

Nkomati and beyond

'Peace in our time': will it be myth or reality?

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi: Once again something new from Africa.

— P W Botha, March 16, 1984.

We are a continent of survivors . . . peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and relations of good neighbourliness are the only rational alternative for our future to be free of the spectre of violence and destruction.

— Samora Machel, March 16, 1984.

For those who attended the impressive ceremony held to mark the signing of the Accord of Nkomati last Friday, something new was indeed witnessed in the distributed texts of the accord, and heard in the speeches of Mocambique President Samora Machel and Prime Minister P W Botha.

The sense of occasion and good spirit which informed the proceedings should

*Regional affairs correspondent
Michael Spicer sums up the
Nkomati accord.*

not be a substitute for analysis of the significance of the accord and its likely impact on the political, security and economic map of the southern African region. But one cannot help feeling that those who warn that the accord will wither on the vine in the absence of SA political reform, which they do not expect, are allowing conventional wisdom to blind them to the possibility of new political and security patterns emerging in the region.

At first sight the accord may seem to represent a major SA political and security victory. Not only has it improved SA standing internationally, and particularly with the west, for its role in helping reduce Soviet influence in the region, but it has also secured application of a prime SA foreign policy principle, regional solutions for regional problems. Together with the long desired political legitimacy conferred on the SA state by a black African country, SA is now implicitly recognised as *primus inter pares* in the region.

In the security field, the accord

represents culmination of the SA drive to deny the ANC bases, planning facilities and transit routes. Though the Frelimo government may experience difficulty in applying the strict and comprehensive terms of the accord in this area, the cumulative effect of its efforts and those of other black states in this direction is almost certain to force the ANC to alter political strategy.

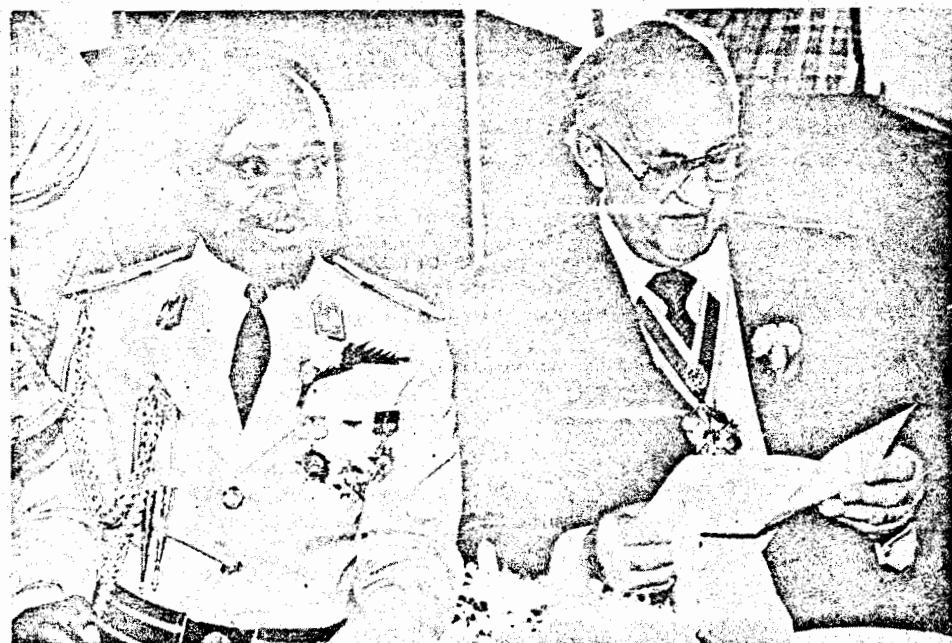
Here some interesting possibilities present themselves and point to a potentially profound impact that the accord may have on domestic SA politics. If the ANC is forced to participate increasingly in more conventional political activity as opposed to continuing the violent struggle, it will find itself participating in an evolutionary process. It will then have to accept the logic that apartheid can be subject to evolutionary reform.

This in turn will create a predicament for Pretoria. With the disappearance of the external enemy the notion of the "total onslaught", already discredited, will lose further validity and Pretoria may be increasingly pressured to contemplate discussion and ultimately negotiation with a 'legitimized' ANC. Of course radical young blacks frustrated at these developments may choose the ex-

treme path of individual acts of terror and sabotage. This would be a terrible development but one which the experience of other societies suggests SA might learn to live with.

Suggestive as such speculation is, it vests in the assumption that the Nkomati accord will endure, and, if not replicated in the rest of southern Africa, will at least be tolerated or given tacit support by other neighbouring black states. In this connection the accord also contains significant benefits for Mocambique which other southern African states may wish to share, either formally or informally. The first is security. While it is possible to argue that SA has won a political victory through the signing of the agreement, the security provisions of the accord are evenhanded and in their comprehensiveness, if applied, will prevent any future major subversion of the Mocambiquan state from SA. In accordance with Article 3(2)f, Radio Free Africa, the clandestine MNR radio station operating from the Northern Transvaal, has since gone off the air.

While the principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other's states and the recognition of the right of each to order its domestic affairs as it wishes involved an abandon-



Comrade, baas: seeing what's next on the menu

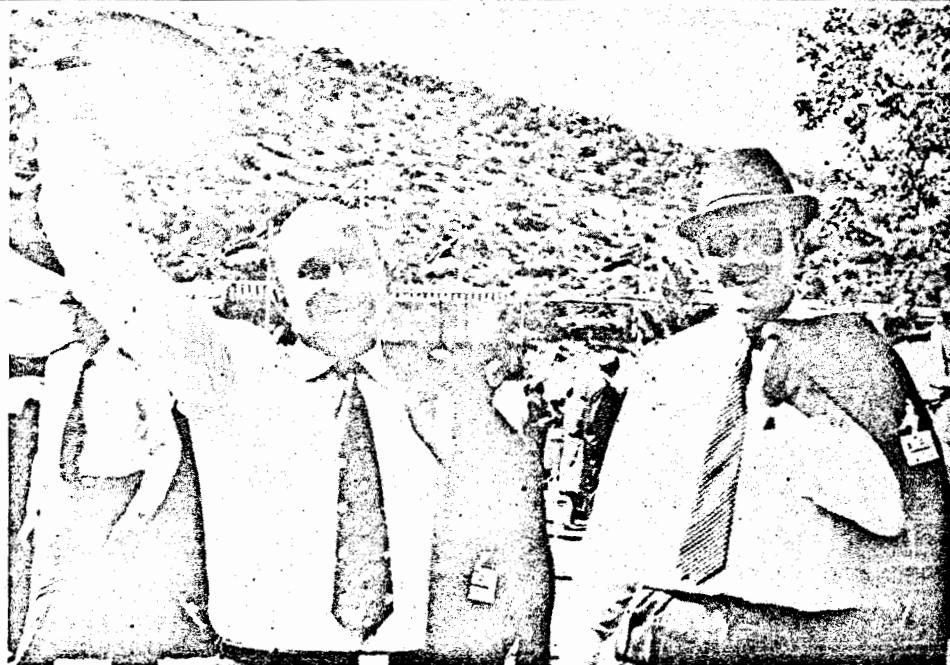
ment of a practical commitment to the "liberation of the south", Mocambique has not only secured recognition of its right to pursue a socialist, if not Marxist, path at home but has also preserved the right to continue to express its views on the SA domestic dispensation through diplomatic and political support for the ANC. Acceptance by the SA negotiating team of a Mocambiquan revision of Pretoria's original more stringent proposals, to allow for ANC diplomatic presence in Mocambique, shows welcome flexibility on Pretoria's part though it ought not perhaps to be construed as a major concession.

More significant, on Pretoria's side, was the absence of representatives of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei from the signing ceremony at Mocambique's insistence. Willing therefore to compromise on support for the ANC, Mocambique has clearly drawn the line at recognizing SA homeland policy. This looks to be a fixed intention and is bound to create difficulties for Pretoria in future.

Thus, although there has been a certain amount of rationalisation of the compelling security and economic pressures which have forced it to the negotiating table, Mocambique has not emerged empty-handed in political and security terms. And, as a Radio Mocambique broadcast on the morning of the signing ceremony pointed out, SA's own temporarily depressed economy and the economic, political and human costs of its policy of "destabilisation" served as an incentive for SA to seek agreement with Mocambique.

One final reason for being sceptical of the sceptics is that there is reason to believe that Mocambiquans combine a continental Portuguese and African perspective which takes a broader, longer-term view of developments in the region than the analytical Anglo-Saxon perspective shared by most of the critics. This allows Machel to both contemplate postponement of the achievement of socialism in Mocambique and of 'liberation' in SA with something approaching equanimity. Such a state of mind is not disturbed in the same way as is the liberal Anglo-Saxon's by continued manifestations of apartheid human rights abuses in SA, such as the removals at Magopa, although it will draw the line at recognition of the homelands.

Radio Mocambique was correct in asserting that the accord does not represent "a meeting of friends" although a



Business community euphoria: grease for peace

friendly atmosphere prevailed last Friday at all levels from the two leaders. Herman Nickel, US Ambassador to SA, has also correctly characterised the negotiations as "clear-sighted and tough-minded". But, on the other hand, the negotiations and agreement represent more than just a meeting of dissenting adults. A genuine warmth and enthusiasm for peace has to be added to the undoubted foundation stone of pragmatism. Two quotes from Machel's speech will suffice

The differences between our political, economic and social concepts are great, even antagonistic . . . We recognised these differences honourably on the hard and difficult road of frank and open talks that led us to this agreement. We shall continue to be aware of the remaining contradictions but we recognise that we are indissolubly linked by geography and proximity.

And

None of us, Mocambicans or South Africans, have another country. We are not foreigners to our continent or our countries

This important echo of the 1969 Lusaka agreement which recognised the non-colonial status of SA whites is more evidence of the generous spirit of the accord.

In the euphoria of the week before signing of the accord, there was expectation that some, if not all the heads of state of black southern African countries would attend the ceremony, invitations having been issued by Mocambique.

However, in the event, only Prince Bhikinnpi, Prime Minister of Swaziland was present, though front line states were represented by their ambassadors in Maputo.

This coolly correct attitude by front line states was summed up by President Quett Masire of Botswana in a critical statement, which, while expressing understanding of Mocambique's action, poured cold water on any expectation that P W Botha's vision of

the nations of southern Africa cooperating with each other in every field of human endeavours: a veritable constellation of states working together for the benefit of all on the basis of mutual respect

will rapidly become a reality.

Though encircled Lesotho may be the next state to sign a non-aggression accord, Botswana and Zimbabwe (both former UK colonies with more Anglo-Saxon views) look like resisting such a formal rapprochement, preferring improved informal cooperation. They would argue that formal agreement was in any event unnecessary since they have always pursued the policy towards the ANC which Mocambique is only now adopting under the terms of Nkomati. However, Pretoria possesses formidable negotiating strengths and the prospect of improved security in Matabeleland may prove one incentive for Zimbabwe to reconsider.

It will be a long road to SA membership of the OAU. Such diverse African voices as Egypt, Nigerian newspapers



Nickel was there

and other Portuguese speaking states have welcomed the accord, but the OAU remains a divided body with many radical states who would be most unwilling to give up the formal OAU stance on SA. Beset by a multiplicity of crises, the OAU as an organisation would hardly risk another by abandoning the factor which continues to give the body focus and unity. Hence the revision of the original OAU statement welcoming developments to one expressing understanding and sympathy for Mocambique's position.

More interesting is Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda's suggestion of a summit meeting of southern African leaders which has been welcomed, if cautiously, by SA. This offers a way ahead to seek more broadly based understanding in the region. One of the difficulties for Pretoria is that it would inevitably involve discussion and criticism of SA domestic policies. But under P W and Pik Botha, SA has demonstrated a recognition of the inextricable link between foreign and domestic policies which was absent in the time of Prime Ministers Verwoerd and Vorster and which may be said to have been one of the major reasons why the detente and dialogue movements failed. With the evidence of some suppleness on the issues of the ANC and the 'homeland' states in the Mocambiquan negotiations, such a discussion ought not therefore to be a barrier to SA participation in a conference.

One major incentive for SA is that it would help give expression to the general principle of regional solutions to regional problems, and in particular to the application of that principle to the settlement process in SWA/Namibia

(see *Finance Week*, March 15-21). Officials in both Zambia and Botswana have indicated that they see no objection in principle to removing the UN role in a Namibian settlement as long as SA comes to terms with Swapo and is prepared to accept a Swapo government.

Despite growing western concern at suggestions that Resolution 435 may be abandoned in favour of a regionally based settlement (on the argument that a bird in the hand . . .) the idea of a regional solution to SWA/Namibia has room for further exploration.

The terms on which Cuba and Angola have just agreed to the withdrawal of Cuban troops are

Unilateral withdrawal of SA troops from Angola, acceptance of UN rulings relating to SWA/Namibia and the end of all acts of aggression against Angola by SA and the US, and of all aid to "counter-revolutionaries", the code-word for Unita, will provide further momentum to the negotiations.

The real threat to continued regional stability does not appear to be Soviet obstructionism. There is evidence that as long as it preserves face and influence in Angola, the Soviet Union would countenance a withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and accommodation between the MPLA and Unita.

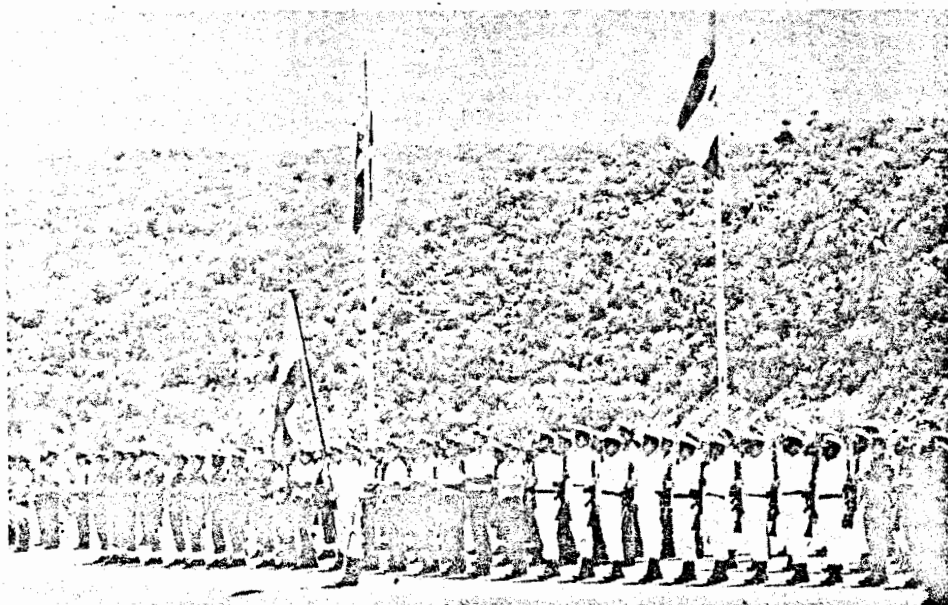
The Soviet Ambassador in Maputo has already indicated that the USSR welcomes the Nkomati Accord in the sense that it has always been for "peaceful coexistence". As long as the Frelimo government does not abandon its socialist orientation or the socialist

camp entirely, neither of which it shows signs of doing, particularly since it still receives most of its oil from the eastern bloc, it too can afford to take the long view of developments in southern Africa. Southern Africa was, and is, contrary to popular SA myth, never an area of high priority for the USSR, and will remain that way for the foreseeable future as long as loss of influence to the west is limited to the field of aid and trade.

Apart from unforeseeable contingencies and crises, such as another Soweto-style racial confrontation, the real threat in the short term to the emerging regional peace initiative is the prospect of delay in independence for Namibia. Unita remains the key, with many, including those in key decision-making positions not expecting Namibian independence before three years are out.

Will the region be prepared to wait for such a period, particularly if a Democratic US President were to reverse constructive engagement after November and complicate regional relations? It is sincerely to be hoped that delay in the west will not turn the Nkomati Accord into another Camp David Agreement, with President Machel increasingly isolated amongst more radical neighbours.

But on balance the analogy looks inappropriate. While progress to regional stabilisation will be slow, the growing desire for peace and stability and the opportunity to confront enormous social and economic challenges seem likely to tip the balance in favour of continued movement.



Presenting arms: SADF making love, not war