

## War Worsens in Hungry Mozambique

[AN] HARARE—"Given the level of disruption, you could say that the whole country should have already vanished into the sea." That's the stark assessment of Mozambique's current plight by a staffer for UNICEF, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. "In Western terms," added the official, who has traveled widely in Mozambique, "you could say the whole thing has already collapsed."

An estimated 2.5 million people are threatened by a famine that is spawned as much by war as bad weather. And with rebel attacks on communications links and key economic targets increasing, Mozambique's leaders and their allies have expressed growing alarm about the course of the fighting, at times hinting that it may even endanger the government's survival.

The three-year drought has ended in much of the country, though flooding caused by torrential rains produced problems in February in some areas, while lack of rain is still troublesome in others. But these natural disasters are overshadowed

by the activities of the Mozambican National Resistance, known as *Renamo* or the *MNR*, a guerrilla movement that has been sponsored by South Africa and former Portuguese colonial settlers.

The escalation in fighting deepened already-strong doubts throughout this region about the sincerity of South Africa's March 1984 pledge, in the Nkomati Accord, to stop assisting the MNR. [Pretoria's image was dealt a further blow last week when the military acknowledged, after Angola killed two South African soldiers and captured another, that it has been conducting "intelligence missions" inside Angola despite an announced withdrawal last month of its troops.]

Officials of the Mozambican government, international aid groups and the U.S. government agree that the MNR has deliberately sabotaged relief efforts. MNR raids have "disrupted agricultural production [and] severed lines of communication in all of Mozambique's ten provinces," according to the U.S. Agency for International

Development's (USAID) latest assessment of Mozambique. "The insecurity has hampered efforts to provide relief assistance."

The violence appears to be expanding on several fronts. Mozambican reports say that at least 66 people were killed by the MNR near the capital Maputo in late April and early May. On May 20 two factories in a Maputo suburb were set on fire by a group of 60 saboteurs, causing at least \$600,000 in damage. A few days earlier, according to Agence-France Press, 1,500 Zimbabwean soldiers recaptured an airfield which had been briefly held by the MNR in Beira, Mozambique's second largest city.

Since December, more than 20 foreigners—most of them relief and development workers—are known to have been killed by the MNR, a source from one United Nations agency here in Harare said. No statistics are available on killings of Mozambican relief workers, but the number is believed to be even larger.

A recent report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggests that Mozambique's food problems are being further compounded by slow action and broken promises from food-rich aid donors, including the U.S. Western countries promised Mozambique about 500,000 tons of grain during the 1984-85 agricultural year but delivered less than 400,000 tons. An agricultural year runs from one harvest to the next, with May the peak harvest month in most of Mozambique.

(FAO officials interviewed in Rome in early

May said that the failure to deliver food in time could mean that thousands of people would die unnecessarily during the "hungry season" which precedes harvest.)

Even when relief supplies arrive on time, MNR raids make it difficult—sometimes impossible—to deliver aid. The latest attack on aid workers occurred May 21, according to the Mozambican Red Cross, which reports that one of its clearly marked relief trucks was assaulted by the insurgents while carrying supplies in southern Mozambique. One worker died; another was wounded.

The violence has virtually halted travel outside Maputo by journalists and international aid workers. But recent reports from Tete, one of five Mozambican provinces afflicted by food shortage, paint a dramatic picture of the effects of warfare in a food-poor nation. In 1983-84, an estimated 5,000 people starved to death in the province, and tens of thousands more fled to neighboring Zimbabwe in search of food.

Donated food and a modestly successful harvest in northern Tete ended mass starvation this year, according to provincial planning director Victor Manuel Borges. But MNR raids have made it impossible for the province's people to regain self-sufficiency. Borges said that the overall level of MNR "banditry" appears to be declining in Tete, but the remaining violence is increasingly directed against relief efforts.

Severe malnutrition remains common in Tete as throughout Mozambique. Even in good years, Mozambique is one of the world's most ill-fed

nations, with so little food available that per capita intake of calories is at least 20% below the minimum recommended by the World Health Organization.

Despite the need for help, "there are not many projects any more in rural areas, because they attract the MNR like flies," said a UNICEF worker formerly stationed in northern Tete. MNR systematically attacks anyone who represents outside help, he said: aid workers, teachers, nurses, etc.

MNR "bandits" place "a very severe constraint on our ability to get to people," said Richard Venegoni of World Vision International, a California-based evangelical church group which has shipped 5,000 tons of U.S. government-donated food to Tete this year. "Dedicated Mozambican officials" are doing "all they can to feed their people," Venegoni said. But they face grave problems until the "security situation" improves. His praise for Mozambique's Marxist authorities and harsh words for the MNR were especially striking because Venegoni's group is often characterized as "right wing" by workers from other U.S. aid organizations.

Venegoni said that the MNR has severed the rail link to Mozambique's central port, Beira, forcing the U.S. to ship donated grain via Port Elizabeth, South Africa—more than 1,200 miles away. It takes a month to truck the food from South Africa, through Zimbabwe and—in military convoys—over the border to Mozambique.

Cutting the rail link also disrupted internal markets, because basic commodities destined for Tete—such as sugar, salt, oil and clothing—come from Beira in normal times. With no goods available to purchase, successful farmers in northern Tete are reluctant to sell produce to their southern neighbors, who remain short of food. Instead, said Venegoni, many carry their surplus grain across the northern border to Malawi, where they can exchange it for basic consumer goods.

If delivering food is difficult, mounting devel-

opment programs to prevent future famine has become virtually impossible in some areas. A UNICEF worker forced to flee southern Tete explained how his highly successful health and agriculture development project was destroyed. Early on April 5, MNR guerrillas entered Ntemangau looking for the precinct's chief technician, Castro Ernesto da Silva, shot him to death, attempted to rape his wife, looted the local health center, and left. Da Silva had been quoted in press reports on the project a few weeks earlier. "Our great mistake," his former colleague says, "was that we failed to keep the press away." The publicity



Distribution of relief supplies in Tete Province during the early stages of the drought there. /Sergio Santimano/AIM

apparently turned Ntemangau into a target.

These MNR attacks on development work will not stop until "the destabilization campaign is cut off at its source—South Africa," said an aid worker with another agency. The very destructiveness of the attacks is evidence of their outside sponsorship, he argued, since no force which actually wants to win the support of Mozambicans could benefit from "such vicious attacks on uninvolved civilians."

The seriousness of the expanding anti-government violence is reflected in President Samora Machel's appeal, most recently at a Youth Day rally May 13, for citizens to fight "in full strength" against the MNR, even to the point of temporarily

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abandoning educational and industrial activity.

More sobering still was a May 7 statement from Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, who in response to questions from district leaders of the ruling party, declared that the Machel government, if ousted by the MNR, will be welcomed back to the bases his FRELIMO movement used in southern Tanzania before winning independence in 1975.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam, he warned South Africa, "We won't allow the FRELIMO government to be overthrown." If a new war is needed to re-liberate Mozambique, it won't stop until the troops reach Cape Town, he added.

According to government sources here, Zimbabwean troops, who have long been guarding crucial oil pipelines and transport routes through Mozambique, have been given new authority to launch counterattacks against the MNR. Zimbabwean leaders, who received crucial backing from Mozambique during their independence war, reportedly offered additional assistance during recent discussions between the two governments. [It was Zimbabwe's former government—the white Rhodesian regime—that created the MNR

in the mid-1970s.]

Such aid is needed because Mozambique's army, ill-fed and poorly equipped, frequently has proved unable to effectively counter the MNR. "I've seen units where nobody had a full uniform except the commander, 40% of the soldiers had no firearms, and most of the men's shoes were two sizes too big," said a European *cooperante* [overseas volunteer] who was recently in Zambezi Province.

Meanwhile, on May 11, Mozambique announced a broad series of free market-oriented economic "liberalizations." The reforms appear designed, at least in part, to satisfy aid conditions set forth by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Mozambique badly needs money from both organizations because it has almost no foreign currency reserves, is nearly \$300 million behind on foreign debt payments, and faces an annual debt service bill greater than the value of all its exports.

The reforms include a rollback of import/export restrictions, elimination of price controls on privately produced beef and on fruit and vegetables from both state and private farms, tax cuts for peasant farmers and rural retailers, and authorization for companies to decide how many people they will employ and to institute wage differentials between skilled and unskilled workers.

Five days after these measures were announced, the World Bank agreed to its first-ever loan for Mozambique: \$45 million for rehabilitation of food marketing and light industry. The low-interest credit is to be repaid over 50 years, with a 10-year grace period. The Bank required that funds be used to support private as well as public enterprises.

—Steve Askin, Carole Collins ■