

MOZAMBIQUE

Purge of security forces

PRESIDENT Samora Machel last month announced the launching of a clean-up operation in the Mozambican armed forces, people's militia, police and security apparatus. Speaking at a mass rally at Independence Square in the capital, Maputo, the President explicitly condemned 'elements infiltrated in the defence and security forces' who violate the constitution, the principles of the Frelimo party and the law of the land through arbitrary imprisonment, beatings, torture and other forms of abuse of power.

The President, who was angry throughout his three-hour speech, received prolonged applause from the crowd when he said: In the People's Republic of Mozambique, beatings, corporal punishment and torture are absolutely forbidden.' The current operation, part of the generalized political and organizational offensive which was launched last year, is intended to purge the security and armed forces of elements who misuse power to oppress and humiliate the people, in an attempt to bring about tranquility and eliminate opposition to party and Government policies.

Evidence

Machel's move, which many observers have seen coming for a long time, was sparked off by letters to the party and the President's office denouncing the abuse of human rights by some members of the security organizations and the armed forces. In visits to Gaza and Cabo Delgado provinces, the President had moving first-hand evidence of some of this abuse. The Mozambican leader said the crimes and abuses of power reflected the survival of the values of the colonial-capitalist society and tribal-feudal

society. The mistakes, he said, 'stem from our own shortcomings'. Henceforth, he promised, they would be 'rigorously investigated and the guilty punished'.

'What we have detected is the use of our power, our uniform, our weapons, to satisfy petty hatreds and personal grudges', the President said. The People's National Security Service (SNASP) members too, were warned: 'In Mozambique we don't want a secret police. We don't need it'. Vigilance on the part of the people, and not suspicion must be the basis of SNASP's work. Recruitment for SNASP must be more selective than for the police. 'If we are not demanding enough, the security man can use the functions attributed to SNASP by the state against the people'.

Infiltration of Mozambique's defence and security forces after independence in June 1975 became easy because the guerrillas were not ideologically prepared for the functions they would later assume in running the country. They became easily corrupted by the taste of good living. This pursuit of luxury affected many Frelimo commanders. As for the police, the force had been created in the image of the colonial police, with new recruits being cast to fit the oppressive mould of the ancient regime.

Machel is determined to change all this. Although he appreciates the task will be an uphill one, he has proposed several measures to deal with the problem. One of these is to create what

he calls 'new Nachingweas' in Mozambique. It was at Nachingwea, in southern Tanzania, that all Frelimo militants received political and military training during the war against the Portuguese. The experience was unifying anti-ethnic and anti-racist. The money for this programme will come from contributions made every month over the last few years to strengthen the country's defence capacity.

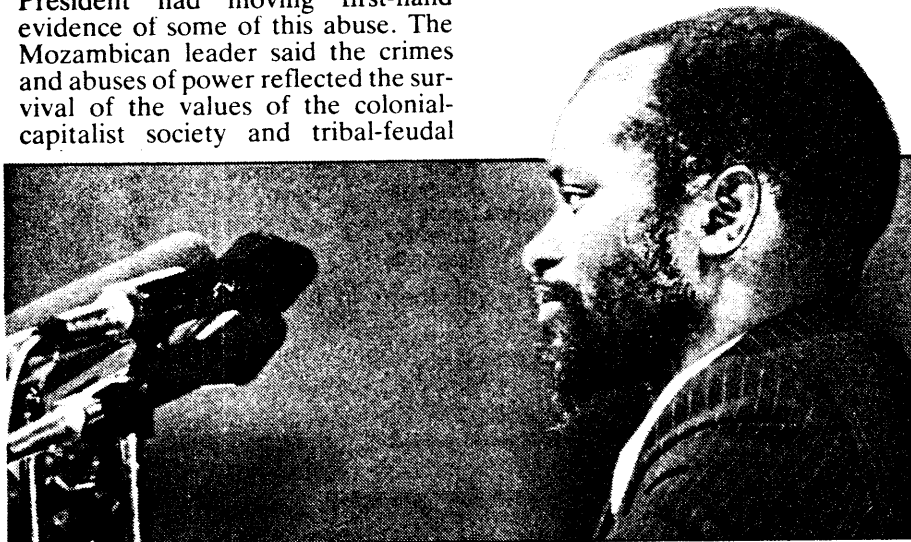
Another of the measures announced by the President is the accountability of the forces to the people's assemblies and the Government at each level, as well as strict application of the laws on powers of arrest and periods of remand. Respect for the law is to be stressed and the need for arrest warrants when culprits are not caught in the act will be insisted upon. Moreover, in future any member of the forces can be arrested by the police or by any citizen if caught committing a crime. If found guilty they would receive 'more severe penalties' in civil courts for common crimes 'besides the internal disciplinary process'. In the past, misbehaviour and excesses by the security forces have been dealt with only sporadically, but now, it seems a thorough process will be instituted.

The announcement of the launching of the clean-up operation in the Mozambican defence and security forces came two months after Machel ordered the creation of the 'Commission on Legality and the State' to study the application of the principles of the constitution, especially in relation to re-education centres, a type of open prison where inmates are taught skills, learn to read and write and farm to produce their own food.

Operation

They were set up at the time of independence in 1975 when Mozambique was breaking with the colonial legal system. At that time there were few trained Mozambican police, and a general state of disorganization in the court system prevailed following the hurried flight of Portuguese legal and administrative experts. Since 1979, President Machel has been visiting re-education centres and, recently, he found cases which he said 'were against revolutionary legality and justice'.

At Unango and Msawize re-education centres in Niassa Province, and at Ruarua and Chaimite re-education centres in Cabo Delgado Province, the President ordered the release of a total of 3,000 inmates. Some of them were members of the first groups of Frelimo



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guerrillas who initiated the liberation war in September 1964, fighting up until the time of the ceasefire in June 1974. They had been inmates in some of these re-education centres since 1976. Their crime? Forgetting to carry their identity cards. They were among the men freed in September this year.

At a meeting with the Cabo Delgado provincial government at the end of his week-long tour of the re-education centres last September, Machel said he has discovered 'situations that are a frontal onslaught against our policies'. He added: 'We found situations that offend our humanity, offend the respect we feel for people and for citizens.' Such injustices, he said, were a form of counter-revolutionary activity.

'The violation of our laws creates a climate of instability and insecurity. It creates fertile ground for enemy action.' No doubt, the President may have been referring also to the National Resistance Movement, whose sabotage of vital installations has in the recent past escalated considerably in central Mozambique.

There is a glimmer of hope today in Mozambique, that both the 'purge' in the defence and security forces and the 'Commission on Legality and the State' will go hand in hand towards enforcing respect for the constitution and through it bring about tranquility and the security necessary, as Machel said, for everyone to take part in the battle against under-development. ■