

STEALING THE DREAM

Joseph Hanlon looks at the results of the 'ceasefire talks' with South Africa

FIGHTING continues in Mozambique, despite claims three weeks ago of a ceasefire. At first, it seemed that South Africa had finally agreed to abide by the Nkomati non-aggression pact signed on 16 March. But even Foreign Minister Pik Botha, who at first trumpeted South African 'peacemaking', later admitted that the agreement was only that there *should* be a ceasefire, and that there would be three way talks (involving South Africa, Mozambique, and the MNR, the forces fighting the Mozambique government) to try to agree on one.

So South Africa has used its successful destabilisation to extract yet another concession from Mozambique's Frelimo, giving little in return. The new concession is talking face to face with the MNR for the first time, and possibly allowing South African troops into Mozambique. Concessions in March included expelling nearly all of the African National Congress (ANC) and allowing in South African business people and tourists. Clearly further concessions will be demanded before South Africa finally backs down.

The nature of further demands was shown by the presence of Evo Fernandes as head of the MNR delegation at the Pretoria talks three weeks ago. Fernandes is white and Portuguese, one of the hundreds of thousands of right-wing *retornados* who fled Mozambique and Angola at independence in 1975 and have rallied against the victorious guerrillas ever since. In colonial times, Fernandes worked in Beira and had close links to the PIDE secret police.

One of the central demands of South Africa (with Portugal putting pressure on Mozambique to agree) is that the *retornados* should be allowed to come back and reclaim their abandoned properties. Although the MNR has involved the *retornados*, it is largely a creature of Rhodesian and then South African security services. However, the West now seems to have accepted the Mozambique government's long-standing claim that the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance or Renamo) is not a political opposition. The only choice, then, is to create one, and the *retornados* form one component.

Another section of the opposition will be the 18,000 MNR men still in training camps in South Africa. The demand is that they should not simply be returned to Mozambique under a general amnesty, but be given some sort of privileged position, with places in the army, civil service, and perhaps even one or more ministries in the government. The United States has offered to fund showpiece resettlement centres.

Together, the *retornados* and returned MNR men could form the basis of the first-ever political opposition to Frelimo inside the country. Members of the middle class, whose lifestyles have come under increasing pressure, and who have high hopes that the Nkomati Accord will bring them luxury goods from South Africa, may well join the opposition.

The final group would be private farmers, a mix of Portuguese who did not flee, *retornados*, and would-be kulaks (larger peasant farmers). The United States has already thrown its

support behind this group, announcing that agricultural assistance under its new programme will go *only* to this group, and not to state farms, co-operatives, or even to ordinary peasant farmers.

UNDOUBTEDLY the most insidious part of the process has been the way the United States has used its emergency aid to re-establish itself in Mozambique. As previously shown (NS 3 February), Mozambique's famine was more a result of South African destabilisation than of the drought. The US held back until it was convinced that Mozambique was 'turning toward the West', then forced Mozambique to accept the presence of a series of right-wing Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), including World Vision.

One of the biggest problems for the US has been that, since the expulsion of the CIA in 1991, it has had poor intelligence about the interior of Mozambique. Under the new aid deal, staff from the US 'disaster relief' organisation CARE will be in offices in each provincial capital — ideal watching and listening posts, with legitimate reasons to travel throughout the country to look at the progress of the war and any growing opposition.

The final step is to undermine the credibility of Frelimo. A priest in Nicaragua, who had been in Chile before, said that the US realised it had made a mistake and overthrown Allende too soon, while there was still a dream of what socialism could be. In Nicaragua they are trying to destroy the dream first. That is clearly the idea in Mozambique, too.

Destabilisation has been aimed almost entirely at economic targets: burning shops, mining roads, and attacking trains and lorries. The goal has been to make life impossible for the peasants who form the backbone of Frelimo's support. Frelimo's own agricultural policies did not always help.

THE MOST subtle twist, however, has been to prevent Frelimo correcting its mistakes. At its Fourth Party Congress last year, it accepted its failure to support the peasants. It agreed on a new programme of more consumer goods for rural areas, higher producer prices, and more support for small private business. It seemed just the sort of thing being urged by the West, and a shift toward peasant capitalism it would have been happy to support. Instead, the West imposed a virtual economic boycott on Mozambique.

The excuse was that Mozambique, like many other developing countries, admitted it could not pay its debts and asked for them to be renegotiated. The response was to freeze all credits, until Mozambique agreed to a comprehensive package including joining the IMF and negotiating a settlement with South Africa. In particular, the freeze prevented Mozambique from importing consumer goods to support peasant farmers, and to restart the economy. Only the USSR, China, and France (breaking ranks with other Western creditors) supplied vital consumer goods and thus, ironically, backed Frelimo's shift to peasant capitalism.

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