

MOZAMBIQUE

Tribal loyalties Frelimo's main stumbling block

By José Ramalho

President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi once pin-pointed to me as one of Africa's most serious problems "the stupid, artificial borders drawn up in Lisbon, Berlin and London with total disregard for ethnic realities". He was, at the time, referring specifically to the large chunks of the Mozambican territory which, in his view, were an integral part of the "Greater Maravi Nation" of pre-colonial days.

Running his finger over a map of central and east Africa, Banda said: "Cheuas, Angonis, Nyanjas, Ajauas, these are my people." They also happen to be some of Mozambique's main tribes.

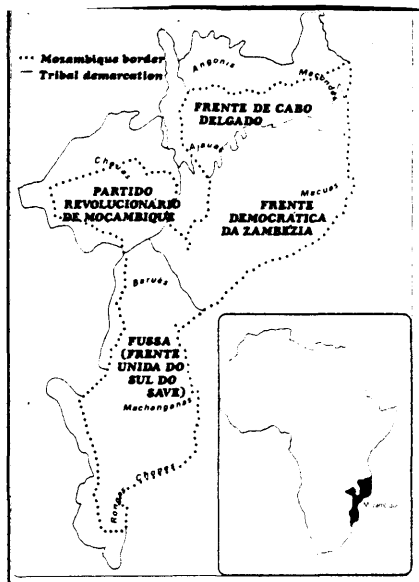
Banda's theory has proved Frelimo's main stumbling block in its efforts to crush tribalism and regionalism and bring the whole country under Marxist-Leninist rule. Three long-established underground movements, drawing their strength from the tribes of northern and central Mozambique have now been joined by a new anti-Frelimo movement in the southern area calling itself Frente Unida do Sul do Save (FUSSA).

Four large tribes, Changane, Ronga, Chope and Inhambane, form the backbone of FUSSA. These include the descendants of the tough warriors who fought Portuguese domination under legendary chief Gungunhana until their final defeat at Chaimite at the turn of the century.

FUSSA claims to be a purely political movement, in common with the Frente de Cabo Delgado, dominated by the Maconde tribe, the Frente Democrática da Zambezia (believed to represent the three-million-strong Macua tribe) and the Partido Revolucionário de Mozambique, with its roots in the Tete tribes.

They all seem to be agreed in supporting the externally based Frente Unida Democrática de Mozambique (FUMO) as the amalgamating factor in the future federal state and have as their armed wing the National Resistance Council which is reported to have recently scored a number of successes in military operations inside Mozambique.

The tribal antagonism to Frelimo's dictatorship finds an echo in the phrase coined by former governor-general Admiral Sarmento Rodrigues: "Mozambique will only be Mozambique for as long as it is Portugal." It does not apply any longer but neither does Frelimo's contention to represent the people of Mozambique as a whole. To most Mozambicans Frelimo is a foreign-inspired regime led



Stupid, artificial borders . . .

by detribalised Africans who do not identify with the cultures and the traditions of the disparate ethnic groups artificially brought together by colonial power struggles.

On the surface, Frelimo's ruthless fight to eradicate tribalism and regionalism has been an outstanding success. On the forefront of the psychological warfare are East German specialists who have been given the control of the mass media. For good measure they have also organised the Mozambique equivalent of the KGB to make sure the fight for the minds and the souls of the people is backed by physical persuasion means.

But the fruits of the never-ending brainwashing are only apparent. Prodded by party organisers, the crowds march obediently chanting revolutionary songs to the places allotted by the party for communal villages and collective farms. After the speeches and the symbolic bush clearing, they quietly make their way back to the traditional hamlets.

A FUSSA spokesman says: "Sooner or later Mozambique will become a federation of states on the basis of the land belonging to each of its tribes." Voicing deep-seated feelings, he goes on: "We, in FUSSA, stand for private property, the right to raise our cattle and marry in the traditional way."

Their immediate aims are "to get rid of Frelimo and its system of police repression to establish tribal autonomy under self-government therefore eliminating oppression of one tribe over the others".

While old and new underground movements go on fighting for a federal state, Frelimo is getting ready for party-rigged general elections. Following a pattern that has kept it in absolute power, Frelimo is now bulldozing its way to the polls. Without waiting for election day, it has already appointed provisional "Peoples' Assemblies" which are expected to be rubber-stamped by a party-organised and led electorate.

FUSSA, with FUMO, the Cabo Delgado Front, the Zambezia Democratic Movement, the Tete Revolutionary Party and other smaller movements under the umbrella of the fighting National Resistance, have a tough nut to crack. Only time will tell whether deep-rooted tribal loyalties, traditions and cultures

will resist the formidable march of Frelimo towards totalitarian rule by a confessedly communist minority clique.