

Mozambique: Redefining the Struggle

Mozambique's Minister of Information, José Luis Cabaço, spoke to AFRICASIA when he was in Paris about the Nkomati Agreement.

By Augusta Conchiglia

"If South Africa does not renege on the undertakings it made at Nkomati, by 1985 we shall have re-established peace in our country," affirmed the Mozambique Information Minister, José Luis Cabaço, on May 8.

Moreover, added the minister, for the moment, the Mozambican government has no reason to suggest that the South Africans are not respecting the March 16 agreement, although Maputo is fully conscious that the process of "détente" begun at Nkomati remains very fragile. He did not, however, explain why many of the facilities for logistic support given to the MNR on South African territory have not yet been dismantled.

Correcting the erroneous impression that the counter-revolutionary organization has recently increased its combat potential, Luis Cabaço explained that the bandits have merely concentrated all their forces on regions close to the capital. They aim to carry out hit-and-run actions—such as the sabotage of the electric lines serving Maputo and its industrial zone—destined to have a psychological impact on the population and internationally.

While it is still too early to declare that the South Africans have really abandoned their destabilization policy against their neighbours, "one must nonetheless assess the unfavourable political and economic effects which this policy has had on South Africa until now," said the minister. "This is why, in our opinion, it appears that South Africa is interested in establishing a modus vivendi with the nations of the region. It is for this reason that we affirm that the very serious difficulties facing our country are not the only key for an interpretation of the Nkomati agreement. South Africa's implicit admission of the failure of its policy of confrontation represents a victory for us."

Cabaço also expressed his conviction that only a definitive decision to accept a peaceful solution for Namibian independence would be proof of a real change in Pretoria's attitude, "the more so since the Nkomati agreement was not unanimously

approved by those in power in South Africa."

"In particular," he continued, "the prime minister's choice in favour of peace does not appear to us to be shared by the military." This contradiction would seem to explain the infiltration into Mozambique of some 1,200 MNR people on the eve of the signing of the Nkomati agreement. "However, deprived of outside help, the MNR has no chance of resisting our army since it cannot count on any support from the local population. The future economic development of the country depends on the elimination of these bandits. This was stressed by the Central Committee of the Frelimo-Party in April. It is a question of strategic importance for all the countries which have been the victims of South African aggression. The heads of state of the Frontline states (including President Samora Machel) met in Arusha on April 29 to reaffirm their solidarity with the liberation movements of Namibia and South Africa and made an appeal for 'concrete support for the efforts of the Frontline states to consolidate their independence and their fragile economies.'"

Mozambique's economic plight is certainly dramatic. Besides the destruction caused by the insidious war directed by Pretoria, which has caused damage evaluated by the United Nations at \$565 million,

Information Minister Cabaço



recently there have been grave natural disasters. Furthermore, there is an extraordinary degree of economic dependence on South Africa inherited from the colonial administration. "Since South Africa has introduced as sanctions the reduction of its products passing through our country, we have experienced a loss of \$2.8 billion, or more than twice the amount of our present foreign debt," points out Minister Cabaço.

Mozambique makes no secret of its objective to "recover this source of revenue," but insists that this will not be "at any price."

The negotiations between Maputo and Pretoria leading to the Nkomati Agreement produced the paradoxical situation where the economic and social development of a revolutionary African country will largely depend upon the willingness of South Africa to cooperate honestly. One cannot ignore, either, the great advantage reaped by the Pretoria regime from the agreement with Maputo which today permits P.W. Botha to visit several European capitals in an attempt to legitimize his regime's repugnant apartheid policy and to be welcomed as a "democrat" by the Western democracies. The hope of ending South Africa's diplomatic isolation may have been well worth the so-called concessions made by Pretoria at Nkomati.

However, the hope that realism will finally prevail among the leaders of South Africa seems to be shared by all the Frontline states who declared at Arusha that "the objective remains the abolition of apartheid by all means, though preferably peaceful."

Free Discussions

Literally, this would imply free discussions between the present South African regime and the legitimate representatives of the South African people. To begin with, Nelson Mandela, leader of the ANC and symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle, must be freed. The struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa has already taken on "peaceful" forms—the very difficult union struggles (in 1983 almost half a million black workers became members of the very recently legalized unions), social struggles as well as resistance against deportation to the bantustans have had a significant impact on the system of apartheid. These victories, however, cannot be separated from the armed struggle of the ANC. Its action and its presence in all forms of the struggle against the apartheid system gives the ANC its strength and popularity. Just as South Africa attacked the strategic economic centers of the independent nations of the region, by striking at the vital economic interests of the minority racist regime, the South African people hope to gain recognition of their fundamental rights. ▲▲▲

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