

THE disc jockey at the mini-golf club on the Maputo beachfront speaks Portuguese with an American twang.

Hordes of people and mosquitoes dance together under disco-lights to the beat of *Modern Talking*, while chauffeurs wait outside in BMW's for their partying bosses.

Last week, one of those "bosses" was Mota Lopez, host to 14 Afrikaans students from the universities of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth and the Orange Free State who were on an eight-day visit to "Marxist-Leninist" Mozambique. "This," he said, stretching out his arms, "is socialism".

One could not tell by his smile whether he was joking.

In the bustling centre of Maputo, there are few signs of government control of commerce. Although it is illegal, hawkers sell food and cigarettes on virtually every street corner. Business people, waiting impatiently for government promises to move towards a less-controlled economy, sell anything from food and household appliances to curios.

A year ago, Mozambicans say, shop-windows were empty and people queued for bread.

Now it seems easy to live in the city centre without realising that you are in one of the world's poorest countries. However, one is still confronted by the effects of the devastating war, more so than a white South African in one's own country.

The vast shanty towns of Maputo spread directly from the city centre, separated only by green belts where farmers in collectives produce food for the city.

Large numbers of rural inhabitants flock to the city each year, building reed huts or corrugated iron shacks in the ever-expanding refugee camps. These dwellings are more spacious than those of Crossroads in Cape Town — and they're legal.

During our short visit, we became acutely aware of the international isolation of South Africa. Mozambique receives aid from, among others, the USA, Britain and the Soviet Union.

An international fair had just finished when we arrived and preparations for the Pope's visit were in full swing. An international fun run in aid of Unicef was held in the streets of Maputo. The Zambian and Tanzanian soccer teams played at Independence Day celebrations.

The highlight of these celebrations was a soccer match between what was the official soccer team of colonial Mo-

A Matie in Maputo

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A group of Afrikaans students visit Maputo ... and have their preconceptions scrambled

By TANJA HICHERT of Stellenbosch, one of 14 students who returned from Mozambique this week

zambique and the "Veterans of the Revolution", captained by none other than President Joachim Chissano. One could only imagine South African Minister of Defence Magnus Malan and his former cabinet colleagues playing a friendly rugby game against the ANC central committee in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Such prospects seemed closer when one of the ANC representatives in Mozambique greeted us in Afrikaans. "*Ek moet dit oefen*," said Tommy Ndlela. "*Ek kry maar min kans om Afrikaans hier te praat*." He suggested an Afrikaans translation of the ANC: *Die Afrikanse Nasionale Kongres*.

The ANC officials' views seemed surprisingly moderate, even when one takes into account that they were being very diplomatic.

One only has to go to Kaya Mandi, the township outside Stellenbosch, to hear the same sort of things being said, and to hear opinions to the left of the ANC. We heard the same views on the October 26 elections that one hears from extra-parliamentary organisations in South Africa, and we were able to hear their direct answers to questions on the armed struggle and the bombing of "soft targets".

It was stated categorically that it was not official ANC policy to attack "soft targets". This was a surprise. The explanation given was that the ANC does not have complete control over all its cadres.

One member of our group said afterwards that he had had preconceived ideas and had expected to meet archetypal "terrorists".

To some of us their position seemed tragic. We had never thought of ANC members as people who would rather not be in exile. During our second meet-

ing, while we shared some beers and spoke to people individually, we realised some of them had not seen their families since 1976.

They, being good diplomats, never questioned our *bone fides*, but we had to answer some questions. They were interested in the state of affairs on Afrikaans campuses and in hearing how the ANC was perceived by Afrikaners generally.

We could only explain how outraged people were after every bomb and how successful was government propaganda about the ANC.

The ANC officials held no bitterness towards Frelimo for signing the Nkomati Accord, which allows only 10 ANC representatives in Mozambique. According to them, there had never been an ANC military base in

Mozambique.

However, the bitterness in the Frelimo government over South African violations of Nkomati was very clear. "The Nkomati Accord was useless in all aspects except one," said Sergio Vieira, member of the Frelimo central committee and former minister of state security. "It has shown the whole world that South Africa is a destabilising force in the sub-continent."

It is this that induced Chissano talk to Botha again last week, he said. "Every commitment given by South Africa is another nail in its diplomatic coffin, because it cannot keep its promises, even if it tries."

Soviet diplomats — with cans of Lion Lager in their hands — condemned Renamo atrocities and South African involvement with the rebel organisation. But it was more surprising to hear this reiterated by the Swedish ambassador, international welfare organisations and foreign journalists.

Even the US ambassador, Melissa Wells, showed a hint of scepticism about South Africa honouring the accord. "We have detected a pattern of support for Renamo, even after the Nkomati Accord," she said. "Where this support comes from is another question."

All of these people confirm that Renamo has destroyed 800 health centres and 2 629 primary schools and killed more than 400 teachers in Mozambique.

And they all agree that Mozambique would have the potential of becoming, in Wells' words, "the California of Africa" if it was allowed to develop peacefully.

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