



SATURDAY VIEW

Robbie Robertson

Looking after our borders

THE tragic shooting of a young South African soldier at Ponto do Ouro on the Natal-Mozambique border should shock us all, even amid the mounting election strife, into a realisation that Angola is not the only place where we have to be on guard.

Many people have forgotten this, their attention being concentrated understandably on Namibia. But the border we have to guard against hostile incursions from the north runs clean across Southern Africa for thousands of kilometres from the Atlantic to the Indian separating us not only from the Swapo forces in Angola but also from Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Less than 10 years ago the borders were the same, but the situation was very different. There was still a Portuguese presence in Angola and Mozambique, still a White UDI Government in what was then Rhodesia. These were the bastions of our southern citadel now the bastions have crumbled and the citadel is exposed. Guarding it against mounting hostility from one end of that long border to the other is no easy task.

Ponto do Ouro should bring this home to us. And Ponto do Ouro is not far-off Angola. Its lonely beach is, as the crow flies, only a few hundred kilometres from Durban's skyscrapers, less than that from the popular North Coast seaside resorts.

Ponto do Ouro, like Angola, like the sporadic racial unrest deep within our own borders, is what

the general election is all about — our need, in a hostile world, at the southern tip of a hostile continent, to find a peaceful way of life for ourselves and those millions of Black and Brown fellow citizens whose lives are inextricably bound up with ours, a way of life that, without surrender of our cherished freedoms, will make Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique friendly neighbours, a way of life that will stop the killing on the border, bring back peace to Ponto do Ouro beach.

We can today defend our far-flung borders — no one doubts that. But the best way of all to defend them, ultimately the only sure, safe and permanent way, is by achieving internal peace and security behind those borders. That means getting down now, with clear, cool heads and stout unafraid hearts, to the job of giving ourselves truly democratic government — government by consent of all our peoples.

If this election, in which our Black and Brown millions have no part, is to serve any purpose it must give them, the onlookers, at least some hope that better days lie ahead, days in which they will, in some way yet to be devised, have some meaningful share in shaping our joint destiny.

The Nationalist Government itself has recognised the need for change.

It has even made promises. As a start those promises will have to become reality.

(Written by W. S. Robertson 4 Hof Street, Cape Town.)