

## Nkomati Accord — two years on

MARCH 16 this year marks the second anniversary of the Nkomati Accord on "non-aggression and good neighbourliness" between Mozambique and South Africa.

Seldom has a solemn treaty fallen into disrepute as rapidly as the Nkomati Accord. Mozambique signed in the belief that the South African government was serious, and would drop its support for the gunmen of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR). But clear evidence of South African violations of the Accord (in the form of airdrops of weaponry to MNR gangs) was available by September 1984, and the full extent of South African duplicity was revealed when Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces captured the Casa Banana headquarters of the MNR at Gorongosa in central Mozambique in August last year.

Diaries and notebooks found at Casa Banana showed that the South African armed forces had never intended to respect the Nkomati Accord. They pumped in arms and ammunition to the MNR immediately before the signing ceremony and later in 1984 mounted a major rescue operation when the MNR was on the verge of defeat. MNR leaders were ferried back and forth by South African planes between Gorongosa and the Transvaal. In South Africa, the MNR was promised full support at meetings with the top military brass, including the then head of the armed forces himself, General Constand Viljoen.

A South African junior minister, Louis Nel (then deputy foreign minister) clandestinely visited Casa Banana on three occasions in mid-1985. The MNR even took photographs of this little adventure, and had some of them published later in right wing Portuguese newspapers.

In the light of all this, it is no wonder that the Nkomati Accord is pretty well a dead letter. The joint security commission established under the agreement has ceased to operate: the South Africans blamed this on Mozambican withdrawal. But as Mozambican Security Minister Sergio Vieira put it: "when the other party, in a deliberate, pre-meditated and large scale way, decides not to observe the Accord, it is obvious that the joint security commission becomes impotent and cannot function."

Mozambican leaders now insist more than ever that the apartheid regime is the source of all instability in the region, and that peace can only be guaranteed through the overthrow of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government in South Africa. For its part South Africa has insinuated that Mozambique is providing military facilities to the African National Congress and Foreign Minister Pik Botha included Mozambique in a list of countries in the region whose attitude to the ANC was "unsatisfactory". The war of words between the two countries has almost returned to the pre-Nkomati level.

South Africa does not restrict its war on



P W Botha and Samora Machel signing the Nkomati Accord — *precious little to celebrate*

Mozambique to verbal exchanges. Despite the Casa Banana disclosures, there has been no sign of any let-up in Pretoria's support for the MNR. Caught in the act, South Africa has decided to carry on regardless.

Thus specialised sabotage units were infiltrated into Maputo province in January. They have been responsible for two attacks on the power lines carrying electricity from South Africa to the Mozambican capital. Maputo imports its power from South

**Two years after signing the Nkomati Accord, Mozambique is no closer to peace because of South Africa's continued support for the MNR. Paul Fauvet reports from Maputo on why the accord has failed.**

Africa under a complicated deal with the South African electricity company, ESCOM. In theory, the power is recycled from the electricity ESCOM purchases from the Cabora Bassa dam in Mozambique's Tete province. In practice, MNR sabotage has meant that no power from Cabora Bassa has flowed to South Africa since 1983.

Maputo's back-up thermal power station does not have enough generating capacity to supply the city's needs: hence a system of rotating power cuts was in force for most of February, coupled with warnings that anyone found wasting electricity would have his supply disconnected.

The MNR has also carried out a series of attacks on the railway lines from Maputo to Swaziland and South Africa. The aim of such attacks is to persuade Swazi and South

African users of Maputo port to switch their traffic to South African ports, thus depriving Mozambique of foreign currency from rail and port dues. Already an unofficial South African boycott of Maputo is in force. South African traffic has dropped to around a million tonnes or so a year from a high point in 1974 of over six million tonnes.

In February, the South Africans also resorted to urban terrorism, placing landmines on a popular stretch of Maputo beach. Two people, one of them a seven-year-old child, trod on mines, and lost limbs. Among the promises made by the South African generals to the MNR at the meetings recorded in the Casa Banana documents was to supply them with material for "urban guerrilla warfare".

Elsewhere in the country, the Mozambican/Zimbabwean offensive has restored government control over substantial parts of central Mozambique, but the MNR retains a strong presence north of the Zambezi river. For its operations here it depends on bases in Malawi, about half a dozen of which are thought to exist. In the post-Nkomati period, South African Military Intelligence deliberately shifted much of the logistics for the MNR operation from the Transvaal to Malawi.

Mozambique has not actually torn up the Nkomati Accord; but has instead called on the international community to put pressure on South Africa to honour the agreement. There seems little chance of South Africa's allies in the west heeding this call, despite the polite noises of disapproval made by US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.