

Mozambican war becomes endurance test

Gdn 27-6-86

From Victoria Brittain
in Maputo

UNDER the brilliant sun of Mozambique's midwinter, President Samora Machel laid a huge wreath of roses and lilies on the tomb of the heroes of the liberation war which ended here 11 years ago this week. The austere ceremony was a fitting celebration of an independence which has turned into a grim endurance test.

Mr Machel and the politburo members filed past the marble tombstone of Eduardo Mondlane who founded Frelimo and led a 10-year guerrilla war against the Portuguese. A very different guerrilla war grips the country today.

"There were no DC-3s, helicopters, parachute drops, submarines and trucks in our

war," said one Frelimo militant. South African commitment of supplies and logistics has transformed the rebel Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) over the last five years into a formidable force.

Zambezia province, between Malawi and the Indian Ocean, is the current focus of military and government attention with an estimated quarter of a million people displaced and destitute, many more are held captive by the MNR who are trying to establish a base area in Zambia to replace their Gorongosa National Park base which has twice been overrun by Mozambican and Zimbabwean forces in the past nine months.

Supplies for the MNR are brought by truck over the

border from Malawi by the South Africans who are also supplying Zambezia by submarine and DC-3, officials say.

President Machel recently publicly named Malawi as the source of the increase in security in the north. But MNR groups are also coming into southern Mozambique over the South African and Swazi borders. A wave of urban terrorism which was feared earlier this year has been avoided.

However, throughout the country 1,800 schools have been destroyed by the MNR and 1,200 of those have had to be abandoned. Teachers have been a particular target of the MNR, as have nurses in rural areas. Many have been killed.

A village school teacher

without nose or ears returning to teach in a rural school, admitting that every day he is afraid, was the unseen hero of Wednesday's ceremony. As one group of peasant women with no ears put it, "if the bandits seize power they'll rule an earless people."

"We used to see the South African strategy as to use the MNR as a kind of 'contras' but we've realised that was a mistake," explained Jose Luis Cabaco, the secretary to the party's central committee. "They do not have an alternative programme of any kind for this country, they are not an anti-socialist force. They are bent on destroying the social fabric of the nation — that's why they hit villages

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