

Mozambique breaks its dependency

Maputo's efforts to disengage from South Africa's economic orbit are meeting with increased aggression from Pretoria.

Mozambique is one of those rare Third World countries that show signs of breaking out of the dependency trap of the colonial past. The decade 1980-1990 has been designated for "victory over underdevelopment", and substantial progress is expected.

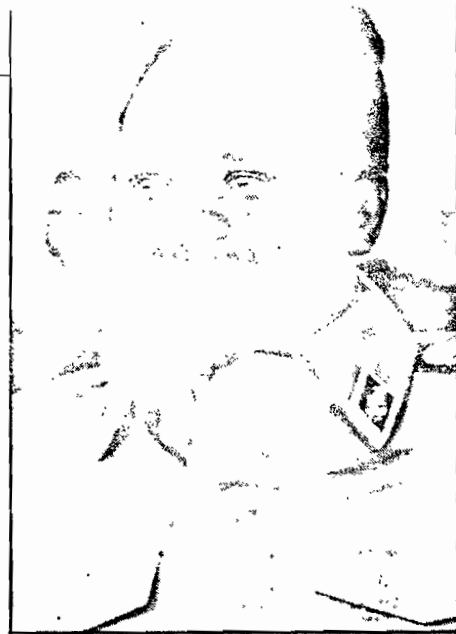
This prospect of success makes Mozambique a particular target for attack from South Africa, whose attempts at destabilisation are conducted through the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), a grandiose title which masks armed banditry, fomented and supplied from South Africa. It has attacked inter-African transport routes running through Mozambique.

While the frontline states are trying to strengthen their own independence through the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the sectoral commission based in Maputo, Mozambique's leaders predict increased South African aggression in the next few years. Within the SADCC strategy, transport and communications have high priority; key railway and ports projects to permit disengagement from South Africa are in Mozambique, and will service the exports of Malawi and Zimbabwe particularly.

Mozambique aims to socialise the countryside with communal villages, production cooperatives, agro-industrial schemes and substantial mechanisation of agriculture. It also plans to increase domestic production and light industry, and to embark on heavy industry. The health and welfare services are to be strengthened to improve life expectancy beyond the present 40-year average, and to cut infant mortality, now 200 for every 1000 births. The various economic and social aims are incorporated into an overall plan for the decade, complemented by detailed annual plans.

The planning process is open to criticism: it is conducted secretly, which tends to shield the technocrats from political and public scrutiny; the plan presents sectors targets which allow insufficient scope for the monitoring of performance; it relies on the personal intervention of a small number of heavily-burdened individuals.

Mozambique's colonial legacy is typical: export cash crops were favoured over food crops for local consumption or raw materials for domestic transformation. Its post independence policy is also typical: living, education and health standards are to be improved for the benefit of the mass of



Machel: breaking away from the colonial past.

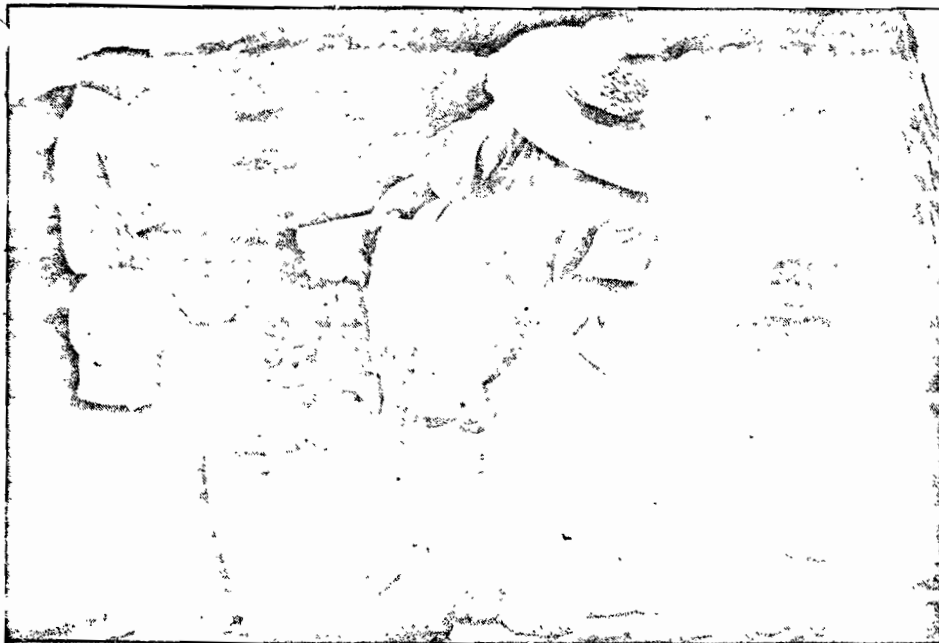
the people. Mozambique has become an example in Africa and has learned from the shortcomings in the Tanzanian experiment in the late 1960s. If there is a single factor crucial to success, it is in the potential of a government or party to continue to mobilise large sections of the people and to maintain two-way communication after the initial nationalist struggle has been won.

Political success lies in avoiding the commandism of a remote party but in perceiving the responses of the 12 million Mozambican peasants, some three quarters of the population. By contrast Frelimo-Partido, the ruling party, is a vanguard of the working class with much of its *cadre* membership in the towns and a current membership believed to be below 100,000.

After independence in 1975 the Mozambican people went through a period of political self-expression that was responsive to Frelimo's experience, particularly in the liberated areas, but was in practice almost anarchic at times. The turning point came early in 1980 with a political and organisational offensive against inefficiency led by Samora Machel as president of Frelimo-Partido and of the republic. In a major political speech in March 1980, Machel itemised many of the failures and complained that the task of management had become diluted. He stressed that in any enterprise, power was exercised by the director, who was responsible for organisation, direction and control of production, who made decisions and was responsible for discipline.

In the same speech he denounced the dissipation of the state's energies in petty commercial activities and in the people's shops, and initiated a return to the private sector for small trade and a food rationing system for the towns. The new system would permit consumer cooperatives and private shopkeepers to operate, with essential items distributed under the rationing scheme.

Farm building in a communal village: inhabitants are paid for their part in the collective work.



Situation reports: Mozambique

A similar pragmatism obtains in the countryside through the communal villages, which house on average 2,000 residents each. The inhabitants retain family plots and contribute to collective work for which they are paid. In the countryside and the towns cooperative and collective forms of work may eventually supercede individual work, but only insofar as the latter become obsolete through greater communal efficiency. In the factories three channels of influence co-exist: management, production councils and the party cell. Their respective roles have been much clarified since Machel's speech of March 1980.

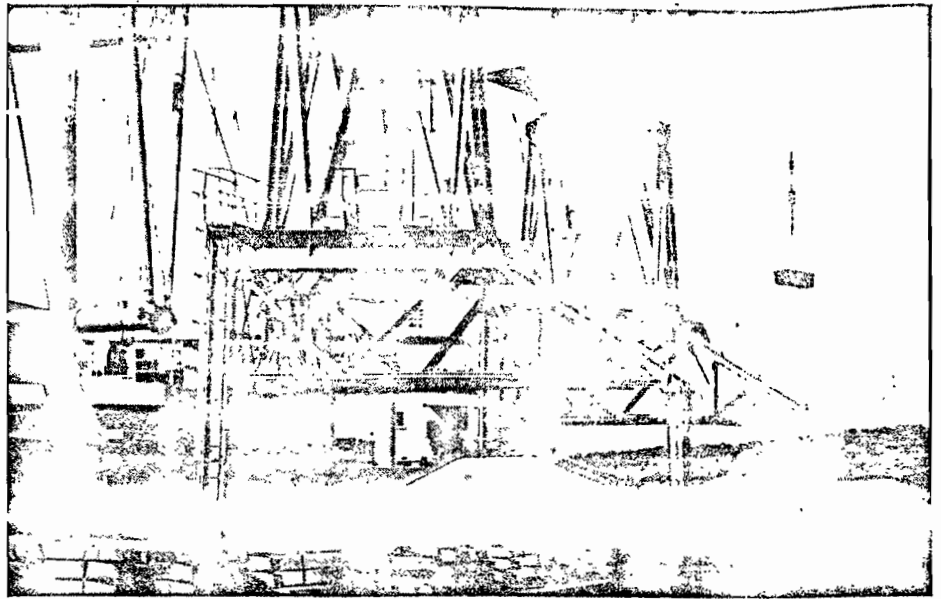
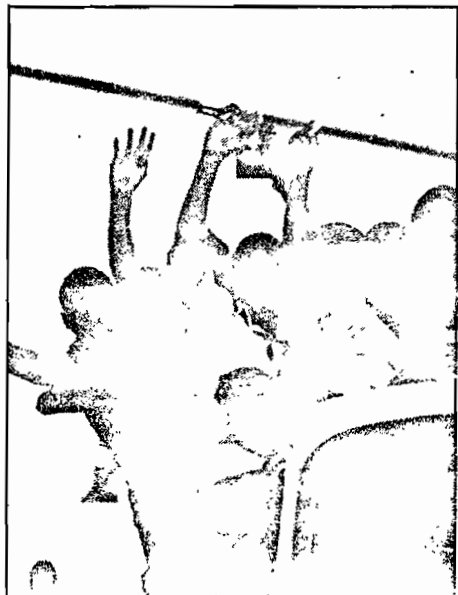
The reassertion of individual responsibility is also reflected in the school system. The teaching unit, the *turma*, still elects its own pupil-leader and within the *turma* much work is done in groups, but the *turma* also has a staff member as director, and staff members are answerable in turn to the school director and "management" colleges.

Almost more notable than the internal democracy of schools is the access to continuing education provided through the national literacy programme and adult education classes. Literacy classes before or after working shifts are a normal feature of factory organisation, and of agricultural cooperatives. Day workers at all levels attend night classes, and to remedy the shortage of teachers skilled workers do teaching stints and senior students teach juniors classes.

Despite a massive programme to prepare and print new textbooks, largely on Mozambican printing presses, there is a shortage of teaching materials and science equipment which must be imported. Whatever is available is used to the full, with educational institutions operating shift systems from early in the morning to late at night.

Mozambique does not claim that its current practice is a definitive answer to national needs. Even under the colonial economy, Mozambique ran an

Waving Frelimo flags: post-revolution self expression.



Copper freight, Cabinda: stepping up heavy industry.

adverse balance of trade to suit Portugal's needs for low-cost commodities. Colonial revenues also depended on payments for transit traffic from Rhodesia and South Africa and on a share of the earnings of migrant mine-workers, particularly in the gold mines of South Africa. For economic and political reasons these invisible earnings are gradually being phased out, except for payments from independent Zimbabwe which should become more important. The targets of mechanised agriculture and industrial expansion set for the development decade require substantial outside assistance, conditional on the goodwill of states and international bodies.

The objectives guiding state farms and public-sector enterprises are aimed at improving conditions for workers; consequent measures may well raise production costs without necessarily yielding sufficient productivity to offset the expenditure. The port of Beira operates with a permanent work force of 2,000 and a casual work force of about 3,500. Not only is this work force of the scale that would be needed for the port's full handling capacity of 3.5 million tonnes a year, when last year's throughput was under half that tonnage, but a programme has already begun to decasualise the port and to offer fixed jobs, salaries and pensions. The action will be spread over several years but has an immediate bearing on the port's running costs and earning capacity. Similar approaches to forming permanent working groups are being tried on an experimental basis in the port of Maputo.

In the huge agro-industrial complexes such as that centred on Chokwe in the Limpopo valley, the crop production pattern is being adapted in the forthcoming agricultural seasons to allow for year-round employment of workers rather than the seasonal

labour of the colonial system. The Limpopo complex currently employs 3,000 permanent workers and 4,000 seasonal workers, mainly during the three or four months of the main harvests. The long-term plan is to provide permanent employment for the full 7,000.

The complex is already substantially mechanised, with nearly 300 combine harvesters in an equipment pool with tractors and other agricultural equipment, on which members of neighbouring cooperatives may also draw. Rice is the main product on 16,000 hectares of irrigated land, and three-quarters of the crop is cut by machine. An additional 4,000 hectares is soon to be brought under irrigation, where crops will be grown under a rotation including maize, wheat and beans.

The intensive developments in the state sector rely heavily on foreign investment and skilled technicians — whether recruited individually or under intergovernmental agreements. Mozambique exports agricultural crops (such as cashew, cotton and sugar) and imports machinery and fuel.

Widespread electrification schemes are under way for industrial and household supply, and the relaxation of state control over the petty commercial sector has encouraged Mozambicans with modest capital to move into the trading sector. Consumer goods are still in short supply, and shortages act as a disincentive to the peasant producer to market any surplus production. The vanguard Frelimo Party, although numerically small, is highly disciplined and organised and has an exemplary effect on the wider society; it argues convincingly that the socio-economic changes in Mozambique since independence were not an automatic result of that independence but "an expression of the socialist character of our revolution".

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