

SOUTH AFRICAN DIPLOMACY

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THE MEETINGS TAKING PLACE between South Africans and Mozambicans will not be met with wild cheers in most of black Africa. They nonetheless represent something of a diplomatic triumph for South Africa. The putatively marxist Mozambicans find themselves constrained to talk with the oft reviled enemy not only as a consequence of their own self-improverishing policies. They are also there as a result of the measured destabilisation which South Africa has set in motion against Mozambique. This has principally taken the form of material aid given to the Mozambican National Resistance Movement, a motley but effective group of guerrillas which appears to have no particular tribal basis. Yet at the same time the South Africans have done just enough to persuade the Mozambicans that they do not have to be all bad. There are said to be South African officials working incongruously alongside Eastern Europeans in Maputo's port.

One can weep tears for the Mozambicans, but their presence at these negotiations is a natural consequence of South Africa's strategic mastery in the area. The South Africans have already persuaded the Government of Lesotho, by dint of a little ruthless armed intervention, that there is no profit in giving succour to the African National Congress. Mozambique seems to be in the process of learning the same lesson. The Zimbabweans, despite the occasional anti-South African outbursts of Mr ROBERT MUGABE, needed no education in this matter. Zambia and Botswana are too economically dependent upon South Africa to offer any threat other than empty words. Only in more distant Angola have the South Africans failed to convince their enemies that there might be some virtues in friendly co-operation. Perhaps their recent successful operation there will have set some minds athinking in Luanda.

One must not exaggerate the amity between South Africa and her neighbours. It is a relationship built on fear. The South Africans cannot expect to be loved so long as they maintain a social system which the leaders of these countries must find deeply objectionable. On the other hand, if South Africa should offer real aid and assistance, as well as guaranteeing stability in the region, who knows what strange friendships might flourish?