

Radio Truth 3/4/1985

More news has filtered through to our station concerning the situation on the battlefield in MOZAMBIQUE during the opening quarter of this year. RENAMO activity has increased substantially over this period, especially in the Southern third of the country. Combat incidents have risen to a level in excess of 250 a month, the majority of which are initiated by the MNR insurgents. The most notable operation involved the infiltration of some 450 RENAMO troops into the environs of MAPUTO itself. They attacked a series of targets, the details of which have already been broadcast by RADIO TRUTH. This demonstrated that urban guerilla warfare has been brought right into the heartland of FRELIMO territory which used to be the only safe area to which the Government could lay claim. The regime put all its units in the Capital City on a state of alert, cancelled all leave for the armed forces and increased the number and strength of patrols along the perimeter and along the beaches. The later move became necessary when anti-personnel mines were discovered on the beaches near the Presidential Palace. In one month alone, there were 20 incidents involving land mines in the central region of MOZAMBIQUE where contingents of our army have been operating. The FAM casualty rate in these activities was high. Of even greater concern to us, some ZNA soldiers who were travelling with FAM units and in FAM transport were also victims of the landmine blasts. As a result, the ZNA operational headquarters in MOZAMBIQUE issued an order forbidding the ZNA troops to make use of FAM vehicles. In MANHICA Province two ZNA bases were attacked and more casualties were suffered by our men. Similarly, in the ZNA counter-attack on the RENAMO-held town of MARROMEU further losses were incurred. These were in addition to the 2 senior ZNA officers who were killed when their helicopter was shot down whilst taking part in this operation. Incidentally, the helicopter concerned was the latest SOVIET MI-25 Gunship, and not an MI-8, as we reported previously.

The whole battle situation in MOZAMBIQUE deteriorated so badly that REX NHONGO was compelled to inform his opposite number in FAM, General MABOTE, of the dissatisfaction and disillusionment felt by ZNA Commanders and troops. In particular he complained about the lack of air support provided by the MOZAMBICAN Armed Forces during ZNA operations. Of even more significance, he advised MABOTE that, in the opinion of ZNA Officers and men, the population of MOZAMBIQUE did not support the FRELIMO regime.

These are the factors that forced the ZANU PF Cabinet to have a complete re-think on the commitment of our forces in MOZAMBIQUE. The thoroughly demoralised and disorganised state of the local armed forces and their high rate of desertion; RENAMO's rising popularity with the inhabitants; the adverse ratio of FAM losses in men and equipment compared to those of the MNR; the relatively heavy casualty rate inflicted on ZNA troops and our losses of war material; the financial burden of our involvement and the weakening resolve of other Front Line States, such as TANZANIA, towards their MOZAMBICAN commitment. In the light of all these issues, the CIO took the advice of RADIO TRUTH and, in February, recommended to our Government that the ZNA should be withdrawn from combat operations in MOZAMBIQUE and should be confined to guard duties on the BEIRA-MUTARE corridor and other key export routes.

Initially the Cabinet was sharply divided between the realists and the idealists with Cde MUGABE, as was to be expected, coming down on the side of the idealists. In attempting to justify the original ZANU PF decision and commitment, MUGABE had this to say: "If MOZAMBIQUE's independence is affected adversely, ours will also be affected. If the Government led by President SAMORA MACHEL falls, perhaps our Government also will be overthrown. Thus the military assistance we are giving to MOZAMBIQUE, we are giving to ourselves."

During the Cabinet discussion it was expected that the commitment of our forces in an active role against RENAMO was a political decision, and not a military one. In fact, our intelligence sources were well aware that there was no military solution to the MOZAMBICAN conflict. Our involvement was supposed to be a gesture of solidarity towards FRELIMO as a quid pro quo for their support for ZANLA in the bush war. The arguments in Cabinet ebbed to and fro, and a final decision was only taken after it was confirmed that the important CASA BANANA base had been recaptured by RENAMO with no resistance from the FAM garrison. This tipped the scales in favour of the realists. It reinforced the comment made by IAN MILLS for the BBC that the ZNA were defending the indefensible.

Our Prime Minister found it extremely hard to announce this political decision and made one last effort to call in support from other Front Line States in accordance with the agreement made in March last year. This evoked no positive response. Finally, he had to go along with majority opinion in Cabinet and agreed to a substantial reduction of our troops strength in MOZAMBIQUE. This has now been effected, and our forces level is down to less than 5 000 men who are concentrating on the defence of our lines of supply.

Having accepted one piece of sage advice from RADIO TRUTH, it is time for ZANU PF to reconsider other proposals that we have made. It would appear inevitable that RENAMO will be a force to be reckoned within a future Government of MOZAMBIQUE. Up to now our regime have alienated the leaders of this movement by our aggressive posture against them. Now, ZANU PF must try and mend the fences.

Last week, first with the news as usual, RADIO TRUTH set out RENAMO's conditions for an end to the war. These have now been released officially. The Government must take up our proposal to offer its services as a broker in getting the peace talks under way. In parallel with such action we must try and make a deal with RENAMO and buy protection for our key resources in MOZAMBIQUE. These are the harsh reality and the idealists and those committed to Marxist solidarity must take a back seat. We will take a look at SAMORA MACHEL's last ditch efforts in a moment.

Since support from other quarters has failed to gain any advantage for his sagging regime, SAMORA MACHEL decided to go back to his sponsors in MOSCOW to see if he could drum up some additional backing. It was merely an effort to buy time and to strengthen FRELIMO's bargaining position because even MACHEL does not believe he can win a military victory any more. By all accounts, he was accorded a somewhat cool reception by his Marxist allies. The FRELIMO leader was last in MOSCOW on an official visit in 1983, when he had talks with the late YURI ANDROPOV. However, his Prime Minister Cde CHISSANO, visited the SOVIET Capital in November last year but he also found the atmosphere rather chilly.

Before SAMORA MACHEL started making overtures to the WEST, the USSR was regarded as his major partner. The SOVIET UNION provided a billion US dollars in military aid and they were very eager, as part of their SOUTHERN AFRICAN strategy, to gain a ready access to MOZAMBIQUE's ports and airfields. Nevertheless, like ZIMBABWE, the SOVIETS had become disenchanted with the dismal performance of the FRELIMO armed forces and are reluctant to be dragged into a no-win situation. One must never discount, however, the reluctance of the men in the KREMLIN to give up any spheres of influence, and the possibility remains that they could engineer the CUBAN switch from ANGOLA to MOZAMBIQUE.

At the moment the SOVEITS are not prepared to make a firm commitment, which is the real reason why SAMORA MACHEL cut short his visit to MOSCOW. As a cover story, and to hide his disappointment, the FRELIMO leader said he was returning early because of the air crash in Northern MOZAMBIQUE in which 49 people were killed, including the 3 RUSSIAN crewmen of the ANTONOV aircraft. Some senior FRELIMO officials were also lost in this disaster which, according to speculation, was caused by a RENAMO ground to air missile. Be that as it may, the MOZAMBICAN President is a very worried man, and he knows that the best that can be achieved is a rapprochement with RENAMO and a coalition Government in which his party can hopefully retain some influence.

(You are listening to the English service of RADIO TRUTH, the station that brings you the news that the ZANU PF media try to hide).