

# MNR turns screws on embattled Mozambique

**BENJAMIN POGRUND reports after a visit to Maputo**

RAND DAILY MAIL, Tuesday, May 22, 1984

9

THERE has been no drop in the Mozambique National Resistance movement's (MNR's) terror campaign since the signing of the Nkomati Accord two months ago, according to senior officials in the Mozambique Government.

If anything, the MNR has become "more vicious," with more deliberate terrorist acts directed against civilians.

Murder, robbery, rape and destruction remain commonplace.

All that has changed since the Accord was signed on March 16, say the officials, is the geography of the MNR's targets — the focus has moved close to the capital of Maputo, although within the city itself there is no visible sign of insurgent activity, to the southern areas neighbouring the South African border and to the Nampula district.

These assessments, gleaned from a range of discussions in Maputo, puzzlingly contradict a reported statement by Mozambique's Information Minister Jose Cabaco in Lisbon on Friday that "there has been a considerable drop in rebel activity since the Nkomati Accord and we believe this pattern will continue".

In Maputo, Mozambicans in leadership positions are convinced about the South African Government's good faith in implementing the terms and the promise of the Accord.

But they say they are equally certain there is a split inside South Africa's ruling ranks — and that what they describe as "certain elements" in the South African Defence Force are behind the continuing violence and efforts to overthrow the Maputo government.

"I have no doubt at all about the commitment of the South African Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, and his Government to peace and the implementation of the Nkomati Accord," says a Mozambican official who has attended many of the meetings between the two countries.

Like the others interviewed, he requested anonymity.

"We disagree on many things but I have formed the impression that they are men of honour," he says.

"They are not dishonest men. When they give their word they respect it."

But he and others repeatedly and angrily point to the MNR's ongoing violence — and say they be-

lieve it to be backed from inside South Africa.

"Before the signing at Nkomati people were getting ready to go on with attacks on us," they say.

They say that, according to their information, a large amount of arms and ammunition was brought across the border from South Africa only a few days before the signing ceremony.

As recently as last month, at least two loads of arms and ammunition were brought in by sea north of Beira.

And captured MNR members claim there were crossings from South Africa during the second half of last month.

Questioned, the official would not say whether details such as these had been put before the joint South Africa-Mozambique security commission.

What happened inside the commission was confidential, he said.

The furthest he would go was to say that the information which his government had was not the sort that could be put before a court of law.

The Mozambique Government believes there are about 5 000 armed men in the country.

Perhaps another 5 000 are involved with the MNR as porters and in support jobs. Many of them are forced labourers.

It is thought the MNR has been sending small groups towards the capital with the aim of infiltration.

About 70 men, some carrying arms, have been arrested inside Maputo itself.

A train was attacked about 90km from Maputo, and shops and property in the rural areas are being destroyed.

It is considered unsafe — especially at night — to drive the first 30km or so from the South African border at Komatipoort to Maputo.

But serious as all this is, it does not approximate to the claims made in Lisbon at the weekend by the MNR's Secretary-General, Evo Fernandes, that "electricity and water supplies are only reaching Maputo intermittently, rail communications

have been cut and it is unsafe to travel to the suburbs of Maputo because of our attacks".

Nor is there any basis to believing his further claim that President Samora Machel has asked the South African Government to send troops to help defend Maputo against increasing attacks by the MNR.

These issues apart, the Mozambicans argue that there are several reasons why the "certain elements" in South Africa are trying to keep the MNR alive...

"South Africa still has commitments to the Lesotho rebels and to its biggest baby, Unita," says an official.

"What is the morale among them going to be if they see someone is being abandoned? So some people in South Africa feel they must show they are not entirely abandoning friends.

"Also, if there's peace on the border, South African 'hawks' won't be able to use this to stir up people. Instead, South Africa's internal problems will have to be faced up to and solved. So they don't want peace on the border."

The official compared it with the end of the Algerian war for independence — which he witnessed — "when in that moment there was terrible trouble within the French army because some officers felt obligated to carry on".

In addition, he says, some South Africans — because of "paranoia and prejudice" — oppose the fact of a Marxist government in Mozambique and they view the Nkomati agreement as "a defeat for their outlook".

At the same time the Mozambicans pin their hopes on Mr Botha's Nkomati pledges. This, they say, will "eventually" cause the MNR to die away.

"You can't run a covert operation, like the one for the MNR in South Africa, for a long time without the government becoming aware of it and responding," they say.

"We hope that within a year from now there will not be any security commission because there will be no security problems for

us to talk about," says an official.

Meanwhile, Mozambicans ask what has happened to the MNR members who were in South Africa — have they been sent away as Mozambique has done to scores of African National Congress members who lived there?

How is South Africa controlling the MNR members?

"No one has yet given answers to these questions," they say.

On the other side of the coin, the officials say they have done everything they promised to do about the ANC.

Their claims are confirmed by ANC members: only 10 have been allowed to remain in Maputo, to man a "diplomatic-type" office; from 100 to 200 have been "asked to leave" since Nkomati.

The officials add that it is impossible to put a total halt to ANC insurgents

who might want to cross through Mozambique to get to South Africa.

"No one can do so — neither us nor the South African army. If they get to Johannesburg they will have crossed hundreds of kilometres not only of Mozambique but also of South Africa.

"But one thing we can say: we are not going to close our eyes to people coming through. We were closing our eyes — although, mind you, there were not all that number of people involved and we never allowed training camps here."

● DAVID CAPEL reports that a spokesman for Foreign Affairs in Cape Town, when asked to comment, said the Prime Minister, Mr P W Botha, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha, had both stated repeatedly in public in the past that the South African Government would adhere to the spirit and letter of the Nkomati agreement.

He said the agreement

made provision for a joint security commission to investigate allegations from both sides.

A joint statement was issued after a recent meeting of the commission which reflected the attitude of both governments.

The commission would meet again on May 25.

A Mozambican Government spokesman, Mr Jacinto Veloso, never raised any of these allegations on returning to Maputo after meeting Mr Pik Botha.

Both men had expressed satisfaction with the progress made since March 16.

The spokesman also referred to a statement Mr Pik Botha made towards the end of last week in which he warned against disinformation campaigns aimed at sowing suspicion.

He said if official complaints were being made, they could be brought to the attention of the commission.