

# ... and Lourenco Marques feels the war

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LOURENCO MARQUES is 1 400km from the war area of Tete. But awareness of the lengthy and spreading struggle with terrorists in the north is now much more evident in the capital.

Six months ago this gay, colourful tourist city and strategic port showed little appearance of also being the capital of a war-torn province. Few military men were seen and the shops were well stocked with international goods, many of them not available in South Africa.

Men in forces' uniform are still rare, being mostly confined to the north, but the shops are becoming bare. It is all reminiscent of Britain in the early months of World War 2; non-essential goods are disappearing and everything is becoming dearer in a very hardy buy.

Lourenco Marques is far from rationing as yet, but the food-loving Portuguese are feeling the pinch and the tourist finds little to buy that is not available at the

same price or cheaper in South Africa.

Mozambique once had the best bread in Southern Africa. The hard durum-wheat flour of Canada was imported and went towards making the bread and rolls which delighted tourists. Canadian flour could be bought in the shops.

But today only flour produced locally is available, and in warm climates only "soft" wheat can be grown. The bread still has crisp crusts and is well baked, but the inside is chewy and well off-white.

There is butter in the hotels and leading grocery shops but it is expensive, and most households use a good quality margarine.

Mozambique has little pasturage and beef has never been of top grade nor inexpensive. But now it is a luxury. Seafood is plentiful but prices have risen and quality has dropped. The best prawns and crabs are exported, mainly to South Africa.

Tons of the magically named Queijo da Serra da Estrella (Cheese of the Mountains of the Stars) made from ewes' milk used to be imported from Portugal and sold in many shops

and restaurants. This favourite is no longer available, nor are the juicy green melons of Portugal and the once-ubiquitous tinned sardine. Ironically the cheese and sardines are freely on sale in Johannesburg.

Imported biscuits and non-essential tinned foods are, when found, old stock. Most of the chocolate and sweets available are now produced in Mozambique or Angola. The home-industry programme has made great strides and could become of importance to a victorious Mozambique.

High-grade Port wines have gone and Madeira wines are becoming scarce; but there is plenty of vinho verde, the "green" (young) table wine of Portugal.

Mozambique does not produce wines or spirits but the beer has always been excellent. However, hops and other ingredients have to be imported and there seems to have been a drop in standards.

The wealthier Portuguese have long drunk Scotch whisky. There is still plenty to be had, but it is costly and fewer brands are evident.

Little fruit and jam is

canned in Mozambique and South Africa has captured this market.

Motoring enthusiasts were always excited by exotic cars allowed into Mozambique but obtainable in South Africa only under strict permit. War conditions find new-car salerooms almost bare in Lourenco-Marques and fewer types are available.

Most disconcerting to tourists is the fluctuation in the exchange rate of the escudo — and this cannot be linked with the war. The official rate is about 36,5 to the rand. Hotels, restaurants and shops drop this to 35. Officially recognised currency-exchange dealers near the central market offer 40 and in the market you do not have to look far to get 43.

Hotels are not expensive but anyone with a bill of R20 or more would be foolish not to take advantage of the official dealers' rate, with its saving of 12,5 percent. The currency-control regulations are tough and hit wealthier residents.

Meanwhile there is a proliferation of beggars and street vendors. Johannesburg's cinema area is full of weekend beggars too; but in Lourenco Marques begging is a whole-time profession.