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EIGHT MONTHS after the signing of the Nkomati accord between Mozambique and South Africa, the question whether South Africa is prepared to fulfil its side of the deal remains wide open. The signs are contradictory. On one hand, this is the first year since 1980 which has not seen direct South African aggression against Mozambique. On the other talks have come to a stop, and the violence perpetrated within Mozambique by the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR — also known as Renamo) still continues.

New evidence has appeared of the collusion of influential Portuguese politicians and businessmen with the MNR, and also of a recent attempt to create a new rear base for the MNR in Tanzania.

In June, when President Machel first made reference to a "conspiracy against Mozambique's independence and sovereignty" involving "personalities of governments which maintain diplomatic relations with our country" and "circles nostalgic for colonialism," few outsiders were able to decode his diplomatically veiled allusions. But now the outline of the Portuguese connection with the MNR is becoming clear.

With it appears the concern of those who lost wealth and influence in Mozambique that the MNR, long seen as their means to achieving some return or at least of forcing Mozambique to make huge repayments for nationalised enterprises and properties, might actually disappear.

If South Africa were to fulfil its obligations under the Nkomati accord, the MNR would disappear. But this is the big unresolved question. Bilateral talks between Mozambique and South Africa have continued without the participation of the MNR since October 11 and on October 12 Foreign Minister Roelof Botha decided to go to Lisbon to sort out the Portuguese end of the MNR and draw the organisation back into the negotiations. At the last minute, however, the Portuguese Government made it known that such a visit would be unwelcome, and it did not take place.

Four Portuguese citizens were arrested on August 26, in central Tanzania. Under cover of hunting under licence in the area of the Selous Gorge near the border of northern Mozambique, they had allegedly been preparing to create rear bases, including air strips, to facilitate continued supplies of arms to MNR units operating in the north of Mozambique.

Three of the four have long connections with the MNR. Adelino Serra Peres, Senior, lived in Beira, Mozambique's second city, in colonial times. He was a close associate of the notorious pro-Fascist businessman and newspaper proprietor, Jorge Jardim, who employed as deputy administrator of his newspaper Noticias de Beira a pride/dgs (secret police) agent called Evo Fernandes. Fernandes is now the ostensible leader of the MNR.

Adelino Peres, Junior, another of those detained, then a member of the Rhodesian army, had been accused of taking part in the Nyazonia

massacre of Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique carried out by the Selous Scouts in August, 1976.

Another detainee is Carlos Cardeano, nephew of Pires, Senior, who is claimed to have been deeply involved with the Rhodesian authorities in the creation and early activities of the MNR in the late 1970s.

The Peres family in Lisbon, one member of which used to broadcast in Rhodesia for Africa Livre, the MNR radio station, and also worked as Orlando Cristina's private secretary, apparently has friends in high places. Deputy Prime Minister Mota Pinto by-passed the Portuguese Foreign Ministry in giving direct instructions to Portugal's ambassador to Mozambique, who also covers Tanzania, to secure the release of the detainees from the authorities in Dar es Salaam.

President Nyerere's position is known to be that an attack on Mozambique is tantamount to an attack on Tanzania. He has deplored the fact that anti-Mozambican propaganda and activities were allowed to be launched from Portugal. The four remain in detention.

Deputy Prime Minister Mota Pinto, who is leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), junior partner to Soares's Socialist Party in the Portuguese Government, interfered again in Mozambique's affairs on October 11. His telephone call from Lisbon to Evo Fernandes in Pretoria, urging him to return to Lisbon before agreeing to anything, caused the MNR to withdraw from the trilateral commission set up in terms of the declaration announced in Pretoria on October 3.

The commission, made up of representatives of the Mozambican and South African governments, and of the MNR, was aimed at bringing violence quickly to an end in Mozambique.

Evo Fernandes, who travels on a Portuguese passport, returned to Lisbon where he has been operating for several years as the public face of the MNR.

On the South African side Roelof Botha seems personally committed to making the Nkomati process work, or at least preventing it from being seen to fail. And he is one of the South African ministers who, having been denounced by Jorge Correia, Fernandes's deputy, as being allied with communism in Mozambique, has declared that obstruction of the Nkomati accord damages South Africa's own interest.

It remains to be seen whether those in the South African military who have been most closely connected with the MNR both before and after the signing of the Nkomati accord will feel themselves bound by the Pretoria declaration of October 3.

The fact that on November 3, two civilian planes from South Africa dropped supplies in Zimbabwe in an area close to a part of the Mozambique border where the MNR has operated in the past is a poor omen.

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