

Dec. 6, '82

MOZAMBIQUE TAKES AIM ON BLACK MARKET

MAPUTO [AN] Mozambique's FRELIMO government, which has always cited the containment of corruption as a high priority, is currently engaged in a major campaign against the expanding black market here.

FRELIMO Ideology Minister Jorge Rebelo calls illicit trading one of the government's principal problems, and a recent report by the Maputo police commissioner verifies that goods are being siphoned off from state producers onto the black market on a large scale. The police list includes 95 tons of flour, 14 tons of chicken, and 28,000 bottles of wine.

In one instance a train was derailed so it could be robbed by a ring involved in black marketeering.

Goods are also diverted through a variety of more subtle schemes. In many cases they disappear between the time a retailer picks up his allocation and when he arrives at his shop. Restaurant owners can also avail themselves of the same technique.

Many Mozambicans are angry about having to pay up to ten times the official price for goods, and they are beginning to take action. Workers' committees in the metal-working industry, for example, are investigating why roofing sheets have virtually disappeared from public retail outlets when they are still manufactured in the same quantity.

Recently, in a suburb of Maputo, local residents caught a shopkeeper offloading an entire truckload of cloth in front of his house late at night.

FRELIMO's response has been to encourage this sort of local policing. According to the minister for internal commerce, Jorge Aranda da Silva, workers' committees in factories are to take an active part in determining the distribution pattern of goods and checking to see who actually picks them up.

In addition, copies of invoices are to be sent to neighborhood councils, who will check to see that goods actually appear on the shelves and are sold to the public at the officially fixed prices.

— Joseph Hanlon ■