

Schade: 'Things only got worse after Nkomati'

Frederikse: *How long were you in Mozambique and under what auspices?*

Schade: I came to Mozambique in 1980. In October 1981 I went up to Angonia as the Director of the Tete Branch of the National Project of Cooperatives and Small Farmers Regional Centre for Development and Experimentation. The idea was to improve the standard of living of farmers by small means. I was employed by the Mozambican government and the project is supported by the Scandinavian countries.

Frederikse: *Why is the Angonia Province so important?*

Schade: Angonia is the high plateau district and very fertile; heavy rains also fall in the area and the population is keen on agriculture. Production is high in Angonia and there is always a surplus. So, Angonia is the most fertile place in the country and the most important.

Frederikse: *When did the trouble start in the area?*

Schade: Trouble started when the capital city in Tete became isolated from the rest of the province. The whole hinterland became blocked and is not functioning anymore. Angonia supplied the southern part of the country. When the MNR started to attack the road from Tete to Angonia, this caused problems, because when this road got blocked, Angonia became cut-off and isolated.

Frederikse: *Surplus — what happens to it?*

Schade: Some was transported to Tete on private initiative; part was bought by the population in Tete who came on their own risk, but at blackmarket prices; part was transported by the government, but the government got into problems because it managed to only get the goods to Tete, where it spoiled because they were unable to move the goods on to Beira.

Ernst Schade who worked in Mozambique's most fertile province — Angonia, talked to Julie Frederikse about his impressions of the MNR war, the Malawian connection and the future, based on what he has seen first-hand in the country.

Frederikse: *Did some of the surplus go out of the country?*

Schade: Some surplus went out of the country because Angonia is a border town — 20–30 kilometres from Malawi — and the people market their products in Malawi in exchange for consumer goods. The people want to exchange for consumer goods because the Mozambican money is not worth anything and doesn't improve their standard of living, and consumer goods became scarce in the province.

Frederikse: *Is some of the grain and food aid which comes back into Mozambique from Malawi, part of the surplus originally grown in Mozambique?*

Schade: Yes, because western European countries began to buy maize from nearby spots, due to the drought-stricken Tete Province; they bought from Malawi and Zimbabwe; not South Africa because of the economical and political situation there. A lot of maize produced in Angonia, and Zambézia, was transported illegally and sold in Malawi for dollars and perhaps is now retransported back into Mozambique as aid.

Frederikse: *What changes in the war did you see occur between 1981–1984?*

Schade: Before, the roads from Angonia to Tete were accessible, but in September 1982, the roads to Angonia were attacked and the problem really started. This is a

well-made plan by the MNR, based on Mozambican intelligence deserters. One big guy in the beginning of 1982 defected to South Africa and took with him documents on ANC operations in Mozambique. After his defection and there were others too, MNR activities focussed on hot points and major areas. The big MNR strategy is to block roads from the major province town, to important districts like Angonia, then you starve people little by little. This was an important move and a big blow for the district.

At the end of 1983, MNR became more active in the district itself. They operate from the bush and come partly into the open — hit and run tactics. We saw attacks on the nearby second important place in the district with 24 hr notice given. But no Frelimo troops took any initiative. These attacks were damaging psychologically because when government is warned and takes no action then this affects the people.

Shops have been empty since this time. There are no consumer goods because products have gone into Malawi.

Frederikse: *What did you see on your recent trip back?*

Schade: I went back at the end of January and what struck me most is that people have been psychologically affected by the war. Things are going down; there is no communication; people are completely isolated and there are hardly any consumer goods; hardly any petrol; hardly any seeds for last rain season and no fertilizer at all.

Also, the MNR seems to have changed their tactics. Before no atrocities were committed against the population itself. Now they invade villages, as well as attack convoys. They massacre the population. I was informed by the hospital that 192 severely wounded people were brought to hospital in the last two months

and over 200 killed in the past two to three months. But the figures are not accurate because people bury their dead elsewhere.

No Frelimo structures — health, education, etc. set up by the youth — are around anymore. Frelimo has no clue as to what is happening in certain big important areas and this is true throughout the country. The MNR little by little replaces the authorities which is what they are opting for.

Frederikse: *What are your observations on the situation in Mozambique since Nkomati?*

Schade: The war only got worse since Nkomati; it got worse in the whole country. One could doubt what effect Nkomati has. South Africa wants to get out little by little.

Also, there are other main supporters like the Portuguese and big shots in Malawi and South Africa would like for MNR to be taken over by these other supporters.

Frederikse: *There has been speculation that arms are being supplied to MNR via Malawi. Have you seen any evidence to support these claims, and who do you think is supplying MNR? What do the people think?*

Schade: In Angonia there are first-hand stories from people who were at road construction camps on the Malawian border at night in the area. These people heard helicopters coming and two hours later there was a big attack on the camp; the helicopters then went off in the direction of Malawi.

People also come into the district from Malawi supplying lifelines to the MNR

camps in the district. Once our domestic worker was kidnapped and forced to carry supplies to MNR by people who had come over from Malawi.

Malawi is used as a step by the main supporters of MNR. The Malawian government is not fully aware of what's happening but at the moment they are on line with South African policy. Also, Israeli intelligence is very active in Malawi. It is like a lion out of control.

Frederikse: *What other direct evidence do you have to support the Malawian connection?*

Schade: It was never so bad or hectic as it is now. Hardly any trucks are passing on the Tete-Angonia road. People are kidnapped to transport goods from Malawi into the drought-stricken area of Tete. Light aircrafts coming from the direction of Malawi fly over the area constantly.

At the end of December, there was an attack on a state-farm based in Angonia whose headquarters is on the Malawian border. The attack occurred during midday and the people escaped into the direction of Malawi.

In February of this year, the Malawi commander-general visited and denied any invasions into Mozambique, but he later had to admit in the face of so much evidence that they couldn't control the area because it is very mountainous. This area is used as a supply and invasion territory.

An important point though is that the MNR is not popular with the population. The people are scared of them. The people avoid MNR and they avoid Frelimo; they are crushed between two elephants. But I think Frelimo has the best intention with the people.

Frederikse: *What is MNR strategy? How has the war changed?*

Schade: MNR now is much more focused on every single thing that moves, whereas in the past MNR focused on projects and government institutions. Hardly any cars pass now on the roads.

There is massacring and slaughtering of the villagers. They come into the villages and announce that they are MNR and that the villagers must abandon Frelimo structures; they also tell the people not to go into Malawi. As a warning, they kill a complete family with knives.

The people are absolutely flabbergasted and don't know how to interpret this whole thing. These indicate an enormous change in tactic.

The people in Angonia now flee to Malawi. Some are well-received by the Malawian village headmen but criticized by the Malawian party structure. The Malawian government is resettling the Mozambicans in new constructed villages and they are also used as cheap labour force. But the people will move back into Angonia as soon as possible.

Frederikse: *What did you expect? Were you nervous when you went back?*

Schade: There was enormous hope when I left because of Nkomati but this has now gone. It is more difficult now to see any hope, especially among people with good intentions. The government people have slowed down too in the villages, as they see how the MNR war is gaining strength. So they do their main task and leave the rest. For our work we could no longer go to the cooperatives because they were abandoned and are in MNR areas. □