

Mozambican peace initiative a tough task

What was accomplished last year in the negotiations brokered by the United States was agreement on the withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola and on the implementation of the independence process in Namibia.

There has been no reconciliation between the MPLA government and the Unita rebels in Angola which could be used as an example for a reconciliation in Mozambique between the Frelimo government and the MNR rebels.

Unlike the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), Unita has long-standing and respectable credentials as a liberation movement as well as clear policies and a strong leadership.

SHADY ORIGINS

The Mozambican rebel group, on the other hand, has shady origins, a little-known leader and vague policies and objectives. It has in addition been accused of widespread and ferocious atrocities.

It is therefore unclear what role Mr Botha envisages for the United States in Mozambique.

The Frelimo government will, however, come under increasing pressure this year to reach a settlement with the MNR, but indications are that for the moment no negotiations are in sight.

There has been no comment from the Mozambican authorities on Mr Botha's statement, but it is

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Foreign Minister Mr Pik Botha's proposal for the United States to mediate in the conflict in Mozambique as it did in the Angola-Namibia dispute is puzzling in at least one major respect. This is that there is no clear parallel between the situation in Mozambique and that in Angola.

unlikely that the Frelimo authorities will at this stage agree to any direct negotiations with the MNR.

"We will not talk to murderers," President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique said late last year.

Last month, he told foreign diplomats in Maputo that his government expected South Africa to accept its historic responsibility by helping dismantle the MNR rebel operation, but reiterated his stance that there could be no negotiations with the MNR.

There are, however, signs that the Mozambican government is having to adopt a more flexible attitude towards a negotiated settlement of the war.

The authorities have confirmed that they supported the forma-



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tion of a contact group made up of representatives from the Mozambican churches who are talking to the MNR about ways to end the war.

However, the Minister of Justice, Mr Ali Dauto, said the church group's objective was only to explain to the MNR the terms of the amnesty which President Chissano extended for another year in December.

It was nevertheless the first time that the Mozambican government had admitted the possibility of indirect contacts with

the MNR.

Pressure for the Mozambican government to come to some sort of accommodation is also coming from Mozambique's allies.

In November, Tanzania withdrew its army contingent from Mozambique, saying the soldiers had accomplished their mission.

However, some diplomats said Tanzania could no longer afford the costs of keeping thousands of men in Mozambique and other reports said the Tanzanian government had been infuriated by President Chissano's decision to

meet President Botha and to reactivate the Nkomati Accord.

In November, the Soviet ambassador to Mozambique, Mr Nikolay Dybenko, caused shock waves in the Maputo diplomatic community when he said that the Soviet government was not going to increase its military aid to Maputo.

At the same time, Zimbabwe, which has thousands of troops in Mozambique, is coming under increasing pressure as the MNR extends its areas of operations to the Zimbabwean border regions.

DETERIORATING

The Zimbabwe government says, however, it has no intention of leaving Mozambique. But sources in Harare said last month that pressures on the Mozambican government to seek a peace agreement were likely to increase this year. The situation in certain areas of Mozambique was, in fact, deteriorating.

The Frelimo leadership appears to be united and President Chissano is firmly in control.

There have been no changes in the Frelimo Party hierarchy since President Chissano succeeded President Samora Machel more than two years ago and although a party congress later this year is expected to introduce formal changes in the party's ideological and economic policies, no leadership changes are expected.