

*Countries, People, Time*

# In War-Torn Mozambique

Vyacheslav Molev



At first glance Maputo looks quiet and you don't see the problems you'd expect in a front-line city. But the first impression is deceptive. After strolling around the city for a couple of hours, you begin to feel tension and inner concern in people. There are long queues for food, beaches are deserted even at the peak of the bathing season, and streets are patrolled by armed soldiers. All this indicates that life in Maputo is far from care-free. Racist South Africa is just 80 kilometres away, and Pretoria directs counter-revolutionary operations of the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) on Mozambican soil. The nation has to pull through great difficulties and hardships. The bandits derail trains, attack trucks carrying food to Maputo, blow up power transmission lines so as to leave the city without electricity, and avenge people who refuse to join them. You can meet in Maputo victims of their frenzied cruelty — people

Gangs financed by Pretoria are waging war against children and women.

without noses, ears or lips, who bring to mind Goya's paintings.

In the summer of 1987, Renamo massacred the people of the town of Homoine, an administrative centre in Inhambane province, just as the Nazis exterminated the population of the Czechoslovak village of Lidice in World War II.

On July 18, 1987, a band of several hundred cut-throats attacked the town and murdered 380 people. They did not spare sick people, pregnant women, or babies. Mário Ferro, editor-in-chief of the Maputo newspaper *Notícias*, visited the place immediately after the massacre. He said the survivors were in a deep shock; they started sobbing when he tried to talk to them.

Here is a comment from Sergo Vieira, Director of the Centre of African Studies (Eduardo Mondlane University). "The massacre in Homoine followed the statement by the South African Defence Minister Magnus Malan that Pretoria would openly support the pro-Western forces in neighbouring countries. Shortly before the massacre, the bands had received large quantities of weapons and ammunition from South Africa."

What are the aims of Renamo? To disrupt the efforts of the popular government, to strangle the nation economically and force the government to make a political compromise with Renamo.

Mozambique's national security service recently learned of a plan for large-scale terrorist and subversive operations against the republic worked out in Pretoria. South African commandos were to assassinate Frelimo leaders and government officials as well as members of the African National Congress of South Africa living in Maputo, and to stage acts of sabotage at factories and offices.

But Pretoria's hopes for an easy victory were frustrated. Therefore, Renamo tried to launch large-scale armed actions throughout Mozambique in late 1986.

This is how the current situation is seen by Mota Lopes, Deputy Director of the Centre of African Studies: "Right now we are not acting against isolated bands. This is a full-scale war against the aggressor. In the last days of November 1987 about 10,000 armed cut-throats invaded Mozambique from bases in Malawi. They devastated small towns, villages, and factories. We estimate the damage at \$100-150 million. The bandits were especially anxious to capture Quelimane. If they had captured that seaport, South African weapons could have been moved deeper into the country by river."

But Mozambican forces supported by Zim-

babwean and Tanzanian troops routed 32 terrorist camps, liberating many towns and villages. That was the end of the plan to divide Mozambique.

"Renamo has been very active in the 'Beira corridor'," Mota Lopes continued. "South Africa is trying to destroy the railway line, the oil pipeline, and the road leading to Beira so as to compel Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi to use only South African ports and roads. Besides, that corridor, like the railway to Nacala north of it, is a major source of foreign-currency earnings to us. To destroy them is to starve us."

Renamo's operations are intended to cause food shortages and economic dislocation. The bandits attack major industrial and agricultural facilities as well as transport routes. They have destroyed the country's two most important sugar refineries in Marromeu and Luabo in the lower reaches of the Zambezi River. There are 10,000 tons of tea in Qurah that cannot be utilized because Qurah has been cut off from Nacala for months. The coalfield in Moatize, which could produce 600,000 tons of coal a year and give the country \$24 million in profit (a quarter of the republic's export earnings) has been all but paralysed since 1982. The bandits have blocked the nation's efforts to build an agro-industrial complex in the Limpopo River valley. The Cabora Bassa hydroelectric complex, the largest in Africa, is not producing enough electricity because power-line supports are regularly blown up by the bandits.

The Mozambican government had fought hard against Renamo, and it seemed in the early 1980s that the bands would soon be wiped out. Renamo's operations were then sporadic and their effects less destructive than now. In the colonial times, the country's economy was structured to serve the needs of the southern neighbour; but in the first years after liberation it began to grow and displayed an increasingly pronounced trend towards independent development. Soon the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference started working out measures to enable Mozambique to be self-sufficient. Those steps had to do with Mozambique's transport system, and this gave Pretoria a major cause for alarm. Racist South Africa then decided to use Renamo to "advise" Mozambique on how it should behave in a "respectable family". In 1981, bands of well-trained and well-equipped mercenaries and saboteurs were landed in the country. Their operations were masterminded by South African instructors. Spy rings were set up in a number of Mozambican cities and towns, including Maputo and Beira.

Mozambique's newly-organised armed forces, short of weapons, communications systems, vehicles, and well-trained officers, found themselves in a very grave situation. In the hope of gaining a respite, the Samora Machel government signed a non-aggression treaty with South Africa. The Nkomati Accord, signed in March 1984, did put off the danger of South Africa's direct intervention for a while.

But later it became known that Renamo camps and logistics installations had been moved to neighbouring Malawi — a fact proved by documents found in Renamo's routed headquarters. Far from discontinuing munitions supplies to Renamo, Pretoria actually increased them. This occurred when racist South Africa realised that the Zimbabwean troops called in by Samora Machel were doing a good job of defending the "Beira corridor". What was more, Mozambique could increase its capacity by modernising the port and the facilities in the corridor.

With the Nkomati Accord signed, the Botha government hoped that Mozambique, whose dependence on South Africa was great, would open the door to South African capital, which would then operate without much competition. That hope was dashed. Machel remained very cautious in relations with South Africa and even tried to reduce his country's dependence on it, so only a few South African companies were allowed to operate in Mozambique. In other words, Machel proved to be far less pliant than Pretoria expected and stuck to his policy. It was becoming increasingly obvious that the "tough guy" was unacceptable to South Africa and that Pretoria launched an intense campaign to bring down the popular government in Mozambique.

Now, what is the cause of Renamo's insatiable, pathological cruelty and craving to destroy? Probably, the fact that it has found no significant support in the popular masses and has, therefore, adopted the slogan: "What is bad for the nation is good for Renamo". We believe that the talks on a peaceful settlement in southwestern Africa (involving Angola, South Africa and Cuba, with the United States as mediator) and the summit talks between South Africa and Mozambique held in Songo (Tete province) in mid-September 1988 will help stabilise the situation in Mozambique. It has been reported that during the talks President Botha promised President Chissano that South Africa would terminate its support for Renamo. The two countries, the joint communiqué says, agreed on the "renewal and strengthening" of the Nkomati Accord, wider use of the Maputo port by the South African side and energy supply by the Cabora Bassa power plant to South Africa.

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*In War-Torn Mozambique*

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In War-Torn  
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The talks raised expectations of easing the tensions in the region, though it is still an open question whether Pretoria is indeed going to stop interfering in Mozambique's internal affairs.

Besides enlisting help of Renamo bands Pretoria brought economic pressure to bear on Mozambique: South Africa decided to fire from its mines 60,000 Mozambican workers and send them home under the pretext that the ANC continues operating from Mozambique's territory. In this way Mozambique was to lose the badly needed 57.5 million a year the miners sent back home.

At the same time, South African newspapers published a number of articles predicting that Mozambique would not last long. Defence Minister Magnus Malan even threatened physical violence against Samora Machel. In that atmosphere of enmity and hatred, Machel's death in an air crash did not look like an accident. The Soviet-Mozambican commission investigating the tragic event is coming to the conclusion that the aircraft crashed because it had strayed off course after being confused by an unknown powerful transmitter. Which prompts the conclusion that South Africa's secret service did contribute to the accident that killed the president of Mozambique.

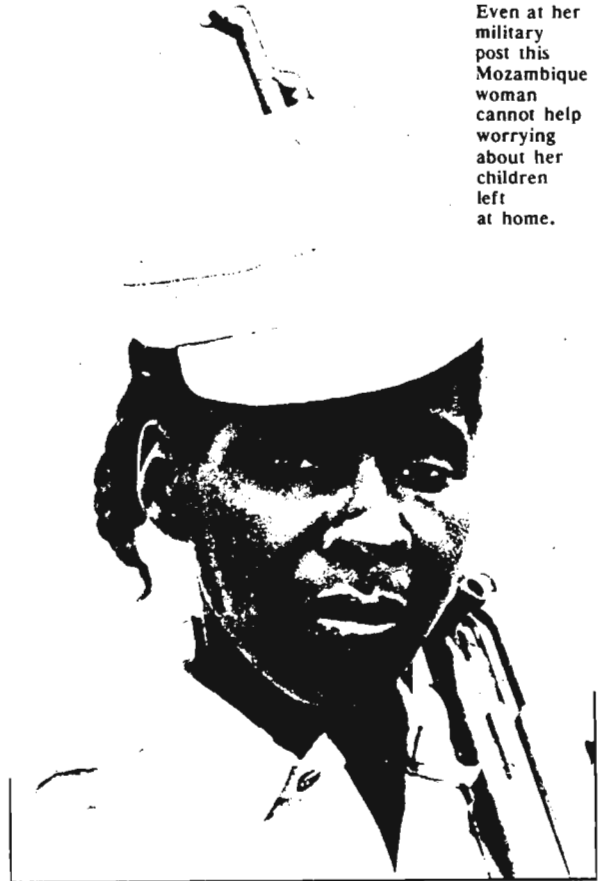
Renamo has caused extensive damage to Mozambique. In 1982-1985 alone, the nation's gross social product decreased by 33 per cent. Its annual defence spending averages \$600 million of 40 per cent of its budget. Apart from industrial and agricultural facilities, the bands have destroyed 4,600 schools and more than 720 first aid stations and clinics. More than 300,000 children of school age have no opportunity to study and more than two million people lack health service.

The decline of export earnings has brought down imports and reduced the supply of consumer goods as well as raw materials and spare parts for the industries.

The food problem is very grave. In 1987, the nation needed an estimated 623,000 tons of grain—twice the amount it had at its disposal (including imports). Today, more than four million people are facing the prospect of starvation. The nation has to import grain and will probably have to do so for some time in the future. At present, Mozambique is almost entirely dependent on donations and aid from international organisations. At their conference in Maputo in late April 1988, Mozambique's donors decided to grant \$270 million to the country.

The acute shortage of food and essential

Even at her military post this Mozambique woman cannot help worrying about her children left at home.



commodities has given rise to profiteering and black-market operations. The national currency has also been devalued. As there was in fact nothing to be bought in the stores, farmers stopped selling their produce. The Minister of Trade Aranda da Silva described the situation as a vicious circle: there was no food because there were no consumer goods and vice versa.

In this situation, the government made efforts to breathe life into agriculture by promoting the establishment of cooperatives around large cities to produce meat, vegetables, and fruit. In May 1985, the government abolished control over the prices of many staple foods. City markets came to life within days. The main market in Maputo is now a very busy place. There are huge piles of vegetables and fruit; however fish is in short supply and meat and poultry are quite scarce. Traders are now much more active than before since they have a chance to make some money.

Naturally, prices are sky-high, so buyers are fewer than sellers. Sweet potatoes cost 100 meticals, mangoes — 200, lettuce and tomatoes — 300 meticals per kilo. A coconut costs 100 meticals, a papaya — 200 meticals, and a bunch of 12 bananas — 350-400. A handful of dried fish costs 100 meticals. We can add that an

average worker earns 3,000 meticals a month.

A woman selling bananas told me that earlier she had also had bananas for sale but the state prices had been so low that it hadn't been worth the trouble. Sometimes she sold fruit and vegetables at her own prices but very often she just threw them away.

The decision to abolish price regulation gave fresh impetus to agriculture and revived farmers' interest in their work. There are 180 cooperatives with more than 10,200 members in the "green belt" of Maputo today. Just about all the cooperatives lack modern agricultural machinery and their farming methods are obsolete.

Many farmers like working on collective farms because they devote half of their working hours to the cooperative and spend the rest cultivating their personal plots of land (averaging 0.25 hectares). The state finds the arrangement advantageous, too: it purchases from the cooperatives about half of the meat they produce at fixed prices (in repayment of its credits), and the rest is distributed among the cooperatives' members.

Increasing the output of food and revitalising agriculture in general are top-priority tasks; the economic and political situation in Mozambique and the people's confidence in the government and faith in its ability to run the country hinge on their solution. A few years ago, a programme was launched to set up state farms in nationalised plantations formerly owned by Portuguese colonisers or in fallow land. But only a small number of those farms operate as planned: some have been divided; others have been laid up or eliminated as unprofitable.

Setting up state-owned farms is a difficult task; it takes time, persistence, and economic knowledge. Besides, peasants' mentality should be taken into account. All this is known from the Soviet Union's experience. Two of the more successful farms are the Matama State Farm near Lichinga and an agro-industrial facility in Luabo producing sugar. The sugar refinery in Luabo, with 12,000 employees, used to process about 200 tons of sugarcane per hour. The cane is grown on 10,000 hectares. Today, its work is impeded by Renamo's frequent raids.

Some time ago, there were three quite successful cotton-growing farms in Nampula province. Experts from the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan helped introduce cotton-sowing machines there. In just a few seasons, those farms started producing about 70 per cent of the country's cotton, which was not very much in real terms, however. Cotton production had slumped by that time, as compared with the early years of independence, because of droughts and bandit raids.



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South African puppets from the so-called Mozambique National Resistance Movement have done enormous damage to Mozambique's agriculture. Thousands of children are starving. In the photo: These children from the province of Zambezi lost their kith and kin when fleeing from the terrorists.

Today, work at those farms has all but stopped because it is unsafe to be in that area.

The main problem of most state-owned farms is an acute shortage of engineers, mechanics, technicians, agronomists, economists, and managers. This is an objective factor. But the failure of state-owned farms has been also due in part to the estrangement between state farms and individual farms, and probably to an intention to counterpose them.

Examination of their relations is very important because the problem is also relevant in most of the African countries whose long-term goal is building socialism. Experience shows that the typical fear of giving support to family farms or, in other words, to individual farms (for the alleged reason that this would undermine the basis of the socialist system at an early stage of its development) does a lot of harm.

In Mozambique and in many other African countries, family farms account for the greater part of the agricultural produce, especially of foodstuffs. Therefore, it is advisable to render assistance to individual farmers—to give them seeds, farm implements, and advice—so that they could regard state-owned farms as an ally and supporter and not as a bitter rival. This might prompt the farmers to join state-owned farms.

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The timber  
industry  
is an  
important  
source  
of foreign  
currency  
revenue for  
Mozambique.  
Forests  
cover one  
fourth of  
the  
country's  
territory.  
In the  
photo:  
A state  
lumbering  
complex in  
the province  
of Manica.

But lack of cooperation between the state and private sectors in agriculture combined with the severe drought and terrorist raids made it impossible for either individual farms or state-owned farms to operate efficiently (one problem was that state-owned farms were short of manpower).

Those errors were promptly exploited by Western powers. They were fully aware that in the face of the serious difficulties Mozambique would accept aid in any form and from any country, so some of them offered assistance that was far from disinterested. For example, much of the aid coming from the United States is intended for individual and family farms, probably in the hope of making them more prosperous than state-owned farms and agricultural cooperatives. *The Washington Post* has admitted that most of the US aid to Mozambique goes to the private sector. The United States is helping some 300 farmers, of which only

25-30 per cent are Africans, and the rest—Portuguese.

The International Financial Corporation, an agency of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development has granted a loan of \$2.5 million to Mozambique to finance privatisation of state-owned farms. The project provides for the establishment of a company to develop 6,200 hectares of land in three provinces. Most of the company's stock will belong to the British corporation Lonro, which is investing \$3 million in the project. In its efforts to gain control over the Mozambican market, the British corporation set up a joint cotton company in Sofala province in 1985 and organised rice production at family farms in Chokwa district. A commendable effort. The question arises, however, how Lonro manages to increase production in areas where experts from other countries have to stop work because of Renamo's attacks. Could it be that there exists a secret agreement between Lonro and Renamo, stemming from the understanding that their ultimate objective is the same—to prevent the establishment of a progressive economic system in Mozambique?

To overcome the grave crisis the Frelimo Party and the government developed a programme of economic rehabilitation which was approved by the People's Assembly in January 1987. The programme is intended to put an end to the economic recession and to raise the nation's production by 1990 to the level of 1981—the best year for Mozambique's economy since it gained independence.

The programme envisages encouraging private investment. Measures have been worked out to make state-owned enterprises profitable. Taxation system has been streamlined, but the government will continue to fix the prices of agricultural produce.

Six months after the programme was launched the economic decline was slowed down. Industrial output increased by 34 per cent during that time. The country's revenues exceeded the target figure and expenses stayed within the budgetary provisions. Noticeable progress has been made in eliminating profiteering, but the problem still remains.

Speaking at a plenary meeting of the Frelimo Party Central Committee in July 1988, President Joaquim Chissano said it was against the republic's interests to always depend on foreign aid. Emergency aid programmes should be closely coordinated with programmes for economic rehabilitation and development.

