

Sweet taste after accord is beginning to turn sour

IS THE Nkomati Accord turning sour? If South African Prime Minister P W Botha had set off on his grand European tour on March 17 — the day after the signing of the Mozambique accord — he might have had a somewhat more enthusiastic reception than the one he will experience in June when the tour actually takes place.

The reason is that since that momentous day in March — when not only Mozambique but all the Frontline States acknowledged, publicly or privately, that henceforth the dream of becoming economically independent of South Africa was over — the accord has turned a little sour.

The first, euphoric phase of the accord is over and once again the reality is with us of just how difficult it is to get the lion to lie down with the lamb.

The paradox of Southern Africa is that, economically, it is the most natural thing in the world for developed South Africa to be integrated with its undeveloped neighbours, but that politically integration jars everyone's nerves.

The Nkomati Accord, and similar ones that might follow, have a solid economic foundation that could make them durable and productive but political interests run exactly counter to these natural economic lines. This is where the accord has begun to stumble.

South Africa-watchers in Western Europe are observing the developments in Southern Africa with intense interest. As they see it, Pretoria would be crazy to jeopardise the gains it has already made and the even more substantial gains that lie ahead in the future.

I have tried to identify these gains, as they are seen from London, and have come up with the following tabulations:

- The savings in lives and money by switching from destabilisation to negotiation.
- The potential for economic growth in the whole area and the furtherance of Pretoria's vision of a constellation of Southern African states, under a dominant South African economy.
- The enfeeblement of the Southern African Development and Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) which set out four years ago to make South Africa's black neighbours independent of South Africa.
- The "regionalisation" of Southern Africa's problems, with the prospect increasingly of excluding the UN, the OAU and other foreign organisations and countries from the deliberations on Southern Africa's future.
- The stranding of the ANC and the identity crisis into which the organisation will be plunged in South Africa itself, leading to increasing internal tensions.
- The possible "pacification", at least temporarily, of the internal black struggle in South Africa as the ANC turns to legal forms of struggle, like trade unions, to realise its aims.

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MR ROBERT MUGABE
Forced to negotiate?

- The emergence in a dramatic form of a fundamental conflict of interests between the ANC, committed to armed struggle, and the Frontline States, urgently seeking peace and stability.
- The emergence of a further conflict of interests between the UN, OAU, and international anti-apartheid organisations and individuals, seeking South Africa's isolation, on the one side and on the other, the Frontline States moving towards the ending of isolation.
- The consequent, partial demotivation of the international anti-apartheid crusade, starting in Africa and spreading to the rest of the world.
- A significant improvement in South Africa's political credit rating among all the countries which favour evolutionary rather than revolutionary change in South Africa.
- A setback to the international sanctions campaign, because the more South Africa's black neighbours are drawn into South Africa's economic orbit, the more difficult it will be to confine the effect of sanctions within South Africa's borders.
- A blow both to communism (or African Socialism) and to Soviet influence in Africa, because in its hour of need the Marxist state of Mozambique was forced to turn to the West for succour.
- Finally, the consolidation of the relationship of "constructive engagement" with United States administration.

This, as many people in the UK see it, is a formidable scorecard, but everything depends on the fundamental aim of peace and stability being achieved in Southern Africa. Without peace and stability, all the accords, spoken and unspoken, will wither on the bough.

At the time of the Mozambique accord, it seemed as if all the other dominos would fall over as well. Certainly, every one of South Africa's black neighbours expressed not merely approval, but enthusiasm for

the enthusiasm, for the new peace and stability that appeared to be dawning in Southern Africa.

But it has not worked out that way. Not a day passes now without the Zimbabweans accusing South Africa — with precise if alleged detail — of destabilisation in Matabeleland. In Lesotho there is an unshakable fear that Pretoria is plotting, with the six funding members of the United Democratic Alliance, to seize power at the next elections. In Botswana there are ominous rumours of subversion in the army and of South African agents at work.

In Mozambique itself, the Mozambique resistance movement is as hard at work as ever while on the other side of the continent, Angola accuses South Africa of trying to push Unita into an Angolan "government of national reconciliation" and of stalling over Namibia to keep out Sam Nujoma.

Possibly, Pretoria has not reverted to the bad old days when destabilisations was an end in itself and is still responding to the advice the Crocker team gave it that, if destabilisation was a fact of life, it should be a means to an end — the end being negotiation and non-aggression treaties.

In that case, then Pretoria may get away with whatever it is up to, because however much Western governments deplore destabilisation, they differentiate between methods and results and they will not object if the results are accords like Nkomati.

But it is a dangerous game and Mr Botha has timed his Western European visit when the game is entering a particularly dangerous phase. Pretoria pulled it off once in Mozambique, but this is no assurance that it can pull it off twice, or three times, or four times, in some other country. There are limits beyond which a country cannot be pushed, without producing unexpected reactions.

The presumption must be made that if South Africa is engaged in the destabilisation of Matabeleland, the purpose is to force Zimbabwean Prime Minister Mr Robert Mugabe to negotiate for a Mozambique-type accord and not to overthrow him and replace him with someone of their own liking.

The political legitimacy of a country's ruler is important: If Pretoria is to have new partners, they must at least have leadership legitimacy in their own countries, otherwise there can be no durable peace and stability.

If Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, Angola and Namibia all still have to be licked more commandingly into line, this could take a long time and the chances of something going wrong would be high.

Does Mr Botha know what he is doing? He should have his answers ready, because he will be asked about these matters when he visits Western Europe in June.