

MOZAMBIQUE: COMMENT ON REINTEGRATION OF FORMER REBELS WITH POPULACE

Maputo home service in Portuguese 1730 gmt 17 Jan 88

Text of commentary

In recent years, many bandits have surrendered throughout the country because they are tired and disillusioned with armed banditry. Accordingly, there are various positive experiences of reintegration and rehabilitation that are worth emphasising. However, with the promulgation of the amnesty law, the number of deserters from the bandit ranks is larger and increasing. Hence, it is timely for us to discuss issues connected with this process.

One of the problems that could arise in the practical implementation of the amnesty law is the attempt by some opportunists to take advantage of the situation of people who surrender, for personal benefit. It is true that most of the bandits who surrender have carried out many horrible crimes, but there is only one correct method for their social integration. This is to inform the community where the bandit will be reintegrated objectively of everything about his past, his acts, and why he carried them out. If we try to hide the past of a former bandit from the community the results could be very serious. A man who was once a bandit and is allowed to live in a village where the people are unaware of his past is a man who is constantly full of fear. He is a man who, at every stage of his life, is afraid that there will be someone who will learn about his past and unmask him before everyone. He is a man who can be manipulated by unscrupulous people who are aware of his past and promise not to disclose it in exchange for specified conditions. He is a man who can never be completely free.

On the other hand, if the community is aware right from the start about what he did and why he did it, if they are aware why he fled from the bandits and handed himself over to our authorities, the bandit can be reintegrated correctly. Obviously, it will not be easy at the start - there could be doubts, fear, and distrust - but a correct attitude on the part of the former bandit would win him respect from the community, which will slowly forget about his past and assign greater importance to his new life as a useful element and on good terms with his neighbours.

However, in order for all this process to be carried out satisfactorily, in-depth political work with the population involved is essential, a task aimed at explaining the problems of using the bandits as instruments, and all the networks of deceit, violence, and manipulation through the use of drugs and belief in superstition that the ringleaders of banditry use to force normal people to carry out the sinister designs of their Pretoria bosses. This political work must be carried out now because the results of the law are already showing. Throughout the country, there are bandits who are surrendering and problems could begin to emerge at any time. The Frelimo Party, with the former bandits, has a precious example of how we must instil education today in every village, every barrack, and every place where the bandits surrender or are resettled for their social reintegration.