



ANOTHER WAR, ANOTHER TIME . . . Machel the guerilla speaks to captured Portuguese soldiers during Frelimo's fight for independence. Now the MNR is fighting its guerilla war against Frelimo.

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SOUTH Africa, southern Africa, Africa and the world are watching events in Maputo closely because Mozambican decisions over the next few days could have a profound effect on the entire sub-continent.

Mozambique is one of the three boiling cauldrons of the region because of the losing battle the Frelimo government is fighting against the Mozambique Resistance Movement (MNR), whom Maputo invariably refers to as "South African supported bandits" — despite denials from South Africa.

In Angola, the 10-year civil war between the MPLA government in Luanda and Dr Jonas Savimbi's Unita rebels drags on, devastating the Angolan countryside, destroying its economic infrastructure and drawing into southern Africa vast quantities of Soviet arms and increasing numbers of communist military personnel.

In an increasingly beleaguered South Africa, resistance to the ruling minority government has escalated dramatically, with increasing economic and political pressure from one-time Western friends.

Because of a series of terrorist incidents attributed to the banned African National Con-

# Next few days could be crucial

gress, South Africa has adopted an increasingly aggressive stance to some of its neighbours.

Significant changes in any of these pivotal situations will almost certainly have far-reaching consequences for South Africa and the region as a whole.

Today the spotlight is on Maputo.

Frelimo's political bureau has probably already selected President Samora Machel's successor and may have decided on their general approach to Mozambique's manifold problems — including the prosecution of the war against the MNR.

The new government may or may not decide to maintain the Nkomati Accord and whether it will provide increasing assistance to the ANC, thus inviting South African military responses and opening the way for

renewed, massive, South African assistance to the MNR.

This would draw South Africa deeper into the Mozambican war. It would invite increased participation in the war by Mozambique's African neighbours. It could push the reluctant Soviets into greater involvement and it might even draw in the British and Americans in a smaller way.

Already a private British company with close Defence Department links has contracted to use former British SAS troops to train an elite battalion of Mozambican troops and to arm them with Enfield rifles not yet available to British forces.

Resumed support for the MNR could mean South Africa will also become more openly involved in Dr Savimbi's battle against the MPLA — thus increasing the tension in the region and facilitating South Africa's isolation.

On the other hand, if Mozambique decides that it is time to negotiate with the rebels, this could encourage the Angolan government to negotiate with Unita — and the whole situation could cool considerably.

And then there is the question of the plane crash itself.

Despite the fact that an investigation involving South Africa, Russian and Mozambican experts is now under way, Mozambique's national news agency has put out a number of reports pointing a finger at South Africa and suggesting that South Africa may have caused the crash.

In many different parts of the world similar suggestions are being made.

Such is South Africa's current standing in the international community that a concerted effort by Mozambique and its many allies could confound the facts of the crash and shift blame for the accident on to South Africa, thus unleashing yet another campaign of international invective against South Africa and increasing the pressure for full-scale sanctions.

South Africa has invited experts from the International Civil Aviation Association to participate in the formal inquiry into the causes of the crash, Mozambique has appointed its own Commission of Inquiry into the crash and the Russians have sent an investigating team.

It would be remarkable if everybody involved arrived at an agreed verdict.

In this situation, SA's greatest asset could be the international experts involved in the inquiry.