

Disengagement in Southern Africa?

The recent negotiations in Maputo and Lusaka mark a setback for Pretoria's and Washington's designs, but a genuine, lasting peace in the region cannot be expected before the victory of the ANC and SWAPO.

By Augusta Conchiglia

Three days after the Lusaka tripartite negotiations among Angolans, South Africans and Americans, which took place following Pretoria's announcement of the disengagement of its troops from southern Angola, on February 20, Maputo was the scene of an important meeting between the Mozambican leaders and three South African ministers. In both cases, the discussions centered on "security" in the region.

Do these talks represent a new phase in the hitherto troubled existence of the independent states of southern Africa? This would seem to be going too far, the more so, since at the same time as the talks were going on, UNITA and the MNR continued their acts of sabotage, the latter having intensified its actions right near Maputo, as our correspondent in Mozambique, Paul Fauvet, has informed us. Actually, the situation will improve only if any agreements reached at the meetings are followed up by others. In Lusaka, Angola's Minister of Interior Alexandre Rodrigues "Kito" and South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs "Pik" Botha, together with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Chester Crocker, decided to create a mixed commission to supervise the South African disengagement from southern Angola. In view of this, it would appear that the South African Army's withdrawal announced 17 days earlier had not been very far advanced. The three parties agreed that the January 31 truce had been respected, but the South Africans wanted an agreement to stop the Namibian liberation struggle, without however committing themselves to discuss the terms of a cease-fire with SWAPO or to set a date for the application of Resolution 435.

At Lusaka, the Angolans stressed the importance of this resolution for the only definitive solution that could lead to a regional agreement. In sharp contrast to the South Africans—and also to the Americans—Angola maintains that after the disengagement of its troops, South Africa must agree to end all its aggressive actions against Angola and to cease its support for the UNITA bands. Only after this would it be possible to draw up a timetable for the progressive withdrawal of the Cuban volunteers, as President Dos Santos had told the Secretary General of the United Nations last August. The negotiators at Maputo announced the forthcoming sig-

nature of a "security pact," stressing the desire and determination of the two states to re-establish "peace, stability, progress and good neighbourliness," to put an end to a conflict which "has plagued our region for too long."

Questioned at Maputo airport, "Pik" Botha said that the agreement to be signed would concern the promise of both governments "not to permit any form of subversion" against the other. In other words, Pretoria demands the halt of all military activity by the ANC which might originate in Mozambique in exchange for the suspension of its aid to the MNR. It should be noted that after years of denials, Pretoria's leaders now implicitly admit that without the aid they have given to the MNR, it would have no impact whatsoever in Mozambique.

But the situation is not exactly what South Africans would like to pretend. The destabilization of several countries of southern Africa, and particularly Angola and Mozambique, is a strategy specifically formulated by Pretoria's intelligence service to try to change the regional balance of power created by the independence of the former Portuguese colonies and later, of Zimbabwe.

Winds of Independence

However, the liberation struggles of SWAPO and the ANC have not been directed from Luanda or Maputo, even if the winds of independence blowing over southern Africa have strengthened the movements for liberation in the countries dominated by a racist minority. An illustration of this was the bloody revolt of Soweto in 1976, which occurred immediately after the defeat of the South African Army which had invaded Angola. However, the extraordinary and rapid expansion of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa stems more from political factors—both internal and regional—than from any foreign military aid.

In its brutal direct and indirect attacks against Angola and Mozambique, South Africa had the objective of undermining their governments in the hope of replacing them by puppet regimes subordinate to its own racist and expansionist policies. Although Pretoria has thus caused great damage, with hundreds of thousands of victims in both countries, it still has failed.

Both progressive governments are standing firmly and the efforts to impose inadmissible conditions, such as a sharing of power with the UNITA bands in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique—demands supported by the Americans—have all been in vain. Neither the pressure of Western creditors (orchestrated by Washington) nor U.S. wooing have diminished the determination of the two governments not to capitulate.

No Illusions

In view of their obvious failure, the South Africans and the Americans were forced to seek an alternative to their interventionist policy, while hoping nonetheless to achieve their basic objectives in southern Africa with new tactics. Conscious of the contradictions within the Western camp, and also within the apartheid state itself, the Angolans and Mozambicans responded, to profit from a situation which the forces of destabilization no longer entirely controlled, without having any illusions about the future or counting on Washington and Pretoria's respect for their engagements.

The Angolans and Mozambicans did not hesitate to participate in the Lusaka and Maputo negotiations because they are confident that SWAPO and the ANC will each be victorious in their struggles against the racist Pretoria regime, and because the two progressive governments will continue to support the liberation movements diplomatically, politically and morally. Despite its immense military superiority, Pretoria has been unable to advance in its design of surrounding itself by a constellation of docile states, or to brake the progress of the liberation movements shaking both South Africa and Namibia. This is the decisive factor that will shape the political future of southern Africa. ▲▲▲