

AFRICA IN FOCUS

War and Hunger: Mozambique What Kind of War?

"The MNR seemed to go from strength to strength, and I began to wonder whether we had created a monster that was now beyond control."

— Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record - Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964 - 1981*. London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., and Harare: Quest Publishing Ltd., 1987.

The MNR – the Mozambican Resistance Movement, also called Renamo – was one of the principal matters the head of intelligence in white-ruled Rhodesia had to handle on the eve of independence in 1980, when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe.

Ken Flower describes in his memoirs, the decision was taken to hand over control of the movement, which his agency had created in 1974, to the South African military.

"The South African response was immediate and enthusiastic," he writes. "Within days, the final arrangements were completed and the MNR was transferred lock, stock and barrel."

That last-minute, almost casual action by a defeated Rhodesian regime has had a devastating impact on Mozambique ever since. The resurgence of a better trained and supplied Renamo quickly shattered the brief peace Mozambique had enjoyed after the Lancaster House agreement of 1979 ended the Zimbabwe conflict.

Under South African sponsorship, according to Flowers, the group that had been established to harass Mozambique and limit its ability to aid Zimbabwe's independence struggle became a potent weapon aimed at Mozambique itself. After centuries of Portuguese colonial rule and a decade-long independence fight, Mozambique remained a nation at war.

Eight years later, the conflict retains its grip on a generation of Mozambicans. An estimated 100,000 people perished during the famine of 1983-84, primarily,

aid workers say, because war prevented the delivery of life-saving food supplies. Mozambique's infant mortality rate is 375 per thousand live births – the highest in the world – and the country is at the top of the Washington-based Population Crisis Committee's Human Suffering Index.

According to international aid agencies, more than a third of Mozambique's 14 million people are at risk for famine, with drought in the south now adding to the war's devastation.

The Military Balance

Mozambique's army has been stretched thin since fighting escalated dramatically in 1982. Counting the 10,000-to-15,000 troops sent by Zimbabwe and Tanzania, plus local militia, the forces defending Mozambique probably number less than 70,000. This is roughly equivalent to California's police force, and Mozam-

bique is twice the size of California.

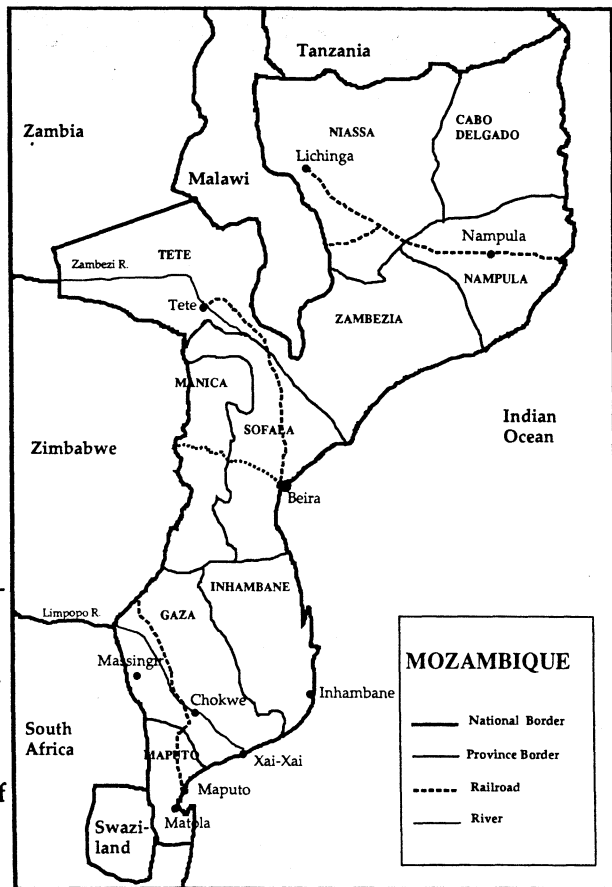
Even if the country had an adequately trained, armed and supplied military, consistent defense of such a huge territory would be mathematically impossible. Counterinsurgency warfare requires a substantial numerical superiority over rebel forces. With 100,000 far better equipped soldiers, the Portuguese were unable to defeat the guerrilla army of the Mozambican Independence Movement (Frelimo), though the colonial troops outnumbered Frelimo forces by more than six to one. The Mozambique government's advantage over Renamo is only about four to one.

Moreover, the insurgents enjoy two military advantages Frelimo didn't have. The independence movement had to transport its weapons, ammunition and medical supplies on foot from the Tanzanian and Zambian borders – sometimes more than a month's march to its forward detachments – while Renamo's supplies have come, in part, across the much-closer land borders with South Africa, Swaziland and Malawi. And tons of equipment are delivered in air drops and sea landings, apparently organized by the South African Defense Force.

Since Mozambique has virtually no anti-aircraft capability outside Maputo, and its minuscule navy cannot begin to effectively patrol more than 1500 miles of coastline, such resupply missions are virtually unimpeded.

Secondly, Renamo attacks the country's social service and productive facilities and peasant villages. Historians generally agree that Frelimo's prime target was the Portuguese army. This made political sense, since the guerrillas aimed at winning popular support and were reluctant to destroy the economic infrastructure they would inherit at independence.

In contrast, according to aid workers, journalists and government officials, Renamo focuses on civilian targets – both human and structural –



avoiding areas protected by large detachments of government troops. (And the government can only defend strategic locations by leaving others unprotected.) The key to this apparent disregard for strategies that would build a base of support within the country may lie in its origins and structure.

Building a Proxy Army

Renamo was conceived in 1969, says Ken Flower, who, as director of white Rhodesia's Central Intelligence, guided the group until its handover to South Africa in April 1980. In his memoirs, Flower relates that Renamo started as a network of informers – parallel to Portugal's own system of secret police and African counterinsurgency commanders. The motive: to monitor Zimbabwean guerrillas who were using Frelimo-controlled areas in Mozambique as rear bases even before the defeat of Portugal's colonial army.

The counterinsurgency doctrine of "pseudo-gangs," developed by the British in Kenya, called for the infiltration of special government units disguised as anti-government guerrillas into contested areas, where they carried out brutalities that were then used to discredit the real guerrilla forces. Among the most useful recruits for these units were "turned" guerrillas, incorporated by persuasion or coercion into the government's camp.

After Portugal agreed to Mozambique's independence in September 1974, the Rhodesians expanded these units with recruits from the Portuguese secret police and African commandos, many of whom feared retaliation for atrocities they had committed against Mozambicans during the colonial war.

The commando units were allied with white settler Jorge Jardim, a prominent Beira businessman. Orlando Cristina, a Jardim aide who had been a key agent in the secret police, became the secretary-general of the organization. (Cristina died in an internal Renamo dispute in 1983.)

Two former Frelimo officers, jailed for profiteering from sales of military supplies, escaped in 1976 and became Renamo's most prominent African leaders. One, Andre Matsangaiza, was killed in

battle in October 1979; his successor, Afonso Dhlakama, has been the nominal head of the group since then.

But mounting evidence suggests that in reality, the operational commander – from April 1980 through at least June 1985 – has been Cornelius (Charles) van Niekerk, a colonel in South Africa's Directorate of Military Intelligence (see page 8).

Even before Zimbabwe's independence, van Niekerk served as liaison to Renamo, and he supervised the transfer of its rear bases to South Africa in 1980. Documents captured by the Mozambican army in August 1985 contain numerous references to van Niekerk, whom Dhlakama addresses as "Friend Commander Charles."

On March 16, 1984, Mozambique and South Africa had signed a non-aggression pact, known as the Nkomati Accord, each pledging to supply no assistance to armed rebels in the other. Mozambique sharply limited the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa to a small diplomatic presence in Maputo, disquieting many ANC supporters in Africa and elsewhere with the concession to Pretoria. (In fact, Mozambique argues, it had never supplied military support to the ANC, apart from turning a blind eye to passage

of guerrilla recruits in and out of South Africa.)

The accord was proclaimed a victory for peace by the Mozambicans and was seen in Washington as an accomplishment of the Reagan administration's "constructive engagement" policy. South African President P.W. Botha, basking in the image of peacemaker, visited seven western European capitals for the first time.

The treaty won much-needed official support for Mozambique in western Europe and the U.S. But it did not end the war. Just before the signing, the South Africa military infiltrated as many as 1,000 new recruits into southern Maputo province, which had only rarely suffered attacks.

When Zimbabwean and Mozambican troops took the mountaintop Gorongosa base in August 1985, they captured tons of munitions and documents, including the desk diary of Dhlakama's secretary, Joaquim Vaz. The diary recorded over 500 pallets of supplies dropped in the two months preceding the accord, followed by a period of suspension of flights (see AN, November 4, 1985).

Three months after the Nkomati Accord was signed, in June 1984, Dhlakama wrote to van Niekerk, complaining "we no longer have war materiel" and reminding "our friends of the pledge they gave us of keeping up support to us clandestinely." Van Niekerk replied with a caution to conserve materiel, but then came through with 26 tons of supplies in August.

It was impossible to use the South African air force or navy, the diary notes, "as there might be an information leak as well as involving many people." Civilian aircraft were used for the August delivery, but later it was agreed that air force C-130s would be used for aid labelled 'humanitarian.'

When the Gorongosa documents were revealed, South African Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha admitted to "technical violations" of the Nkomati Accord. Since Pik Botha himself is portrayed in the military documents as suspect (his deputy Louis Nel visited Gorongosa in July



Three to four refugee families share boxcars in Moatize

Ruth Brandon Minter

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1985 without informing Botha), it is unclear how much he knew. And there has been no examination in South Africa of President Botha's involvement or the continued backing from South Africa most observers assume is taking place.

Since the accord was signed, however, Renamo has reached out for support from other sources, particularly hardline anti-communist groups in Portugal, West Germany and the United States. As part of this public relations effort, prominent non-African leaders of Renamo, such as Evo Fernandes and Jorge Correia in Lisbon, have been sidelined. Black Mozambicans in exile have been recruited as spokesmen – including

plane crash on the Mozambique-South Africa border, Malawi officials were apparently shocked into distancing themselves from Renamo.

Last December, Machel's successor, Joaquim Chissano, signed a security pact with Malawi, and a small detachment of Malawian troops was assigned to help protect the Nacala rail line against Renamo attacks.

Strategies for Survival

To combat Renamo, the Mozambican government has combined a focus on mobilizing local resources with a search for widespread international support. Internally, one of the most important programs has been a reorganization of the army. Six

With International Monetary Fund and World Bank approval, Mozambique has won rescheduling of about \$800 million in foreign debt on comparatively favorable terms. External aid pledged to Mozambique in 1987 comes to some \$700 million.

The results of the program can be clearly seen in the Maputo market. Virtually empty three years ago, this year the market is full of fruits and vegetables, especially tomatoes. Between price liberalization, support for increased production in the "green zones" surrounding the city and the Chokwe irrigation scheme, Maputo is fed – or, at least, is not starving.

The program is no panacea – prices for food and non-food items significantly outpace wages – but the appearance of goods on the shelves and the reduction in black market trade are seen by the people as important first steps.

The farther away from the cities and provincial capitals one gets, however, the more the availability of goods becomes a problem.

Apart from the priority of minimal relief services, the government's strategy outside the towns is focused on securing key transport links. With the aid of Zimbabwean troops, the Beira corridor to Zimbabwe is well-protected. Rehabilitation and modernization of the port and railway are well advanced, with traffic up this year some 50% over last. In September, trains made it over the Nacala line to Malawi for the first time in several years. And with Canadian and British aid, rehabilitation work is proceeding on the Limpopo line from Maputo to Zimbabwe.

All such projects are to some extent vulnerable to attack, and Mozambique is, accordingly, seeking aid for defense – as well as relief and development – from a wide range of countries. This year, President Chissano made state visits outside Africa to Italy, Britain, Sweden, France, the United States, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl travelled to Mozambique in November, and Pope John Paul II is scheduled to visit next year.

The best defense, however, can only limit the damage from a well-supplied adversary. To achieve development goals – or even to feed its long-suffering people – Mozambique needs peace.

– William Minter

After centuries of Portuguese colonial rule and a decade-long independence fight, Mozambique is still a nation at war.

Luis Serapiao in Washington and Artur Fonseca in Bonn.

Just how effective the campaign has been is uncertain, but in the U.S., conservatives maintain pressure on the Reagan administration to end its cordial relations with the Mozambican government.

Renamo has also turned to Malawi for help. The landlocked country's most economical route to the sea runs through Mozambique to the port of Nacala. But President Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda, the country's aged ruler, has been Pretoria's only openly ally in black Africa since the early 1960s, and Malawi has maintained close security ties with South Africa. Before Mozambique's independence, Malawi sheltered a pseudo-nationalist Mozambican group financed by the Portuguese secret police, the remnants of which were integrated into Renamo in 1982.

Last year, Renamo launched a drive from Malawi to capture Mozambique's Zambezi Valley – a push that succeeded in temporarily taking several district capitals.

In September 1986, Frontline leaders Samora Machel, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia called on President Banda, reminding him that Malawi's vital trade routes to South Africa through their countries could be cut. Although Machel was killed the following month in a still-unexplained

months ago, President Chissano – implementing a plan outlined before Machel's death – replaced nine of ten provincial commanders, moving younger and more capable officers into key positions and sidelining a number of guerrilla war veterans who couldn't cope with the demands of counterinsurgency.

In July, the defense ministry announced demobilization of several thousand troops in a move towards a more efficient army. Troops without regular supplies – including draftees held long after their required two years because of bureaucratic mix-ups – were more of a liability than an asset, the government concluded.

Plans for enhanced military performance also depended on new officers being trained in Zimbabwe by British instructors, and on expanding and improving training for local militia. But shortages of military equipment remain a chronic problem, President Chissano told the Maputo diplomatic corps in September, appealing to East and West alike for greater assistance.

The centerpiece of the government's economic strategy is the Economic Recovery Programme, involving drastic devaluation of the currency, deregulation of prices (except on key foodstuffs), improvement in the efficiency of state companies and the granting of more leeway to the private sector.