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MOZAMBIQUE:  
FACING A WAR WITHOUT END?

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Nowhere have human rights been so consistently violated as by the apartheid regime.

Perez Cuellar, Havana Declaration, (Le Monde, 8 February 1983).

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In Mozambique, as I speak to you, the armed bandits - the self-proclaimed "Mozambican National Resistance" or "MNR" - are receiving massive support from South Africa. A communique from the US State Department predicted in 1983 that the SADF was about to adopt a real "scorched earth" policy, to demolish the economic infrastructure of the country, and to terrorise the majority of the defenceless population, especially in the rural areas. The prediction has come true. The South African state was and is trying to destroy the social fabric of Mozambican society, and to turn the People's Republic of Mozambique into a client state of the apartheid regime. Let us see how this state of undeclared war came about.

In 1962, shortly after the independence of Tanganyika, and with the support of that great pan-Africanist Julius Nyerere,

FRELIMO, the first nationalist movement of modern Mozambique, was born under the presidency of Dr. Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane. FRELIMO's first political act was to propose "peaceful" negotiations to the Portuguese Government in accordance with United Nations' resolutions, with a view to starting a process which would end in Mozambican independence. Faced with the point-blank refusal of the dictator Oliveira Salazar, who had presided over Portugal's fortunes for many years, FRELIMO was compelled to resort to force of arms. In 1974, after ten years of war and suffering, the struggle against the colonial power ended in victory for FRELIMO, the Lusaka Accords, and the transfer of power to the Mozambican people, whose only legitimate representative was FRELIMO, recognised as such by the international community as well as the UN and the OAU.

FRELIMO's victory in Mozambique, and a little later the victory of the MPLA in Angola, destroyed two buffer states which had been protecting the apartheid regime in South Africa against the "winds of change." The geopolitics of southern Africa had been irreversibly altered. Let us look more closely at these events.

The first FRELIMO government of Samora Machel, despite the serious crisis which it inherited from Mozambique's brutal colonial experience, showed itself to be both responsible, and capable of successfully governing the country, bringing well-being and material progress to its people. Contrary to widespread belief, and despite the exodus of qualified Portuguese personnel, the costs of applying sanctions against Rhodesia, and systematic

Rhodesian attacks and sabotage, conditions improved initially: the gross social product of the People's Republic of Mozambique increased by fifteen per cent in the five-year period between 1977 and 1982. Some solid social achievements were registered between 1975 and 1980: the level of illiteracy, which had stood at 97 per cent at independence, was reduced by 21 per cent; the number of doctors per head of population doubled in the same period.

The situation seemed to be well under control, and on the way towards normalization. An economic "take-off" seemed assured in the not-too-distant future, achieved moreover by the first "government of freedom fighters" in southern Africa, which was showing itself self-reliant and capable of governing. At this time, the Republic of South Africa, under the premiership of John Balthazar Vorster, appeared to have accepted FRELIMO's accession to power as a fait accompli, and seemed to be prepared to co-exist with a Marxist-Leninist government in the region.

In 1978, however, and unhappily for Mozambique, the equation changed inside South Africa itself. A palace coup removed Vorster from the seat of power. His former defence minister, P. W. Botha, had been preparing the operation for some time, with the support of allies in the military elite of the SADF, and with the encouragement of big finance, which had never had much of a rapport with John Vorster.

South African capitalism was about to adopt more expansionist policies. Botha's job was to complete the modernisation

of the power structures which he had inherited. The leadership of the Nationalist Party, which had ruled the country for nearly thirty years, and indeed the executive arm of government itself, were about to take a secondary position.

Among the most important of the changes in the major restructuring of the South African state apparatus during this period were the alterations in the State Security Council. This had been created in 1972 as a consultative body, but it now became the semi-secret top-level think-tank of the new-style South African polity. In its new role, the SSC was made up of a handful of ministers and a group of high-ranking SADF officers, not all of them publicly identified. These soldiers were to play a decisive part in the decision-making process presided over by P. W. Botha. In foreign relations, the priorities of the new power alignment had already been set when Botha was still Minister of Defence. Thus, in the 1977 White Paper on Defence, prepared by South Africa's military strategists the necessity to

maintain a solid military balance relative to neighbouring states ... [with] the purpose of promoting political and economic collaboration in the region,

is postulated. To these same ends the White Paper advocated concerted action in the region's most sensitive economic sector, namely "transport services, distribution, and telecommunications."

In less equivocal terms, this meant persuasion, but also if necessary making use of force against those newly independent states which had the geographical misfortune to share the Republic's borders, to convince them that their interests lay within a

Pax Pretoria: in sum to guarantee the southern African market to an aggressive and imperialistic South African capitalism, and to turn the Republic into a regional super-power.

And so the admittedly somewhat vague project of an front against the common enemy - "international communism" - reappeared, better defined as the Constellation of Southern African States. CONSAS, as it became known, had originally been thought up by John Balthazar Vorster, on the eve of the collapse of Portugal's African empire. The Constellation was supposed to include the Bantustans, the "captive states" (Lesotho Botswana, and Swaziland), and the newly independent states of the region, excluding, of course, radical Tanzania, and Marxist-Leninist Angola and Mozambique.

A "moderate" Zimbabwe under Bishop Abel Muzorewa (with Ian Smith in the shadows) was called on to assume a central role in this system, because of its geo-economic position as a key element in the security buffer belt of the CONSAS project. This new "sovereign state" was to have protected the apartheid regime against the subversion intended by "international communism." The whole operation had been largely thought out and financed by the Pretoria strategists, and was assumed to be a winning bet by the British and the Americans.

Nevertheless, Robert Mugabe's ZANU, by now had access to rear bases in the People's Republic of Mozambique. ZANU had reduced the rebel Ian Smith, by force of arms, to the point at which he submitted to South African pressure, and to agreed to

install the servile regime of Abel Muzorewa in Salisbury.

The objective was to block the progress of the guerrilla war. On Samora Machel's advice, Mugabe responded by accepting an armistice and a cease-fire proposed by Great Britain, the colonial power. Against the expectations of the West, Mugabe and ZANU then won the country's first free elections. Botha's CONSAS project had been defeated, before it had even been born.

The People's Republic of Mozambique had shown that a "black" government could not only be self-reliant and capable of ruling, but had also opened the way for a grouping of the independent states of the region to define a policy which would allow them to free themselves step-by-step from dependence on South Africa.

Samora Machel defined Mozambican policy within this framework at the First Extraordinary Session of the Mozambican Council of Ministers, held in Maputo just after Zimbabwean independence. The Mozambican President defined cooperation with the new rulers in Harare as an absolute priority, without ideological preconditions, in all sectors. The frontier between the two countries, had been closed for four years in conformity with the UN decision to apply sanctions against the illegal regime in Southern Rhodesia: now it was re-opened. Rail traffic between the two countries began again and within three years more than half of Zimbabwe's commercial traffic was crossing Mozambique to the Indian Ocean ports.

These measures had the effect of reducing the dependence

of the African states on South Africa, at the expense of the South African railway and port system. Landlocked Zambia, and even Zaire and Malawi, which had always maintained discreet relations with Pretoria, drew the obvious conclusion that the "Mozambican alternative" was cheaper and quicker than the southern route controlled by the apartheid regime.

Shortly before Zimbabwean independence another step forward was taken, in Lusaka. It had become necessary to enlarge and formalise what had merely been "circumstantial relations" in order to create effective conditions for the progressive disengagement of the states on the periphery from Pretoria's domination, a heritage of the colonial past. And so the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) was born, as an instrument of the liberation struggle and as a response to the Botha's CONSAS policy. It was a first and necessary step, in response to the expansionist plans of the South Africans, to turn the independent sovereign states of the region into viable economic entities.

Botha did not take long to reply: he began to apply his own sanctions against the "rebels" of the SADCC. The combination and timing of the tactics used against different member states of the SADCC varied according to their individual military, economic and political vulnerability. but the primary targets were invariably economic. The first blows in this undeclared war, as one would have expected, were aimed against the People's Republic of Mozambique. Mozambique's railway transport and communications network and her ports, which could serve the landlocked countries



at competitive prices, were all strategic targets. In addition, the security of the sector could only be guaranteed with great difficulty by the ill-equipped, inexperienced and under-trained Mozambican army, the FPLM. The special groups of the SADF, had intervened as early as 1967 on the side of the Portuguese army; and again in 1979, to support Rhodesian forces in the attack against the Beira oil storage facilities. In the new scheme, they were to intervene again, whenever sophisticated technological know-how was needed, as was the case, among others, in the blowing up of the road and rail bridges over the Pungwe. Henceforth the SADF, directly or indirectly, but always systematically, set out to undermine the Mozambican economy and to sabotage communications routes which would have enabled neighbouring landlocked countries to reduce their dependence on the apartheid regime.

The practice of state terrorism is not unknown on the African continent, but this particular strategic operation was accompanied by an unpublicized and self-reproducing process, designed to spew forth a parallel "terrorism of the masses."

The "armed bandits," for the most part Mozambican nationals, began to be infiltrated into the national territory. Their hard core was made up of former collaborators of the colonial regime who had received an exclusively military and very sophisticated preparation in training camps inside the Republic of South Africa. This hard core or nucleus, led by SADF officers, was intended to mount special operations against well-defined strategic targets, but it had attached to it a mass of lumpens and criminal elements, produced and indeed reproduced by the very

process of war, and who were an integral part of the destabilization project.

#### REGIONAL EFFECTS OF THE WAR IN MOZAMBIQUE

The economic effects of the war have been devastating: a few simple figures will suffice to show just how devastating. The only trade route to the sea which is still open for the landlocked central African countries now runs straight from Zambia and Zimbabwe to the South African ports of Durban, East London, and Cape Town. This is the only route which has not been attacked in the past six years. Are we to believe that this is merely coincidence?

The proportion of Zimbabwean trade transiting Mozambique in 1983 had been 53.9 per cent; by mid-1986 it had dropped to an estimated 5 per cent. Despite public denials by the South Africans that they have benefitted, we know that the major part of Zimbabwe's trade now passes through South African ports, at great expense in terms of heavy freight costs. Steel costs almost three times more to move; tobacco pays a supplement of US\$500 per tonne.

Zambia is now effectively isolated from Mozambique. Her western outlets to the sea, through Angola to the Atlantic coast, which used to account for 90 per cent of copper exports, have practically ceased to operate, making the country totally dependent on South Africa.

Sixty per cent of Malawi's trade used to be carried through the Mozambican port of Beira. Today, as a result of sabotage, this trade has been reduced to nil. Malawi is compelled to airfreight its tea and coffee crops to the markets, and its transport bills are now roughly five times what they used to be.

Disruption and sabotage of regional communications have increased dramatically. Attacks on domestic routes prevent Mozambique from getting its own exports to market. Cement, for example, used to be produced at a Maputo factory, using raw materials from a quarry to the south of the capital. This has been continuously sabotaged, by bandits coming up from nearby camps just across the South African border. The result is that Mozambique no longer exports cement, but instead spends Rands 90,000 per month on clinker from South Africa. The local price of a tonne of cement, which used to be US\$42.50, is now US\$62.50, an increase of almost fifty per cent.

The landlocked Moatize mining complex is a virtual "coal mountain." Conservative estimates of its potential contribution to the Mozambican economy range between US\$50m and US\$60m. Today it has virtually shut down production because the railway linking it to the coast has been practically destroyed.

It would be possible to give dozens of examples of how this undeclared war, with its destruction of regional and domestic transport routes, has made Mozambique, and indeed the whole sub-region, more dependent on South Africa, and furnished the South African regime with protection against the sanctions that

the international community will eventually have to apply against the apartheid regime.

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#### SOCIAL COSTS OF THE WAR

1. The gross social product, grew by 15 per cent between 1977 and 1982, and declined by 33 per cent between 1982 and 1985.
2. Exports doubled between 1977 and 1982 and dropped in the period 1982 to 1985 by a factor of three.
3. In 1985 imports were only 42 per cent of their 1982 value. those in 1982.
4. Receipts from the service sector from South Africa and Zimbabwe, dropped by US\$150m per year between 1982 and 1985.

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These statistical indicators are just abstract figures, however, and fail to reveal the real nature of scorched earth warfare, which affects the whole social fabric of the country. To achieve such a high level of destruction, Pretoria has relied largely on its surrogates, the so-called "MNR," who in truth are nothing more than armed bandits. Let us look at some concrete cases which may clarify the nature of the crimes which the South Africans commit against the people of Mozambique.

Two of the areas where the Mozambican revolution registered substantial achievements were the education and health

sectors, especially for the peasant population of the rural areas. By 1983, 840 out of a total of 4,727 Mozambican primary schools had been destroyed by the armed bandits. At the beginning of 1985 the number of schools destroyed had reached 1,863. The displaced school population (which had been 152,688 in 1980) had climbed to 313,766 by 1983. What these figures amount to is this: 40 per cent of the schools in the country have been destroyed; 25 per cent of the school-age population has been deprived of education opportunity; and 5,000 trained teachers have been thrown out of work.

In the health sector, the number of doctors per head of the population, as I said earlier, had doubled between 1975 and 1980. The World Health Organization considered this to be a major achievement, without parallel on the African continent. After twelve months of South African aggression in 1980 one hundred hospitals and clinics in the countryside had been razed; today 10 per cent of the health network has been destroyed.

The African peasant family is deeply dependent on its livestock. In 1980 Mozambique had 1.5m head of cattle. At the end of 1985 they had been reduced to 900,000, and today the figure may even be as low as 600,000 head, for a population which is now over 13 million.

From 1980 onwards South Africa decided, in defiance of international opinion, to apply sanctions in turn against Mozambique. The Mozambican economy depended very much on service sector earnings from Zimbabwe and South Africa, but from 1981

onwards these earnings were reduced by around US\$150 million per year.

The costs of the adoption of terrorism against the People's Republic of Mozambique as state policy by the South African government have amounted to an officially estimated US\$3,800 million. By the end of which had risen by the end of 1985 to US\$7,000 million.

After the defeat of the Portuguese colonialism, the euphoria of independence in 1975 did not produce peace for the Mozambican people. The state of uninterrupted war, against the ambitions of yet another neo-colonial metropolitan power, the apartheid regime, has continued now for almost 20 years. Shortly after independence, the young People's Republic of Mozambique applied sanctions against the rebels in Salisbury, closing her frontiers and her ports in conformity with the resolutions of the international community. The direct costs of applying these sanctions had risen to over US\$500m between 1977 and 1979.

This war is little known to the outside world. The South Africans call it the "total strategy", in reply to a "total onslaught" coming from outside the region, and attributed by the "bosses" in Pretoria to "international communism." Among the vast quantities of documentation captured during the joint Mozambican-Zimbabwean assault on the bandit base at Gorongosa was a "secret" military document, the authenticity of which was not disputed by Pik Botha, and in which we read that

We [South Africa] soldiers will continue to give support without the consent of our politicians to win the war

... and Machel can only fall ... through a cut in the communications routes.

Where will this aggression lead southern Africa? What can we hope for from the international community in this dramatic situation in our country? This is a war, after all, which has been imposed on us by South Africa.