

# South Africa Hints It's Mediating Between Mozambique and Rebels

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By ALAN COWELL

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JOHANNESBURG, Sept. 28 — South Africa has indicated that it is acting as a mediator between Mozambique's avowedly Marxist Government and the rebellious army seeking to unseat it, which is said to be seeking a cease-fire.

In statements in the last two days, South Africa's Foreign Minister, Rieff F. Botha, has said delegations from the two sides are in Pretoria. There has been no suggestion that they have held face-to-face meetings.

The leader of the rebellious Mozambique National Resistance, Alfonso Dhlakama, has told South African radio that "I have to come South Africa to try to negotiate a cease-fire arrangement with Mozambique."

The Mozambican Government delegation is led by Jacinto Veloso, a minister in the office of President Samora M. Machel and the Mozambican figure most frequently in contact with Pretoria. According to the official Mozambique press agency, he told reporters before leaving Maputo on Thursday that continuing rebel activities could "seriously endanger" an accord signed last March 16 between Mozambique and South Africa, committing both sides to withholding support from each other's internal foes.

## Another Problem for Pretoria

The agreement, under which Mozambique expelled hundreds of members of the outlawed African National Congress, has produced "no practical results" for President Machel, Mr. Veloso said. The comments seemed further to highlight blemishes in South African foreign policy, which reached a zenith only a few months ago.

In March, President P. W. Botha, then Prime Minister, secured an accord with President Machel that would once have seemed unthinkable, since it brought together Africa's last white supremacist regime with one of its most ardent opponents.

A month before, South Africa had signed an agreement with Angola, establishing an unprecedented joint military force to rid southern Angola of anti-South African insurgents and oversee a South African disengagement of force. In June, Mr. Botha visited West European countries, including Britain, on a tour that was interpreted in South Africa as a breakthrough from isolation and a kind of endorsement of the limited changes Mr. Botha has intro-

duced in his racially divided nation.

## A Change in the Outlook

The image, these days, is different. The joint South African-Angolan force has been bogged down for months, north of the border between South-West Africa and Angola.

The enthusiastic talk of an impending settlement of South-West Africa's long-running war is now muted. The gains Mr. Botha achieved in Britain — historically and economically an important, if ambiguous, partner — appear to have been canceled by the bitter dispute that has surrounded six political fugitives who have taken refuge in the British Consulate in Durban.

Moreover, the picture South Africa sought to present earlier this year — of a benevolent godfather in a region of strife — seems offset by the failure of its initiatives with black-ruled neighbors like Angola and Mozambique to produce clear results, permitting the re-emergence of more traditional suspicions about South Africa's intentions toward its neighbors.

## Conflict Has Widened

In the dispute with Britain, in which South Africa has withdrawn a commitment to extradite four of its nationals wanted on arms-smuggling charges, Foreign Minister Botha has compared the episode in international diplomacy to neighbors' throwing rocks through one another's windows.

Under the March 16 agreement with Mozambique, South Africa was supposed to withdraw the support it has given to the Mozambique National Resistance since the collapse of the rebels' erstwhile white Rhodesian mentors with Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. The conflict in Mozambique, however, has widened, prompting some Mozambican officials to suggest that unidentified elements in the South African Army are continuing to provide support for the rebels. South Africa has denied that.

Until now, Mozambique's official and public line has been to show patience, but Mr. Veloso's comments seemed to indicate that this is running out. President Machel, Western diplomats said, needs to show results from the accord to offset the criticism he courted among black African peers by signing it. More important, the insurgency, now in its seventh year, has augmented other problems crippling his economy. There was no word tonight on the outcome of the talks.