

S African Comment on "destabilisation" in Mozambique

Johannesburg in English for abroad 0630 gmt 16 Oct 86

Text of commentary:

A total of three of the four countries most in need of assistance because of human refugees are in Africa. These three - the Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia - figure high on the list of expenditure for 1987 that has just been approved by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. Before 1987, however, the commissioner's expenditure figures might well have to be revised to take account of the growing refugee problem resulting from civil war in Mozambique.

In the worst case of destabilisation in southern Africa for many years, hundreds of thousands of Mozambicans are being displaced from their homes and are being forced to seek sanctuary in neighbouring countries. In one single incident, 50,000 people fled into Malawi after a fierce battle in the civil war. Thousands more have flocked into Malawi since then, and others have sought sanctuary in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Tanzania has also become embroiled in Mozambique's civil war, and nearly 300,000 Mozambicans have crossed illegally into South Africa.

The main resistance movement in opposition to the Mozambican government, the MNR, operated in only three of the country's 10 provinces when the war started 11 years ago. Today, the MNR operates in all 10 provinces and has been taking over control of important towns, in the process driving out government troops and even forcing thousands of government troops to flee into neighbouring countries. The crunch, it would appear, is coming in Mozambique. The Soviet Union and her allies stand poised to use the turmoil in Mozambique as a pretext to rush in more weapons of war and more communist bloc troops. The further destabilisation and militarisation of southern Africa needs to be resisted actively before Mozambique becomes another Afghanistan or Nicaragua.