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Background to the Nkomati Accord

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Ten years ago the Marxist-inspired guerrilla army of FRELIMO had little more to do than defeat Portugal and release Mozambique and its indigenous Black inhabitants from centuries-old oppressive White colonial rule. It was the first of a rush of victories for such movements across southern Africa in the 'seventies, with Angola and Zimbabwe still to follow. White colonial domination was the manifestation, capitalism the cause that was the final enemy for the movements of FRELIMO, ZANU and the MPLA.

However, further south, all manner of action is perpetrated in the name of anti-Communism. For questioning the need for the system of apartheid one can be accused of harbouring Communist thoughts, for supporting the ANC one can be hung. South Africa's Suppression of Terrorism and Communism Acts are so wideranging that participation in a karate class under certain circumstances could be construed as being a questionable act.

In 1975 FRELIMO won the protracted guerrilla struggle against the Portuguese in Mozambique and immediately began attempting to build a Marxist State. As such they were the first and most radical of the new independent Black African nations, and a vocal opponent of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Six years later, in 1981, after the first of three major South African Defence Force raids into Maputo (in which ten members of the ANC died within earshot of Machel's residence) the Soviet Union sent warships to Beira and Maputo promising direct aid if Mozambique were to be further threatened by South Africa. The Russians in Maputo told reporters that they were "*not threatening anyone, but if anyone attacks us or our friends we will give an appropriate response*". While up to this point South Africa and Mozambique had managed to exist "pragmatically" in spite of their opposing ideologies, the rhetorical temperature was raised to new dimensions. For South Africa, to all intents and purposes the Reds had now officially set up camp under their bed.

And yet, a short three years later, with all the fanfare that accords anywhere could possibly be made of, Mr P. W. Botha and Samora Machel, both bedecked in ceremonial finery, shook hands with one another and agreed that from now on co-operation was going to be the name of a game that hitherto had not been played. Why?

Mozambican opportunity lost to South African destabilization

From independence in 1975, Mozambique served as a rear base for ZANU guerrillas in their struggle against Smith's regime in Rhodesia. In the five years to Zimbabwean independence it was estimated that Mozambique was attacked 350 times by Rhodesian forces, killing 1335 Mozambicans. Agricultural and forestry projects along the border were stopped while more than 150,000 refugees became an additional burden in camps in Mozambique. At this time there were two anti-FRELIMO movements, the Mozambique National Resistance and the Portuguese secret police PIDE, both operating from within Rhodesia. After the coming to power of ZANU in Zimbabwe, Mozambique began looking to a long-overdue measure of internal reconstruction in peaceful circumstances.

However, FRELIMO did not bargain for a South African destabilization programme. PIDE disappeared together with Rhodesia, but the MNR didn't. Defence Minister Malan told Parliament that the Government would use any methods to fight its enemies in neighbouring countries "*even if it would mean we would support anti-Communist movements like MNR*". The US State Department said that the MNR "*receives the bulk of its support from South Africa*".

The MNR was led by Alfonso Dhlakama, expelled from FRELIMO in 1974 in an anti-corruption drive, and a White Portuguese, Orlando Christina. Both were believed to live in South Africa but all publicity is done through Eva Fernandes in Lisbon. Shortly after the agreement was signed by Botha and Machel the right-wing anti-FRELIMO radio station supporting MNR rebels announced that it was closing down for "re-organization". The station operated from the northern Transvaal.

There were estimated to be 10,000 MNR guerrillas operating
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erating inside Mozambique subscribing to a vague version of capitalism and a return to more traditional ways of social operation, such as polygamy and tribal chieftainship. With these politics they could command no real support from the people for if there is one respect in which Machel had been successful it had been in the fight against racism. There is today no tribal division. But while the political attraction of the MNR was small the fact that 100,000 people died of starvation in the latter half of last year must have contributed to a feeling of unease about FRELIMO's ability to improve the situation.

However unattractive the MNR was politically, their sabotage activities were devastating. They kept the rail and pipe lines between Beira and Zimbabwe inoperable for long periods forcing Zimbabwe to do almost total business with South Africa as there are no other transport and port facilities anywhere else. The MNR made farming in large areas of Mozambique impossible for anything other than the barest subsistence. And they finally totally stopped power reaching South Africa from the Cahora Bassa hydro-electric scheme.

Economic murder

The Mozambican economy was in desperate straits, having been ravaged successively by drought and floods on the one hand and by South Africa on the other. The Cahora Bassa hydro-electric source of power has been drawn upon less and less by South Africa until it ground to nothing late last year. As the scheme, which cost \$326 million, can only be paid for out of sales (South Africa only pays for what it gets), and as it was built almost exclusively for South African sales, it has become an expensive giant white elephant when it could have been a big money earner.

Secondly, exported Mozambican labour is now only half that which it was in 1975. The mines remit 60% of miners' pay direct to Mozambique accounting for about \$49 million per year. When export earnings were just \$449 million in 1981 this source of South African foreign exchange is a substantial contribution. It would be doubled overnight if migrant labour went back to 1975 figures. Lastly, South Africa has stopped using the port of Maputo so this source of revenue was also lost to Mozambique as well as its spin-offs. These are only the three largest and most dramatic ways in which the economy of Mozambique has been harmed. There are of course many others, such as tourism and trade.

These economic difficulties were compounded by one further problem. Setting themselves up as a "Marxist-Leninist" Government they firmly planted their roots in the Soviet satellite camp. As such, between 1978 and 1982 Russia gave the country \$423 million in aid. But, not only was this aid insufficient, \$285 million of it was

military. And while Mozambique was receiving this kind of handout from Russia, the USA did not contribute any kind of aid and influenced its Western surrogates to do likewise. For Machel, money for the development of the economy was fast becoming more important than the acquisition of guns. The Soviet Union didn't agree, and when Machel began to look to the West for aid, he angered the Soviet Union to the extent that they cut fuel aid to Mozambique.

Clearly Mozambique was in perilous difficulties. South Africa's policy of destabilization had been functioning long enough for it to be devastatingly successful. Machel went cap in hand to Europe and spoke to West Germany, Portugal, Britain and of course the USA, in the shape of Mr Chester Crocker. They all said the same thing — sit down at the table and start talking to South Africa. 'Pik' Botha followed Machel to Europe. The southern African policeman got instructions from his Western imperialist bosses and a few weeks later the Nkomati deal was signed.

South Africa — policeman for the West

Not only can South Africa boast of an accommodation with one of Black Africa's most left wing of governments, but it can set reporters all over the world speculating about more "pacts". The move has given Mr Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement" the firepower it needs against the Democrats leading up to this year's presidential elections in which the Black American vote is so important. World opinion together with large sections of the American public has been unimpressed with the workings of this policy in Lebanon, Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador — to name only the most dramatic. It is no small surprise that Mr Reagan and Mrs Thatcher were amongst the first and certainly the warmest in their congratulations on the signing of the agreement. South Africa has acquired a new respectability.

South Africa, on behalf of the West, soundly thrashed Mozambique. It has not yet finished the job in Angola. There is today hardly a country under the Equator in Africa that doesn't have to bow and scrape to South Africa in order to keep its people from dying of starvation. They are forced to swallow their revolutionary zeal, as Machel does, kick out the ANC in the hope of curtailing the armed struggle in the interests of what Mozambique no longer perceives as a struggle for national liberation but a struggle for "civil liberties" in South Africa. They've all had everything to lose and almost lost everything. The South African working class has nothing to lose and everything to gain. On their shoulders lies the future of the entire region. And the struggle for civil liberties cannot hope to even dent the armour-plated apartheid regime. □