

MOZAMBIQUE — SOUTH AFRICA

Bargaining in two capitals

Influences as disparate as President Reagan's re-election bid and deep economic recession in South Africa may have had considerable influence on talks in Maputo and Pretoria

On January 16, Mozambican and South African delegations met simultaneously in Pretoria to discuss security matters and, in Maputo, for talks on economic relations between the two countries.

At the end of the Pretoria meeting, a brief communiqué was issued which said that the delegations had discussed "practical ways and means of achieving peace, security and good neighbourly relations between the two countries on the basis of internationally established

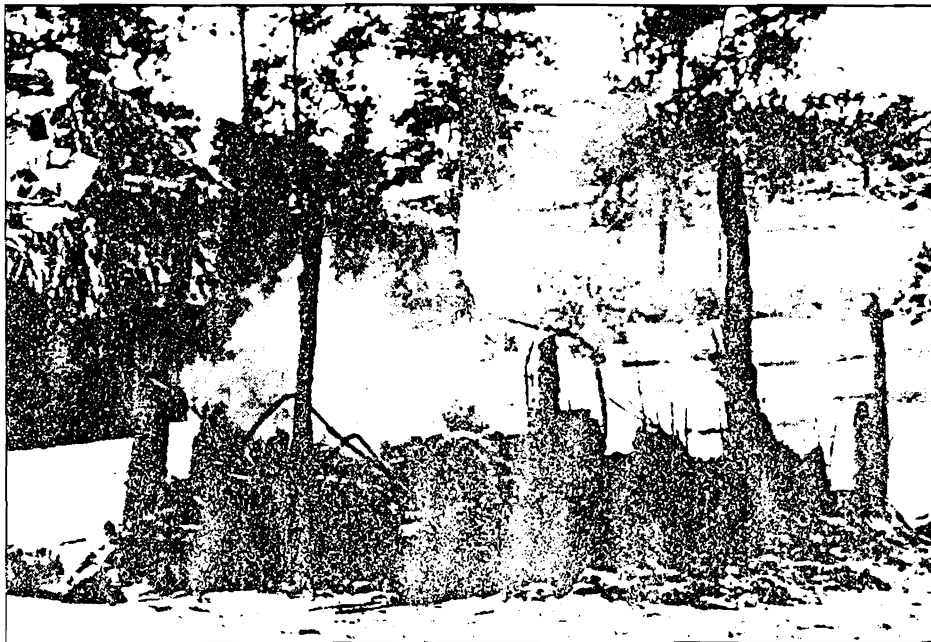
principles of relations between sovereign states."

More specifically, the meeting had considered "measures to be taken in order that the territory of neither state should serve as a springboard for aggression and violent actions against the other."

There is no doubt that Mozambique interprets this as a South African pledge to drop its support for the rebels of the "Mozambique National Resistance" (MNR). This much was said, politely, by FRELIMO political bureau member Jacinto Veloso at the opening of the economic talks in Maputo. He said that the Mozambique authorities interpreted the presence of a South African delegation in Maputo as "evidence of the South African Government's intention to take actions to end the violence and escalating war."

The sincerity of the South Africans was soon put to the test. Just four days after

Smouldering houses after South African raid on Matola: talks aimed at halting such destruction



the talks, on January 20, 2,500 Mozambican troops began to move in on MNR bases in Zambezia Province, near the Malawian border, where 14 Soviet geologists, kidnapped in August, were being held. It is a fair assumption that in Pretoria the Mozambican side had told the South Africans firmly that they wanted the geologists back alive.

The result was that South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha leaned hard on the MNR — and publicly admitted that he had intervened (at the request, he said, of Mozambique, the Soviet Union — and the United States). He still, of course, clung to the now threadbare claim that South Africa has never supported the MNR.

With the Mozambican army closing in and with their patron making threatening noises, the MNR dropped 12 of their hostages on the Malawian border and beat a hasty retreat using the remaining captives as human shields. The MNR bases in the vicinity were overrun. (the MNR itself, through its Lisbon representative, claimed to have released the hostages after direct negotiations with the Soviet authorities over the heads of the Mozambican Government — nobody takes this claim very seriously).

Thus, whatever the details of the agreement reached in Pretoria may have been, it does seem to have yielded immediate results. The future, however, remains unclear. Presumably the South Africans will refrain from airlifting weaponry to the MNR camps in Mozambique for at least a few months — if only because any such obvious breach of the agreement would anger the Americans. The administration is clearly interested in reducing the level of violence in the region and then claiming a diplomatic victory which might help Ronald Reagan's chances of being re-elected later in the year.

But the MNR is already armed to the teeth and can probably survive a cutoff in cash supplies for quite some time. Meanwhile, the South Africans show no sign of closing down the MNR's radio station which is still broadcasting loud and clear from the Transvaal. There is also no indication that the South Africans will repatriate the large number of MNR rebels in the rear bases in the Transvaal. In other words, it seems likely that Pretoria will keep the MNR in reserve, as a weapon to be unleashed again whenever the apartheid state feels the need to revive its military option towards Mozambique.

But what concessions has Mozambique made to South Africa? Crucially, Mozambique has not been forced to abandon the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC). Mozambique stuck to the position stated in December by Samora Machel: that the ANC could not be compared with the MNR, that ANC offices would remain in Maputo and that

Sacrifices

The ANC and Mozambique have been holding discussions around a list of demands made by South Africa. South African press reports allege that Joe Slovo, one of the leaders of the ANC and of the South African Communist Party, has been denied his base in Maputo.

Slovo, husband of the assassinated journalist, historian and fellow Communist Ruth First, has long been a fixation among South Africa's rulers, who have credited him with almost supernatural powers. He, for instance, was the one supposed to have masterminded the sabotage of the Sasol oil installation; in their racist thinking Blacks could not have been responsible for the sophisticated operation. Into the bargain, they also contend that he is a colonel in the KGB. Now Mozambique (and the ANC) could have decided to humour them.

The ANC have stressed that their talks with Mozambique around South Africa's demands were "characterised by a common will to make sacrifices for the liberation of Southern Africa."

In a discussion with *Africa Now* late last year, Mozambique's Interior Minister, and the man in charge of national security, Armando Guebuza, had this to say about the ANC: "We support the ANC morally, diplomatically and politically. The ANC is fighting for a cause which is just, a cause for which we have fought for a long time."

"The problem is not with the neighbouring countries as South Africa claims; the problem is inside South Africa: it is the hatred people have against the kind of domination, of the system which exists in the country, one which opposes the majority of the people against a minority."

the Mozambican Government would continue giving "moral, political and diplomatic support" to the ANC. In accepting an ANC political presence in Maputo, the South Africans retreated from Defence Minister Magnus Malan's position of October, which was that the ANC had to, purely and simply, "get out" of Mozambique.

But the South Africans have probably demanded that Mozambique police its frontiers thoroughly and prevent armed ANC militants from slipping back into South Africa.

However, the real *quid pro quo* for dropping the MNR may lie in the economic field. South African businessmen see in Mozambique (and in Angola, for that matter) possibilities for investment and a conveniently nearby market. Some feel that their government's militarist foreign policy has been hopelessly counter-

productive in that it has displaced South Africa from the Mozambican market to the benefit of Western European countries.

The South African economy is in deep recession, with hundreds of small and medium-sized industries facing bankruptcy this year. Capturing markets in Mozambique and exporting capital there may help alleviate the situation for at least some businessmen. In the colonial period, the South Africans invested in small industries in Mozambique, such as packaging plants. The raw material came from South Africa, was packaged in Mozambique, and the South African parent company bought most of the production. This happened to be cheaper than doing it all inside South Africa.

South Africa may be thinking of re-establishing such relationships. Certainly there are a substantial number of Mozambican factories that operate at a mere fraction of their capacity. An input of South African capital (or of Western capital using South African subsidiaries) could boost production rapidly, with South Africa buying a certain percentage of the finished product and paying in rands.

Some of these details are still shrouded in secrecy. However, the nature of Mozambique's interest in economic relations is obvious. The Mozambican Government argues that economic pressures form part of the "undeclared war" that South Africa has waged against the country since independence in 1975.

The "undeclared war" has cost Mozambique an estimated \$3.8bn. This figure is explained in detail in documentation that the government sent to the Maputo embassies of Mozambique's creditors in early February, explaining why Mozambique was seeking to renegotiate its foreign debt (which currently stands at \$1.4bn — excluding sums owed to other socialist countries).

Of this figure for losses caused by South Africa, only \$333m is attributed to military aggression (either directly or via the MNR). \$568m was lost in migrant workers' remittances when South Africa cut back drastically the number of Mozambicans recruited to work in the mines of the Transvaal. There were about 120,000 Mozambicans in the mines in 1975, and in 1982 the figure was just 45,500.

Even worse, in 1978, South Africa unilaterally scrapped the practice of paying part of the miners' salaries in gold at an artificially low price (29.75 rands per ounce). The abolition of the artificial price has cost Mozambique \$2,647m (or about twice the entire debt that the country is trying to reschedule).

Deliberate diversions of traffic away from the port of Maputo has also struck at Mozambique's revenues ●