

# Mocambique

## Rhodesia and South Africa keep an eye on the sick man of Africa

**R**HODESIA'S security chief, Andrew Fleming, has warned in his latest report of the growing potential threat to Ian Smith's rebel republic because of the increasing activity of guerrillas in the neighbouring Portuguese territory of Mocambique.

In the past Smith's security problems have been largely confined to Rhodesia's border with Zambia. Now anxiety

by

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has shifted to the growing challenge to Portuguese rule on Rhodesia's north-eastern border.

This growing anxiety reflects the great successes of the Front for the Liberation of Mocambique (Frelimo) in the Tete province — a strategic corner of Mocambique wedged between Rhodesia and Malawi.

Malawi's President, Dr Kamuzu Banda, is the leading African spokesman for a policy of establishing friendly economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa. He is therefore regarded as a hostile element by the liberation movement's leaders.

The guerrilla struggle in Mocambique has been going on since 1963, but

was largely confined until recently to the northern province of Cabo Delgado, which borders on Tanzania. Its shift to Tete was primarily dictated by Frelimo's challenge to the Cahora-Bassa hydro-electric and irrigation project which the Portuguese are building in close co-operation with the South Africans.

### Threat

Although Frelimo has not yet directly threatened the dam site itself — which has been turned into an armed citadel — it has begun to threaten the rail and road systems. These serve not only the Portuguese in the area, but also provide outlets to the sea for Rhodesia and Malawi.

Although the Portuguese — who are also engaged in fighting two other African wars, in Angola and Guinea-Bissau — continue to play down the seriousness of the challenge to their power in Mocambique, their best friends and allies are now beginning openly to express their concern.

The latest Rhodesian security report underlines the seriousness of the guerrilla challenge in Mocambique — which a British writer, normally friendly to the Portuguese, recently called "the sick man of Africa".

Serious misgivings about the situation have also been expressed by Mr Desmond Donnelly, a former British Labour Member of Parliament, who has always been a defender of the Portuguese stand against the liberation movements.

After his latest visit to Mocambique he said in interviews in South Africa and Rhodesia that there was a possibility that Portuguese control might crumble in the territory. If this were to happen, he commented, it would lead to an "exposure of Rhodesia's flank" and would force South Africa to choose between the Limpopo's northern frontier and the Zambesi (which is the northern frontier of Rhodesia and also runs through Tete) as its own line of defence.

Although the South African security forces

have been actively engaged in giving active support to the Rhodesians in their anti-guerrilla campaign, they have not yet intervened militarily in Mocambique. They do, however, keep teams of observers watching the situation there.

Recently, too, when the first of two trains from Malawi through Mocambique was blown up, the South Africans responded to urgent appeals from Dr Banda for supplies of arms.

### Conflict

Frelimo's headquarters are now established inside Mocambique, but they have important camps in the southern province of Tanzania, and have access routes through Zambia into Tete province.

Zambia's Foreign Minister Mr Elijah Mudenda, has predicted that Mocambique will fall to Frelimo within five years — the most optimistic view yet expressed by any responsible African leader.

He also disclosed that he had recently met with Frelimo's military commander, Samora Machel, who told him that his forces would be increasingly concentrated in Tete province.

This can lead only to an intensification of the confrontation between the white-ruled regimes of Southern Africa and the guerrilla movements. The principal support for Frelimo comes from the Organisation of African Unity whose Liberation Committee provides both funds and arms for its struggle. It also gets military and other assistance from the Russian bloc, the Chinese and from the Scandinavians.

The governments of Sweden, Denmark and Norway have all recently increased their contributions to Frelimo's funds. No other Western governments officially provide aid for the guerrilla movements in Portuguese Africa.

### Camps

Already, the increasing

military pressures on the Portuguese have led to open conflict along the Tanzania-Mocambique frontier. Following bombing attacks by the Portuguese Air Force on Tanzanian villages, one of its planes was recently shot down.

This is the first time a Portuguese plane has been brought down in a neighbouring African country. The assumption must be that the African States are now using more sophisticated anti-aircraft and other weapons to deal with possible Portuguese attacks across their frontiers.

Few observers doubt that the Portuguese, backed by Rhodesia, South Africa and their closest supporters, will step up their attacks against Tanzania and Zambia if Frelimo's campaign continues to put their rule in jeopardy.

This escalation of violence has resulted in the neighbouring countries increasing the size of their armies. Tanzania has recently received its first consignment of MIGs supplied by the Chinese, who have also agreed to take over the training of the air force from the Canadians.—OFNS.