

S African Foreign Minister Comments on Opponents of Incomati

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Text of interview with Pik Botha, from the "Top Level" programme:

Q The accord of Incomati between South Africa and Mozambique was a year old yesterday, and at the time of its signing it was seen as opening up tremendous opportunities for the entire subcontinent. There were, of course, problems, many problems, at the time the accord was signed, not least of these being a guerrilla war in Mozambique; Foreign Minister Pik Botha.

A From the beginning, there was conflict, there was a war, whatever you want to call it, being waged in Mozambique, and we did not underestimate the difficulties which we expected at that time in attempting to end that war. Apparently, the war has increased, the conflict has increased, and that has made the full implementation of the accord more difficult, particularly its implied expectations, namely, larger economic cooperation. Tourists will not go there in large numbers. They fear that they will be blown up. Investors from all over the world are really scared to come and invest on a large scale. If the country's infrastructure - its railways lines, power lines, roads - are disrupted and do not function well, then the country cannot import or export, so it affects the whole economic development of Mozambique very seriously, and it affects us. It affects our direct material interests. Maputo harbour remains the cheapest export port for South Africa, for the whole Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging area, so we have a direct interest in trying to end the war. We do not underestimate the difficulties. We have made various attempts to assist in bringing this war to an end. So far we have not been successful. That does not mean that we must give up hope.

Q The Incomati accord is, of course, not the only South African-Mozambique agreement that is at stake today. Mr Botha explains:

A we tend to forget that there are other agreements also in force between the two countries. There is, firstly, the very important Mozambique Convention, which provides for the recruitment of labour and the use of Maputo harbour - a very important agreement. You can very readily see the importance of this agreement if I say to you that roughly 50,000 Mozambican workers are working in South Africa in terms of that agreement and they earn roughly 200m rands, and they remit roughly half that amount to their families. (Then) we estimate, of course, that there could be up to 100,000 illegal entrants from Mozambique working in various sectors of our private sector and on farms and also they would most probably remit vast amounts to their families back home. Then there is, of course, the agreement between South African Transport Services and the Mozambique Railways, concluded in 1979, which is a business agreement, also a very important one, in the mutual interests, bilateral interests, of both countries.

Then, in 1983, South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique concluded an agreement in respect of cooperation on common rivers. Then there is the 1984 Cahora Bassa agreement which, for the first time, gave Mozambique a share in the tariff paid for delivered power.

The point I wanted to make is, not only the Incomati accord is jeopardised by conflict in Mozambique. All these other agreements cannot be fully implemented so South Africa has a real and important interest in achieving peace in Mozambique. Our material interests are directly affected and negatively affected. I want to make it absolutely clear that the South African Government is doing its best to facilitate the achievement of peace and a cease-fire in Mozambique.

Q South Africa has been and is constantly accused of forcing Mozambique into this agreement.

A That is not correct. President Machel voluntarily, openly, accepted this accord because he saw that as a way to serve the best interests of his people. After all, we are neighbouring states. The question that must be asked is, why should we not have it? It would, indeed, in my opinion, be bad if we do not have it. That would be indicative of bad relations with our neighbours. One simply cannot have this geographic proximity, you cannot have the railway line, you cannot have a host of other cooperative projects without engaging in bilateral agreements. I believe that is just part of a propaganda campaign, that is just part of the general campaign to jeopardise the agreement. There are elements in the world who did not like it, did not like it from the beginning and would not hesitate to try and break it up if they could.

Q What of Renamo [Mozambique National Resistance]? What is the position of that organisation and is it not perhaps being used by the international anti-South African lobby - either willingly or unwillingly - to widen the rift between Pretoria and Maputo?

A Renamo is fighting its own war for its own purposes. I do not believe that they particularly welcomed the Incomati accord because it gives President Machel an opportunity to rationalise his economic development. It certainly holds a lot of advantages for Mozambique, for the Mozambican Government and, after all, we have done quite a lot in the past year, by means of credit facilities and, investors that went there, Mozambique became a member of the IMF, which would give it in turn great financial capabilities, new loans, cheap interest rates and so forth.

But there are other elements in the world, in Africa and elsewhere, who never liked the accord. They were suspicious from the beginning. You know what they said - that this was an entrenchment of apartheid or racial discrimination policies of the government. Now, I could never understand that because it does not matter which government really is in power in Mozambique from that point of view. That government and this government, irrespective of the government here, too, would be foolish not to endeavour to cooperate like good neighbours in the interests of both countries. Those who do not like the accord, who would rather see it destroyed, certainly would wish the war to be increased, expanded and the violence, murdering, killing of people - it would be in their interests to show both President Machel and us up, show us up as two governments that could not bring peace and therefore the Incomati accord becomes incapable of implementation.

Q Nevertheless, despite all South Africa's assurances, the Mozambique Government seems more than a little wary of grasping the hand of friendship extended by South Africa. At times, in fact, they seem almost eager to believe this country's opponents.

A I suppose you cannot really blame the Government of Mozambique if they have suspicions. I do not think that they are suspicious of my Government's intentions. Our personal relationships - the discussions in which I was involved, and General Malan [S African Minister of Defence] - made it clear to me that on a personal basis, as you sit there around a table and have lunches and dinners together, there is nothing wrong, there is nothing suspicious in the attitudes of us, vis-a-vis one another as human beings, as persons. Their suspicions are based, rather, on indications that they have elements in this country who might be assisting Renamo - and perhaps did - and in other countries of Africa. You must not lose sight of the fact that they also make similar accusations as regards the use of territories of other African countries, in order to assist Renamo.

Now, I think they thought that we should have made a greater effort to bring Renamo to a halt, to force it to cease the violence. I think they might be thinking that we could have done more, but after the last meeting on Thursday, when I was there in Maputo [sentence not completed]...

Q As Mr Botha has just mentioned, he was in the Mozambican capital as recently as Thursday [14th March]. What was the subject of these discussions?

A We dealt in detail with all the allegations and charges submitted to us by Mozambique over a number of months, and in some cases the two sides agreed that a particular charge or charges were thoroughly investigated, and that there was no substance in the charges of violation of the Incomati accord from South African territory. At no stage has the Mozambican Government accused the South African Government as such of violating the provisions of the accord.

What they have done is, they have pointed out, and they have given us, indications of violations from our territory, just as they have done in respect of other African countries, so South Africa is not the only one, or the only territory, from which, according to them, assistance is being rendered to Renamo.

It is quite clear to me that they are very suspicious that Renamo is still being supplied with arms and equipment from South Africa, South African territory, from Malawi, even

Kenya, and other African countries. They indicated that they also have evidence of equipment being landed by boat somewhere along their shores. They will later give us more information about that.

They complained about the presence in some of our military units stationed near the border, the presence of Mozambicans in those units. This gives you a rough idea of the matters we dealt with. We did so openly, and a member of the Mozambique Government told me subsequently that they were very pleased with the way that we dealt with all these charges on that particular day.

Q What, then, of the ANC and others of their ilk? Surely, the more successful South Africa is in improving relations with Mozambique, the less they will like it?

A This is the problem. There are so many diverse, and a variety of, elements who really desire the Incomati accord to break up. Certainly, the ANC would become a break-up, so would Renamo, so would certain, I think, financiers in Latin American countries and Europe. Some are anti-communist, others are pro-communist. But it does not matter. There is, there are quite a number of elements representing opposite ideological poles, who would not wish the Incomati accord to succeed.

Q You have spoken before about these big economic powers and corporate organisations and perhaps business associations that want a foot in the door in Mozambique. Now, although Mozambique has lots of minerals, a lot of it is undeveloped and very expensive to develop. What could they hope to get out of being more in control of Mozambique?

A I think some instances, in some cases, you are dealing with persons who feel that they must take revenge on history. Like the Ayatollah Khomeyni, that they must get back what they were robbed of. Others harbour old political desires, probably wish to see Mozambique return to the former era, in terms of which, this time, they can use black persons as politicians, and really get a foothold, a grip, on the country and perhaps get their possessions returned that way.

Q Renamo, it would also appear, is a major stumbling block to the normalisation of Mozambican-South African relations. Is peace possible in these circumstances?

A I cannot see this happening in the short term, but that does not mean that we must - I think Mozambique and ourselves must continue to consult, make proposals as we have done last Thursday. I believe that I have made some constructive proposals to them. We must work at it. We must work at the peace. We must not give up hope.