

# Frelimo's opposition gains ground

By José Ramalho



Operating from bases in central Mozambique guerrilla forces of the anti-Frelimo movement Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RNM) recently launched a series of major attacks on several towns near the Indian Ocean coast.

With the world spotlight turned on the areas where fierce fighting is reported, the Maputo Marxist regime could no longer keep up the pretence that there was no armed opposition to its dictatorial rule. It was forced to acknowledge the existence of the RNM admitting at the same time that its main base is in the Gorongosa



RNM: ready to fight Frelimo

hills as TTP reported first-hand some months ago (TTP July 19 1979).

Until last August it had been easy for Frelimo to claim that the insurgents were a band of "Frelimo deserters, renegades and bandits" supported by the Zimbabwe Rhodesia government. But the pattern of fighting has changed radically. The lightning hit-and-run raids in areas bordering on Zimbabwe Rhodesia have evolved to full-scale operations against strategic towns more than 200 km away from the border, including Inhaminga, the main junction of the railway lines to Malawi and Tete.

Inhaminga has been under siege for more than a week. The RNM command claims that the town is isolated and its troops control the lines of communication between Inhaminga and Beira to the south and northwards towards Vila de Sena-Mutarara.

Travellers have confirmed that the roads

Inchope-Maputo, Katandica-Chimoio and Chimoio-Beira are under RNM control. The guerrillas have issued repeated warnings to civilian drivers to stop at roadblocks and obey their instructions.

In a recent communique the RNM said that occupation by its forces of villages and towns is temporary as it is aimed mainly at recruiting volunteers for the guerrilla army who are given directions to proceed to transit points from where they will be taken to secret training camps.

Following last May's spectacular raid on the Beira oil storage tanks which were set alight by the guerrillas the RNM has lately staged a number of daring attacks on vital targets in the Beira area. On the night of September 12 the main telecommunications complex on top of the Xiluvo hills was totally destroyed. Claiming to have repulsed the attack the Frelimo government admitted that damage caused to the installations amounted to more than R1 million.

Xiluvo, about 100 km out of Beira, is the second major telecommunications link to be destroyed by the RNM. Two years ago, the Chicualacuala station was blown up by the guerrillas and telephone and radio communications were cut off.

On September 18 two sabotage teams sneaked under cover of darkness into the Beira dry docks and blew up two dredgers. An RNM communique explained that the destruction of the vessels was aimed at blocking the approaches to the port in order to keep away Soviet ships bringing in war equipment for the Frelimo army. Silting of the shallow channel leading to the Beira docks requires constant dredging.

Reports of RNM activities in a wide area covering central Mozambique from the Zimbabwe Rhodesian border to the Indian Ocean lend credence to

RNM claims that it controls a major section of the country, between the Zambezi river to the north and the Save river to the south.

They also ridicule Frelimo's claims that its forces have wiped out the guerrilla army. The Maputo government, through its foreign minister Joaquim Chissano, admitted that Macossa was in the hands of the RNM for more than a week although he blamed the Zimbabwe Rhodesia forces for the operation. Since then Maringué and Mazamba have been taken by the guerrillas.

Despite the support of Russian, Cuban and East German "advisers", equipped with tanks and heavy weapons, the RNM troops keep scoring spectacular successes. As President Samora Machel confessed recently: "Either we (Frelimo) destroy them or they will destroy us." With thousands of Mozambicans, black, white and Coloured, joining the guerrilla ranks and

the increasing support from the population for the anti-Frelimo armed struggle, Machel's prediction that the RNM movement may eventually topple his Marxist regime becomes a distinct possibility.