

MOZAMBIQUE

The old Eastern flank

MOZAMBIQUE'S assumption of the responsibilities of a frontline state in southern Africa predates its accession to independence in June 1975. It was the high point of Frelimo's armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial administration in the country that enabled the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe to develop a serious and systematic character in 1972.

Then, Frelimo guerrillas had consolidated their offensive against the Portuguese army in Mozambique's north-western province of Tete, at the same time introducing a new, important front and providing logistical advice for ZANU guerrillas. The Rhodesians then combined with the Portuguese in battle, and Frelimo with ZANU. Mozambicans were already transforming their victories into a bulwark for the struggle against minority rule in Zimbabwe.

With independence, the process was completed: no longer would the minority regime in Salisbury find succour from Mozambique as it had done during the previous ten years when the Portuguese colonial authorities helped it evade UN sanctions. On March 3, 1976, President Samora Machel closed Mozambique's border with Rhodesia denying it its principal outlets to the world through the ports of Beira and Maputo. Before Mozambique's independence, some 80 per cent of Rhodesia's exports and imports, including oil, were channelled through these ports.

The decision was a heavy body-blow for the Rhodesian economy. However, it also had extremely adverse consequences for the infant Mozambique whose own economy was under siege from sabotage by the departing Portuguese industrialists and businessmen. It meant that the country would be deprived of the income it derived in the form of port and customs charges as well as hundreds of jobs for her rail and port workers. About 86,000 Mozambicans working in Rhodesia either lost their jobs or could no longer send money home. Mozambique could also no longer import food, especially maize and meat which it used to get

from Rhodesia. Although President Machel, in his efforts to transform the economy from a service to a self sustaining one, has urged his people to produce more food for themselves, Mozambique still faces serious food shortages today as a result of the border closure. According to the UN, the cost to Mozambique of applying sanctions against the regime in Salisbury has varied from \$108m to \$134m per year.

In 1976, there was a massive influx of Zimbabwean refugees into the country, bringing with them the attendant problems of welfare and security for the new state. At present, there are an



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President Machel: long ties with Zimbabwe armed struggle

estimated 45,000 refugees in the country, mostly in the Manica and Gaza provinces. The refugees partly benefit from the proceeds of a publicly subscribed "Solidarity Fund" established by Mozambique in 1976. At the same time, the war in Zimbabwe escalated and Mozambique today provides a rear base for over 20,000 freedom fighters of ZANU.

For the Rhodesians, Mozambique became, once again, a theatre of war. In the first 12 months after the border closure, Mozambican authorities say, the Rhodesian army attacked Mozambique more than 359 times. Today, under Major-General Walls, chief of the Rhodesian command, the Rhodesians operate in Mozambique on a daily basis.

This incessant aggression by Rhodesian forces has always been accompa-



Mozambican soldiers: their war has not ended

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nied by the destruction of human lives—both Zimbabwean and Mozambican—and the wanton destruction of property, roads and vital installations. In 1976, the Rhodesian forces launched an air and ground attack on the refugee camp at Nyazonia leaving more than 700 men, women and children dead. Two months ago, they staged another airborne attack on a ZANU camp at Chimoio where they killed more Zimbabwean refugees and soldiers of the Mozambican army. Other major attacks have been at Timbue, Chioco, Mazoe in Tete and Chicualcuala in Gaza.

A large area of Mozambique is adjacent to active Rhodesian military zones: 'Thrasher' in the west, 'Hurricane' in the north-west, and 'Repulse' in the south-west. It is a measure of the extent to which Mozambicans, who have really never known peace for 14 years despite their own victory against

the Portuguese, are directly affected by the war that most villages in these areas have built air raid shelters and trenches for protection against the invading Rhodesians.

The Rhodesian raids on Mozambique place considerable strains on the Mozambican army, some units of which, for example in Tete, have never left the areas they operated from before independence. Further, they have deprived Mozambique of the opportunity to create a powerful conventional army from its guerrilla force.

Mozambique's support for the liberation movements in southern Africa, President Machel often emphasises, stems from the 'internationalist' duty of Mozambicans. It is also motivated by national interest; for Mozambique cannot develop her economy and build a new society with minority regimes which are determined to strangle it as

its neighbours. Further, the conclusion of the war in Zimbabwe and the emergence of a Black majority government there would also enable Mozambique to minimize further the traditional links between South Africa and its economy.

Thus its long term interest lies in joining in the struggle for a free southern Africa. At present, both wings of the Patriotic Front—ZANU and ZAPU—have offices in Maputo and operational facilities in other parts of the country. The ANC (South Africa) maintains an office there, while the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) of South Africa is allowed access through to Swaziland, an important post for them.

Perhaps Mozambique's most important contribution to the liberation movements is Frelimo as a united and cohesive movement. With regard to the Zimbabwe liberation movements, where division has been a serious malaise, President Machel has, perhaps, been a strong and persistent exponent of unity. ●