

Marxist Mozambique Faces Challenge From the Right

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NAIROBI, Kenya — The Marxist-oriented government of Mozambique is locked in an increasingly violent struggle against a coalition of interests which accuses President Samora Machel of failing "to deliver on the goods" on his socialist promises.

Machel recently sentenced another eight Mozambicans to death for anti-state activities.

The executions by firing squad will bring to more than 50 the number killed since a wave of anti-government sabotage and violence began in Mozambique last spring.

In the increasingly unsettled situation, anti-government guerrillas claim to have blown up a vital oil storage depot, attacked government military barracks and freed hundreds of political prisoners from a government "re-education camp."

The militant challenge to the policies of Machel and his ruling party, Frelimo — or Front for the Liberation of Mozambique — has led the president to command the death penalty for any Mozambican suspected of being in contact with dissidents.

In addition to the executions, Mozambican sources say, hundreds have been imprisoned by the Machel government in a clampdown as arbitrary as any suffered under the country's former Portuguese colonial rulers.

The struggle pits Frelimo, the nationalist guerrilla organization which took power at Mozambique's independence in 1975, against the Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana (Mozambique National Resistance, or MNR).

The MNR coalition ranges from right-wing Portuguese businessmen whose assets in Mozambique have been nationalized by Frelimo, to South Africans seeking to destabilize the Marxist regime on their northern border.

The coalition also includes former Frelimo guerrillas who are convinced that Machel's Marxist policies are taking the country away from their ideals of freedom and democracy.

A reading of the political manifestos of both Frelimo and the MNR reveals few differences. Both favor democratic elections, human rights, equality and freedom of expression. Where they disagree is over how, when and to what extent these ideals can be put into practice.

Mozambique has been suffering the effects of a debilitating, undeclared war with neighboring Rhodesia, a serious and growing refugee problem and an economy ravaged by the departing Portuguese in 1975.

These problems have heightened

Frelimo's determination to harness its largely rural, illiterate and ethnically diverse people into common economic and political development efforts.

Frelimo has nationalized banks, businesses and funeral parlors. The party has herded farmers onto communal plantations and has restricted freedom of movement around the country. Thousands of thieves, prostitutes, loafers, suspected Rhodesian spies, and dissidents have been herded into re-education camps.

The church has become a target of Frelimo's displeasure, as it has in many developing socialist countries. Preaching loyalty to a heavenly authority is taken as inimical to the interests of a nation trying to instill in its people a sense of national purpose, pride and identity.

Indeed, some clergymen, particularly of the Catholic Church, are heavily involved in anti-Frelimo activities. According to recent visitors to the Rhodesia-Mozambique border areas, Catholic clergy help smuggle MNR guerrillas back and forth in the false bottom of a van.

Frelimo has chosen socialism as the most efficient and humane path toward development. The progress it has achieved in Mozambique's four years of independence — building a sense of national identity, holding elections (in 1977) at the village and national levels, bringing health clinics and sanitation campaigns to the countryside — has convinced many observers that Mozambique is socialism's rising star in Africa.

The MNR disagrees. Says one MNR guerrilla, who prefers to be called Jorge, "Frelimo has failed to deliver the goods. For 500 years, the Mozambican people have lacked education, food, and shelter. Frelimo has not fed the people, nor educated them, nor sheltered them. And, above all, it has not given them their freedom. All Mozambique got is an imported brand of socialism."

What began as a minor disagreement over politics has taken on the tragic dimensions of a bitter struggle that Mozambique can ill afford. Hundreds of Mozambicans, particularly Western-trained technicians and intellectuals, have fled or gone into hiding, prompting greater crackdowns by a worried Frelimo and a hardening of positions on both sides.

"They are killing our people," says an MNR official. "The only thing we can do is to kill them back."

The MNR claims to have infiltrated its agents into key positions in the army and in Mozambique's East German-trained secret police, SNASP. MNR claims to have killed

over 200 government troops, wounded many more and to have encouraged the desertion of many Frelimo soldiers.

The MNR also claims responsibility for the destruction of railway bridges, telephone lines, hydro-electric plants and other installations. The claims are not verifiable.

In response to such activities, Machel has taken an increasingly hard line in his domestic policies. In an angry, two-hour Mayday speech this year, the fiery former guerrilla leader justified his crackdown on the Catholic Church in Mozambique by charging that it has become "a force of political and ideological subversion."

Last month, five Frelimo party leaders were dismissed for promoting "regionalism and tribalism, continuation of colonial working practices," and for "maintaining ties with religious figures."

Such actions lead MNR guerrillas to believe that they are not far from their goal of toppling the Machel regime. "Frelimo is definitely scared," says one MNR guerrilla. "Every day, more and more people in Mozambique are getting fed up with the Frelimo leadership. Machel is now more unpopular in Mozambique than Idi Amin was at the height of his power in Uganda."