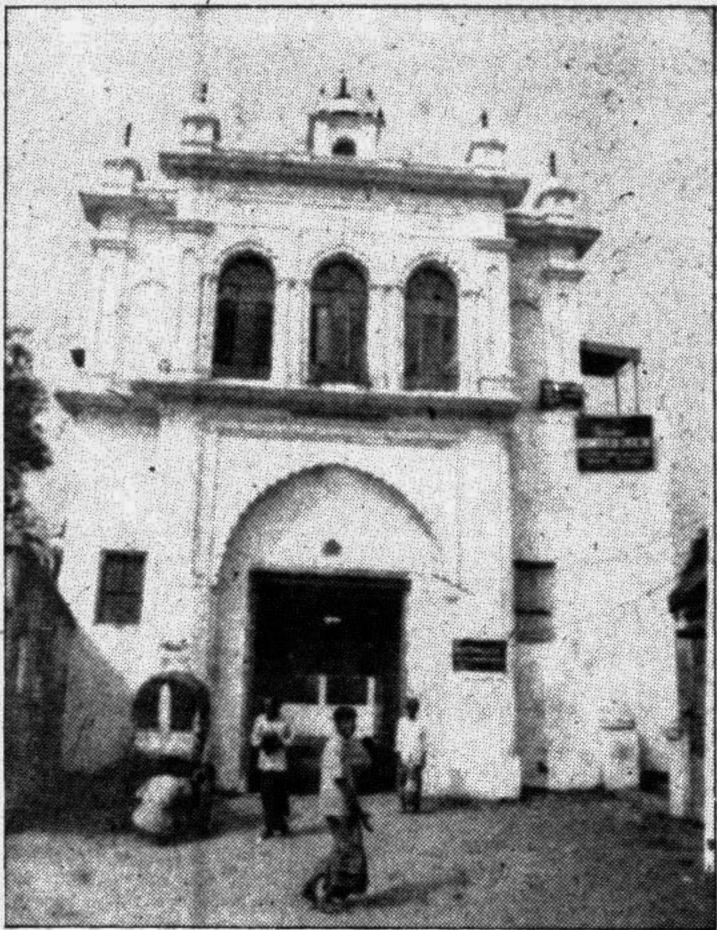


MOSQUES OF DHAKA

Continued from page 9 These buildings are messengers of the civilization, culture and socio-economic conditions

of the predecessors to the

present generation. To discover the heritage we are to look back to the art, literature and architecture of the past. When all over the world archi-

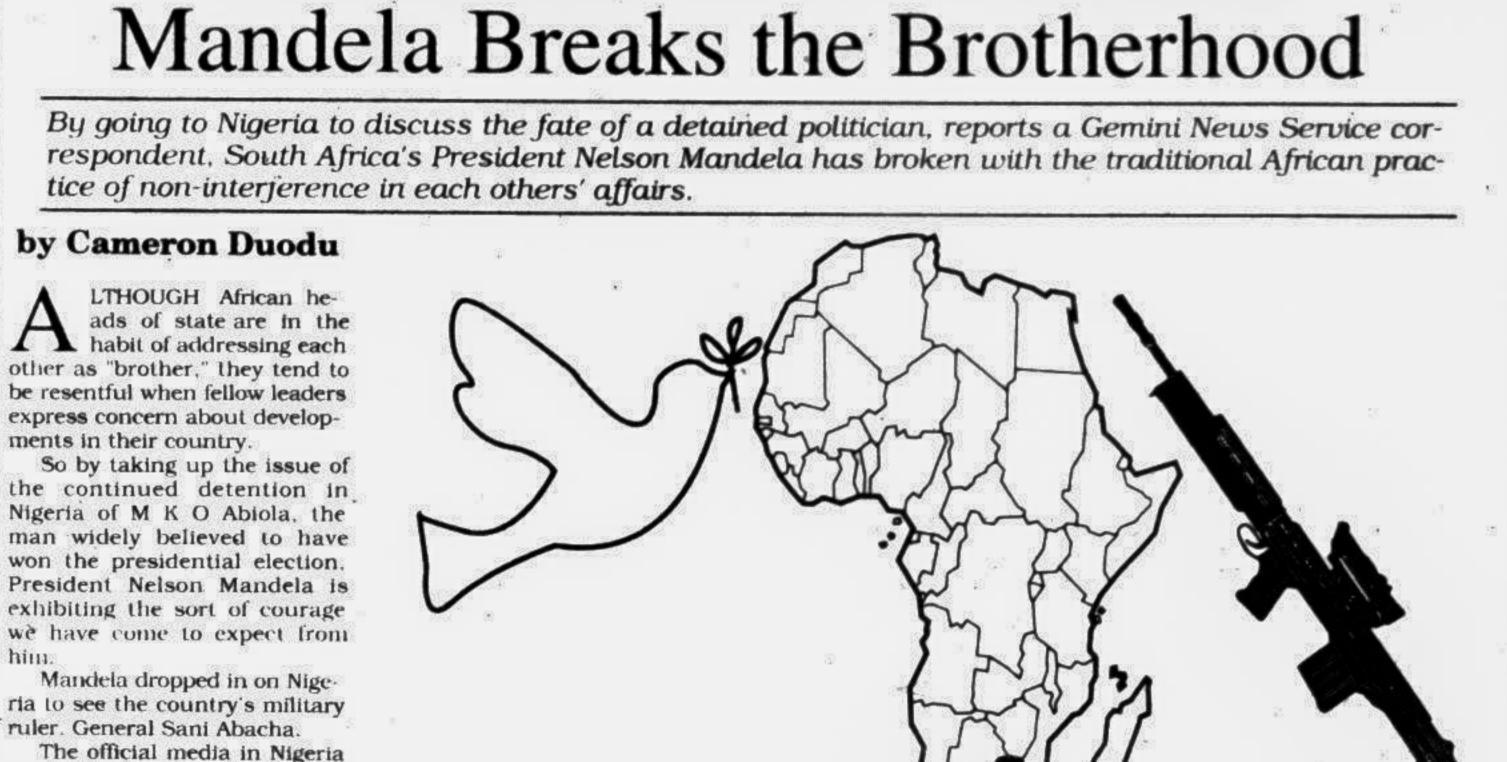


Gate of Azimpin Bara Daira Sharif, Azimpur, Dhaka.

ing momentum, ironically Bangladesh is lagging far behind. One of the local Bengali newspaper "Haq Katha". June 30. 1972, pg. 6, published a statement of the pro-communist political leader Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasanai "96 thousand mosques of Bangladesh are lying in a state of liveliness." This was commented may be because mosques have failed to serve the manifold purposes. Moreover, due to our apathy and unconsciousness they have been transformed into built forms which do not represent the periods they belong to. Things which are not original, pure and true cannot inspire others. Same is applicable to build forms and mosque architecture. Through analysis of traditional concepts, forms and styles of mosques new expressions befitting the contemporary need may emerge, which has link with the past as well as comply with the present.

The study is part of the research project entitled "The Conservation Study of Dhaka City- Its Historical Building and Areas." The research was carried out by a team who are teachers of the Department of Architecture, Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, Dhaka. Ford Foundation's co operation is gratefully acknowledged.

The writer is Associate Professor. Department of Architecture. BUET



South Africa looks north

other's territory, is President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. In his first speech to the summit conference of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) shortly after he had shot his way to Kampala in January 1986, Museveni denounced the way African heads of state had turned the OAU into a "trade union" whose members looked after each other's interests, and

sent them there. "Where were you when the people of Uganda were being killed?" President Museveni asked the shocked African leaders. Since Museveni's question, Africa has not learnt any lessons and has seen some of the worst outbreaks of blood-

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forgot about the people who

shed ever to occur on its soil.

Liberia fell apart in 1990. The leaders of the neighbouring West African countries, who had looked on unconcerned as the late Samuel Doe sowed the seeds of civil war in his country. now tried to pick up the pieces. Four years and thousands of lost lives later, they have still not been able to patch a viable coalition together to bring peace to Liberia.

Next came Rwanda. Here again, the signs had been there for all to see. The Tutsi and the Hutu have a history of animosity which all too easily lends itself to exploitation by unscrupulous politicians eager to use all means to come to power. Therefore, the neighbouring

countries should, by mid-1993, have thought of urging both groups to face up to the "ugly" reality that perhaps it might be best for the Tutsi and the Hutu to investigate the possibility of living in separate territories set aside for each of them, after ne-

Instead, the old formula of "unity government" was entrusted with the job of bringing peace to Rwanda. The result was that after an air crash had disposed of the rulers of both Rwanda and Burundi, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans lost their lives and another million were driven into exile.

Even after the Rwanda nightmare. Burundi is showing

disquieting signs of treading the

same path of bloodshed. Yet

On a continent in which such massacres continually take place, leaving everyone floundering with frustration, the courage of a Mandela who can lend his moral authority toward the search for peace in a fellow African state must be saluted. The consequences of Chief Abiola's imprisonment in Nigeria have already become apparent.

For the first time, a significant group, the oil workers, were able to go on strike for nine weeks, without strike pay, for a political purpose. Demonstrations led to several deaths. And even though things are quiet now, the underlying causes of the unrest remain. All that is needed for it to start all

over again is a spark. That spark could come at any moment. For Chief Abiola is so sick in detention that the Nigerian Medical Association has expressed its concern that unless he is released for medical treatment abroad he might "become permanently paralysed or even die through a stroke." Abiola is suffering from muscular-skeletal problems, compli-

cated by high blood pressure. It is a pity that Abacha, who attended Mandela's inauguration in Pretoria last May, is not one of history's philosopherkings. If he were, it might occur to him that there is something propitious in the fact that someone who became President of his own country, after being imprisoned for 27 years, should come to ask him for the release of a person he. Abacha, impris-

In other words, if imprisonment could thwart the march of history, where would Mandela

himself be now?

It is ironical that it should have been Mandela himself who is cast in the role of drawing Abacha's attention, almost allegorically, to this fact. It would be tragic if Abacha were to ignore the import of it all.

CAMERON DUODU is a Ghandian writer and journalist now living in London.

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The new South Africa is rapidly exerting its diplomatic influence to restore stability in Africa. President Nelson Mandela's recent visit to Nigeria follows moves in southern Africa to bring peace there. He is working closely with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to end the conflicts in Angola and Mozambique. The two men, reports Gemini News Service, see new horizons opening up at least for their continent.

The Ritual-Practice Gap

ITUALS and practices. Ramzan and Eid. Now back to the 'normal' behavior pattern. After the overdose of sermons cames the renewed overdose of hartals, thanks to the political style our so-called political leadership - or at least as section of it. So long it was the information gap. Now it is the credibility gap.

A view of the mosque and the mazaar sharif.

political ethnics in the country me of challu friend - fast or is hard to accept by those fasting? whose conscience is not yet medium, violence the output, country is headed for? To hell say the cynics. There is no o gap on things hellish.

every brand of pulpit. y are having a field day. In s hungry country, anything edible goes - the question of indigestion does not arise as there is hardly anything avail-

by Alif Zabr

able for digestion. Chew the cud, and be content; and watch the gladiators' fighting to put on the finishing fouches to the bridal country. The days of fasting are over; waiting for Generally the standard of the days of feasting. Reminds

Oratory in the wrong hands blunted. Coercion is the rule of is dangerous for the country. the day, confrontation the Such privilege at the hands of political leaders is misused and disruption the order of the blatantly, especially in the deday. Militant defiance in civil veloping countries. In the life is being encouraged by the emerging societies, which wirepullers in this type of comes first: the inflation of the puppet dance. Where the ego or the development of the infrastructure? And a competitor: the misuse of black money. Then where is the playing field for the role of the masses, and what is the importance of pub-

> lic opinion? All religions and humanists lay the stress on the cultivation of patience and the diffusion of

THE THEORY OF THE PARTY OF THE tolerance. Both of these virtues are interlinked; like the man and his shadow, or the vin and the yang. Below the poverty line, or just above it, the ad hoc priorities of life test the heart and tax the brain on aspects of nation-building.

Back to the zero point, one is faced with a dozen of priorities, all of which ask to be sorted out at once, and simultaneously. The sequential system does not work, as the, growth rate is slow, and the fruit takes longer to ripen. Therefore a national consensus is difficult to obtain. We ware confronted with the familiar sight of beating about the bush in the tropical jungle. Both the bush and the beating dominate an environment of frustration, defiance, lawlessness, and vio-

This is the current state of the nation. The opposition par-

ties launch a mass movement to set right a small part of a whole system, named fair elections. Only and simply the election process is under scrutiny, like changing the leaves and branches of a tree without paying attention to the tree (system) and its root.

How far temporary grafting will solve the moral problems of the society? The political grafting is still under experimentation after two decades. Politics and morality have been mixed up not in a simple or compound way, but in a manner so complex that it is easier to cut the Gordian knot than find a solution to the artificial political problems created in Bangladesh.

The developed countries count time by the minute; the developing minds count time using the decade (years) as the unit. So there is much novelty of entertainment value to each new generation, thanks to our playful political leaders. They carry the magician's bag, or the Pandora's box? Your guess is as good as mine.

Africa's New Trouble-shooters

well as Aboila.

in South Africa, leading cam-

by Derek Ingram

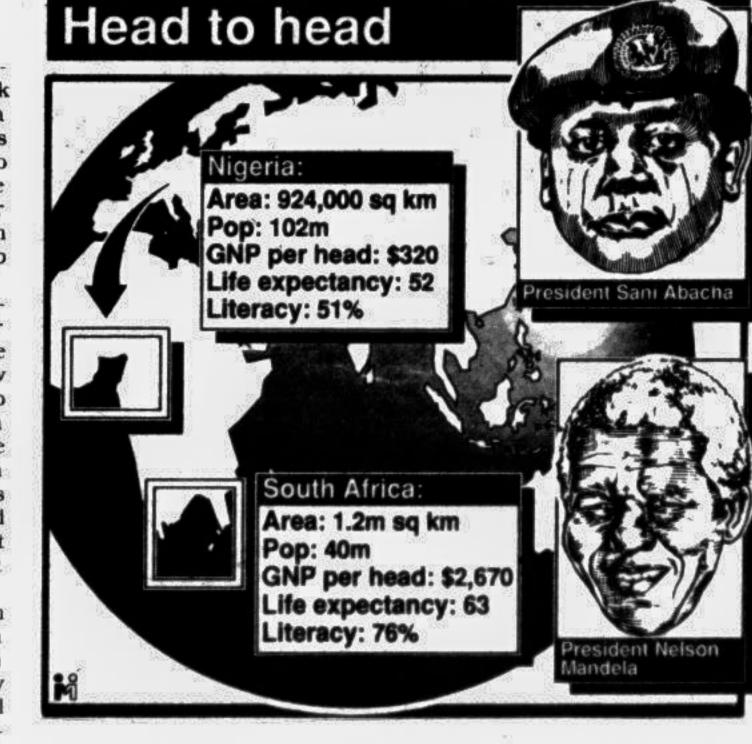
7 HEN Nelson Mandela's government took office in South Africa its foreign policy priority was to do everything possible to help restore stability to the southern African region. After little more than six months in power it can chalk up

considerable success. The visit by President Mandela to Nigeria on November 28 has taken the policy a stage further, showing that the new South Africa would like to bring stability to all Africa south of the Sahara. The restoration of democracy in Nigeria, the most populous country on the continent and potentially one of the most prosperous, would be a great prize.

Mandela has long kept in close touch with the situation in Nigeria, where repression has grown and the economy deteriorated since General Sani Abacha took over as military ruler in 1993.

The man believed to have won the annulled general election, Chief Moshood Abiola, has been held in prison since June 23 and is in deteriorating health. Newspaper have been closed and many people detained under draco-

nian decrees. When Mandela was inaugu-



rated as President in Pretoria. paigns in the Commonwealth Nigeria was well represented and elsewhere for sanctions Abacha was there, though he and boycotts. was less than warmly wel-But by the time full democ comed. Also present were racy had come to South Africa former presidents Yakubu

the Lagos government was Gowon and Shehu Shagari, as denying the same rights to its own people, refusing to im-Nigeria had long bitterly plement the results of what opposed the apartheid regime was generally regarded as the fairest election ever held in

Nigeria.

Within South Africa, pressure has been building up for action against Nigeria. The main union movement, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), recently called for the expulsion of Nigeria from international organisations.

Some weeks ago Mandela wrote to Abacha appealing for the release of Abiola, for whom he had fellow-feeling as the prisoner of an intolerant regime. Abacha sent back a dusty answer. Now Mandela has made a more personal approach. It will be damaging for Abacha to be seen ignoring the advice of a man who has such enormous popularity and influence in Africa.

South Africa is now in a position to rescue the African continent from some of its troubles, just as earlier it was the cause of them. Under the apartheid regime it created instability; under Mandela it is setting out to create stability.

Mandela has teamed up with President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to restore peace to their region. Mugabe is man of the same generation who also had a long struggle against white supremacy that included several years in fail

Their first success came in tiny Lesotho, geographically and enclave within South Africa: where the military threatened to return to power and the King removed the

Continued on page 11