



# AFRICA SURVEY

## mozambique

### FRAGILE BUT TOUGH

**I**T HAS come to light through sources in Pretoria that the recent Rhodesian incursions into Mozambique was part of a general plan which the Rhodesian high command formulated at the beginning of October for its special commando units, especially the Selous Scouts, a paramilitary body under Premier Smith's Office.

This included (a) an operation in the Bindura area of Rhodesia to capture a leading freedom fighter; (b) special activities against Mozambique which would embrace raids on 'guerilla camps' in the country and thrust deep into Mozambique to cut all lines of communication between Chimoio, Maputo, Tete and Beira and the guerilla camps; (c) invasion of some premises outside Francistown in Botswana which the Rhodesians believe to be the base of ANC (Nkomo) supporters.

However, the priority remained Mozambique from where the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) was maintaining its offensive against the Rhodesian forces.

In what was perhaps the most daring act in the continuing incursions into Mozambican territory by the Rhodesian armed forces yet, units of the Smith regime's army and air force made a two-pronged invasion into the provinces of Tete and Gaza early last month. According to the Mozambican news agency, AIM, the Rhodesians used 'tanks, cannons, mortars, infantry, fighter-bombers and cavalry' in thrusts into the two provinces.

The attacks began in Gaza, which borders both Rhodesia and South Africa, where the Rhodesians were attempting to advance on Mapai, a town 80km from the Rhodesian border which was the scene of another attack last June when Rhodesian troops destroyed a village and killed several civilians.

This time they cut lines of communication, including the railway line between Chiquialaquala and Mapai and they also attacked the town of Chitanga. In Tete, attacks were concentrated on five zones —

Changara, Nura, Chioko, Gentu and Chikombizi.

It is not known how many casualties there were, but fierce fighting was reported to have raged on for a few days before the Rhodesians were finally repulsed by the Mozambican armed forces, FPLM. However, AIM reported that the invading troops had 'murdered more Zimbabwean patriots'. The Mozambican Ministry of Defence later displayed some of the weapons that had been captured from the Rhodesian Forces.

The latest invasion of Mozambique was the principal subject of the summit of the five frontline states which was held a few days after the attack in the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam.

Described by authoritative sources as 'the the most important meeting on independent Southern Africa's collective security', the summit was attended by Presidents Agostinho Neto of Angola, Kenneth Kuanda of Zambia, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Samora Machel of Mozambique as well as Quett Masire, Vice-President of Botswana. The four Presidents were accompanied by their military advisors: Angolan Minister of Defence Iko Carreira, the top brass of the Zambian Defence Secretariat, leading members of FPLM and Tanzanian Defence Chiefs.

At the end of the summit, the frontline Presidents issued a terse and toughly worded communique reaffirming their commitment to the liberation struggle, including the caveat that they will strike back if any of them were attacked by the minority regimes.

Although President Nyerere, the chairman of the group, would not be drawn to outline the specifics of the summit, he did indicate that it had been primarily concerned with increasing military support for Mozambique. Appealing to African, non-aligned and socialist bloc countries for more military assistance, the President said: 'we cannot liberate southern Africa with bows and arrows.'

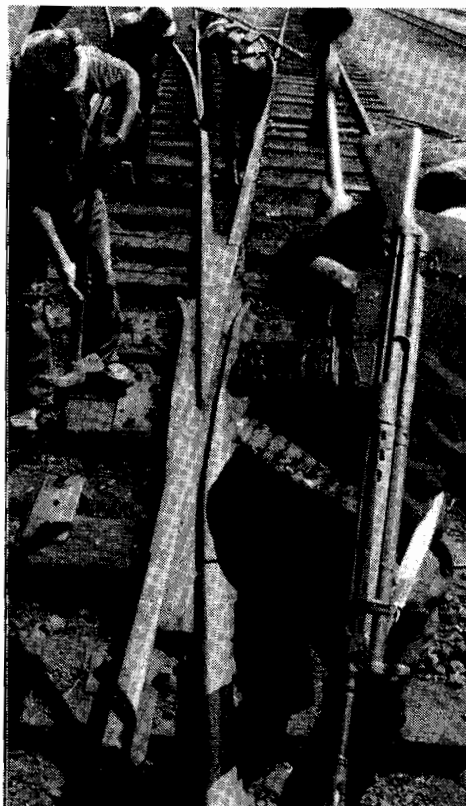
It is understood, however, that the Presidents immediately agreed to place more sophisticated weapons from their arsenals at the disposal of Mozambique. In fact, since the attack on Nyazonia refugee camp four months ago, Angola, Zambia and Tanzania have been airlifting arms to Mozambique.

Giant transport planes from Angola, presumably refuelling, and Zambian air

force planes regularly take off from the air force base near Lusaka southwards towards Mozambique, mostly at night when air traffic is light. It is believed that there is also considerable military traffic between Dar es Salaam and Mozambique.

Available evidence suggests that the strategy of the frontline states is to provide Mozambique with as much war material as they can without necessarily committing their military personnel on a large scale.

Angola and Zambia are unable to commit any troops to Mozambique because they themselves are subject to attack from the racist regimes, particularly Angola which is facing an estimated 30,000 South African troops across its



**Mozambican railwaymen in Chiquialaquala, which was raided recently by Rhodesian air and ground forces, are now armed and organised in the militia as are other Mozambicans in border towns which are increasingly being attacked by rebel troops.** AIM

southern border. The only country which is able, and has done so, to commit troops is Tanzania because it is relatively immune from direct attacks.

Extra-continental assistance to enable Mozambique to maintain tight security along its long border with Rhodesia can, at this stage, be ruled out. 'What we need,' confided a Mozambican official in Dar es Salaam, 'is more firepower. We can hold our own.'

It thus appears, therefore, that Mozambique, with active military solidarity from the other frontline states, is bracing itself for a situation where the Rhodesian troops can no longer violate its territory with impunity or without punitive action. Mozambique may appear vulnerable but it is certainly tough. ●