

Machel's war against sabotage

EARLY last month, Mozambique nationalised almost all foreign and local banks and established a second state-owned bank, the People's Development Bank. Three of the nationalised banks have already wound up business, while two more have been given until the end of this year to terminate their operations in the country. Seen against Mozambique's commitment to 'development through socialism', President Machel's recent move was predictable. However, its timing was dictated less by the exigencies of socialist ideology than by the imperatives of national survival in the context of a hostile southern Africa.

Mozambican leaders are understood to have recently agreed on a programme of action to curb what they describe as 'the strategy to destabilise Mozambique through economic sabotage'. The central component of this 'war against saboteurs' is the decision by the government to assume control of all the commanding heights of the economy. In an opening shot, the Minister of Development and Economic Planning, Marcelino dos Santos, announced in mid-December that the activities of enterprises which are of strategic importance to the Mozambican economy are to come under the direct control of the Council of Ministers.

Speaking in Tete, the north-western province which is also one of the three frontline regions in the guerrilla war against the Smith regime in Rhodesia, the Minister announced that the Cabora Bassa Hydroelectric Concession and the Mozambique Coal Company, which operates the Moatize mines, would immediately come under government control. He also said the Council of Ministers would control production, transport and trading of produce considered vital for the country, such as sugar, rice, cotton, cement, copra and cashewnuts. 'We direct the state enterprises, we support the co-operative sector and we control the private sector', dos Santos declared.

The desire on the part of the government to bring the private sector under the scrutiny of the Council of Ministers appears to have been motivated by the continuing attempts to disrupt production through damaging equipment and bleeding the country of its meagre foreign reserves. The Mozambican News Agency, AIM, last month catalogued several instances of alleged sabotage against the Mozambican economy.



Marcelino Dos Santos: 'We control the private sector...'

- Between 1975 and 1976 the Boror company sold 180,000 contos (one conto - approx. US \$30) worth of copra and sisal to Spain and other countries. The money never arrived in Mozambique.

- The Mozambique Liqueurs factory recently ordered 643 contos worth of raw materials from abroad. Of the 500 barrels ordered, only 216 arrived full, 187 were empty, 64 half full, one came full of dirty oil and 32 did not turn up at all. Work at the factory stopped for a month.

- The Ferreira and Faria company sold 18,000 contos worth of soap and vegetable oils to West Germany. The money never arrived.

- One of Mozambique's biggest clothing factories, Investro, ordered raw materials from West Germany, but received boxes of rags instead.

- The sweater manufacturing factory, L.M. ordered 11 tons of yarn from South Africa. Only five tons arrived, soaked in water and useless. The factory was paralysed for three months.

- The firm of Pendray and Sousa received exchange control clearance to send £95,000 out of the country for automobile parts. After several months only three tiny boxes arrived. One of the directors had written to the supplier asking for the goods to be sent to Durban in his own name. The director has not been seen in Mozambique since then.

- Mozambique's foreign exchange authorities authorised the transfer of a considerable sum of money as a down payment for construction of a fleet of fishing boats abroad. The boats had been ordered by a well-known Portuguese businessman, Vitor Lopes, who later left Mozambique, ostensibly to check up on the boat-building. And that was the last Mozambique saw of him, or the foreign exchange. The boats never arrived, and neither did a large sum of foreign exchange which was due to be sent to Mozambique in payment for prawns exported by one of Lopes' companies.

While some of these actions could be attributed simply to vengeful foreign businessmen in Mozambique, others, Mozambican officials believe, show signs of collusion by forces outside the country. Indeed they are convinced that some aspects of the economic war against Mozambique are engineered exclusively abroad. Currency forging is an example often cited.

Earlier in 1977, thousands of forged one conto Mozambique banknotes were dis-

covered in Portugal, ready to be shipped to South Africa. The tightly-censored South African press itself reported later that forged notes had actually arrived and were being passed to unsuspecting Mozambican miners returning home after working in the Rand mines.

Elaborate scheme

How many of these notes have actually arrived in Mozambique is not known. But descriptions of the bogus notes appear in shops and hotels as part of the government's effort to foil this scheme for destabilising the Mozambican economy.

Another, more elaborate, scheme was discovered last July. Mozambican airports were closed for two days when the government found out that illegal tickets of the national airline, DETA, were circulating abroad. The authors of this particular racket, who surprisingly included an East European country, had devised a number of methods of operation.

One was that an individual leaving Mozambique for good would buy not one but several tickets with Mozambican currency. The extra tickets, which could be used for trips to anywhere in the world, were sold abroad. However DETA is a small airline with a very limited number of international flights, so this joy-riding around the world was done on a variety of foreign airlines and Mozambique had to foot the bill in foreign currency.

Linked to many of these schemes, the Mozambicans allege, are some wealthy Portuguese businessmen who formerly operated in Mozambique and fought for years to maintain colonial rule over the country. However, officials also suspect that some Mozambican nationals are not unwilling accomplices in the efforts of foreigners to undermine President Machel's administration.

Late last year, a Mozambican national, Alfonso Cotoi, who was captured while on a reconnaissance mission for the Rhodesian armed forces revealed that there were hundreds of Mozambicans being militarily trained at a base in Rhodesia. Cotoi claimed that he had been told by his instructors that their leader was Jorge Jardim, an influential business magnate and press baron who lived in Mozambique during the colonial period. It is understood that it is from this base that exiled Mozambicans beam broadcasts hostile to President Machel's government on 'Radio Free Africa' as well as help the Smith regime launch attacks across the border with the People's Republic of Mozambique.

While President Machel has declared war against the economic saboteurs in Mozambique, it is doubtful whether, at least in the short term, his measures will stem their activities altogether. Much of the economy was structured to service South Africa and Rhodesia, and Mozambique's external trade is still partly linked with that of South Africa. As long as this remains the case, Mozambique will be vulnerable not only to acts of sabotage by

disgruntled expatriate businessmen, but also to a programme of economic blackmail orchestrated from South Africa. Perhaps it is this, more than anything else, that should impel Africa to rally behind President Machel's efforts to sustain the momentum of the liberation struggle in the region while simultaneously creating a viable and autonomous economic rearguard.