

Collapse? Maputo struck me as calmer than Jo'burg

**PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK
reports from Maputo**

MOZAMBIQUE after Samora Machel is a country in deep crisis — but not because of any struggle over the succession.

The real struggle will be to rehabilitate the war-ravaged economy in the face of intensified attacks by the Mozambique resistance movement (Renamo) and the certainty of further economic sanctions by Pretoria.

The ruling Frelimo party has, if anything, closed ranks and the political succession is likely to be smooth. At the moment, the favoured successor is the foreign minister and number three in the Frelimo hierarchy, Joaquim Chissano.

Although alarming reports are reaching Maputo from the war in the north, the capital itself is remarkably relaxed and free of troops. There is little to substantiate the claim by South African defence minister Magnus Malan that the country is on the verge of collapse.

There is a gentle ambience to the city and despite the poverty, the broad colonial *avenidas* bustle with the warm African life that makes Maputo a much more relaxed city than Johannesburg. Many shops are empty and some foodstuffs are rationed. But the situation is not critical and vegetables, for instance, are freely available.

Mozambique is under no illusion about the path that faces it now.

In his funeral eulogy, Marcelino dos Santos said that Machel had fallen at a "crucial, difficult moment in our history".

Using vivid language, he said: "The prolonged aggression against our country has already left deep wounds. We do not have the tranquillity we need to rebuild our land.

"We still suffer from hunger. The efforts that we undertake to relaunch production are constantly sabotaged by our enemies. We still face the raggedness, the ignorance, the backwardness inherited from colonial domination."

The war situation in the northern provinces of Zambezia, Niassa and Tete is extremely serious as Renamo continues its drive to new supply lines from the sea and to the Beira corridor.

Mozambique has put out a desperate plea to the international community

for food aid as the country expects a deficit of 455 000 tonnes of maize, wheat and rice in the next 12 months.

A document put out by AIM, the Mozambican national news agency, describes the economic situation as an "emergency".

Total exports have declined by more than half since 1980, with the industrial sector weakening even more substantially.

The AIM document — which is brutally frank — shows that the economy actually improved between 1977 and 1981. The gross social product grew at a rate of 11.6 percent per annum, while agricultural production increased at a rate of more than 8.8 percent annually, reaching pre-independence levels.

Apart from the effect of several devastating droughts, the AIM document says this is because of "the constant attacks along the border, sabotaging of economic targets and armed attacks carried out directly by the South African armed forces and through their armed bandits".

The document says "locomotives, railway lines, bridges, production

People here believe that the electricity supply from South Africa may well be cut off

centres and power lines were destroyed, vehicles and equipment were destroyed, leaders and ordinary workers were murdered".

Since 1975, 500 schools have been destroyed, leaving 90 000 children without classes, while one in 10 of the country's health units have been destroyed.

The total cost of destabilisation for Mozambique, says the report, are the

lives of 100 000 people and damage to the economy amounting to \$5-billion (R11-billion).

To overcome the massive destruction, Mozambique is attempting to carry out fundamental economic reforms, starting with rigorous austerity measures which are currently being drafted.

For this, however, it is necessary to secure the support of the international community to provide emergency aid, to rebuild the infrastructure and to overcome the effects of South African sanctions, such as the repatriation of Mozambican miners.

The cutting off of electricity from South Africa which supplies 80 percent of Maputo's needs, is viewed in Mozambique as an inevitability.

However, for any rehabilitation to succeed, the war must end. The economic crisis requires political and military solutions.

Despite speculation from South Africa, negotiations between Renamo and Frelimo are probably more distant than ever.

Which is why the actions of the six Frontline states, whose heads of state met in Maputo the day after Machel's funeral and who are themselves threatened by the crisis in Mozambique, constitute the key to overcoming the dilemma.