

MOZAMBIQUE: RENAMO RUINS THE ECONOMY

MOZAMBIQUE'S desperate economic situation is rapidly worsening and is eroding Frelimo's support. The international aid expected after Nkomati has not materialised. Nor is it likely to. Donors and potential investors have made it clear that they are waiting for a ceasefire before committing their money. The few enterprises still functioning are working at a fraction of capacity and face shortages of everything needed for production - raw materials, spares, technicians, effective management. It is a long list.

Agriculture is in worse shape and not only because of drought. The little that is being produced seldom reaches the market. The big state farms set up to copy Marxist examples elsewhere have proven a total failure, as have the communal units into which thousands of small farmers have been dragooned over the past decade. Accurate statistics are almost non-existent in Mozambique, but indications are that farm production dropped by more than a third between independence in 1975 and the onset of the current drought.

Drought has worsened all the other problems. Coupled with the rapid spread of insurgency since 1980, it has dealt a death blow to what little remained of the Mozambican economy. Along with continuing rural mismanagement it has doubled the size of Mozambique's food deficiency over the past three years. More foreign exchange has had to be used to feed the population of Maputo, while in the rural areas of five provinces over 300,000 people have starved to death in the past two years. Four million others are facing starvation.

Economic paralysis is nearly total. Most transport has ground to a halt. The rail lines to South Africa and Zimbabwe have been cut, as have most major roads in the country, including the highway linking the capital with the provinces of Gaza and Inhambane and points north. The destruction near Palmeira on February 10 of a major bridge on the Maputo-Beira road completed the virtual isolation of Maputo.

Land transport cut

The only significant transport still working between Maputo and the rest of the country is by air or sea. Transport within the provinces is more difficult still. Fuel and spares are seldom available and the Maputo government lacks the foreign exchange to buy any - though it has placed an order for \$135 million worth of Soviet MiG fighters.

Food and fuel are continuing problems

even in the capital. Only diplomats, expatriate workers and top government officials with access to foreign currency can eat well in Maputo. While the tightening rebel noose around the city means that the elite can no longer drive to Swaziland or South Africa for shopping, they can find most of their needs in the government-operated *loja franca* or hard currency shop which sells a variety of imported foodstuffs for dollars or South African rands. The population of Maputo cannot use the shop. They are increasingly desperate and resentful of their well-off rulers and their Soviet and Cuban allies.

Fruits of Nkomati

For President Machel's government, the fruits of Nkomati are mostly proving to have a bitter taste. The Machel government saw the Nkomati Accord as a last chance for survival, but little has materialised. The war is intensifying and spreading and the dreams of a South African-fuelled boost to

Recruits being trained by Renamo at one of its base camps.



the Mozambican economy remain dreams.

Maputo put everything on the Nkomati gamble and lost. In the process the way was opened for South African neo-colonisation of all sectors of the Mozambican economy from agriculture to tourism, including the leasing of large tracts of the country's best farmland to South African agri-business concerns.

But for both sides, Maputo and Pretoria, the main obstacle is the Renamo insurgency. Renamo has warned off potential investors and foreign-aid workers whose work is aimed at salvaging Maputo's economic wreckage. Recently, the warnings have turned to action. In December last year, 11 aid workers were killed along with their military escorts in a series of ambushes all over the country, forcing the government to admit, in a circular to foreign diplomatic missions, that it could

not guarantee the safety of foreign nationals outside Maputo.

Renamo's external contacts and sources of aid have increased dramatically since Nkomati. The treaty with Pretoria considerably diminished President Machel's prestige and gave a boost to the largely successful rebel diplomatic drive to gain the support of a number of African, Arab and East Asian states. Last September's San Diego, California conference of the World Anti-Communist League marked a turning point. It enabled Renamo to establish firm links with conservative groups in the USA and a worldwide network of anti-communist organisations reaching from Afghanistan to Nicaragua. These links were further strengthened in November when Renamo representatives were invited to the Paris meeting of the International Conference for the Resistance in Occupied Countries (ICROC).

Government communiqués tell of brilliant victories in far away places with large numbers of rebels killed or captured, and Maputo's Chief of Staff, General Sebastiao Mabote, has declared 1985 to be the year of total eradication of the "armed bandits". Nevertheless, the rebel's numbers keep growing. Security is deteriorating rapidly throughout the country and the

guerrillas operate with apparent impunity within the capital's suburbs. The war seems to be going badly for Machel.

Attacks on road and rail links occur with almost monotonous frequency within a few kilometres of all the major cities. The transmission lines from the giant Cabora Bassa Dam to South Africa, which should be earning millions of dollars worth of desperately needed foreign exchange for the Maputo government, are blown up as fast as they can be repaired and there is little that the Army, the Forças Populares de Libertacao de Moçambique (FPLM), can do about it. The guerrillas frequently disrupt the electricity and water supplies of Maputo and Beira with little interference from the army, and have carried out raids within Maputo. Clearly, General Mabote's forces have a long way to go.

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