

Mozambique: Stalemate

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Mozambique's long war of attrition may have reached a point of equilibrium, for the moment at least. This seems to be the best that can be hoped for following the meeting in early August between the South African foreign minister, **Roelof 'Pik' Botha**, and Mozambique's international cooperation minister, **Jacinto Veloso**, at which the two governments reaffirmed their commitment to the Nkomati accord. But even if this best-case scenario of a continuing sporadic war holds good, Mozambique's FRELIMO government still faces an uphill struggle.

On the one hand, there is widespread consensus that the opposition *Resistência nacional moçambicana* (RENAMO) is incapable of forming a credible alternative to the existing government (AC Vol 28 No 6). But a feeling of weariness is just as widespread. Common complaints are that the army, estimated as 30,000-40,000 strong, enjoys too many privileges without demonstrating a great deal of efficiency. There is resentment, too, about the sacrifices imposed by the war effort and by the economic recipes of the *International Monetary Fund*.

A new category of privileged people has appeared. This consists of those Mozambicans working for the private companies and aid agencies from overseas which are proliferating as the country fast becomes an aid junkie, like so many countries before it. This is worrying orthodox party officials, who are alarmed by the logistic independence and the economic power of these organisations, which are spreading a model that has little in common with socialism. Yet most of the employment created by the companies and agencies involves only menial jobs. Meanwhile, the growing role of foreign experts in the civil service itself is being taken particularly hard by the 20,000 or so Mozambicans with Portuguese ancestry. Many are now asking whether they made the right choice at independence by not emigrating to Europe or South Africa.

A further obstacle facing FRELIMO is the offensive that has been launched within the party itself

by elements campaigning for a greater share of responsibility for black Mozambicans, who consider themselves under-represented in ruling circles. Among those encouraging this trend is the influential pro-Soviet transport minister, **Armando Guebuza**, who enjoys a reputation for being a Stalinist. He was a main force behind the 1983 *Operação Produção* (Operation Production), which saw those without identity papers or employment deported to the countryside. Also reportedly associated with the movement is the security minister, **Mariano Matsinhe**.

The campaign relies for support on frustrated former FRELIMO war veterans, recruited in large numbers from the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Manica and Sofala. Many, from the Maconde, Ndau, Makua and Yao tribes, see themselves as deprived in comparison to other ethnic groups. In contrast with the south, these provinces bore the brunt of the liberation war. Nonetheless, from the start, it was intellectuals from the southern provinces of Maputo and Gaza who dominated the independent government of Mozambique, including the late **Eduardo Mondlane**, **Samora Machel**, and the current president, **Joaquim Chissano**. Furthermore, some observers point out that President Machel did not always display a great deal of tact in presenting himself as the heir to the Gaza emperors, who in fact gave their neighbours a hard time.

These frustrations are not expected to be attenuated by the June reforms in the armed forces, which witnessed the promotion of the leaders of this year's campaigns in Sofala and Zambezia and the dismissal of several hundred veterans.

The community of Portuguese descent often feels uncomfortable about these trends. Some Luso-Mozambicans put part of the blame for this growth in ethnic consciousness on South Africa's attacks on the country. They also complain that Soviet personnel keep them at a distance. But while grudges against whites are rarely paraded in public, it is common to hear complaints about the relative prosperity of the Asian commercial community. Yet only two Asians hold important government positions: the Muslim finance minister, **Abdel Magid Osman** and the Hindu vice-minister of commerce, **Prakash Ratilal** ●