

Was the breakdown of the Nkomati Accord inevitable?

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By Moeletsi Mbeki

THE Nkomati Accord signed between Mozambique and South Africa in March last year will long be a subject of debate in Southern Africa, especially among the region's scholars and political commentators.

Were the Mozambicans duped by sweet-talking agents of the Pretoria regime into giving up their strongest card against South Africa, the African National Congress, in return for an empty promise, disbanding the MNR, that Pretoria never had any intention of keeping?

Did the Pretoria regime have the power in the first place to keep such a promise or is the MNR a force in its own right that is only partially dependent on Pretoria's military assistance?

Is there anyone in the apartheid establishment who really wants the Nkomati Accord to be honoured or are there serious divisions among "hawks" on one side who want Frelimo driven out of Maputo and "doves" on the other side who want a tamed Frelimo to stay in office?

What about the South African capitalists? Do they really want to invest in Mozambique and thereby breathe some life into that country's shattered economy or do they just want to exploit Mozambique's problems to make a quick buck before dashing back into the laager?

The questions come thick and fast; the answers, however, are not so readily available. The latest attempt to answer some of these questions has been made by Dr Robert Davies, a South African lecturer at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo.

In a study entitled South African strategy towards Mozambique in the post-Nkomati period recently published by the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies at Uppsala in Sweden, Dr Davies makes at least one very important observation — it is not possible for elements of the military intelligence of the South African Defence Force to support the MNR while the rest of the apartheid hierarchy thinks otherwise.

Shortly after the Nkomati Accord was signed, the Pretoria regime took highly visible steps to show compliance. South African soldiers stopped entering Mozambique to give direct support to MNR bands as they were in the habit of doing before the accord.

Secondly, the MNR's radio station, The Voice of Free Africa, which beamed from the Transvaal to Mozambique went on the air. Other activi-

When I interviewed one of President Samora Machel's close advisers, Professor Aquino de Braganca, earlier this year, he was convinced that the accord had created a split in the apartheid ruling class between those who wanted peace and the die-hards who wanted the war in Mozambique to continue.

In his study Dr Davies makes it clear that "it is inconceivable" that elements within military intelligence in alliance with the Portuguese backers of the MNR could have defied the Botha regime and continued to supply the MNR.

He writes: "This thesis rests on a serious misunderstanding of the decision-making process on security questions in the current South African state."

He goes on to show that since P. W. Botha came to power in 1978, decision-making in the apartheid state has been re-organised and centralised.

The 20 ad hoc cabinet committees that had previously existed have since been replaced by four permanent committees — for national security, constitutional, economic and social affairs. The key committee in dealings with Mozambique is the committee for national security known as the State Security Council (SSC), which was established by an Act of Parliament in 1972 but "revamped" after South Africa's first invasion of Angola in the mid-1970s.

Today, Dr Davies says, the State Security Council is "the primary de-



PRESIDENT BOTHA, co-author of "total strategy".

cision-making body" in the South African state. Presided over by P. W. Botha himself, the council includes four ministers — Defence, Foreign Affairs, Law and Order, and a senior cabinet minister.

Also included on the council are the following senior state officials — head of National Intelligence Service, chief of the SADF, director-generals of foreign affairs and law and order, and Commissioner of Police.

The SSC has its own secretariat directly responsible to President Botha and currently headed by the man who headed South Africa's invasion of Angola in August 1975, Lt - Gen. A. J. van Deventer. The staff of this secretariat is drawn from various government departments with a high military component including a number of important officials from military intelligence.

"There is no evidence which convincingly shows that the above highly centralised and rationalised decision-making process has radically changed or broken down since Nkomati," Dr Davies says. "If the MNR continued after Nkomati to receive support from within South Africa via the clandestine network — a fact which is now proven — this can only be because the SSC accepted that it should be," he concludes.

So why did South Africa sign the Nkomati Accord? Dr Davies makes it clear that South Africa did not sign the accord because it was being pressured by Mozambique. On the contrary it was Mozambique that signed because it was being pressured, militarily and economically, by South Africa and its surrogate, the MNR.

Mozambique hoped that by trading in the transit facilities it had accorded to ANC armed cadres, South Africa would stop giving logistical support to the MNR.

Mozambique also hoped that South Africa would lift the economic boycott that it had mounted against Mozambique since it achieved independence in 1975.

South Africa did not see things this way at all, Dr Davies argues. For South Africa, Nkomati was the logical outcome of the policy of "total strategy" formulated by Gen. Magnus Malan when he was chief of

SADF in the 1970s and P. W. Botha when he was defence minister at the same time.

"Total strategy" is a rough-and-ready "theory" to justify South Africa's aggressions against its neighbours.

It postulates that because of its minerals and strategic position for the West, Southern Africa as a region is threatened by a marxist onslaught from communist countries. To defend themselves, the people of the region must form a regional alliance to be known as "the constellation of states" where South Africa would be recognised as the regional power and therefore first among equals.

In return for joining the Pretoria - sponsored "constellation of states", independent Southern African countries are going to be rewarded with various economic measures, the theory goes, ranging from investment and of course use of South Africa's extensive and state-controlled transport system.

Those who fail to see things the way Botha and Malan see them must be "persuaded" to do so, first, by showing them the possible economic advantages, but if they continue not to be persuaded, then military means must be employed, a process now commonly known in this region as destabilisation.

South Africa therefore signed the Nkomati Accord in its view by way of accepting "surrender" on the part of Mozambique, albeit limited surrender. This was how P. W. Botha explained it:

"The Nkomati Accord was the result of a process which began years ago in accordance with our philosophy of total strategy. It was a process in which the image of South Africa and all it had to offer economically and technologically, was made firmly known.

"The belief was built up in our capacity to maintain internal peace and safeguard our borders, that is, in our military strength. We could then undertake our diplomacy with self-confidence born of strength — economic and military strength — and make standing room for ourselves in Southern Africa."

The Nkomati Accord has once again demonstrated the age-old truth, that the vanquished are in no position to dictate terms to the victor.

Long before the ink was dry on the Nkomati Accord, South Africa was pursuing its logistic support for the MNR and, according to Dr Davies, MNR camps in South Africa are intact and in business.

"All that is certain," Dr Davies writes, "is that — in the words of Frelimo's best-known slogan — 'a luta continua'."

Recent discoveries at the MNR base camp Casa Banana and the way the Pretoria regime has dismissed Mozambique's protestations speak for themselves about South Africa's intentions. — Zimpapers Feature Service.