

MOZAMBIQUE

Time 2/8/82

A Rebellion On the Rise

p. 21

Under cover of darkness, a group of armed commandos gathered last week outside Beira, Mozambique's second largest city and a port on vital Indian Ocean oil routes. They first severed the city's power and water, then blew up a section of the 180-mile pipeline that feeds gasoline and diesel fuel to neighboring Zimbabwe.

President Samora Machel blamed the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR) for the attack, the latest in an intensifying series of armed challenges to his seven-year-old Marxist government. Over the last six years rebel forces have blown up railways, ambushed military supply convoys and shut down state-run enterprises by threatening to kill their workers—all with little apparent challenge from Mozambique's largely urban-based 25,000-man army. That seemed to change late last week, when Machel's forces—backed by Tanzanian and Zimbabwean regulars, and reportedly led by Soviet-bloc advisers—launched a full-scale counterattack against rebel bases.

Defections: Machel is clearly in trouble. Curfews have been ordered in the country's major cities and military escorts guard trucks and buses traveling its main roads. Two key aides have defected to South Africa, and rebel forces are growing. In 1975 they numbered only 500 dissident guerrillas who banded together to oppose the Moscow-oriented policies Machel has followed since he led his nation to independence from



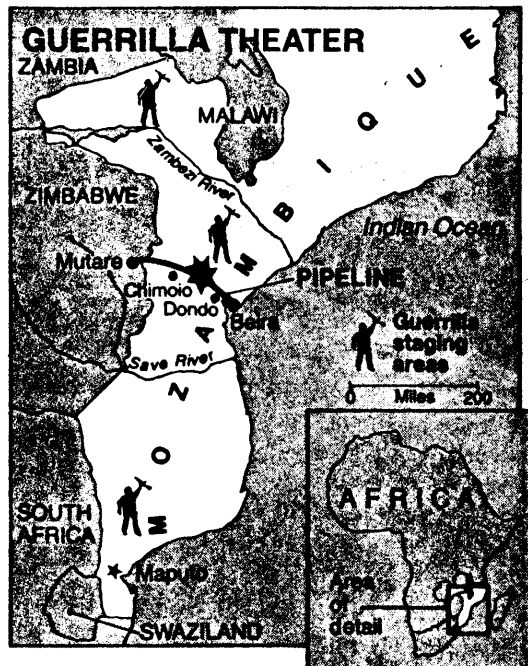
Edgar Moura—Gamma-Liaison

President Machel: Defections, curfews and a severed pipeline

Portugal. Today the MNR boasts as many as 16,000 fighting men.

Machel contends—with support from many diplomats in Maputo—that MNR guerrillas are financed and trained by South Africa. Although Pretoria denies such meddling, it openly supports anti-Marxist rebels fighting for control of another former Portuguese colony, Angola. Rail and road links between Mozambique and Zimbabwe are favorite MNR targets, lending credence to the belief that South Africa is backing the rebels not only in the hope of toppling Machel but also to keep up economic pressure on southern Africa's black-ruled states.

The MNR apparently has homegrown supporters as well. A British ecologist held



Claire A. Nivola—NEWSWEEK

captive by MNR rebels for five months earlier this year reported that peasants willingly fed, clothed and sheltered his well-armed captors. "People are starving and the government does nothing," says Carlos Dombo, who fled from Mozambique to Zimbabwe, one of an estimated 20,000 refugees to make that trip in the last year. "The MNR steals food and gives it to the people." Such Robin Hood-style tactics should come as no surprise to Machel, an ex-guerrilla who often wears khaki fatigues and a hip-slung pistol. But whether he can maintain the upper hand over the rebels—and their backers—is not at all assured.

MELINDA LIU with PETER YOUNGHUSBAND
in Cape Town