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A collective farm near Maputo, flourishing in better times: Mozambique today is beset by economic and political problems *John 8 May 1984*

Mozambique guerrillas bring war into the cities

Rebels of Mozambique National Resistance menace Maputo despite signing of nonaggression pact with South Africa

From Joseph Hanlon in Maputo

MOZAMBIQUE'S cities and transport links are coming under increasing pressure from anti-government rebels of the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

In the past month, there have been at least six attacks on trains, killing more than 50 people. The most recent was last week on a commuter train just north of the Maputo city boundary. It was raked with machinegun fire, killing two and wounding 30 people.

A train has also been attacked on the line west from Maputo to South Africa, and at least four trains were hit during April on the line that goes from Nacala Port to Nampula and then on to Malawi. The line was seriously disrupted. In some of those raids, trains have been derailed by the MNR and then attacked, with guerrillas passing through the carriages and shooting and bayonetting passengers.

Nampula, Mozambique's third largest city, feels under siege. It is unwise to go far outside the city without a military escort. Attacks on the road to Nacala, which began in March, ended when military convoys were started. But on April 27 the MNR began attacking the convoys as well. On a day when a convoy and a train were attacked, the small Nampula mortuary was full and bodies were lying on the floor.

In rural areas, normal life is grinding to a halt under pressure from the MNR. In Mogovolas district, just south of Nampula, only four of 45 primary schools are still open.

Here in the capital, Maputo, there has been MNR action inside the city for the first time. A bus was hit on April 29 on a main road inside the city. Two people were killed. The road 30 miles north of the city has been attacked repeatedly. The road to the South African border has been cut several

times, forcing diplomats and United Nations staff to curb their shopping and holiday trips to South Africa.

South Africa agreed to end its support for the MNR when it signed the Nkomati non-aggression pact in March. But it is now clear that this offensive against Maputo was planned before Pretoria abandoned the MNR. Several guerrillas captured around Maputo recently were presented to neighbourhood meetings last week. Jose Botao, who said he had been in the MNR for four years told how he had been trained as a parachutist in South Africa and then dropped near Maputo earlier this year.

South African involvement in the new offensive is not the only factor, however. It appears that the MNR is receiving at least passive support from some local people. The raids near Maputo and Nampula were in populated zones and the MNR's ability to launch repeated attacks in

these areas indicates that either people are not telling the ruling Frelimo Party about the presence of armed bands, or that the army is not responding.

In the areas east of Nampula, the army has begun using a tactic employed by the Portuguese in the fight against Frelimo. It is forcing people to leave their family compounds and move into villages, burning the huts of those who refuse.

The new MNR offensives have taken on an international aspect, involving Swaziland and Malawi. The MNR has established a base in north-east Swaziland, near the South African and Mozambican borders, which has been used to launch raids near Maputo. Both Swazi daily newspapers have reported MNR men in the mountainous border area near Mozambique.

So far, however, the Swazi Government has taken no action. It is believed that this

was one topic discussed recently when the Swazi Foreign Minister, Mr Richard Dlamini, visited Maputo.

Land-locked Malawi is now effectively cut off from the outside world. The railway to Beira has been cut for two years by the MNR, and recent attacks have cut the other two outlets—the railway to Nacala and the road through Tete to Zimbabwe. This means that the only way out of Malawi is the long and tortuous road to Harare through Lusaka.

The South African Foreign Minister, Mr R. F. "Pik" Botha, flew to Malawi for talks with President Banda last month. On his return, he said he had been asked by Dr Banda to use his influence with the MNR to control attacks on the railway to Nacala.

Ironically, Malawi allowed South Africa to use its territory as a rear base for the MNR, and it was from Malawi that the MNR launched the offensive into the north of Mo-

zambique that was eventually to cut the railway. Dr Banda's pleas seem to have been in vain, as the attacks on the railway are continuing.

Reports are now emerging of a particularly severe attack on the Malawi to Tete road on April 27. Traffic on that road normally goes only in military convoys guarded by Zimbabwean troops. But on that day, five Mozambican lorries travelling without guards were hit and more than 30 people were killed. The lorries are believed to have been carrying food to Tete, badly affected by drought.

One survivor, Joao Singano, a local peasant, said that the MNR men declared that they had already warned people not to use the road, and that anyone who did would die. Singano told of one man who was injured and trapped in a lorry cab, and who was pleading for help. Instead, the MNR set the lorry on fire, roasting him alive.