

Rough transcript

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT JOAQUIN CHISSANO OF MOZAMBIQUE, September 27, 1987.

with Oakland Ross, Globe + Mail, Canada

He wears a grey flannel three-piece suit, toys with gold-rimmed glasses, has a goatee sprinkled with grey.

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"In Vancouver, we expect the commonwealth countries will take decisions to reinforce their pressure on S. A. in order to change its system. It's a system which is condemned by the people of S.A. and by the international community in general. We expect that the Commonwealth meeting in Vancouver will pay very special attention to the fate of the peoples of southern Africa who are suffering from destabilization from S.A., the utilization of terrorists and bandits who are nationals of those countries which leads to destruction and jeopardizing the economies of the different countries. Therefore, we think, we hope that the Commonwealth countries will find the means to deal with the two issues: one the source of the problem, which is the apartheid regime and the second, to look for ways and means to alleviate this burden both economic and military which these countries are suffering from.

As far as Mozambique is concerned, we expect the commonwealth countries to be sensitized on the plight of 4.5 million Mozambicans who are suffering from hunger due to destabilization. They are obliged to leave their residences, their normal residences, and their normal places of work and production to live in uncertain places where they can be attacked by the terrorists and also who are obliged to leave their country to the neighboring countries. And these need all sorts of assistance, first...

He mentions, food, clothing, and "third, assistance to help themselves to start in establishing themselves afresh in order to produce their own food". He mentions agricultural implements, means of transport, Also trade incentives for their products. All this he says is for emergency program. He mentions also medicine, schools, help in rebuilding health and educational infrastructure destroyed by bandits.

"But this is not enough to assist these people in this emergency situation. We have to support the rehabilitation program which we have launched this year and for that we will need a lot of help from all the countries which can contribute so that the improvement of the conditions of life in Mozambique becomes irreversible...

speaks of having to bring back factories that are in difficult conditions, also bring back into production the farms, both private and state "but mainly the family agriculture must be improved..." He moves on to question of security, the need to defend both emergency and rehab programs.

"In order to protect distribution, we need to have adequate military protection. The convoys which are taking food into the displaced people are being attacked, so we have to reinforce the defense of these convoys and sites of distribution also have got to be correctly protected because the bandits are trying to disturb the emergency program and the

2. re military assistance and reduction of eco ties with S.A. "I would say that this is a very important equation to be solved and Mozambique is a very important geographic position to solve this problem because we have the harbors and the railways which serve almost all of the neighboring countries of southern Africa."

He mentions that Mozambican railways serve Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi and even the southern part of Zaire.

"Therefore we need to defend those railways so that the exports and the imports of southern African countries be channelled through our ports instead of the ports of South Africa...Also our trade among the countries in the region would be enhanced."

He mentions the ~~Nkala~~ ^{Nacala} railway and the Beira corridor, also the Limpopo railway linking Zimbabwe to port of Maputo, where rehab work has started as well.

"For this, we would welcome this non-lethal military assistance, which for us should comprise the means of transport, clothing, food, medicines, and means of communication and other items. I think that this would help in reducing the dependence of the hinterland countries on South Africa and it would improve our economy because we would have earnings in hard currency...infrastructures would be functioning.

3. re whether Mozambique is still in Soviet orbit.

"Almost all countries have lost the fear of having Mozambique under the orbit of the Soviet Union."

He credits "sustained work" in explaining Moza's policies to the world.

"The practices of our international policy have shown clearly that we are a non-aligned country. We are independent. We take our decisions independently and that our ties with the Soviet Union are based on the same principles which on which we want to have ties with other countries... There are some organizations here and there who still do not understand, who do not believe in the independence of African countries. Therefore they still tend to label the countries as being pro-Soviet or pro-American.

"Well, in the United States of America, we know that there are organizations who are actively working against us, such as the Heritage Foundation which is backing the propoganda of the bandits and even giving them material support...In Portugal there are offices of the bandits. They are not there just on their own. It's because there must be some organization which is supporting them. They stay there. And in West Germany also you have some bandits moving around and making lots of propoganda from there. Again, we believe there are some organizations which are aiding them but, in the main, we can see that our co-operation with the western countries is increasing.

He mentions Italy as a country with warming relations with Mozambique even though some groups in Italy are trying to change Rome's policies in that respect.

"Italy is the first country in the West co-operating with us in what concerns projects for development in Mozambique. And then you have France; Britain is coming in now with their participation. Of course, we don't mention those who already from the beginning have been with us like Holland and the Nordic countries...So, I think that it's true that in the United States of America the administration is clearer of our stand."

4. Question about how bad military and economic situation of country really is.

He describes the economy as "a bad situation that has deteriorated very much from 1981 to 1986." He gives examples: in 1975, a social global product (which must mean GNP) of 71.4m thousands of meticaís. In 1984, that became 84.9m thousands of meticaís.

"Since 1981, due to the intensification of terrorism and destabilizatio by South Africa and the recession of the international economic situation and the increase of oil prices we started having many difficulties without counting the droughts so that in 1986 the social-global product was only 56.2."

He also speaks of exports. 1981, exported more than 200m dollars whereas in 1986 exported only 80 million dollars. Re external debt is about 3.2 billion dollars.

"We have a very negative balance of payments and a heavy service o of the debt. Ag Production had dropped very much; industrial production had dropped very much...But from 1984 we have taken measures which were defined by the fourth congress. We have corrected some mistakes which we have defined in management and others and that resulted in stopping the decline of the economy by the ^{end} of 1986 and during that period, 1986, we have drawn up an eco rehab program the application of which has changed the direction of the economy. "

He says they can speak of an improvement in agricultural and industrial production. Says that only now are they receiving external aid to the program. So said ag and ind growth would continue with that aid. Said necessary to maintain rescheduling of debt and need to reduce interest rates and we need to get fresh money at reduced rates.

Drop 5. Pick up at 6. Re USA relations with Moza and Soviet relations.

"In order to understand the present, the current relations with the two countries, one has to speak about the past. When we were fighting for independence, our people had relations with the Soviet Union in the sense that the Soviet Union helped a lot together with other socialist countries and non-aligned countries, Nordic countries and some European countries like Holland have helped with the struggle for liberation until victory came in 1975 when we proclaimed independence. So, with the Soviet Union, it has just been a continuation of relations which from military support came into economic co-operation. So, these relations were developed quickly, while with the United States of America the relations did not exist before independence with us. They had links with the Colonialists, the Portuguese Colonialists, but not with the Mozambican people, not with our party, although we had many friends among the American public. Well, in 1975, these relations started building up with a lot of hesitation. It took some time to establish diplomatic relations. We established diplomatic relations but I must say that there was still a lack of confidence. In Washington, the administration and ~~other~~ ^{other} people forgot that they didn't have relations with us and so they started comparing our relations with them with the relations we had with the Soviet Union without taking into consideration the background. So, in their minds it sounded as if we had been parachuted into Mozambique by Moscow. They forgot that we were a people from Mozambique fighting for liberation. So they would label us as a result of machinations of the Soviet Union. They forgot completely about our struggle. So this is what we had to explain, starting by utilizing the public fora, like the international fora, the United Nations. Our willingness to co-operate with all countries and so the contacts started. I must say that only too late we came to close contacts. It was in 1982, I may say, although before we worked with the Governments of the United States of America on questions pertaining to southern Africa, on issues related to the independence of Zimbabwe. We participated in the contact group...when the Americans were playing a big role and we have participated in the Anglo American initiatives. We worked with them, and that's when actually they came to know us better until the time, now we are working together and trying to solve other issues in southern Africa, destabilization, apartheid, the Namibian question. So, that they became more reassured about our position as an independent and non-aligned country. So they have so far been increasing their humanitarian support in terms of food aid to such an extent that ^{today} ~~we~~ ^{we} may say that the United States of America is the donor number one as far as food aid is concerned. It's already a positive step and they have played a very important role in this conference on the emergency situation in Mozambique which was held in Geneva. And they have played a good role in what concerns the rescheduling of our debt and also on the conference which took place in Paris for support to the rehabilitation program..."

"They have started helping us in development projects, although it's still in a very limited way they are supporting the private sector particularly in what concerns agriculture. So, that is a good start but we would like to see a bigger involvement in development programs in Mozambique. We know that there are private enterprises in the United States who would like to come. We have had already contacts with some who are operating in Mozambique... So I may say in short that our relations with Washington are increasing. But what is more interesting here is that both Moscow and Washington today understand the need of Mozambique to co-operate with all, with both. As I said, I'm speaking about the administration. In the case of the United States of America, there are still some organizations, some people within the senate and within the congress who still think that we should actually shift from having relations with the East to having relations only with the West. Jesse Helms, Dole and the others. We think that the atmosphere is good for us actually to defend our own non aligned policy and to co-operate with all.

7. question about Malawi, Zim and Tanzanian troops compromising Moza sovereignty.

"In no way. The Tanzanians, Malawians and Zimbabweans who are in our country are here as friends of Mozambique. They don't dictate anything to us. They are here because we agreed that they come. Their motivations are very good motivations, very good, clean, sane. First, they are here because they think it's their moral obligation to support Mozambique which is being pressurized by South Africa through destabilization. They understand that the weakness of Mozambique is their weakness also. If Mozambique were to fall into the hands of inimical regimes to Zambia, to Zimbabwe, to Tanzania, it would be very bad for them. They would be the next target. They are sure of that. And, in the case of Malawi and Zimbabwe, they know clearly that their economic development depends a lot on the stability in Mozambique, not only because they need to utilize the railroads, but also because they have a neighbor reliable as an economic partner. Actually, the defense of Mozambique serves the interest of all the SADC countries, not only of Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Therefore, there's no forcing in their participation. There are no conditions for their participation. Anytime, Mozambique may ask them to leave, they would leave. And in fact, we are working towards that end, that they leave as soon as possible, through the increasing of our capacity to defend ourselves. Not that we are tired or dissatisfied by their presence but because it's logic that they have things to do in their own countries so that they have to be given eventually the chance to leave for their countries. We have been discussing about improvement of our ability for defense.

8. question about the state of preparedness of the Mozambiquan FFAA and the contribution of the Brit. military training program.

"Well we have actually improved a lot our ability for defense, first by raising the skills of our soldiers and the knowledge of our officers and also through the establishment of a new type of organizations of the forces themselves... which are becoming more and more adequate to the fight against terrorist banditry. But we still feel that we have to improve more. What is making the pace to be slow is the lack of adequate equipment and logistics. This is connected also with our economic situation. But so far we have improved a lot our capacity, in such a way that we have reversed the trend which was starting to end up last year in which it seemed that the bandits had the upper hand on our forces but today we see that the initiative is always on our side. And we are working according to our program, although we all know that the strategy of the bandits is to try to deviate our forces from the plans which we have drawn up. The British military training program has been useful in the sense that it has helped us to improve the standard of many of our officers and administration and in other fields... With this training program, we are able to create new units. Therefore they are helping us to speed up our capacity of training units. We have expanded that program. Today they will no longer train only officers but they will train small units of company size to which we will want to assign very specific tasks related to the protection of the rehabilitation, the economic rehabilitation program... (re the training of these units in Zimbabwe): They are doing this already. And already some of the units which we have trained with the support of officers trained by the British are being very much useful in the protection of some of our railway system.

9. Question about the evolution of Canadian policy toward Mozambique:

"Our relations are still very weak in the economic field. We have good diplomatic relations, but our contacts are not as frequent as should be. It is the fault of no one. Maybe it is the fault of both our sides. We have not been very much aggressive diplomatically towards Canada due to our lack of personnel. But we feel that Canada is a very important country. We have been utilizing public opinion in Canada to maintain our contacts with Canada. But we would prefer to go beyond that. It has been started. The Canadian foreign minister has visited Mozambique. it's a good step. We have accredited an ambassador to Canada. Of course, the lack of an embassy of Canada in Mozambique also is contributing to this slow pace of relations between Canada and Mozambique. However, Canada is being helpful in what concerns humanitarian aid. We are receiving food assistance from Canada since not many years ago, and Canada is involved also in the projects within the SADCC context. The main one is the rehabilitation of the ~~Mozambique~~ ^{Nacala} railway where the participation of Canada is paramount. Canada is participating in this project together with France and Portugal. It's a very important contribution to our economy.

Although ~~through~~ this is a project of the SADCC. We are trying to impress the Canadian authorities so that we be inscribed in the country program of Canada, so that we start receiving some aid for development. This is what we are trying to get from Canada. Since a long time, we have been suggesting areas where Canada could be of great help for our development, mainly agriculture.

Q. And you would be pleased to see a Canadian embassy in Maputo?

"Yes, there's a lot of things to be seen. It's very difficult for the ambassador in Zimbabwe to travel and feel the real situation and changes that are occurring in Mozambique. In my experience when I was foreign minister I had a lot of contacts with the embassies and I know that an ambassador when he comes to Mozambique has got a very different idea of what Mozambique is and its policies and its economic capacities and abilities and so forth. Some come here thinking that the bullets and the bandits are all over and ^{so} nothing can be done. Some come thinking that this illiteracy of Mozambique makes Mozambique impossible, that the productive forces here are non-existent and so forth. But, after one year--it takes time--after one year they start getting accustomed to this, they start speaking another, a different language. So, it takes time. Mozambique is a very vast country. We have about 800,000 square km...To cover it we have to fly in a plane. So, if an ambassador comes here once a year, I don't know what kind of report he can send to his country. He will send very vague impressions. The ambassadors who stay here, they come to realize the need of change, of the participation of their countries in our economic development and defense. That's how all the other countries have improved their relations with us. Of course, if we had an embassy equally in Canada, our embassy would be able to suggest how to go about all these problems in order to get the improvement of relations.

10) Question about hard evidence of South Africa support for Renamo bandits:

"Well, it depends on what you call hard evidence. But we have captured bandits who say that they have been trained in South Africa. We have captured bandits who say that they have received supplies through helicopters from South Africa. We have captured parachutes which were dropped by helicopters, or planes in Inhambane province. So, knowing that these bandits have been receiving support from South Africa, knowing that they are a product of the South African regime, in our minds it is clear that South Africa is continuing to supply them. The parachutes cannot just come from the bush. There are informations about the appearance of strange boats, ships along the coast. Our radars are detecting very often airplanes and helicopters violating our airspace in different points of our country. It is clear that these helicopters cannot come from far away. They come from a nearby country and this cannot be Zimbabwe of course. It cannot be Zambia or any other country in the area. So, this for us is enough evidence."

11) Question about whether anything remains of the Nkomati accord:

"Well, the Nkomati accord for us is important because it states principles for good neighborhood, for non-aggression, and the Nkomati accord speaks for us, for Mozambique, because we are implementing it. The Nkomati accord shows who is the cause of instability and insecurity in southern Africa. So, the Nkomati accord is there, and we must keep (it) there in order to show always our determination in search of guarding peace and security in this region. The Nkomati accord must be there to be always the instrument which calls the South African Government to reason. If we renounced the Nkomati accord, then the South Africans would have a justification, which they are waiting for, in order to act even more openly, and I'm sure that if that happened, all the forces which are still trying to portray Mozambique as guilty of the insecurity situation in southern Africa, they would forget immediately that it was South Africa who did not comply with the agreement. They would forget all the testimonies which we have heard in Gorongosa and all the testimonies which we are having now on the violations of the agreement by ~~the~~ South Africa. Therefore the Nkomati accord is for us still very important."

12) Question about possibility of negotiating with Renamo:

"Well, the question ~~is~~ here is not negotiating or not negotiating. The question here is what to negotiate and with whom to negotiate. What you called Renamo is a product of the Smith regime, is a product of the apartheid regime. They were conceived and created by these regimes, and we have the testimony for that--fortunately, of the man who created them: Ken Flower, the head of security of the Smith regime. And he says clearly that he created them in the image of (-----) movement, which he saw in Angola, in order to utilize against Zanu, against the Zimbabwean freedom-fighters, to use them as a buffer zone, to create a buffer zone between the liberation movements of Zimbabwe, and Rhodesia. He described together with other officers who are still alive--unfortunately, Ken Flower died some weeks ago--that some officers who are still alive, and how they created the first bases in Mozambique, of these bandits....

He describes the history of Renamo (beginning at 924 on tape, or midway point on side B).

"So, we are sure the South Africans are using them also as a buffer zone between the South African regime of apartheid and the south African liberation movements. They are being utilized actually to weaken Mozambique so that Mozambique does not eventually support the ANC..."

He describes the South African approach in talks leading up to the signing of the Nkomati accord.
So, it's clear for us that these bandits are nothing else but an

extension of the forces of the racists in the region. We know also the composition of these forces. At the beginning these were the collaborators of the Portuguese and the forces of the security services of Portugal who merged with the security services of Rhodesia and of South Africa..."

He says aim of Portuguese elements was to stop independence of Mozambique. Tells story of Sept 7 1974 when they took over radio station of Maputo:

"When they took over the radio station of Maputo, they did not play any revolutionary song, any party song, but they played the Portuguese anthem. They marched with Portuguese flags. So, it is clear for us that it was not a question of Mozambican parties disliking Frelimo. It was a question of impeding the independence of Mozambique. Therefore, if we speak about negotiating, it would be negotiating with such people. I don't think that any country in the world, any government, sensible government, in the world could accept that.

"Secondly, on what to negotiate, the bandits are saying--they are made to say--because they say it in their agencies in Lisbon and Washington and so on, that they are fighting against socialism, that they would prefer capitalism. I don't know whether we had proclaimed socialism when they started fighting with us. They started fighting with us right away, after independence, when in this country of Mozambique people did not know actually what meant socialism or capitalism..."

He explains that Renamo did not know at first what direction Frelimo would take, or if it would be capable of bringing good government to Mozambique. He says that Renamo's actions are mainly directed against capitalist targets, anyway.

"The buses which are being attacked, many of them are private and they are carrying passengers who are being killed, and among those passengers there are capitalists. The private lorries carrying goods from Maputo to the north are being attacked on the way. These are private. The shops which are being destroyed in the villages, in the districts, are private. The tractors which are being burned, in their majority, are private. Some industrial installations, if they are not private, they are joint ventures, where the private element is an essential component. Many private factories have stopped. Private firms coming from the United States of America, from France and so forth, who want to work with us, in the search for oil or exploration for gas, and agriculture and so on, they have got difficulties, they find difficulties. So, they are not attacking socialism, they're attacking capitalism in Mozambique..."

He says that before independence there were only foreign capitalists in Mozambique.

"It is Frelimo who brought capitalists into Mozambique, Mozambican capitalists..."

He says that Frelimo brought small capitalist shops run by Mozambicans to the country, also farms run capitalistically by Mozambicans

"So, it;s not clear that we have to negotiate about socialism or capitalism."

13) Question about whether there can be any southern Africa solution so long as apartheid remains in South Africa.

"Well, we are convinced that there will be some kind of destabilization in southern Africa as long as the apartheid regime remains there. What we can try is to decrease that destabilization by enhancing our defense capacity. But the attempts of destabilization will be always there. AS far as in South Africa (is concerned), there will be a struggle against apartheid and the apartheid regime will try to defend itself. Therefore it;s a condition for peace, the eradication of apartheid. But as I say, we are going to try, we are trying to reduce the destabilizing capacity of South Africa. I think that in turn will work in favor of quicker changes in South Africa."

14) Question about Mozambican application of sanctions:

"Well, what is happening in Mozambique is the reverse. It;s South Africa imposing sanctions on Mozambique. We have no room for imposing sanctions because of the relationship which exists between the two countries. It;s a relation of dependency which was created in colonial days of Mozambique toward South Africa. If it was South Africa depending on Mozambique, then we would be able to apply sanctions to them. Of course, sanctions applied by us against South Africa at this stage, while other countries are not applying correctly and fully sanctions against South Africa, it would amount to applying sanctions against ourselves. But we always said this: that if sanctions are applied against South Africa, although ~~this~~ this can affect us here, we would not oppose, as far as that would speed up the fall of apartheid.

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peacocks squawk hysterically at intervals in lush garden outside.

It;s a rainy, chilly, dreary day. The Palacio L. Ponta Vermelha, which was formerly residence of the Portuguese governor. Ornately appointed in grand, opulent colonial fashion. We sit in narrow sun-room.

. Pres. Chissano seems humble, almost self-effacing, very gentlemanly, fiddles with his hands, consults occasionally from notes scribbled on a small pad or from documents, has fine features, flecks of grey in goatee, has narrow eyes, high cheekbones, wears startling white socks, speaks slowly, deliberately. interview goes on almost 90 minutes.

Zambique will will be represented in Vancouver by foreign minister Pascoal Mocumbi.