

BUILDING A NEW LIFE

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Two sturdy figures in camouflage uniform suddenly sprang up in front of our car. One of them approached us, the other stood with a finger on the trigger of his sub-machine gun.

"Papers!" was the laconic demand. When the soldier read through the permit issued by the Mozambique Ministry of Information, he looked up with a broad smile: "So you're journalists from the Soviet Union!" And it was with a smile that he waved us on.

"Good luck!" he shouted as the car slowly moved ahead. "And be careful, you're not very far from the Rhodesian border. Don't take anyone on—you risk getting a bullet in your back. Salisbury sends in spies and saboteurs."

We were back on the gravel road, driving northwest from Choque towards the small town of Mapai. The road led through the savannah. Once we passed an orange grove overgrown with tall grass. No one had been tending it. And we saw why: not far away from the grove were bomb craters. There was no one about, complete and frightening silence, but mindful of the advice of our Mozambique friends, we looked about and watched the sky, for Rhodesian air attacks were no rarity here.

We could not help thinking how different all this was from what we had seen a mere 100-150 kilometres to the east, near the coastal areas, with their green rice paddies, sugar-

cane plantations, and blossoming orchards. People were living there in tranquillity, working, studying, raising families.

The striking contrast between this border area and the rest of the country is in a way symbolic of the situation in the People's Republic of Mozambique. It won independence four years ago, and it is no accident that a rifle, hoe and book are depicted on its coat of arms: the country has to fight to maintain its freedom, work for a better future, and study to raise cultural standards.

Legacy of Problems

The Portuguese came here way back in 1498. They landed on an island in the Indian Ocean, not far from the northeastern tip of the mainland. They were met by the

island's ruler, Sultan Mussa Ben Mbiki and named the island in his honour. Later that name, Mozambique, was given to the vast territory the Portuguese occupied in south-eastern Africa.

They remained there for nearly five centuries, exploiting one of Africa's richest areas, eight times the size of Portugal. And throughout all these years Lisbon drained the life-blood of its colony by a subtle system of exploiting the indigenous population, taking advantage of tribal strife, and implanting a powerful community of white planters and factory owners. But this could not last for ever, and the armed struggle for independence began in 1964 in the northern districts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa, organized and led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). In June 1975 the flag of the independent People's Republic of Mozambique was raised in Lourenço Marques, the capital, now renamed Maputo.

The young state inherited a grim legacy of problems, and to it were added a multitude of new ones. For more than 200,000 Portuguese had fled the country. And they were not only planters and factory owners, but also engineers, technicians, doctors, agronomists, mechanics, schoolteachers, lawyers, veterinarians. Some left because the future seemed uncertain, others succumbed to hostile propaganda which prophesied early collapse of the new republic. Factories that needed hundreds of technicians were left at best with a few. Four thousand large European-type farms were abandoned. The peasants, with their

FRELIMO headquarters in Maputo.



primitive hoes and with no knowledge of modern farming or ability to operate farm machinery, and no marketing experience, were in no position to run them. And besides, there was the sabotage organized by counter-revolutionary groups. Machinery was wrecked in the factories, farm equipment and seed destroyed or burned, and cattle slaughtered.

To make matters worse, there was the ever-present external threat. Mozambique's progressive foreign policy, its effective support of liberation movements in southern Africa, brought counteraction from the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa. Rhodesian planes fly several bombing missions a month against peaceful towns and villages. And the raids have continued under the present puppet Muzorewa regime. Subversive groups are regularly sent in to kill peasants, destroy villages and drive away cattle to Rhodesia. The damage done to Mozambique is estimated at about \$350 million a year.

We discussed the situation with Mario Ferro, editor of the *Noticias de Beira* newspaper, shortly after the explosion of the big oil storage depot on the outskirts of Beira. The explosion was the work of saboteurs sent in from Salisbury, and meant a loss of \$3,000,000 to Mozambique.

"The continuous armed attacks," Ferro said, "have a definite political aim, namely to force us to stop supporting the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front in its just struggle for freedom and independence. Look at the facts. Late last year the Zimbabwe patriots blew up an oil storage depot near Salisbury, now Salisbury gangs have blown up our depot. The Zimbabwe patriots ambushed a column of Rhodesian troops, and now Rhodesian commandos attacked a bus on its way to Beira and shot its passengers. All this is meant as an ultimatum by the Salisbury ruling clique: stop supporting the Patriotic Front and we'll leave you alone. That black-



The ceramics factory in Ulumbezi is one of Mozambique's most up-to-date industrial plants.

mail stands no chance of success. Our government and FRELIMO have repeatedly reaffirmed their loyalty to the liberation struggle in southern Africa."

Food

Mozambique is predominantly an agrarian country, and development of farming and reorganization of rural life are top priority tasks. Peasant farming here was of the most primitive kind and could never rise above subsistence level. Tens of thousands of labourers employed by the Portuguese were left without work. The result was a food shortage. FRELIMO and the government

decided to set up large, state-owned farms and encourage "collective villages" and rural co-operatives.

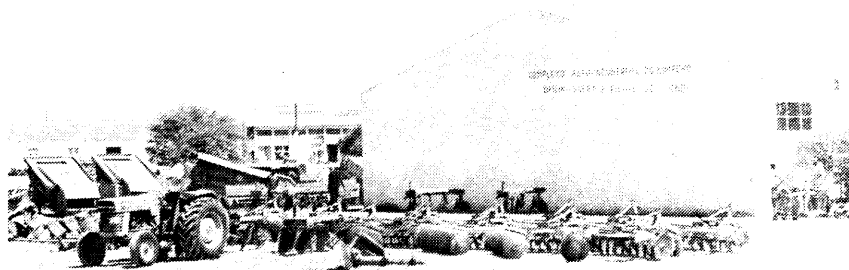
We had a glimpse of how rural Mozambique was changing when we visited the country's first state agro-industrial complex in the Limpopo valley. It has 14,000 hectares not far from the river, most of the land being abandoned Portuguese farms. The main crop is rice, a Mozambique staple. Irrigation canals crisscross the farm. The land is worked by tractors and harvester combines supplied by the U.S.S.R., the G.D.R. and other socialist countries. Chemical fertilizers are used. So far this is the only farm of its kind, but the experience gained here will set the pattern for large-scale farming.

Two big dams, the Mapai and the Massangero, are being erected on the Limpopo and its tributary, the Olifants, to irrigate another 250,000 hectares. With existing irrigation, the Limpopo valley will in the none-too-distant future become the country's principal granary.

Organization of state farms is paralleled by the setting up of co-operative farms on land abandoned by Europeans. The shift from the traditional family farm to large-scale agriculture is difficult and complex. It entails overcoming numberless prejudices, fears, misgivings and taboos, cultivated over the centuries. The government is well aware of all the difficulties. No one is being forc-

Repair shops at the agro-industrial complex in the Limpopo valley.

Photos by authors and TASS



ed to join the "collective villages."

The first one was founded three years ago after the devastating floods in the Limpopo and Zambezi valleys, when many villages were all but destroyed. The government suggested that they be rebuilt and the fields worked on a collective basis, and helped put up new, bigger settlements. The peasants were allotted large tracts and supplied with machinery and seed. With more concentrated communities it was possible to set up medical aid stations and courses to teach the peasants to read and write. The advantages were soon appreciated by other peasants. Indeed, no one could remain indifferent to the fact that the Tronga "collective village" in Sofala Province had not only purchased a tractor and a truck, but also installed a power generator. Tronga was one of the first Mozambique villages to get electric light.

There are now over a thousand such villages with a total labour force of more than a million. Of course, not all of them have been as successful as Tronga. There are still many problems to solve—transport, farm machinery, etc.—but they have an immense potential, and this is now understood by many peasants.

The new land law, which came into force on September 25, on the fifteenth anniversary of FRELIMO, is designed to strengthen the new trends in the country's farming.

The Builders

Every day, at about 6 or 7 p.m., in a park in downtown Maputo you will find men and women sitting on the grass facing a blackboard. They are being taught to read and write. It is hard to say how many such classes there are now; at any rate, several thousand. But there are not enough classrooms, and hence these open-air groups. They are part of the nationwide campaign to wipe out illiteracy, for 90 per cent of the population are illiterate.

Instructors are being trained too—there are now about 15,000 working in all parts of the country—and more textbooks are being put out. Minister of Education and Culture Graça Machel recently told a conference in the capital that at least 100,000 had learned to read and write in the initial stage of the campaign.

Primary school attendance has risen sharply over the past few years, from about 600,000 in 1973 to nearly 1,500,000 at present. Teaching people to read and write is regarded as a vital prerequisite for training national technical and administrative personnel, to replace the Portuguese specialists who have fled and to run state enterprises.

This is especially important: in 1978, the state took over 18 major enterprises, reorganized banking and nationalized insurance. The offensive against private capital is being conducted with due caution, but also with due determination. Nationalization extends to key branches of the economy and to enterprises whose owners are guilty of active hostility to the people's republic. The nationalization measures are helping to eradicate sabotage.

We attended the opening of a session of the People's Assembly, the supreme body of state power. Sitting side by side in the hall were workers and Cabinet ministers, peasants and members of the FRELIMO Central Committee. There was a critical, businesslike discussion of pressing problems and long-range plans.

We noticed this significant detail: many of the deputies had deep scars on their faces. In Africa this is called scarification. The pattern of the scars serves as tribal identification, and Mozambique has more than a dozen tribes. All of them were represented, testifying to the democratic character of the Assembly and to the new Republic's ability to unite all its peoples around a common aim, the building of the new Mozambique.