

DEVELOPMENTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

After Angola and Namibia, the next southern African peace talks are likely to be about Mozambique. Last week, South Africa's director general of foreign affairs, Mr Neil van Heerden, said it had become vitally important for South Africa to settle the Mozambique conflict. Mozambique is already in indirect contact with the MNR rebels and this could lead to indirect talks, if the MNR stopped fighting — at least temporarily. If the MNR leader, Mr Alfonso Dhlakama, agreed to retire to South Africa or elsewhere, there would be little problem in expanding the present amnesty into a full re-integration programme.

There is a precedent for this: in 1982 the government granted full civil rights to tens of thousands of Mozambicans who had actively collaborated with the Portuguese against Frelimo during the liberation war. It would also be possible to give MNR leaders posts in district or provincial governments. If pressed, Frelimo might even allow a former MNR official on a national level. But as in

Angola, all of this depends on ending South African support to the rebels. Until that happens, there can be no end to the fighting.

South Africa's involvement in Angola and Namibia was deep and expensive. Its involvement in Mozambique is much less costly. South Africa has contributed few of its own ground troops, and the Mozambican army is weaker than Angola's with much less foreign support. Pretoria is not under the same financial and military pressure in Mozambique that it was in Angola. The cost to Pretoria of destabilisation of Mozambique is so low, and the process so successful, that it may take more to convince South Africa to drop the MNR. Pretoria has already indicated three further demands: curbing anti-apartheid rhetoric, help in blocking international sanctions and allowing economic penetration.

The South African deputy Minister of Defence, Mr WN Breytenbach, warned Frelimo in November that 'the export of revolution to South Africa', whether in the form of physical violence and terrorism, or in the form of propaganda and disinformation, is unacceptable.' Particularly unacceptable, he said, was the continued claim that South Africa was destabilising its neighbours. Thus demand number one is a curb on criticism of the South African Government and apartheid. Pretoria also wants Mozambique to become a buffer against stepped-up sanctions. It might try to get the use of Maputo port for sanctions busting, and new economic links with Mozambique might be viewed as an excuse not to impose new sanctions. Pretoria has already made demands in private that aid designated for post-war rebuilding of Mozambique be channelled through South Africa and South African companies.

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