

President Chissano on Problems and Prospects

President Chissano kindly agreed to give an exclusive interview to the Editor of SAPEM, Ibbo Mandaza, at State House, Maputo, on June 2nd, 1989.

Q: Arriving in Maputo, I have noticed a clear indication of an improvement in the morale and physical appearance of the city and its people. Is this a correct interpretation of the events here?

A: Yes, Mozambique has been hit very hard. We had a negative growth of the economy by 11%, from 1982-85. In 1985 we tried to take some measures to counter this process of negative growth rate of the economy. We took some measures – very simple ones. We did not yet know exactly what to do. We were trying to get loans, credits and so forth and while waiting for these credits, we had to take certain measures to enable us to increase our GNP, to reverse the tendency towards degradation.

We stopped the degradation late in '85 and in '86 we had a growth, a positive growth of 1,6% of GNP. That's when we started to look for ways of implementing a programme of real implication. And we started drawing some measures and implementing them, even whilst we were still drafting a programme and making contacts with our partners. This is when we also tried to join the IMF and the World Bank, which we did in 1986.

We finished drafting our programme and started implementing it in '87. Then, because we had joined the IMF, the draft had to take into consideration some of the IMF requirements here and there. But basically we had started it and developed it ourselves and this made it possible for us to give it a certain orientation. So we implemented this programme in '87. By the end of '87 we had a growth of 3,6%.

Q: You are saying that the IMF/World Bank programme was really something that you began yourself? There was no imposition?

A: No.

Q: Because, at one stage, our analysis was that Mozambique, given the depression, had no choice but to accept.

A: We did not know. If we had accepted what the IMF was proposing to us, we would have been lost. We would have had a strong revolt here.

Q: What was the orientation you gave it?

A: Let's say in several aspects – for instance, I can give you one or two examples. On devaluation of the currency,



President Joaquim Chissano

Pic. Ministry of Information

we are devaluing according to our own plan which we had established ourselves, contrary to what the IMF was proposing. Although we took into consideration what would be acceptable to the IMF, we have applied our own policies because when we started the plan we already understood that we had to devalue. It's obvious – from independence up until 1980

we had not devalued when other currencies were being devalued. And so we were already in the process of doing so. We started at a rate which we considered appropriate to ourselves.

Q: Are the IMF/World Bank happy with the programme.

A: Yes, we have no quarrels with them.

Q: Are there indications that things will continue to be positive, economically?

A: I hope so.

Q: I ask the question because we are told that there are very positive economic changes which perhaps some of us had been able to see for ourselves. But there are also said to be very negative social implications.

A: This is another aspect. Whereas the IMF maybe might not care about the social implications, we took into consideration the fact that we have a vulnerable strata of the population to take care of, in the fields of education and health for instance.

People start having lots of problems because prices are rising and we have to do something. We have to guard against some fronts to solve problems for at least that strata of the population.

I could give you many more examples. We are working hard so that we can also convince our partners, even the World Bank and the IMF, of the feasibility of what we are proposing – that what we are proposing will not be contrary to the aim of rehabilitating the economy. This has been proven because of the 3,6% growth in 1987. In 1988 we had a 4,2% increase and this year we have a target of 5%. So, in spite of all the corrections we are giving to proposals which are brought to us by some IMF officials, I think they are becoming accustomed to working with us

and they take our views into consideration. But one has to work very hard.

Q: There is also the question of aid. Mozambique's dilemma, and the position it has been put into by destabilisation, has provoked much sympathy for Mozambique internationally. Aid has become a very important component of the rehabilitation. What would you say has been the percentage in terms of GDP and secondly, in terms

development. When the displaced people come to one area they are given aid and we say, "Don't just give them food and medicine, give them a hoe and a knife and an axe. Give them seeds. In some cases give them water pumps for some small irrigation and it is possible that next year you will not need to bring food for these, but for other groups. And this group will, at some future time, be able to feed other

A: I don't think that is a good word. The word 'privatisation' may imply that there was once a 'deprivatisation' which we never had in Mozambique. In Mozambique we came to find a country which had no private owners who were Mozambicans. It's our own revolution which is taking into consideration that there is need to utilise this type of economic participation of our people. This means



Displaced children in a makeshift classroom

Pic. Steve Askin

of the impact on rehabilitation?

A: I can't give you figures but our policy is to convert aid into an instrument for all – to end the need for aid. We have two programmes therefore, one of which is the emergency programme.

The emergency programme is meant mainly to save lives which are affected by destabilisation. But we think, at the same time, that they cannot just receive all the time. So, when they receive this aid, the aid must bring in it a component which will enable them to start being part of

displaced people and provide a base for them". And so we are trying to do this.

We also say that some of the aid, if the organisations accept this, can be multiplied by putting it in industry – an industry which can support the emergency within the country. And therefore the connection between rehabilitation, economic development and emergency is maintained. You can save the lives but you don't create the habit of receiving.

Q: How much privatisation is there now?

giving them the chance to own some property which can be put to the benefit of development of the country. That has been difficult because we don't have enough means even to do that. For instance, we are asking the USA to give us help for development. They decided they would only give help for development if it was utilised by the private sector. We accepted this. But what they are giving – it's little. It's little compared with the need to create a visible private sector in Mozambique, in terms of agriculture and in-

dustry. They are giving us from \$15 million to \$20 million in aid to be distributed by the ten provinces of Mozambique – it's not enough.

There is also this question of distribution of property which, by force of circumstance, had to be run by the State or even by co-operatives after the exodus of the Portuguese owners with workers left behind who did not know how to manage the property. And if they knew, they have never been the owners. We had to define and decide who the owner is and, in some cases, we were able to organise the workers into a co-operative and, in other cases, to incorporate the land into a state farm or state property.

Later we found some people who wanted to do something and we would give them a parcel of land to manage, often together with workers. So perhaps you can call this privatisation.

There is now a big private sector in Mozambique, which is Mozambican. Where ever the bandits have not destroyed property in the trade area, all the trading shops in the rural areas and in town which remain, belong to the private sector. We never intended to nationalise them but the Portuguese had abandoned them and for some years they remained closed because the State could only care for some of the shops which were opened

as people's shops, while waiting for someone to open the others.

Q: What hope do we have now? One feels that perhaps 1989 is a turning point in the history of the region, that perhaps the war and the banditry would stop and their sponsors would see reason and understand that enough damage has been done. This would lead to circumstances where the South African situation might improve, freedom in South Africa will come and the region will be a better place to live in.

A: If one takes into consideration the reaction of international opinion, I would say that this year has been very much more favourable. There has been an increase in pronouncements in support of our policies, condemnation of terrorism, calls for the end of violence and acceptance of the efforts which we are making in order to create conditions for the normalisation of life for all citizens of this country.

I think that the support from outside for banditry has decreased. But there are still some vital sectors who have to take stronger attitudes. But this is not the only assessment one can make. We must also think that the enemies of our country have depersonalised very much. For the Mozambicans involved in banditry and terrorism, destabilisation and destruction, it is hard to know how long it will take

even after some quarters have decided to stop their support, to bring the people to their senses and to humanise them and not use a knife or an axe to kill another Mozambican.

We will probably have some mad actions still continuing. Some will do it for survival. We have to deal with the consequences of dehumanisation which are so extreme. Imagine a child who starts killing at the age of eight, how do you tell him to stop? I think this is one of the problems that those who are sponsoring these atrocities have to consider. This should be in their minds. They protest that they are not involved but they are producing monsters which they can no longer control.

There is a wish, a desire, to see this come to an end. Much depends on whether or not the bandits' sponsors take a more active attitude to stop the banditry. If they do that, then the day is nearer. But, as I say, we still have a job to do which may take some time because we are dealing with a dehumanised group of people. If we attempt dialogue, we may have two or three who are prepared to listen. But, sometimes, you may be speaking to people who have already lost their soul. And how can you expect this thing to be over in a short while? We have to work patiently. ●