

Delicate Peace With Apartheid

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On March 16, in the town of Nkomati, on the border between Mozambique and South Africa, representatives of the two countries' governments signed an accord aimed at reducing tensions between them. In addition to promoting mutual security and cooperation on several economic projects, the agreement calls for Mozambique to withdraw its support from the guerrillas of the African National Congress (A.N.C.) and for South Africa to stop directing and supplying rebels seeking the overthrow of Mozambique's government.

Why did Mozambican President Samora Machel, a socialist and revolutionary with impeccable antiapartheid credentials, enter into this pact with Prime Minister P.W. Botha? Explaining the accord to the Permanent Commission of the People's Assembly in the capital city of Maputo on April 5, Machel emphasized the need for détente between countries with different social systems, while reaffirming his government's commitment to "building socialism on the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism." He warned that "rightist opportunists" would try to give a "defeatist content" to the implementation of the agreement and that "leftist opportunists" would use "adventurist ideas and pseudorevolutionary arguments to divide the progressive forces and spread confusion and intrigue."

Machel's success in steering between this political Scylla and Charybdis will depend in part on his government's abili-

ty to defeat the rebels whom Mozambicans call the "armed bandits." Created by Rhodesian intelligence in the late 1970s to harass Machel's Frelimo government for its support of the Zimbabwe rebels, the Mozambique National Resistance (M.N.R.) has been armed, financed and controlled by South Africa. As of March, it operated in nine of Mozambique's ten provinces. Even if South Africa keeps its side of the Nkomati bargain it will take time for the ill-equipped Mozambican troops to regain control of the often inaccessible hinterland.

There were widespread reports in Mozambique that South Africa had sent thousands of heavily armed M.N.R. rebels into the country just before the Nkomati agreement was signed and dropped equipment to them from helicopters. As President Machel put it at a huge political rally, when the tap was turned off "there was already a lot of water in the pipeline." In the months immediately following the accord, the M.N.R. increased its activity, partly to give the impression that it is independent of South Africa.

The rebels have caused considerable damage in Mozambique, but their most crippling blows have been dealt against food shipments to the famine-ridden country. They have cut road and rail lines from Maputo to outlying regions. In Vilanculos, a small town on the Indian Ocean about halfway between the major ports of Maputo and Beira, U.N. officials delivered maize and dried fish on small landing crafts while I was there in late March. Canoes brought the supplies to villages farther along the coast. The M.N.R. had made it impossible to send food by road or rail from Maputo.

Mozambique is not the only country in southern and eastern Africa that has been hit hard by the droughts that lasted from 1980 through 1982, but many Mozambicans



DRAWINGS BY KIMBERLY BULCKEN ROOT

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believe much of the famine in their country is political rather than natural in origin. Although in 1983 Mozambique alerted the world to its crisis, the Rome-based World Food Program (W.F.P.) confined aid to Maputo province, ignoring the more devastated Inhambane and Gaza provinces, where the M.N.R. was active. Until last October, when President Machel traveled to Western Europe to plead for help, Western countries had viewed the M.N.R. destabilization as purely an internal problem. Machel's requests were interpreted as a sign that he was turning away from the Soviet Union and was therefore worthy of assistance. Aid began to pour in.

Even so, Mozambique has not been getting all the food it needs. Of the 550,000 tons of cereals the country would require in 1983 and 1984, only 338,000 tons had been pledged by the end of March, according to U.N. officials, and an even smaller amount had been delivered. They estimate that Mozambique will need an additional 28,000 tons of food a month until the middle of next year, as well as help in the form of fishhooks, seeds and money to pay for new railway tracks and irrigation systems. No one is sure how many Mozambicans have become sick or gone hungry as a result of the drought, and the M.N.R.'s destabilization efforts, but a joint task force established by two U.N. agencies—the W.F.P. and the Food and Agriculture Organization—estimates that more than 4.5 million of the country's 13 million people have been affected, 1.4 million of them seriously. And neighboring Zimbabwe says that some 60,000 Mozambicans have fled across its border and are being cared for in refugee camps established by the government and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

But even if the famine is ended, troubling questions will remain for Mozambique. What social and political price will it have to pay for peace and a chance to reconstruct its economy? A critical factor will be Mozambique's ability to renegotiate its foreign debt—estimated to be \$2.5 billion owed to Western banks and to commercial suppliers in Brazil and Europe—without bringing down the heavy-handed intervention of the International Monetary Fund. Another is the pressure South Africa may exert in return for the investments it is already making in shipping and hotels. According to C.W. Fiddian-Green, chairman and chief executive officer of Rennies Shipping Company of South Africa, about 1 million tons of South African goods will move through the port of Maputo before the year's end. Under the Portuguese, Maputo was a favorite vacation spot for South Africans; now the city's virtually empty hotels are being refurbished in anticipation of an influx of tourists. Some Mozambicans fear that Machel will not be able to control the "rightist opportunists" who yearn for the good old days under the Portuguese.

In March Mozambique began keeping its side of the Nkomati bargain by raiding the Maputo homes of members of the African National Congress of South Africa, driving some of them into Swaziland, where many are rounded up and turned over to South Africa. Mozambique never provided bases for the A.N.C., whose military wing, Spear of the Nation, numbers 8,000 to 10,000 trained soldiers, but it

transported fighters trained in Tanzania and offered sanctuary to A.N.C. guerrillas following their attacks inside South Africa. The Nkomati accord will change the nature of the A.N.C.'s struggle against apartheid, forcing it to operate inside South Africa rather than from neighboring countries. But as one A.N.C. official in Lusaka, Zambia, put it, "When we were outlawed in the sixties [then South African Prime Minister John] Vorster boasted that we were finished. We were not, and we are not finished now, either."

Many of Mozambique's friends sympathize with the circumstances that forced it into the Nkomati agreement. Their concern is that "leftist opportunists" may denounce Machel and drive him deeper into the arms of South Africa. Indeed, the United States should help Mozambique free itself from the "unwanted embrace," as a U.N. ambassador from East Africa told me recently. □