

# Mozambique – South Africa Is it a deal?

The outline of an agreement between Mozambique and South Africa has already taken shape, but difficult negotiations still lie ahead. Can the two countries, with widely differing objectives, find enough in common to reach a lasting settlement. **Colin Legum** reports

THE PRINCIPLE difficulty in the Mozambique and South African negotiations appears to be over methods for monitoring an agreement that would prohibit either side from allowing its territory to be used as a springboard for violence against the other.

But even if agreement is reached on the methods for policing such an agreement, the real test would still come in making the agreement stick. In the end, this depends mainly on building up trust on both sides – the one critical missing element.

Informed Western and African diplomatic observers believe that if South Africa were to take advantage of Mozambique's present severe economic and security problems to strike too hard a bargain they will risk either scuppering the chances of an

agreement altogether, or if they do succeed in getting one, that it would not hold up for long.

However, these diplomatic sources are encouraged by evidence of some flexibility on the side of South Africa's negotiators, who seem to have accepted that it is impossible for President Samora Machel simply to disavow all support for the ANC.

## ANC in Maputo

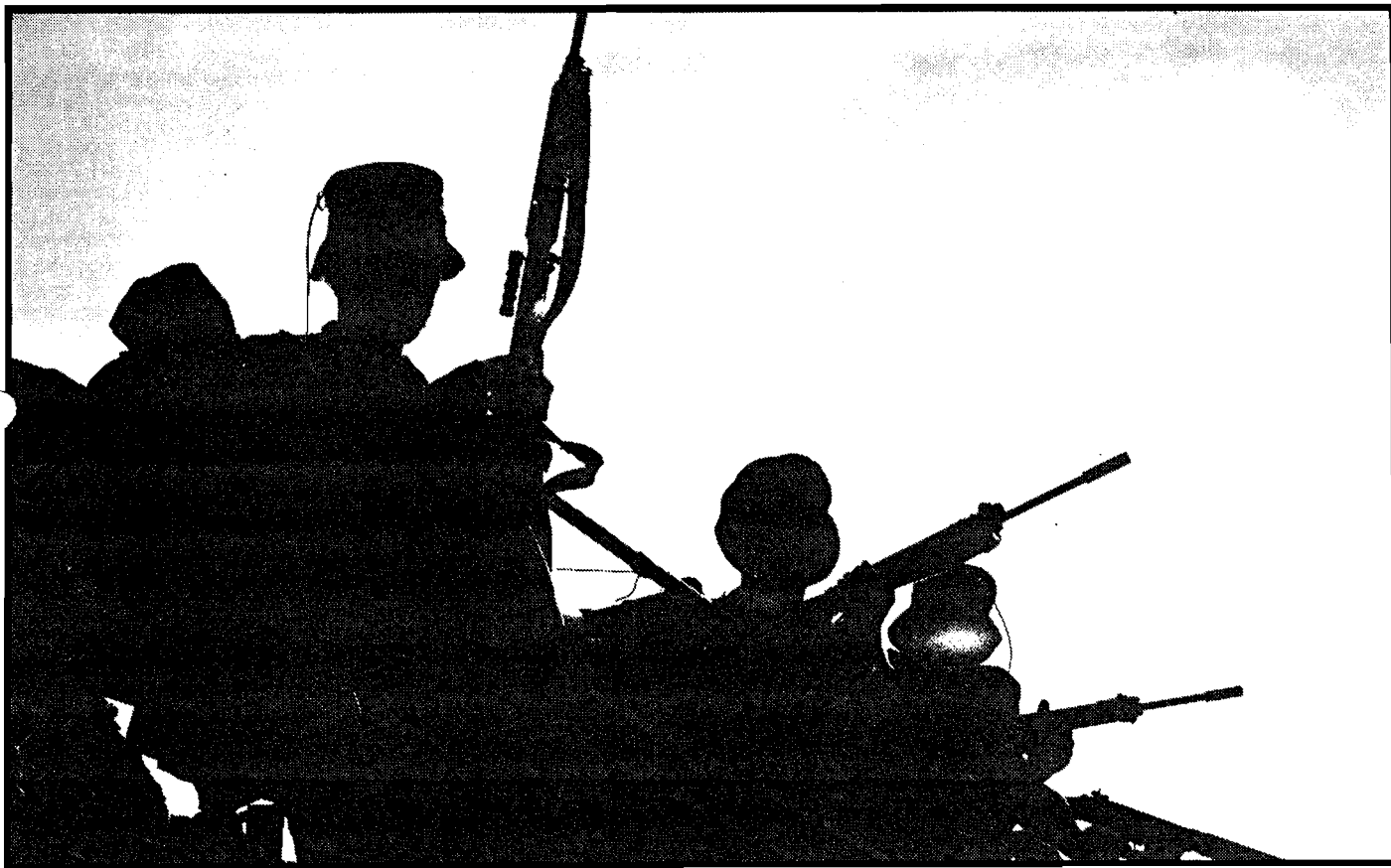
They appear to be willing to accept that the ANC should be allowed to retain a political presence in Maputo by staffing an office there, but that none of its armed cadres should be allowed to transit from Tanzania, or to operate across Mozambique's borders.

Since South Africa with its vast security apparatus finds difficulty in preventing incursions across its own borders, Pretoria recognises that Mozambique with its much slenderer resources cannot always be expected to detect illegal crossings. This leaves open an area for misunderstanding as to whether armed incursions have necessarily been made with the knowledge of the Mozambican authorities.

The problems of monitoring the military side of the agreement are two-sided. The maximum South Africa can hope for is an agreed procedure for investigating complaints that ANC cadres are either poised to cross the border or, if attacks have been made, to establish whether they, in fact, originated from Mozambican territory. South Africa's idea of a joint intelligence operation to monitor the agreement seems to be firmly ruled out in Maputo.

On the other hand, Mozambique is insisting on close inspection of what it firmly believes are the South African Defence Force (SADF) links with the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR). The evidence in their hands about such collaboration ranges from intercepts of literally hundreds of radio messages between MNR transmitters and a radio station located in the Northern Transvaal,

**After failing to impose a military solution, South Africa is using diplomacy to secure its goals in the region.**



to details of drop-flights made by SA Air Force planes. It is not yet clear what measures are proposed, or might be agreed, to monitor the allegations about MNR-SADF connection.

While it has proved relatively easy to get agreement on the economic issues – such as tourism, restoring Beira and Maputo ports as outlets for South African exports, and the future of the energy contract with Cabora Bassa – the key to an overall agreement is how to ensure both sides' security interests without either side sacrificing what each regards as vital political commitments.

Pretoria can, with some justification, claim success for its stick-and-carrot policy. Nobody can doubt the weight of the economic and military stick it has wielded against Mozambique; the question now is how large a carrot it proposes to offer, and how magnanimous it is prepared to be in not attempting to force impossible conditions on Mozambique.

President Machel has come most unwillingly to the negotiating table; but, though ready to negotiate, he does so without any change of heart. He remains as bitterly opposed as ever to the policies of apartheid, and he remains committed to implementing the basic objectives of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), which seeks to lessen the dependence of the border states on

South Africa. Any idea that SADCC will be weakened, or that the importance attached to it by Mozambique and its members will diminish, appear to be inaccurate.

President Machel took other leaders of the African front-line states into his confidence before he embarked on what he regards as a stand-off agreement.

He had the full agreement of his own Politburo to enter into the negotiations, although it seems clear that not all colleagues favour the negotiations. However, if terms are reached acceptable to Machel, there is no possible reason to doubt that he has the authority and power to ensure that they are enforced. He remains the dominant force in FRELIMO.

### Agreement welcome

The other front-line leaders would welcome a viable agreement because it would ease the strains on Mozambique as well as on Zimbabwe; but also because it could facilitate the pending renewed negotiations between South Africa and the Angolan regime in Cape Verde.

President Machel's allies in Southern Africa recognise the very real crisis through which Mozambique is passing. The drought was the final straw that broke the back of the country's economy. Figures are now beginning to emerge showing that as many

as 100,000 Mozambicans have either died or become seriously debilitated because of the drought, while 30,000 more have so far crossed the border into Zimbabwe.

While the MNR offers no serious political challenge to FRELIMO, it has developed a capacity to inflict serious damage to communications and rural development. The Mozambique authorities now admit that the MNR strength has grown to 12,000. While they freely acknowledge that the MNR could not have attracted so much support if it were not for weaknesses in FRELIMO's administration and policies, they insist that MNR could not have developed its military capacity without the support received from the SADF.

Although President Machel shows no sign of loosening his ties with the Soviet bloc, he recognises that no effective economic support can be expected from that quarter. His recent visits to Western Europe were a recognition of the economic realities that Mozambique can expect more from the Western democracies than from the communists. But it does not follow that Machel is yielding an inch in his belief in Marxism.

The future political direction of Mozambique could well be determined by the economic response of the West to its needs, and by the relief, if only temporary, of a stand-off agreement with S. Africa. ■

ALTHOUGH no final decisions have yet been announced about the negotiations for a new agreement between South Africa and Mozambique over economic cooperation and security arrangements, considerable progress has been made.

However, President Samora Machel's FRELIMO government has begun to prepare Mozambicans for the formal announcement of such an agreement; indeed, they have begun to speak in terms of an agreement having already been concluded.

A broadcast by Radio Maputo on 3 February, quoted an official document, which had been circulated to embassies in the capital, listing the damage inflicted by Pretoria as part of its 'global strategy of reducing commercial and economic relations with Mozambique.' The following damage was reported:

- The number of Mozambicans working in South African mines has fallen by almost two-thirds, with the loss of \$568m in remittances; 70,000 workers have become unemployed.

- The most costly factor was the cancellation of the former agreement whereby South Africa paid one-half of miners' wages in gold at official prices. The total loss to Mozambique was estimated at over \$2.6 billion.

- Direct aggression by South Africa and by armed bandits sponsored by the regime has caused \$333m damage. In 1982/83 the

## MOZAMBIQUE EXPLAINS ITS STAND

bandits (i.e. the Mozambique National Resistance – MNR) destroyed 900 rural shops, affecting 4.5m people; almost 500 primary schools, and 86 secondary schools.

- In 1982, alone, the MNR destroyed 130 communal villages with the result that more than 100,000 peasants had lost their property.

- The total cost of 'South African aggression and economic destabilization' was estimated at almost \$4bn – three times more than Mozambique's total indebtedness to Western countries.

Aside from this official account of the havoc wrought by the MNR, the most significant part of the document was in its concluding paragraph which said that:

'The recent agreement with South Africa opens the possibility of economic and stable relations, safety and equality, and mutual benefit, and the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.'

The document concludes that this agreement 'allows us to look to the future with greater hope and confidence.'

Despite this assertion about the existence of an agreement, no announcement has yet been made about such an agreement having been signed; nor have any details been released about its terms.

It is reasonable to assume, though, that agreements reached in the economic field include the renewal of a technical agreement with South Africa to supervise work at the ports of Maputo and Beira in order to restore their capacity to handle South African exports; a new contract to supply electricity from the Cabora-Bassa hydro-electric plant; and plans to expand tourism.

However, strict secrecy is being maintained about measures to be taken by both sides to prevent their territories being used as launching-pads for 'terrorism'. But what seems clear is that President Machel has agreed to closer supervision of the transit of ANC cadres transmitting from their camps in Tanzania; and that the ANC offices at Matolo, near the capital, will be moved further north to Nampula, which is the main military training centre for the Mozambican army.

The South Africans have made a special point of insisting that Joe Slovo, a prominent leader of the ANC and Communist Party, should be expelled from Mozambique. He is Pretoria's *bête noire* because of his close ties with Moscow. The hard evidence is that Joe Slovo had, in fact, left Mozambique more than a year ago. But this evidence seems not to be believed in Pretoria. ■