

IZVESTIYA Reports on Chissano-Botha Talks

PM2209090088 Moscow IZVESTIYA in Russian

17 Sep 88 Morning Edition p 6

[Own correspondent B. Pilyatskin report: "Sensation or Inevitability?"]

[Text] Maputo—Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel, once observed: "You can choose a friend, but not a geographical neighbor. That is what the Republic of South Africa is for us, and our country has no choice but to coexist with it."

Alas, coexistence between the superpower of the African Continent and the young republic weakened by the colonial past and internal problems took on the nature of a conflict, a confrontation. And the mighty neighbor resorted not only to economic and political pressure, but also to strong-arm tactics—from bombings of the outskirts of Maputo to raids by commando detachments there.

Not much changed as a result of the nonaggression treaty signed on the Nkomati, the border stream, in March 1984, in which the sides pledged to refrain from any hostile actions or interference in each other's affairs. Suffice it to say that the activity of the "Mozambique National Resistance" (MNR) terrorist gangs, who found a new patron in the shape of South Africa after the fall of the Rhodesian regime, has by no means declined.

But now I see on the television screen South African President Pieter Botha and Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano smiling, shaking hands, and exchanging souvenirs after the completion of talks in Songo, a small town near the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric power station on the Zambezi River.

Some Western news media described P. Botha's first visit to this African country as head of state as "sensational." But for those who carefully monitor events in the region, what happened came as no surprise. Things were moving that way, and precisely this turn of events was dictated by the positive changes that have begun in the world.

Naturally, Africa has not remained aloof from the global process of detente, as is indicated first and foremost by the developments in the resolution of the Namibian

problem. This is the context in which to see the peace initiative by Mozambique President J. Chissano, who proposed dialogue, instead of confrontation, to his South African partner.

The Mozambique leadership is clearly aware of the realities of the country's economic position. And that leaves the republic no alternative today but to make the maximum use of the economic ties and infrastructure that it inherited from the past. In 1974—the last year in the country's colonial history—6 million tonnes of South African freight passed through the port of Maputo in transit, while 10 years later the figure was less than 1 million. According to the latest figures more than 73,000 Mozambicans are registered in South Africa as workers hired under contract (the vast majority in the mines). In addition to this there are a quarter of a million so-called "illegals"—those who have gone to South Africa in search of work and food and to escape the MNR gangs. Money transfers to Mozambique from officially registered workers total more than \$40 million a year.

That is the income. What about the losses resulting from many years of undeclared war, economic sanctions by Pretoria, and attacks by it? Civilians killed, roads destroyed, enterprises idle, crops burned—the list is endless. Let me cite just a few figures published by the National Executive Commission that was set up in connection with the emergency: In Mozambique there are 5.9 million displaced persons in need of urgent assistance, having lost their property and homes; more than 2,000 schools and hundreds of medical centers and rural stores have been destroyed. The total damage sustained by the country, according to the Mozambique press, amounts to the astronomical sum of \$5.5 billion.

Mozambique's human and material losses are clearly vast. But South Africa has not achieved the goal it set itself. The maintenance and supply of the 20,000 MNR troops cosntantly require money, while "victory over the Marxist Frelimo [Mozambique Liberation Front] government" is still no closer. Finally, in purely financial terms, it is advantageous to South Africa to use Mozambique's territory and the port of Maputo for transporting its freight.

All this put together made the Pretoria ruling clique respond to the proposals from Maputo for a revival of the "Nkomati treaty."

Apart from anything else, I think P. Botha also had hopes in connection with the municipal elections scheduled for the end of October. The fact is that the ruling Nationalist Party is in the throes of a deep crisis. The growing antiracist movement in the country and the exacerbation of economic problems have caused an unprecedented polarization in the white community: On the right flank fascist elements accuse the president of "betraying the Afrikaaner cause," while on the left sober-minded people advocate talks with the African National Congress.