

Mozambique: The Liberation Struggle Continues

After a decade of freedom, Mozambique is still struggling to defend its independence, which remains threatened by South Africa and its terrorist agents. The Frelimo-Party, however, has reaffirmed its resolve.

By Tania Vasconcelos

“All Mozambique's citizens are summoned to participate in the defence of our threatened country,” announced President Samora Machel to Frelimo's central committee, shortly before the ceremonies celebrating the tenth anniversary of national independence. “If necessary, we shall close the schools, factories and administrative offices” in order to free fighters for the struggle against the terrorists, he had stated a few days earlier. The elimination of the danger posed by bands of the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR) is now, more than ever, the top priority for the Maputo government.

A year and a half after the ill-fated Nkomati Accords, which were meant to put an end to Pretoria's use of the MNR in its attempts to destabilize Mozambique, there is no longer any doubt that operations by the Mozambican army are the only thing, in fact, which can change the situation on the ground. After launching its biggest offensive in four years during 1984, the MNR is currently feeling the effects of the constant harassment to which the Mozambican army has subjected it. Several MNR bases have been annihilated since the beginning of this year and substantial quantities of arms and equipment have been seized.

South Africa, however, continues to supply the MNR by every means possible, including air and sea, and the terrorists are still strong enough to isolate the most important agricultural regions and to foster insecurity throughout the greater part of the country. Communication routes are their main target and, as the drought continues, there are grounds to fear that the population in the most affected regions will once again be struck by famine. As a result of their isolation and of such natural disasters as the drought and flooding, 200,000 people have already died between 1982 and 1984.

The bad state of the roads and a shortage



President Samora Machel: first priority is defeat of the terrorists

of petrol, lorries and spare parts have combined to hinder the distribution of food aid, which amounted in 1984 to more than 300,000 tonnes. Six of the ten Mozambican provinces are still affected by drought. However, an agreement on fuel supplies signed with the Soviet Union has led to a first delivery last March of 33,000 tonnes, and will enable Mozambique to be less dependent on electricity imports from South Africa and to keep the planes of the national airline flying. Repeated sabotage of the high-tension cables bringing electricity from Cahora Bassa to Maputo, via South Africa, has led Mozambique to build up a fuel reserve for the power plants of the capital and the other principal towns. Deliveries of Soviet fuel will

also enable Mozambique, if necessary, to do without coal from South Africa. Mozambique's own coal production has been hit by sabotage by Pretoria's henchmen.

The Pretoria regime continues to pursue a dual strategy towards Mozambique. While it still provides logistical and military aid to the MNR in spite of the Nkomati agreements signed amid great pomp and circumstance by President P.W. Botha himself, South Africa enters into trade and financial agreements concerning projects which the MNR does its best to hamper or render ineffective. As long as the railway line remains the target of MNR sabotage, the South African contribution to the refurbishment of port installations in Maputo—worth \$6 million—will have no beneficial effect on the Mozambican economy. On the other hand, South Africa continues to do good business in setting up tourist establishments and infrastructure!

Economic cooperation between the two countries was one of the most important aspects of the Nkomati Accords. The decline in South African investments in Mozambique during the first years after independence revealed the extent of Mozambique's economic dependence on South Africa. In 1973, 6.8 million tonnes of goods to and from South Africa passed through the ports of Mozambique. Ten years later, this flow had dropped to scarcely one million tonnes and the annual loss to Mozambique was of the order of \$250 million. Pretoria is currently building a port at Richard's Bay to the east of Swaziland, which is destined to replace completely the facilities in Maputo, should the need arise. South African mining companies have been favourable to the maintenance of trade relations with Mozambique, since Maputo is the nearest and cheapest port, but Pretoria has always put its geo-strategic interests first and thus wants to bring the former Portuguese colony back into its zone of influence through economic blackmail.

The precedent of Mozambican sanctions against Ian Smith's Rhodesia had undoubtedly worried Pretoria. These fears were reinforced when Rhodesia became independent Zimbabwe and the Southern African countries formed their coordination conference for economic development—the SADCC—in order to achieve greater independence from South Africa. The apartheid regime was alarmed at the prospect of losing its monopoly of power.

Intensified activity against economic targets by Pretoria's mercenaries in Mozambique and Angola has been aimed both at weakening the two governments domestically and reducing their influence in the region. While the constitution of the SADCC was completely in line with the development strategies of Maputo and Luanda, it was also intended to meet Mozambique's need for a diversification of its economic partners. In retaliation, however, South Africa was not

satisfied just to withdraw the funds it had invested in Mozambique, it embarked on a full-scale economic boycott as well, threatening the viability of Mozambican ports. Moreover, Pretoria cut the number of Mozambicans working in South African mines from 120,000 in 1975 to only 40,000 two years later. Revenue from the earnings of these emigrants declined considerably, at the same time as South Africa modified the conditions of payment under which part of their wages were paid directly in gold—at a preferential exchange rate—to the Mozambican state, on the basis of a previous agreement with the Portuguese colonial regime.

Growing Hostility

Though preoccupied by the fall in earnings resulting from the attitude of Pretoria and the sanctions against Rhodesia, Mozambique's leaders still somewhat underestimated the difficulty of bringing about an economic recovery. At the third Frelimo congress in 1977, it was hoped that production could be restored to 1973 levels by 1980. However, the precipitate departure of former colonists, the lack of technical and managerial staff and the shortage of funds led to a general degradation of the economic situation. This called for a more sustained effort, and even the reconsideration of a development strategy which was flawed by, among other things, excessive centralization.

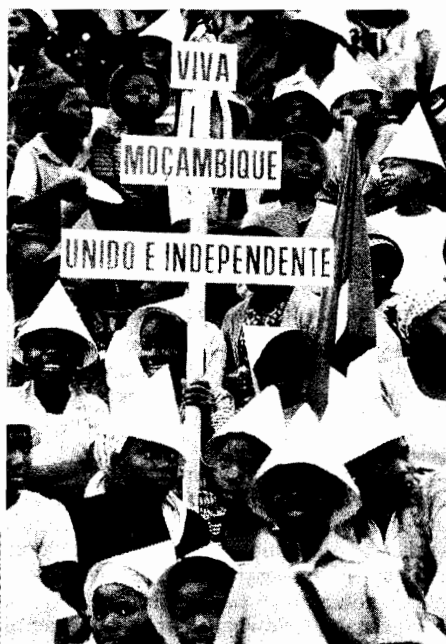
When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, there was renewed hope of a rapid recovery. An ambitious development programme for the 1980s envisaged an early victory in the battle against underdevelopment, a substantial improvement in the standard of living, and the ending of illiteracy. A census was held, the colonial currency was successfully replaced by the *metical*, and it was hoped that by 1990 all Mozambican peasants would be living in village communities which would form the basis of a modern and prosperous agricultural system. Infrastructure—particularly in industry—was to be developed in a series of projects valued at about \$6 billion. Finally, the gross domestic product (GDP) was supposed to increase by 17 percent a year and the rate of construction by 40 percent.

These plans did not, however, take sufficient account of the difficulties on the horizon. There was growing hostility from South Africa, which had immediately replaced white Rhodesia in aiding and sustaining the anti-Mozambican terrorists, moulded by Pretoria into a powerful armed force. There was also the worldwide recession, which led to a decline in the amount of Western aid to the nations of the Third World.

The situation was lucidly analysed at the fourth Frelimo party congress in 1983, the year in which Pretoria stepped up its direct action against Mozambique and Mozambican support for the nationalists of the Afri-

can National Congress (ANC) in South Africa itself. The errors in economic policy committed throughout the eight years after independence were also discussed. Much emphasis was given to the role of the peasants and the private sector in agricultural production, a factor which had hitherto been neglected in favour of state enterprises that had proved incapable of meeting their objectives. The party congress agreed on the need to speed up the process of distributing land among the peasants, who were responsible for 70 percent of total agricultural production in the past.

The insecurity provoked by MNR operations and the difficulties in distributing industrial goods, however, have since made it difficult to implement this policy in rural areas. MNR sabotage has, for example, prevented the transfer of surplus produce from parts of Angonia, the leading agricultural province, to regions in that same province afflicted by drought. The decline in



Norma/Butchaud

Independence in 1975: hopes threatened by destabilization

agricultural production has had repercussions in the processing industry, which is also affected by other problems, thus increasing the country's trade deficit.

In February 1984, the Mozambican government announced that it could not honour its financial commitments and asked for a rescheduling of its foreign debt, currently estimated at \$2 billion. It should be noted, nonetheless, that these commitments it was unable to meet were worth only half of what Mozambique is held to have lost as a result of the drought and destabilization tactics.

This was the context in which Maputo signed the Nkomati Accords on March 16, 1984, which was widely criticized in Africa,

where a number of leaders correctly warned that Pretoria would never abide by its commitments and that Maputo was falling into a trap. In fact, the past 18 months have proven that the agreement led neither to the beginnings of a return to normality, nor to a substantial increase in foreign capital investment. The reluctance of Western countries to invest in Mozambique could be explained in terms of the instability there, but those same Western countries have failed to put any serious pressure on South Africa to make it respect its commitment to end its undeclared war on Maputo. In particular, the United States, which encouraged the signing of the Nkomati Accords, bears much of the responsibility for Pretoria's double-dealing and aggressive attitude.

Mozambique's membership of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), dating from September 25, 1984, might be seen as a way of encouraging the capital inflow it so desperately needs. A World Bank loan of \$45 million, starting in 1985, is a good sign, but the IMF seems keen on imposing one of its economic "miracle cures" in the meantime. This would involve the devaluation of the *metical* and cuts in non-productive spending in the social sector. The high rate of inflation in Mozambique could justify devaluation. The fourth Frelimo congress noted that the aggregate annual remuneration of wages and salaries was \$200 million higher than the value of goods available on the market. Cutting expenditures, however, would by no means be so straightforward.

With regard to the health sector, which accounts for 11 percent of this year's national budget of \$650 million (of which one-third is allocated to defence), Minister of Health Pascoal Mocumbi recently declared that his government would not permit the reintroduction of private medicine, abolished in 1975, and would not change the current practice of providing medical care almost free of charge. Education could also come under the axe. However, the government has made considerable efforts to train teachers (17,000 since 1975, 88 percent of whom are in primary schools) and education is now free. This is why the school population has risen spectacularly, from 670,000 in 1975 to 1.5 million in 1980.

Ten years after independence, the Frelimo leadership has to contend with a very difficult situation. It must sustain the military effort for the final liberation of the country,¹ safeguard the achievements made at enormous cost since 1975, and open the way for real and viable economic development. It is a fact of geography and a reflection of Mozambique's regional importance that, like it or not, the stability of the country will never be guaranteed until the apartheid regime is destroyed. ▲▲▲

¹Zimbabwe and Tanzania have sent thousands of troops to strengthen the defenses of some strategic regions of the country.