

# Mozambique: The Video

BY LARRY KUEHN

Larry Kuehn is a teacher/educator, and part of the editorial collective of *New Directions*. He is presently working for CUSO.

*Mozambique: The Struggle For Survival*, produced by Video Africa, directed by Bob & Amy Coen. 57 min., colour video, Mozambique-Zimbabwe 1987. Rental: \$74/\$55 (Available from IDERA Films, 2524 Cypress, Vancouver V6J 3N2.)

How best could a filmmaker convince an audience of skeptics that the MNR – the *bandidos* in Mozambique – are in the service of South Africa and trained and supplied by South Africa?

What more powerful evidence could be provided than the head of intelligence from Ian Smith's Rhodesian regime telling the story of how they created the MNR (Renamo) in the mid-70's, and turned it over to South Africa when Robert Mugabe took over and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe?

Just such testimony from Ken Flower, former head of the Rhodesian intelligence service, is woven throughout *Mozambique – the Struggle for Survival*. It provides the clinching evidence, should any be needed, that achieving peace and development in Mozambique requires an end to the apartheid system in South Africa.

Flower describes how the Rhodesians built a secret army, emphasizing that "at no time did the movement (the MNR) have its own political program." Rather, what the Rhodesians, and later the South Africans, offered was a "way of life."

Much of the video describes that way of life – robbing, killing, destroying and mutilating.

One of the Renamo defectors interviewed tells about an operation in which he took part. The *bandidos* he

was with went in and destroyed a village, rounding up the villagers, taking their clothing and food, and selecting out the teachers, leaders and Frelimo people to kill.

A mutilated victim – with ears and nose cut off – recounts her experience, describing the terror of the terrible violence directed against her and many others.

And shot after shot shows torn up rail lines, bombed bridges and refugees barely able to find food, clothing and shelter.

The video pictures a country facing war, a wrecked economy, millions of internal refugees, famine – and children who have less chance of surviving to adulthood than in any other country.

Yet, strangely enough, this is not a statement of despair. It is, as the title says, about struggle, about not giving up, about working to rebuild.

The shots of destruction are balanced by views of the beauty of the country – its beaches, its countryside, its people.

And it tells about the recent opening of the market system and improvements in food supplies in the cities.

Efforts to reform the army are detailed, including the training of middle rank officers in Zimbabwe by the British army.

Gains are being made in control of the country by Frelimo, with the army winning back some areas, and troops from Zimbabwe and Tanzania helping to protect the vital rail corridors so that transportation can be restored.

*Mozambique – the Struggle for Survival* has sufficient breadth, balance and detail to provide a good introduction to audiences of that vast number of Canadians who know virtually nothing about Mozambique, often mistaking it for that island off the east coast of Africa, Madagascar.

This is a long video – 57 minutes – so coherently structured that it would be very difficult to select out a portion to show for situations that require a shorter presentation. That coherence is also one of its real strengths as an educational experience.

The film works, then, on two vitally interconnected levels. Mozambique, as a country, is presented sympathetically in its efforts to survive the ruthless onslaught of South Africa. But Mozambique is Mozambicans. The cruel fact is that, for the individual peasants whose lives are shown in the video, their hope each day is that the war's reach will be escaped another night.



Village burned by the bandits in Sofala, Mozambique

Joel Chiziane/AIM