

COVER STORY



The commander-in-chief and some of his men: heavy weapons needed

MOZAMBIQUE

# The threat from

## RESISTANCE GROUP STEPS UP ATTACKS ON FRELIMO POSITIONS

For some time Frelimo had been shrugging it off as a joke. Then came the big raids that hit the headlines — claims that thousands of prisoners were freed from concentration camps, main bridges blown up, army barracks attacked and ransacked. The Beira oil tank farm went up in flames. Now, President Samora Machel, Marxist ruler of Mozambique, has warned grimly: "We must destroy the enemy before it destroys us." The "enemy" is the Resistência Nacional Mocambicana (Mozambique National Resistance). To find out who leads it, how it works and what it is hoping to achieve, to THE POINT's José Ramalho entered Mozambique clandestinely and made his way on foot to a Resistência bush camp deep inside the country. His report:

He apologised for not being able to introduce me to his second-in-command Afonso Djacama. His deputy was somewhere in the Save area, where his troops are gathering to "open the Maputo front".

He had made his point. Frelimo has admitted that the Resistência is strongest in the central provinces of Manica, Chimoio, Sofala and Tete. André's main camp is right in the heart of the country within striking distance of the main road and railway routes. The presence of Resistência groups in the southern areas of the Gaza province has been confirmed by eyewitnesses. His forces are spread far and wide indeed.

Clearly, they do pose a serious threat to Frelimo. They thrive on the widespread discontent with the Marxist regime throughout the territory.

"All I need now are heavy weapons. If I could lay my hands on them it would be no problem to wipe out the Russian-led Frelimo garrison at Vila Pery," the commander claims.

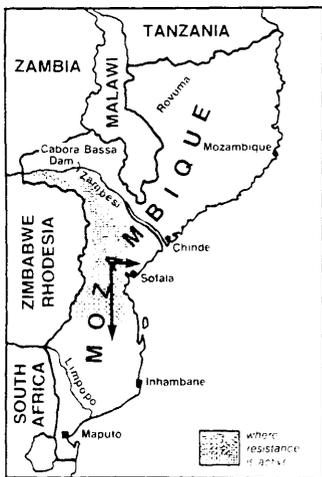
So far, the Resistência weapons have come mainly from Frelimo armouries. The guns

The man I had come all this way to meet stood out among tough-looking soldiers bristling with AK 47s, rockets and machineguns: commander-in-chief André Matade Matsangaisse, known to his troops as simply Commander André.

His eyes moved down the long rows of men in the camp and beyond to the hilltops where his guerrillas had mounted a security ring. Speaking slowly and with emphasis, he said: "God willing, we are going to win this war."

Sensing my scepticism, he added: "I have some documents that might interest you." He produced a manilla envelope and scattered its contents on the ground. The places and dates showed that the documents, which included passports and identity papers of foreign co-operatives working for Frelimo, had been seized during a raid on Vila Paiva de Andrade, a town about 150 km west of Beira.

Commander André's visit to our camp was in acknowledgement of my visit. His headquarters are in the Gorongosa area. "I shall have to be back soon because we have major operations in progress just now," he said.

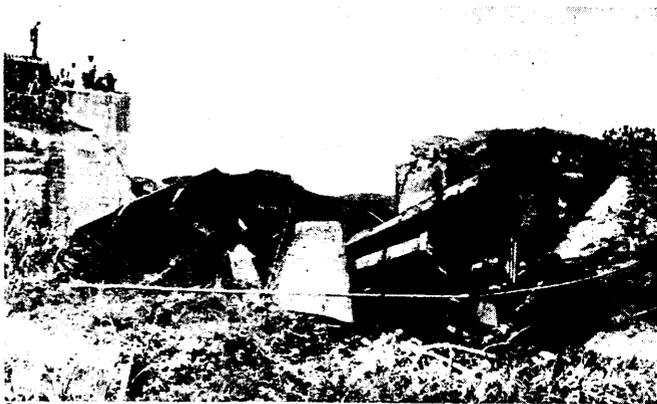


around the camp I visited were an odd assortment, mostly the ubiquitous Russian AK 47s; a few G3 automatic rifles left behind at the time of the Portuguese debacle; some 7.9 German Mauser rifles captured from the poorly trained rural militia; Russian rockets and Datsigref machineguns and 60 mm mortars.

Frelimo brands anyone taking up arms against the Marxist regime as either a mercenary or a traitor. In the camp, I was told that new recruits are coming forward all the time in large numbers.

I asked some of the men why they had joined the guerrilla ranks. José Martins Gilberto (26) says: "Last year I was in a Maputo bar with some friends. There was some light banter and when my turn came I told a joke about Machel's toilet night. A police informer reported me to the political police (SNASP) for the serious 'crime' of disrespect to His Excellency the President.

"I was detained and sent to the Secuze concentration camp near Gorongosa. On April 10 this year, the camp was razed to the ground



Frelimo's own photograph of the Mecito railway bridge blown up by the Resistência

rebellion against the new Marxist regime. The mutiny was crushed with the help of Tanzanian troops called in by Machel. The flow of Frelimo deserters to the Resistência ranks has swollen ever since.

At the camp I met an old acquaintance, Filipe Augusto, a former member of the crack Beira Paratroop Battalion (BCP 31)

had flown with me on operations during the Portuguese war against Frelimo. He went into hiding when the new rulers had a witchhunt for Africans who had served in the colonial forces. Two years ago he heard that Matsangaisse was somewhere in the Gorongosa area and went to join him.

Commander André's men idolise him. I asked them why. "When we go into action he is way out in front. His courage is unbelievable."

André Matsangaisse was born in Vila de Manica 27 years ago. "I come from a poor family and when my father died I had got only as far as Standard Two. After some training I found a good job as an assistant Caterpillar operator with SHER" (the Manica power works).

His big chance came with the construction of the Cabora Bassa dam. "I was making more than R400 a month operating heavy machinery at the dam site. All the same I firmly believed all the talk about the Portuguese being exploiters of the people."

In 1972 Matsangaisse made contact with Frelimo agents at Estima, south of Cabora Bassa. With 26 other recruits he was sent to Frelimo's main training camp in Nachingwea, southern Tanzania. There he underwent a crash terrorist course given by Chinese instructors. He returned to Mozambique, fought in Tete and later in his native Manica.

After the Portuguese withdrawal, Matsangaisse got the plum job of Frelimo commandant in charge of heavy equipment at the Dondo main barracks, 30 km north of Beira.

"I thought — now that we are free and independent, the time has come to enjoy life," he said.

With the money he had saved from his Cabora Bassa job he bought a Mercedes-Benz saloon. But his happiness was short-lived. The Dondo barracks' political commissar Fernando Tembe informed him that under the new dictatorship of the proletariat the car belonged to the people.

André fought back — and lost. In February 1976 he joined the inmates at the Gorongosa concentration camp and until he escaped six months later, he had plenty of time to become thoroughly acquainted with the harsh realities of life under the regime he had helped to establish.

Once free, it did not take him long to make contact with small groups of anti-Frelimo fighters which had been operating in the central areas of Mozambique for more than a year.

At a secret rendezvous of guerrilla leaders from Manica and Tete, André was unanimously

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by a party led by commander André and, together with some 390 prisoners. I was freed. All able-bodied men volunteered to join the Resistência."

Others like Matsangaisse himself and his senior staff officers came from the top ranks of the Frelimo army. Large-scale desertions started soon after independence.

In December 1975 a battalion stationed at Matola on the outskirts of Maputo staged a

The first reading matter the commander had seen for a long time



COVER STORY



Commander André talks to TTP's José Ramalho about his plans and hopes for Mozambique

elected overall commander of the forces fighting Frelimo.

With him at the Manica base camp I visited was the chief of the external affairs department Orlando Cristina and the Resistência's representative in Portugal, Dr Evo Fernandes (see box, p. 11).

Cristina says: "The Resistência Nacional Mocambicana (RNM) is the only effective movement physically operating in Mozambique against the Marxist regime."

He went on to spell out what the RNM really is and what it hopes to achieve: "This is a milit-

ary, non-political organisation concentrating its efforts on toppling the Machel regime. It is determined to liberate the people of Mozambique from the Marxist oppression which has been imposed on them. Finally it aims at creating the conditions for the people themselves to choose their political future through free elections."

He was emphatic about this. "The Resistência leaders have no political ambitions. They are fighting for the right of every man and woman to have a say in the choice of government for their country."

Anticipating the inevitable question about its affiliations, Cristina states forcefully: "The Resistência has no connection whatsoever with any political group in Mozambique, Portugal or elsewhere in the world. There are a number of political opportunists claiming to be connected with the Resistência. Their claims have no foundation."

I was told that the immediate objective of the RNM is to expand their operations to the north and south of the central provinces, in which they claim to be solidly established.

The movement's permanent bases are said to be strong enough to deter the Frelimo army (FPLM) from attacking them and the RNM leaders claim that intelligence on FPLM movements is passed to them by sympathisers within the Frelimo forces and also by the local tribesmen.

One veteran bush fighter in the war against the Portuguese told me that he found a striking similarity between the present situation and the last days of Portuguese rule when the morale of the colonial army was being eroded by communist propaganda.

He said: "In those days the demoralised Portuguese units going into operations always tried to find out where we were so that they could keep well away from us. The same thing is happening today with Frelimo whenever we are around."

Recently Frelimo's Minister of Defence, Alberto Chipande, threatened his own troops with execution if they continued to retreat and avoid contacts.

A number of RNM bases are self-contained.

### Salisbury to blame - Frelimo

Although Frelimo has admitted from time to time that there are "reactionary elements" in northern areas, official policy is to ignore publicly any suggestions that opposition to the regime is organised or poses any threat.

The few Western journalists allowed into Mozambique since the Frelimo takeover, came away with the impression of a well-organised, nation-wide party structure with grassroots support right down to village level. Every aspect of life seemed to be controlled by the party.

Machel's ministers constantly exhort Mozambicans to watch out for the "enemy within" but dissidents are referred to as agents of Zimbabwe Rhodesia or South Africa. The successes claimed by Commander

André's men are attributed by Frelimo either to attacks by Zimbabwe Rhodesian troops or agents or to the action of "internal reactionaries" supported by the Salisbury government.

James McManus of the British newspaper *The Guardian* describes the RNM as "a Rhodesian creation". Mozambique officials admitted to him, however, that it was causing problems. They listed its activities in Mozambique as if there was no distinction between it and those of Zimbabwe Rhodesian troops.

McManus claims that 50,000 peasants have been removed from the border provinces because of Zimbabwe Rhodesian activities. Large areas of the country are said to be uninhabited.

## Top men in the struggle against Machel

As head of the RNM external affairs department, Orlando Cristina (51) is a sort of roving ambassador forging links between the Mozambique-based Resistência and the outside world.

He was born in the Portuguese southern city of Lagos but thinks of himself as a true Mozambican, having lived in the country for the best part of 30 years.

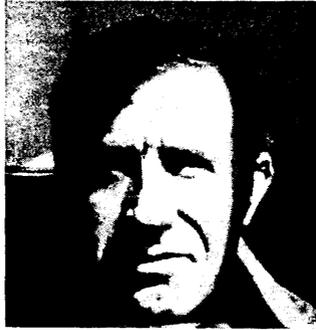
As a young law student in Lisbon he became involved in politics and under threat of arrest by PIDE, the secret police, he fled to Mozambique to join his father in the northern town of Vila Cabral.

Soon after his arrival, Cristina joined a budding separatist movement. After a few years as a professional big game hunter he was drafted into the Portuguese army in 1960 and served in the military intelligence department at general headquarters, Nampula.

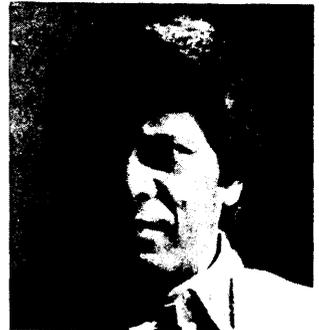
Cristina's reports were highly critical of the Portuguese administration and when he was about to be detained in 1963 he fled to Tanzania. There he met Leo Milas, a member of Frelimo's central committee, who made arrangements for him to be sent to Algeria for terrorist training.

Later he met leading politician Jorge Jardim and, though they held widely different ideas about Mozambique's independence, Cristina agreed to work with him in organising a system of self-defence for the Niassa district against Frelimo attacks.

His next assignment was to help in the



Orlando Cristina



Evo Fernandes

formation of a crack African paratroop unit known as GEP, *Grupos Especiais Paraquedistas*.

Says Cristina: "My aim was to turn the GEPs into a totally Mozambican force not only to fight Machel's communist guerrillas but to find a final solution for Mozambique's independence."

When Portuguese rule collapsed, Cristina faced arrest and deportation to Portugal. His association with Jardim came to an end. From then on, Cristina moved along the Mozambique borders making contact with Frelimo dissidents and deserters. In October 1976 he joined forces with Commander André Matade.

Evo Fernandes (35) is a third-generation Mozambican. Born in Beira he graduated in law at Lisbon University and upon his return to Mozambique worked in the legal branch of the police force. In 1974 he became editor of the daily newspaper *Notícias da Beira*.

Although a firm supporter of independence for his country, Fernandes refused to join Frelimo because of his opposition to the movement's communist ideology.

He was detained in Beira after the 1974 Marxist-orientated coup in Lisbon. Released in January 1975 he went to Lisbon and contacted Cristina who appointed him as the RNM's representative in Portugal.

Crops are grown with the help of the local population. Weapons and equipment are obtained by raids on Frelimo barracks, military convoys and militia posts. And extra food and supplies come from looting government-owned stores.

Commander André has no misgivings about it. He says: "The Marxists call these *lojas do povo* (people's shops) but in fact they are Frelimo stores. So we take what we need and give away what is left to the local population." A set of stocktaking books seized during one of the raids was produced. The printed forms were headed Loja do Povo No. 31, Kanda, Gorongosa.

As the guerrilla leader outlined his future plans, he frequently prefaced his statements with the phrase "God willing . . ." I found that he and his men feel strongly about the intense religious persecution by Machel. To the approval of his men he shouted: "Who is this man, Machel, to say there is no God?"

But the guerrillas' religious beliefs are curiously mixed with the veneration of the ancestral spirits and the practice of witchcraft. They say their prayers before going into an action — but they would not part with scarves given to them by witchdoctors to keep them from harm.

Commander André is supremely confident

about the future. In his picturesque style, he says: "Here, in the Manica area, Frelimo is singing no more. We are in Tete and Sofala and are marching to Beira."

He says FPLM forces recently tried to storm his headquarters at Gorongosa. "I wish you could have seen how they ran when we chased them all the way to Inchope" (the main road junction between Beira and Maputo).

He is especially proud of the spectacular raid on Beira, during which the huge oil tank farm in the port area was blown up. "I set a strike force out. They marched along the Gorongosa hills until they reached Dondo. Then they went on to the Munhava depot and 'bang, bang' shot it up sky high." His mirth turns to grief when he mentions the name of one of his men, Joaquim Agostinho, killed in the raid.

The resistance leader claims that guerrilla ambushes on the roads linking Tete, Chimoio, Beira and Maputo have disrupted normal traffic and that travel is restricted to daylight hours and under strong military escort.

Railways are also prime targets. The link between Beira and Moatize was put out of action when the Mecito bridge was blown up and on three occasions goods trains operating between Beira and Chimoio have been derailed.

Matsanganisse emphasises that guerrilla actions are directed against the FPLM forces and

the Frelimo administration. He says every effort is being made to avoid harming the ordinary man and woman or to interfere with their lives in any way.

He is bitter about the Frelimo drive to concentrate the population in communal villages. "How can we avoid having innocent people killed when we hold a meeting in a village and are forced to return the fire of the Frelimo militia posted there?"

The actual strength of the guerrilla army is not divulged; the Resistência leaders say it is a military secret. Cristina answered my questions evasively: "In addition to our fighting groups we have thousands of supporters throughout Mozambique, including the main centres. These people have, on a number of occasions, assisted special task forces of ours to carry out operations in the urban centres of Beira, Chimoio, Tete and Maputo."

At the camp I visited there were about 200 men and I was promised a future tour of a larger camp not far away where I was told there are some 400 men. But these are only outlying base-camps away from the central headquarters somewhere in the Gorongosa area.

What I saw at the Manica camp was a group of highly disciplined, well-drilled men looking battle-hardened in their dust-covered greenish-blue faded uniforms.