

Heart of darkness

The more government tries to explain away numerous breaches of the Nkomati Accord, so much darker and tangled does this abrogation of bilateral trust become.

After this week's effort by SA Defence Force chief General Constand Viljoen to clear his name and that of the SADF, only one thing is certain: the tension between the SADF and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and their respective Cabinet ministers has reached breaking point.

Parallels are already being drawn between government's handling of the Nkomati debacle and the French government's handling of the Greenpeace *Rainbow Warrior* affair.

Viljoen told a Press conference at SADF headquarters he was not disloyal to SA or to the Cabinet, and that the SADF accepted the "change of strategy" vis-à-vis the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR) after the Nkomati Accord of March 16 last year. He accused "elements" in the Frelimo government of engaging in "psychological warfare" against the SADF, and said these elements were being aided by the intelligence services of the Communist bloc.

He said of the MNR diary found by Frelimo at a rebel base that many of its facts were correct, but some of the information had been slanted (*verdraai*) and some of its contents could even have been forged.

However, Viljoen also admitted that Foreign Minister Pik Botha had on more than one occasion not been informed about SADF moves in Mozambique — some of them many months after Nkomati.

Most puzzling of all, he restated that he did not inform his own minister, Defence Minister Magnus Malan, or Botha, about Deputy Foreign Minister Louis Nel's visit to the principal MNR base at Gorongosa, deep in central Mozambique.

Viljoen contradicted some of Pik Botha's explanations at his last press conference, and said he would not agree with Botha that there were "technical violations" of the Nkomati Accord. He also criticised the DFA's handling of the peace talks between the MNR and Frelimo in October last year.

The burning question in political circles is precisely where State President P.W. Botha stands on this issue. Viljoen's statement this week that he had the "State President's permission" to put his side of the case could mean P.W. Botha is more in sympathy with the SADF. This is also indicated by his statement last week that he trusts Viljoen "unquestioningly".

Another theory is that the President fears the extent to which the Conservative Party will exploit the issue the moment he takes disciplinary action against the SADF. CP defence spokesman Koos van der Merwe's attitude seems to support this: He told the *FM* of his belief that no SADF officer had behaved wrongly. All blame "for this scandal, bigger than the Info scandal" must rest with the two Bothas and Malan, he said.

Advancing proof that the SADF was not aiding MNR, Viljoen disclosed that the SADF had given the Mozambique army several vehicles and equipment worth some R4m; that he had proposed SADF patrols on the Ressano Garcia-Maputo road to ensure safer travel between SA and Mozambique; and that the SA Air Force would photograph the Cahora Bassa powerline from the air to assist ground repair teams. These last suggestions had been rejected by the govern-

ment of President Samora Machel, he said.

Viljoen said that after the failure of the Pretoria talks he had again advised government that the only way to achieve peace in Mozambique was to effect an immediate ceasefire pending "settlement" talks. SA Military Intelligence officers arranged a secret meeting in Europe between Frelimo and MNR which they hoped would result in a "Camp David"-type accord at a remote SA base. Deputy Minister Nel would officiate, Viljoen said, and he had been instructed by Malan to assist the Deputy Minister.

Viljoen sent an advance party of officers — among them Colonel Charles van Niekerk who is referred to in the *Vaz*-diaries that exposed SA's continued involvement with MNR (*FM* October 4) — to prepare the way for Nel's excursion to Gorongosa in May this year. He told Nel the principle of "need to know" had to be applied if the talks were to have any chance of success. For this reason, he said, Pik Botha was not informed.

Pressed on this point during question time, Viljoen said the protocol of how the meeting would be arranged had not been decided by him, "although I will admit I told Nel he must not talk too much too early".

The reason Malan had not been informed, Viljoen said, was that he had "a very good understanding" with his minister.

Botha's explanation a few weeks ago of why Nel had not told him about the meeting was that the Deputy Minister had feared Botha would refuse permission, arguably because it would be too dangerous for him to fly to Gorongosa. However, Viljoen says he sent a squad of paratroopers to secure the area a few days before Nel's visit.

One of the documents found at Gorongosa said Colonel Van Niekerk told MNR leader Alfonso Dlakhamba that "his (Nel's) coming here would be without the knowledge of his chief Pick (sic) Botha".

More questions hang over Nel's role (he was put in charge of the State President's new Information Bureau shortly before the allegations were made) and that of Deputy Minister of Defence and Police Adriaan Vlok.

For example, Van Niekerk reportedly told Dlakhamba: "Renamo must never guarantee to Louis Nel that he can come here alone. You must give him to understand that should he need to come here, it is necessary for the military to come here first ... General Viljoen (Viljoen) will send the head of the army with Louis Nel, or the Deputy Minister of Defence and Police who is 100% in favour of Renamo. The basic idea is for the military to get influence over Louis Nel."

Evidence of the Foreign Minister's suspicions about the SADF's role also comes from the diary of the MNR's Major Vaz. On August 15 last year he wrote: "Pick (sic) Botha wants to remove the military as intermediaries between Frelimo and Renamo, for him to be the one to serve in our negotiations with Frelimo, he even asked to be chairman of the negotiations."

The Gorongosa documents also mention an Angolan connection — "100 MNR specialist soldiers who are in the hands of SA. Of the 100 men, two died struck down by the Angolans, three are prisoners, 30 in Namibia, 65 in Parabolwa. Out of these 75 are paratroopers."

Asked about this, Viljoen said he "would check" but as far as he knew no MNR soldiers were sent to Namibia or Angola. 