

MOZAMBIQUE'S HEAVY BURDEN

SA destroying economy

H 0 4 MAR 1987

and entire social fabric

SOUTH AFRICA'S onslaught against Mozambique over the past six years has affected every sector of the economy and the entire social fabric of the country, as well as jeopardising the region's transportation routes.

Direct and indirect economic losses to Mozambique during 1980-85 amount to at least US\$5.5 billion, and the number of people who have died, directly or indirectly as a result of the undeclared war, is estimated at between 300 000 and 400 000.

If the upward trend in its economy had continued from 1981, the country would be comparatively prosperous. Instead it is one of the world's 25 poorest countries. Exports in 1985 of only \$80.2 million were not enough to cover the next years cost of oil imports.

Mozambique's mineral wealth is vast and virtually untapped. The country is traversed by many rivers and, drought and cyclones notwithstanding it has considerable potential for economic growth. However, the destruction of communications routes has made it virtually impossible for Mozambique to get its exports to the coast.

Production has halted at the Moatize coal mine in Tete province due to a stockpile of high-grade coal worth about \$25 million. At Gurue, in Zambezia, tea worth about \$14 million sits deteriorating. Nearly all geological mapping and prospecting has been halted as a result of the security situation, and most mines are closed.

The destruction of one economic target has a ripple effect through the entire economy. Cement is one example. A quarry which supplied the cement factory at Dondo, near Beira, was forced to close because of the security situation. This led to the closure of the cement plant itself, then of an asbestos roofing

factory, and finally an asbestos mine.

Mozambique, which had become a significant post-independence cement exporter, has been forced to import clinker from South Africa, spending precious foreign currency to produce any cement at all.

Meanwhile, South African companies have taken over Mozambique's traditional export markets for cement.

In virtually every agricultural sector, production is less than one-quarter of its 1981 level. In one recent attack on a successful state farm, \$4 million worth of combine harvesters, tractors, trucks and workers' housing was destroyed.

Statistics, however, do not begin to reflect Mozambique's suffering; and inevitably, it is the people in rural areas who have suffered the most.

Of the estimated 400 000 people who have died since 1980 more than half are children under the age of five who, had it not been for the war, would have lived. They have died from otherwise easily preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and measles, and from the effects of malnutrition.

At least four million people in Mozambique — almost one-third of the population — have been deprived of rudimentary health services which were provided since independence. Health workers have been murdered, maimed and kidnapped.

Teachers, like health workers, are targets. They are seen as agents of the government who, by providing education, are giving the people something they did not have in colonial times and

do not get from the MNR. At least 40 percent of primary schools have been destroyed and over 300 000 primary children are without school places.

For a nation which had a 93 percent illiteracy rate at independence 12 years ago, the implications for the future are considerable. Large-scale literacy programmes had reduced the numbers of those who could not read and write to 79 percent by 1981. But since then, because most rural programmes have been suspended, it has certainly risen again.

Another group targeted for attack is foreign aid workers. In a country with little or no expertise in many fields they represent a force in economic and social development. Since December 1981, at least 150 of them have been killed or kidnapped in the rural areas.

During its anti-colonial war, Frelimo carried out mass vaccination and literacy campaigns in liberated zones, trained teachers and nurses, built schools, health posts and hospitals.

The South African-sponsored MNR does none of these things. They destroy the very health centres which could save thousands of lives, burn down the schools which offer rural children education for the first time, destroy the rural stores, ambush buses and steal cattle.

No attempt is made to win the "hearts and minds" and, on the contrary, the actions of South Africa's proxies seem calculated to ensure they do not. A senior American diplomat in Maputo described the MNR as a "disparate group of gun-slingers, thugs, white

Portuguese opportunists and other assorted anti-Frelimo types who lack any vision or programme".

The level of brutality is almost impossible to grasp. A youth with a bandage over his left eye steps into the street at a traffic light in Maputo. As he passes, the realisation that he has no ears, lips or nose is devastating.

A young woman sitting on a bench at the airport has no ears. In the rural areas of the southern provinces this is not an uncommon sight. One village woman, asked by a Swedish photographer why the MNR does these things, replied: "We also wonder. If they seize power, they'll rule an earless people. I suffer doubly; they cut off my ears and took my child."

An Australian doctor, doing a recent study in Inhambane province, asked if there were any problems she might help with. "Yes," replied an elderly woman. How could they get the bodies out of the well where the "bandidos armados had thrown them, and get clean water again?"

Another young woman, not out of her teens, walked from house to house in Maputo suburb begging milk for the baby strapped to her back. She had been in a convoy ambushed 60 km north of the capital a few days earlier. The car carrying her and her in-laws was hit and they fled. So did she. She came to Maputo to search for her parents.

Mikas, about 12 years old, is one of thousands of orphans. He has lived at a school at Costa del Sol near Maputo for two years, since the train he and his parents were travelling on was ambushed and they were killed.

He lost his right leg below the knee. His forefinger is all that remains of his left hand. He does not like it at the school because he is taunted by other children. His dream is to have a pair of running shoes and play soccer. — SARDC.