

MOZAMBIQUE

The Nkomati process

By Mark Doyle

THE NKOMATI Accord, signed in a blaze of publicity last March, was hailed in the West as an "historic" turning point. For the first time, South Africa had signed a good-neighbour agreement, with military implications, with an independent country.

And so there was some confusion this month when another "historic" agreement was announced by Pretoria. Two historic turning points in one year? With the same country? Surely not even Roelof "Pik" Botha could conjure up such a feat?

In fact, this month's "Pretoria Declaration" can be seen as a continuation of the Nkomati process. Alternatively, it can be seen as twisting the knife that was already deep in the body of FRELIMO.

The "Declaration" ceremony was a revealing event. The Union Building in Pretoria was first filled with journalists. Then, representatives of the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance came in led by Evo Fernandes, the Portuguese-born secretary-general of what might be called the MNR's political wing. Fernandes was followed a few minutes later by a Mozambique government delegation led by Major-General Jacinto Veloso, Minister for Economic Affairs at the Presidency. Roelof "Pik" Botha, the South African Foreign Minister, sat between them and hosted the press conference.

The staggered entrance was deliberate; the Mozambique government had strictly insisted that it was not entering direct negotiations with the MNR, which it calls "organised bandits".

Botha himself was the only one to speak, and correspondents were not permitted to

address questions to either Veloso or Fernandes; their mere presence, Botha said, signified their assent to what he was announcing. The real reason for their enforced silence only became clear later that day.

Botha read from a statement: "Samora Moises Machel is acknowledged as the President of the People's Republic of Mozambique." The second point, Botha said, was that "armed activity or conflict within Mozambique from whatever quarter or source must stop". The following two points were that "the South African government is requested to consider playing a role in the implementation of this declaration", and that "a commission will be established immediately to work towards an early implementation of this declaration". These four points, Botha said, were "a basis for peace in Mozambique".

However, no ceasefire agreement had been signed; no date was set for a ceasefire. Within minutes, it became clear why Veloso and Fernandes had not been allowed to speak at the Pretoria press conference: half an hour after Botha's statement, MNR guerrillas had once again destroyed power lines to Maputo; MNR representatives in Pretoria and Lisbon were that evening declaring that the war continued; and Veloso, back home in Maputo, was talking of neutralising the MNR via "military action on the ground by the Mozambican armed forces".

At the press conference Botha said South African troops could be used to monitor the ceasefire. He balked at describing such troops as a "peacekeeping force", but said that one of their functions



Associated Press

During the ceremonies in Pretoria, the recently appointed Executive President P. W. Botha (light suit) met members of the Mozambican government delegation. Behind the Executive President is the South African Foreign Minister, "Pik" Botha. Centre (with glasses) is Fernando Honwana, President Machel's personal adviser.

would be "to see that the parties do not break the ceasefire" [which has not been signed], "and do not take advantage of it".

Given the regional context, South Africa was badly in need of a diplomatic success at this time. After the National Party's ecstasy over Botha's European tour, everything seemed to the white electorate to be going wrong: the new Constitution had been rejected; the Lusaka accords with Angola had failed to end SWAPO activity, let alone deliver Namibia; and Nkomati had not brought peace to Mozambique, let alone stopped the ANC. The "reformist" and "peacebroker" image of the South African government was badly tarnished.

Maputo had little choice but to participate in South Africa's attempts to rebuild this image. Since Nkomati, the military situation in Mozambique has deteriorated. Veloso recently told *West Africa*, for example, that he was very disappointed at the lack of the "stability" that had been supposed to flow from the accord. Before he left for Pretoria for the "Declaration", Veloso's language was stronger: "Six months after the Nkomati Accord there have still been no practical results, and the violence has continued."

It had been reported by several correspondents in South Africa that shortly before Nkomati, the South African army pushed an additional large force of MNR guerrillas from the Transvaal into southern Mozambique. Although this allegation has not been officially supported by Maputo, FRELIMO did insinuate that elements in the South African army, unbeknown to

their government, were breaking their side of the deal.

Whatever the truth of this particular allegation, it would certainly have been surprising if South Africa had dumped the MNR completely. Even if it was true that Nkomati, in Machel's words, "turned off the tap" of South African backing, Mozambique was already seriously flooded with a ruthless and efficiently disruptive force.

The MNR was established in 1976 by Rhodesian intelligence. Its purpose was to gather information about Mugabe's ZANLA and to harass the recently established, avowedly socialist FRELIMO government.

Recruits to the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (or *Renamo*) included disgruntled Portuguese, dissidents from FRELIMO, businessmen and traditional chiefs. Its crude political programme is "anti-communism", making it a natural ally in the South African (and then Rhodesian) governments' war against a perceived "total onslaught from Moscow".

According to the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, the MNR's bases were moved to South Africa a few days before Zimbabwean independence in April 1980. Two South African Dakotas flew the MNR HQ staff from their camp in Rhodesia, while a South African C-130 picked up the radio equipment used by the clandestine station *Voice of Free Africa*. US military intelligence subsequently confirmed that a new MNR HQ had been set

up in northern Transvaal, near the Mozambique border.

In early 1981, MNR guerrillas were transported into Mozambique in what Zimbabwean military observers described as "an armada" of South African military helicopters.

Since then, the MNR has been engaged in disrupting transport, farming, power transmission and aid projects. Its tactics are ruthlessly violent and include chopping off people's lips, noses, breasts or heads. Although it calls itself a "liberation movement", it has not, as FRELIMO did against the Portuguese, established any consistently-held "liberated areas". This is not surprising given the terrorist tactics the guerrillas use on local populations.

The strength of the MNR was estimated in 1983 at 5-6,000 armed men operating in the country. Some 3,000 of these, according to a recent statement from Maputo, have now been "forgiven" and are re-integrated into FRELIMO-monitored villages. This would leave 2-3,000, though the pre- and post-Nkomati pushes from South Africa would have increased this number considerably. Supporters of the MNR may bring the total number of dissidents up to 20,000.

The reintegration of these people, many of whom are based in South Africa, is a crucial question which the Pretoria Declaration did not address.

The military commander of the MNR, Alfonso Dhlakama, is a former officer in the Portuguese army who joined FRELIMO in 1974 but was later expelled following conviction for theft. He is fond of inviting foreign journalists, *à la Savimbi*, to see his camps.

Evo Fernandes, who was present at the Pretoria Declaration, spends most of his time in Portugal and South Africa. A Portuguese citizen, he is a former agent of the Portuguese secret police, PIDE. Fernandes is trained as a lawyer and had worked for the Portuguese millionaire Jorge Jardim, who was close to the fascist leader Antonio Salazar and was instrumental in setting up the MNR.

There is no military prospect of the MNR beating the Mozambican army. But one aim of the South African government is clearly to dilute FRELIMO's commitment to socialism as well as denying the ANC access to the Republic. There were pointers to this before the "Nkomati Accord", and there will probably be others after the "Pretoria Declaration". A Mozambican news agency despatch commenting on the press conference in Pretoria said: "Recent speculation about 'power sharing' between FRELIMO and the MNR bandits was indeed no more than that — pure speculation." Why, like the recognition of Samora Machel as President of Mozambique, did this have to be said?

The Maputo agency said that recognising Samora Machel as President of the Republic was tantamount to "recognition of all other institutions of the Mozambican state". However, it is difficult to see why South Africa should now begin recognising institutions that are an anathema to its own.

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MOZAMBIQUE:

MNR
in the
Maputo Suburbs

10/1
15/9

Four Mozambican railway workers were killed in the latest reported attack by the MNR, which took place near the town of Magunde, about 150 kilometres north of Maputo. The train on which they were travelling was engaged in repair work when it detonated a mine, wrecking the luggage van and killing the four men instantly. The rebels, who were waiting in ambush, opened fire on the derailed train and soldiers escorting it fired back. The rebels are reported to have fled.

While this attack was covered in the local national media, an attack on a passenger bus on the outskirts of the capital was not reported. Reliable sources said five civilians were killed after gunmen in military uniform boarded the bus, forced the passengers to disembark and then shot at them.

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The MNR has threatened to "storm Maputo" at the beginning of October if a satisfactory agreement is not reached with the government. However, there appears to be a certain amount of confusion among rebel spokesmen in Lisbon, with two contradictory statements being released. One claims the FRELIMO wanted to enter into talks, but the MNR refused, saying it preferred to continue fighting. The other says the MNR was obliged to begin discussions with Maputo after the signing of the Nkomati pact.

There is a widespread feeling in Maputo that the September 25 celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the armed struggle for independence will bring some kind of official statement on the MNR.