

Pretoria, Maputo agree to reactivate security pact

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MAPUTO—Is South Africa willing at last to curb its surrogate force, the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), which has wreaked havoc on this country? The possibility emerged last week when Mozambique and South Africa agreed to revive the dormant Nkomati accord, the 1984 nonaggression pact between the two countries. Specifically, Maputo and Pretoria decided to reactivate the joint security commission originally established under the accord.

This was the main topic on the agenda of the Mozambique-South Africa "Liaison Committee" meeting held here May 25. The two sides agreed that the full joint security commission should be convened "at the earliest possible date."

THE DISMAL RECORD

The security commission collapsed in mid-1985 in the wake of revelations of South Africa's massive violations of the non-aggression treaty. Diaries and notebooks captured when Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces overran the MNR headquarters in the central district of Gorongosa showed conclusively that the South African military had deliberately flouted the agreement and had continued to pump weaponry into the MNR. When the late Mozambican President Samora Machel confronted apartheid Foreign Minister Roelof Botha with this evidence in September 1985, Botha was forced to admit that the documents were genuine.

At a press conference two weeks later the then-Security Minister Sergio Vieira explained that it had become "practically impossible" for the joint security commission to function. "The commission was conceived as functioning on the basis of observance of the accord," he said. "When the other party, in a deliberate, premeditated and large-scale way, decides not to observe the accord, it is obvious that the joint security commission becomes impotent and cannot function."

By PAUL FAUVET
Special to the Guardian

The reestablishment of the security commission thus indicates that Mozambique has grounds to believe that South Africa may be forced to implement its side of the Nkomati accord. In the aftermath of the recent U.S. State Department report on MNR atrocities, Pretoria has been under heavy international pressure to drop the rebels. It also appears that the price for any summit meeting between South African President P.W. Botha and Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano would be some clear evidence that the South African government is pulling the plug on the MNR.

MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS

The delegations that met in Maputo last week were highly military in character. The Mozambican side was led by the commander of the army, Lt. Gen. Tobias Dai, while the head of the South African delegation, Niel Van Heerden, director general of the Foreign Affairs Department, is generally viewed as a stooge of the South African military.

South African army head Gen. A.J. Liebenberg, also attended. Liebenberg has a longstanding connection with the MNR. He used to run South Africa's "Special Forces," which were deeply implicated in the training and supplying of the MNR. Liebenberg was one of the generals present at a meeting with MNR leaders in Pretoria in February 1984 that plotted how the military would circumvent any agreement between Mozambique and South Africa, and would carry on aiding the rebels.

The communique from the Maputo meeting was as bland and uninformative as such official documents normally are. It said that the two sides "addressed the fundamental question of the implementation of the Nkomati accord and in particular spoke frankly about security problems and aspects of internal stability in the two countries."