

B. AFRICA

South African Radio Accuses Mozambique of Undermining Incomati Accord

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Text of commentary:

The decision by the South African government that work contracts of expatriate Mozambicans should not be renewed after expiry signals a deep-rooted crisis in the two and a half-year old Incomati accord. Mozambicans legally working in South Africa represent a major source of income for their poverty-stricken country. Pretoria's action would seem to be a means of putting pressure on President Samora Machel's government to reconsider its stand on permitting ANC terrorism against South Africa from its territory.

According to a ministerial note, there is evidence of active collaboration with the ANC in Mozambique. That this violation of the Incomati accord has elicited a dramatic response is not surprising. For South Africa it was made clear from the start that an improvement in relations with Mozambique was dependent above all on an explicit acknowledgement that national security was non-negotiable. Foreign Minister Pik Botha warned at the outset of the initiative that finally led to the signing of the accord that its success would be determined by the security issue.

The Incomati accord marked a potential turning point not only in relations between South Africa and Mozambique but for southern Africa as a whole. It provided a framework for a regional dispensation based on recognition of the sovereignty of member-states and a desire to co-exist peacefully and to co-operate in economic development. It also made a not insignificant contribution towards removing the superpower conflict as an element in the affairs of the subcontinent, by averting the prospect of Soviet militarism in Mozambique itself as well as through the ANC. It was on those grounds that Western governments welcomed the agreement and expressed renewed interest in investment aid to the region.

But the essential foundation for the Incomati accord was the acceptance by each party of the legitimate security demands of the other. With that went a commitment not to permit any form of aggressive action against one another. Initially this agreement was satisfactorily upheld. Within months ANC terrorist incidents in South Africa, of which 60 per cent had previously been planned and launched in Mozambique, had declined sharply.

What pressures caused the Mozambique government to change its stance are a matter for debate. Whatever they were, they have evidently led to a degree of co-operation with the ANC that has made a mockery of the Incomati commitment. The future of the accord itself, and its present and potential benefits for Mozambique, now depend on President Machel.