

# Mozambique's rulers inherited shell of a nation

By Peter Goodspeed Toronto Star

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MAPUTO — The turmoil in Mozambique is an explosive mixture of conflicting ideologies, regional power politics, and blind destruction. But its roots are buried deep in southern Africa's past.

When Mozambique won its independence from Portugal in 1975, after 400 years of colonial domination and 10 years of gruelling guerrilla warfare, the country was immediately plunged into chaos.

Mozambique's present rulers, Frelimo (the Mozambique Liberation Front), inherited a legacy of neglect and distrust which seemed to doom the country to disaster.

Within two years of independence, more than 180,000 of Mozambique's 200,000 Portuguese settlers fled the country, stripping the nation of virtually all its technical, business and administrative skills.

## Portuguese sabotage

Before they left, some of the departing Portuguese sabotaged whatever they could, driving tractors into the ocean, tearing plumbing out of buildings, destroying factory machinery and burning government and business records.

What remained was the shell of a country with just a few million dollars in foreign currency reserves; an illiteracy rate of 97 per cent; only 80 doctors and 100 high school teachers.

Frelimo, under the late President Samora Machel, tried to build a new Marxist state on the ruins.

It confiscated private property, turned abandoned colonial plantations into state farms, handed factory operations over to workers' committees and imposed central government planning on almost all activities.

The results were often disastrous. Productivity declined even further; scarce resources were squandered and bureaucratic inefficiency and mismanagement aggravated an already growing problem.

At the same time, Mozambique's new government plunged into regional politics with a frenzy, offering bases, aid and support to black nationalist guerrillas who were trying to overthrow the white minority government in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

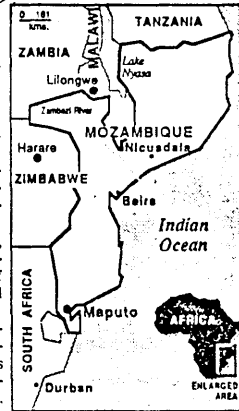
The Rhodesians responded by creating the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR or Renamo), ordering it to destabilize Mozambique and destroy the country's economy in an effort to stop Machel from backing Robert Mugabe's black guerrillas.

## Assumed control

When Rhodesia's white government fell and Mugabe came to power in Zimbabwe in 1980, South Africa secretly assumed control of the MNR.

Feeling threatened by a black Marxist state on its borders and angered by Mozambique's support for African National Congress terrorists who operated openly in Maputo, South Africa ordered the MNR rebels to continue trying to undermine Machel's government.

MNR guerrillas were airlifted into South Africa for training, equipped with new weapons, given new communications equipment and provided with South African military advisers — who fought alongside the rebels in Mozambique and assisted with cash, military and political intelligence and



a steady stream of combat supplies.

The move almost brought Mozambique's government to its knees, as MNR rebels terrorized the countryside, blowing up bridges, sabotaging railways, destroying factories, and burning farms, schools and health clinics.

Three years ago, Mozambique decided to sue for peace and signed the Nkomati Accord with South African President P. W. Botha. The treaty, essentially a non-aggression pact, called on South Africa to abandon its support of the MNR in exchange for Mozambique's refusing to allow the African National Congress to operate from its territory.

Originally, Mozambique believed the MNR, deprived of South African support, would wither away and die. But in the year immediately following the signing of the Nkomati Accord, MNR activities actually increased and spread right across the country, with rebel bands operating in groups of between 100 and 500 men in all 10 of the country's provinces.

## Rebel documents

Mozambique angrily accused South Africa of continuing to supply the MNR. South Africa, just as vehemently, denied it. But in 1985, a combined force of Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops overran an MNR rebel base, captured tons of supplies and ammunition, which Maputo insists came from South Africa, and discovered rebel documents all showing South African involvement with the MNR.

Among the records seized was one that revealed South Africa's then-deputy foreign minister, Louis Nel, made three secret visits, 16 months after the signing of the Nkomati Accord, to the MNR guerrillas' headquarters in Gorongozo.

For weeks, South Africa publicly and diplomatically denied Mozambique's allegations, but finally acknowledged that the allegations in broad terms were correct and that the Nkomati Accord was violated.

Nevertheless, Pretoria insists it wants to help, rather than hurt, Mozambique.

South African officials note nearly 30,000 Mozambicans are employed in South Africa's gold and coal mines, providing Mozambique with much-needed foreign currency. They also say Pretoria has recently given Mozambique 3 million Rand (about \$2 million) in foreign aid to redevelop and upgrade Maputo harbor.