Mozambique: Destabilization and Counter-revolutionary Guerilla Warfare

JOHN S. SAUL

"Now, in the early minutes of June 25, the flag-raising ceremony proceeds, the vast crowd cheering as Samora Machel, briefly but eloquently, proclaims the country's independence. We're together, representatives of various western support groups, and we embrace one another enthusiastically. Embrace, too, Mozambicans, strangers and old friends. I greet Janet Mondlane, wife of Eduardo, FRELIMO's first president, assassinated by the Portuguese in 1969, greet Felisberto, a FRELIMO comrade..."
from the days when the movement's office was a dingy office on Nkrumah Street in Dar es Salaam, greet two militants with whom I travelled to the liberated areas of Tete Province in 1972. Was that really only three years ago? Enthusiastic guerillas fill the air with tracer bullets. Too much like the real thing for my taste but who can blame them? Independence Day.”

That was 1975. In June, 1985, I returned to Mozambique to celebrate the tenth anniversary. And it was, to be sure, a boa festa. On the evening of the 24th, an impressive “gala” is staged by Mozambique’s national dance troupe. In the morning hours of the 25th itself, President Samora Machel is joined by five other African presidents (from Tanzania, Zambia, Cape Verde, Angola and Botswana) and one Prime Minister (Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe) in laying wreaths at the Heroes’ Monument in Maputo. Then there is a mammoth, impressively organized march-past of thousands of Mozambicans, from schools, from youth and women’s organizations, from various work-places. That afternoon, a reception is held at the Polana Hotel, the President speaking briefly, members of the Politburo leading the dancing as a giant birthday cake is cut and distributed. Later in the week is the premiere of Mozambique’s first feature-length film, The Time of the Leopards, a film which evokes the days of armed struggle against the Portuguese, and another premiere, the production of a play by the noted Angolan writer, Pepetela, performed by Mozambique’s leading theatre group.

Yet there is also a more sombre counterpoint to the week’s events. It serves to remind us just how harsh are the realities of the present phase in Mozambique. Independence day in Manhica district, less than seventy kilometres from the capital, finds the “armed bandits” of the MNR/”Renamo” (Resistencia Nacional Mocambicano, South Africa’s principal contribution to Mozambique’s first ten years of independence) attacking a bus and clubbing twenty-seven people to death. A few days later, in the same area, a convoy is hit. Five buses come under heavy fire, with thirty-nine killed and over one hundred wounded. More prosaically though no less importantly, as we eat our fill at the Polana we know that many people in Maputo will not have enough to eat this week. Beyond survival—although under the circumstances, this is itself no small accomplish-
ment — there seemed little enough, in all conscience, to celebrate. A decade which had begun with so much hope had become a long and very difficult one.

A range of factors have produced this disheartening denouement to Mozambique’s inspiring struggle for liberation from Portuguese colonialism. The Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) inherited from the centuries of Portugal’s own underdeveloped brand of colonialism a desperately backward society, which was also subordinated economically to South Africa. Moreover, at independence, this legacy was made much worse by the precipitate (and often willfully destructive) abandonment of the country by those Portuguese who had arrogated to themselves virtually all the training, skills and positions of responsibility. To the structural problem of a badly distorted economy was added the reality of a crisis of that economy as industries, many agricultural enterprises, and the circuits of commercialization threatened to close down completely.

FRELIMO fought back, though hounded by a cruel run of natural disasters. And there were policy errors, both of omission and commission, albeit errors which the movement has sought to identify and correct (notably at the Fourth Party Congress of 1983). Yet Mozambique’s chief problem has been an even more intractable one: the war waged against the country by South Africa. This has granted the regime virtually no margin for error, while also severely limiting the impact of such creativity as FRELIMO has managed to demonstrate during its first decade in power. It was Rhodesia which first levelled its sights at independent Mozambique. Although the Smith regime was to be defeated by ZANU with Mozambican assistance, it had time enough to sow the seeds of a singularly destructive method of destabilization, that of the counter-revolutionary guerilla. This was a method new to Southern Africa, and new enough even in global terms. Moreover, as we shall see, South Africa would subsequently nurture this Rhodesian initiative into a counter-revolutionary project of frightening potency. Small wonder that President Machel could argue convincingly in 1984 that the single most important cause of Mozambique’s current economic problem “lies in the situation in Southern Africa and in the wars that have been forced upon us”.3
1. The Counter-revolutionary Guerilla South Africa's wars against its neighbours represent one important tactic within its broader strategy of seeking to dominate its regional environment in defense of its own narrow political and economic interests. Pretoria seeks to undermine support by neighbouring states for the African National Congress, to sabotage attempts by the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) to establish a regional economic grid outside the South African orbit and, where appropriate, to create so much economic and social disruption in specific countries as to tarnish the image of both "socialism" and "black majority rule" in the region. Mozambique has been a particular target and South Africa has been prepared to use not just economic but also military pressure against that country in pursuit of such goals: for example, air raids on Maputo of 12 June 1981 (12 killed) and May 1983; the assassination, in 1982, of Ruth First; the presence of South African commandos both in sabotage raids (the death of South African Defence Force lieutenant Alan Gingles in 1981 by his own bomb while attempting to destroy a railway line deep inside Mozambique is a case in point) and alongside counter-revolutionary guerillas.

Yet it is this latter phenomenon—"the counter-revolutionary guerilla" itself—which is most important. There is nothing new about counter-revolutionaries, nor is it unusual for them to coordinate their actions with external forces who wish a particular revolution ill. But recent prominence of the counter-revolutionary guerilla has a new and grisly feel to it nonetheless, and its operations are being mounted with a new sophistication and a new ruthlessness. Not that this kind of guerilla can be understood to have taken a leaf out of the book on classical guerilla warfare. To a surprising degree—as exemplified by the contras in Nicaragua, for example, and by the MNR in Mozambique—he actively disdains to seek the support of the peasantry. More often intimidation and naked terror enacted against the local population are the tactics.

In addition, the planners of this kind of warfare have developed a quite sophisticated sense of the kind of linkages that are necessary to begin to move an underdeveloped country forward. They have consciously crafted their intelligence and operational capacities to identify and destroy such link-
ages-in-the-making in the countries which have been targeted. In other words, instead of placing any great emphasis on developing what might be termed a counter-hegemony, they seek, through induced economic hardship and undermining the people's sense of security, to wear down the population. By these means too, they seek to render the target government vulnerable—if not necessarily to total collapse, at least to extortionate demands from outside and to the possible compromising of first principles. This was how Mozambique was bludgeoned into offering, though the Non-Aggression Pact signed with the South Africans of Nkomati in early 1984, sufficient concessions to South Africa and its western allies in order to lift the cruel weight of aggression (albeit with no very great success).

Visiting Nicaragua in 1984, I witnessed a similar pattern and wrote of it in the following terms:

Déjà vu. Nicaragua had too much the feel for me of Mozambique two or three years ago, on the way to the Nkomati Accord with South Africa: an inspiring struggle, a humane and vital revolution, being slowly bled to death. A Jesuit priest, now working in Nicaragua's agrarian reform sector but also active in Chile before the coup, put the point to me with scalding simplicity. "In Chile," he said, "the Americans made a mistake. They cut off the revolution too abruptly. They killed the revolution but, as we can see from recent developments there, they didn't kill the dream. In Nicaragua they're trying to kill the dream."

Of course, the possibility of Reagan attempting a quick kill remains. Nicaraguans are bracing themselves for a possible invasion, as well they should. But in the meantime the American-backed contras are not merely, perhaps not even primarily, a military threat per se—though people are dying. They are also part of an overall strategy of slow strangulation—attacking economic targets and disrupting normal economic life on the one hand, draining off scarce Scandinista resources (internal funds, foreign exchange, personnel) into the defence effort on the other. Such wrecking complements an all too familiar gamut of international economic pressures which have been brought into play as well: leaning on debts; boycotting exports; and the like. And the result in Nicaragua does begin to approximate that achieved by the South Africans in Mozambique, even if the process has not gone nearly so far—an economy in tatters, with lack of foreign exchange a severe constraint, a goods shortage, and rising prices.
Needless to say, these developments hit the proverbial “man (and woman) in the street” pretty hard. Such economic difficulties are the first thing many people wanted to talk about as I walked about Managua. Even when they could see the American-cum-contra role in all of this, some people grumbled—not going over to the other side, it seemed, but a little less wholeheartedly enthusiastic about the revolution than before. Some of the blame for economic crisis must stick to socialism, so the Americans apparently calculate. Who’ll dare to raise their heads for another fifty years after we get through, who’ll dare to dream: this too seems part of the calculation. When I gave a public talk in Managua about South Africa’s war of aggression in Mozambique, Nicaraguans shook their heads: the parallels jumped off the page.5

This kind of warfare, which the South Africans term “destabilization”, the Americans have come to call “low intensity conflict” (LIC). In the words of one of its theorists, low intensity conflict is “total war at the grass-roots level—one that uses all the weapons of total war, including political, economic and psychological warfare...” It is apparently intended, according to at least one CIA manual on the subject, that the destructive aspects of LIC aggression be complemented by the development of an “internal front”, including the generation of a popular base for counter-revolution. However, the transition to “people’s war” has proven to be virtually impossible for counter-revolutionary guerillas to make, a result that may not appear particularly surprising given the venality of the overall project, and given the “anti-people” elements from which these forces are generally stitched together. Such rebels seem much more comfortable with the same CIA manual’s more horrific and Machiavellian suggestions as to the wisdom of provoking “riots or shootings which lead to the killing of one or more persons who will be seen as martyrs” or of hiring professional criminals “to carry out specific selective jobs”, including the “neutralization” of Nicaraguan judges and other key Sandinista cadres. So, too, the brutalization and intimidation, rather than the mobilization of the civilian population quickly becomes the dominant approach.6

As shall be documented in greater detail below, the South Africans have made even less attempt than the Americans to give destabilization/“low intensity conflict” a positive political
colouration vis-à-vis such target populations. Nor has the South African approach been a mere carbon-copy of the American in other respects. Indeed, as Phillip Frankel has argued, the South Africans have drawn much more heavily on French than on American theoreticians in crafting their “total strategy”; of particular importance has been General André Beaufre’s concept that “action is total and . . . must prepare . . . and exploit the results expected from military operations by suitable operations in the psychological, political and diplomatic fields. Old style warfare with its battles was a sort of bloody surgical operation. The new style war with its nuances is more analogous to the creeping infection of an illness.” In the end it is the “moral disintegration of the enemy [which] causes him to accept the conditions it is desired to impose upon him.” In the same vein, we should not underestimate the considerable creativity shown by the Rhodesians in first crafting for the region the practices of aggressive destabilization which have found their cruelest expression in Mozambique.

2. The Opening of the War Against Mozambique Of course, South Africa’s military involvement in Mozambique is not a recent phenomenon. As Dean Guldenhuys, a South African academic with close links to that government’s defence establishment, has written, “in 1967, South Africa’s police units became involved in counter-insurgency operations in Angola, in Mozambique and in Namibia. South Africa began a vast military build-up. The Republic declared its determination to fight ‘terrorism’ and ‘communist domination’ even beyond the country’s borders.” Moreover, South Africa continued to play a military role alongside the Portuguese in Mozambique right up until the final collapse of Portuguese colonialism in 1974. Yet the aggressive role of the Rhodesians against FRELIMO, involving air and ground actions in Tete province in particular, was even more marked during this pre-liberation period, especially after it became apparent that FRELIMO and ZANU were beginning to coordinate their movements through that province to the front lines. It was in these years too that Rhodesians, in advance of the South Africans, began to develop the concepts of destabilization and counter-revolutionary guerilla warfare, thus generating tactics which would eventually be used against Mozambique in the post-independence period.
Interestingly, the target initially proposed—in 1971—was not Mozambique but already-independent Zambia. This is revealed in a "very secret" document of the period entitled, in its Portuguese-language version, Operações Especiais (Special Operations). In trilateral discussions with the Portuguese and the South Africans, Ken Flower of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Office (CIO) identified Zambia as a crucial rear-base for both FRELIMO and ZANU guerillas entering Tete, and proposed a multi-faceted offensive against that country, one designed quite explicitly to force it to "expel all terrorists (sic) from its territory and to forbid their through transit." The operation would have "economic aspects": delaying the transit of crucial goods into Zambia and of exports out of the country; raising rail charges and port fees discriminatively; and, refusing to accept payment in kwachas. But, as Alves Gomes points out in an important article on the document under discussion, it is in this document's emphasis on "immediate direct action" and "long term action" that the seeds of the armed banditry (which has become all too familiar in Mozambique) lie.

Thus, not only was it suggested that equipment and machinery bound for Zambia might be selectively sabotaged in transit, but also that there be "the creation of a climate of uncertainty" by means of the "indiscriminate killing of Zambian government and party functionaries." Even more important: despite the absence of any large number of Zambian refugees in neighbouring territories there was to be established in Mozambique a special centre for training "africans, asians and others" to act (primarily in Zambia but Tanzania was also mentioned) as secret agents and "trouble-makers", with one specific task to be recruiting and organizing dissidents in the target territories"! There are indications that South Africa's then-Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha, and his lieutenants were more enthusiastic about such plans than was Prime Minister Vorster. In any case, the Portuguese (and the South Africans) rejected the option offered by such "Special Operations", choosing instead to concentrate primarily on their high-powered "Relâmpago" and "Gordion Knot" offensives against FRELIMO-controlled areas within Mozambique. Moreover, linked to these latter offensives was the creation—with South African assistance, and with the shifting of such officers as Alvaro
Cardoso from Angola to Mozambique—of various hard-boiled commando units and special forces (e.g., the Flechas, the Grupos Especiais (GEs), the Special Paratroop Groups (GEPs), the Comandos Africanos, the Servicos Especiais de Informacao e Intervencao (SEIs), all organizations “of sad memory in Mozambique” as Alves Gomes puts it.

Yet ironically, even as Flower’s initial blueprint for destabilization and counter-revolutionary guerilla warfare was being shelved, the Portuguese’s own alternative was creating the concrete basis for its long-term reactivation—though this time to be directed against Mozambique itself. For it was precisely the military and para-military organizations just cited that provided the first recruits who the Rhodesians were to mould into the MNR. The network thus made available to the Rhodesians, fanned back into the broader structures of the Portuguese security apparatus (the notorious PIDE) but also reached beyond the Portuguese colonial state per se. For a number of the “special forces” the initiatives of the waning days of Portuguese colonialism had borne the stamp of private enterprise. The key site for this was Sofala Province, in the very centre of the country, and the key actor was Jorge Jardim, an extremely wealthy (and reactionary) Beira-based businessman.10

For Jardim and other die-hard Portuguese, the war against African nationalism had not stopped with the coming of Mozambican independence. It is an attitude that many of those who have survived Jardim (he died in 1982) still retain. In the event, Jardim’s former private secretary, Orlando Cristina, became the crucial linkman with the Rhodesians, helping establish the anti-FRELIMO radio station, Voz da Africa Livre (Voice of Free Africa) in Rhodesia in 1976, and apparently providing much of the inside knowledge (names and organizations, state and private) that facilitated recruitment. As Alves Gomes notes, other familiar faces resurfaced in the early days of stitching together what was to become the Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (MNR). Thus Jack Barry, who had been a co-author with Flower of the 1971 Special Operations proposal, became the first instructor at a camp established in early 1977 in Rhodesia at Odzi, an important near-base for destabilization activities inside Mozambique. Alvaro Cardoso, the military commander linked to the genesis of Portuguese commando operations, now found himself leader of one of the
first such destabilization actions, in this case directed against the Musuzi hydroelectric operation in Manica province; later he too became an instructor at Odzi.

It was at Bindura however that the first training camp was established in 1975 or early 1976. “When Mozambique imposed sanctions on Rhodesia on 3 March 1976”, writes Hanlon, “it gave Flower the excuse he needed. The first MNR bands moved into Manica and Tete Provinces and attacked shops and health posts near the border.” As time went on, the Rhodesians made some effort to give the MNR an African colouration as well, welcoming such Mozambicans as André Matzangaissa and Alfonso Dhlakama into leadership roles within their organization; these two men, both of whom have been particularly prominent (Matzangaissa until his death in action in 1979, Dhlakama to the present), had both been cashiered from FRELIMO for corruption. Attacks on villages and commercial linkages inside the Mozambican border with Rhodesia were the MNR’s main activity, the apparent aim being to bleed the FRELIMO regime rather than attempt to overthrow it. Indeed, the launching of the counter-revolutionary guerilla was defined fairly modestly as merely one specific ploy—alongside airstrikes, dramatic acts of sabotage (e.g., the 1979 attack on the Beira oil-storage dumps, with South African assistance) and the like—designed to make Mozambique pay for its continuing support of ZANU guerillas. It is true that by 1979 the Rhodesians were pushing the MNR further into Mozambique, helping establish a major operational base in Gorongosa and supplying it by air. But the handwriting was already on the wall. The Mozambican army struck effectively at Gorongosa; with Matzangaissa’s death, various factions within the MNR fought destructively amongst themselves; and Rhodesia itself made ready to face the music at Lancaster House. After more than fifteen years of war, Mozambicans looked eagerly towards some breathing-space within which to promote, single-mindedly and without distraction, the reconstruction of their country. Unfortunately Mozambique’s trial by destabilization had only just begun.

3. The South African Connection  It should be stressed that South Africa had not been entirely absent from the MNR initiative during this early period. Contacts were maintained
and, as one example, it seems that a major part of BOSS agent Gordon Winter’s work at this time (see his book, Inside Boss) was to act as propagandist for the MNR, both within South Africa and abroad. Nonetheless, it was still primarily Rhodesia making the running with the MNR. By 1979-80, however, the scene had begun to shift, setting the stage for South Africa to revitalize the fading MNR even as Rhodesia retired to the wings. Botha’s ascension to the Prime Ministership in 1978 had placed an even more tough-minded and assertive “total strategy”—one very close to the South African military’s own priorities—on South Africa’s agenda. Moreover, the importance for South African decision-makers of Ronald Reagan’s rise to power in the United States cannot be ignored.

It was Botha as the Minister of Defence and his cronies, rather than Prime Minister Vorster, who had shown the most active interest in Flower’s destabilization scenario back in 1971. It was not too surprising then that in 1977, according to Flower’s own account, the Botha team, now in power, showed much greater interest than its predecessors in Rhodesia’s Mozambique operation. The evidence also suggests that the new Botha government began to give that operation much more concrete support. Certainly, as Rhodesia slipped away, they were to prove themselves quite willing to adopt the Mozambican counter-revolutionary guerillas as their own; “a C-130 airplane from the South African airforce flew to the base of Grand Reef, near Mutare, only one week before [Zimbabwean] independence, to take back to Voortrekkeropke in Pretoria the men whom we had used against Mozambique,” says Flower. Cristina was once again the linkman, Hanlon notes, selling the Dhlakama faction of the MNR (the faction which had won the recent shoot-out within that movement) to the South Africans as the cutting edge of further destabilization. The MNR, which had been “on the road to total destruction,” as Dhlakama himself was subsequently to state, was back in business.

The fact that South African sponsorship was now crucial to the fortunes of the MNR quickly became an open secret. As the [London] Economist summarized the new situation in a 1983 special issue on “Destabilising Southern Africa”:

The MNR directorate was flown south to Pretoria, lock, stock and barrel. It was established first at the Phalaborwa military base in northern Transvaal and its commander, Afonso Dhlakama, was openly welcomed by General
Since then, it has emerged as a major guerilla force some 10,000 strong. It is financed and armed by the SADF (South African Defence Force) and given logistical support in the form of training, command and control equipment, helicopter transport and special operations. Its radio, the Voice of Free Africa, broadcasts regularly into Mozambique from South African soil.

Even the US State Department was prepared, in early 1983, to issue a statement acknowledging that the MNR “receives the bulk of its support from South Africa.” Of course, the South Africans continued to deny such obvious realities, although the truth did poke its way through in various of their hypothetical assertions. Thus, in 1982, a Pretoria spokesman warned that “if neighbouring states continue to harbour anti-South African forces, they should not be surprised if South Africa considers doing the same for them”. The minister of defence, the above-mentioned General Malan, spoke even more directly in early 1983, suggesting that South Africa would fight against its enemies “even if it means we will have to support anti-communist movements ... and allow them to act from our territory.” However, it was not until mid-1985 that Foreign Minister Pik Botha would admit in Parliament that there was “naturally” a time when South Africa had aided the MNR, and that it would do so again “in similar circumstances.” This statement in turn prompted Colin Eglin to accuse Botha and the government of “making a ‘farce’ of parliament by making the admission after years of denying opposition changes that South Africa was destabilising its neighbours.” The Nkomati Accord had brought an end to all this in any case, Botha rejoindered. In the event, only a few months later Botha had to make even more damaging admissions concerning the extent of South Africa’s continuing support for the MNR long after the signing of Nkomati.

4. Economic Destabilization and the Mechanics of Terror

It is important to underscore the extent to which the South Africans began effectively—and far more aggressively than the Rhodesians—to link MNR incursions to its overall strategy of undermining the Mozambican economy. The latter goal had long been evident in South African policies. Thus, an important report prepared by the Mozambican government in January 1984 in order to specify to creditors the reasons for its parlous economic state, documented the manner in which “the
apartheid regime since the independence of Mozambique implemented a global strategy of reduction of its economic and commercial relations." The report cited, among other things, the reduction of traffic of goods through Maputo's port, the reduction in the number of Mozambicans working in South Africa's mines, and the unilateral change in the terms of payment of these workers (to the detriment of Mozambique's balance of payments). Now, in addition, military targets were to be chosen, with considerable sophistication, in terms of the extent of the damage which could be inflicted on Mozambican (and SADCC) development.

The pattern of MNR activities would itself provide sufficient evidence of this, but MNR documents captured at their Garagua base in December 1981 reinforced the point that careful planning was involved. Thus, notes from meetings held in October and November revealed not only Dhlakama's fawning attitudes towards his South African contact (variously referred to as "Colonel Charlie" and "Colonel Van Niekerk") but also the nature of the chain of command. Colonel Charlie presented Dhlakama with the "list of targets for the MNR's 1981 campaign. These included the Beira-Umtali pipeline, the railways linking Zimbabwe to Mozambique's ports, and the roads in the centre of the country. The border areas with Zimbabwe had lost their previous importance, and the stress was now laid on disrupting the economies of both Mozambique and Zimbabwe by hitting at their most vulnerable point, their communications." Constantino Reis has testified that this continued to be the pattern of South African-MNR relationships during his period with the MNR in 1983:

"Asked about other work he did besides broadcasting, Reis said he "worked on files that Cristina had in his office at the camp and I also did some translations for him. It was from documents in these files that I understood better that nothing was done without orders from the South Africans". And they often overruled Cristina and Dhlakama. "For example, the South Africans decided that the armed bandits had to attack the Beira-Zimbabwe pipeline and the railway from Beira to Malawi. Cristina and Dhlakama didn't want to do this because they were afraid of losing a lot of men and because it would only benefit the South African economy. But they had to attack, they had to sign the orders.""

Of course, as noted earlier, in the case of the more complex sabotage actions, the South Africans were even more directly involved: the blowing up of the road and rail bridges over the
Pungwe in 1981; the railway operation which cost the above-mentioned Alan Gingles his life; and, the destruction of the marker buoys in Beira harbour (carried out, almost certainly, by South African frogmen). But, as hinted earlier, the South Africans were slowly and surely pointing the MNR towards more modest, but cumulatively even more devastating targets—in effect, the entire infrastructure of Mozambique’s development effort in terms of physical plant, social and economic institutions and linkages, and human resources. The precise extent of the damage done in this way is impossible to quantify, although anecdotal evidence does begin to suggest both the low cunning and ruthlessness, in terms of realizing the long-term goal of destabilization, of South African-cum-MNR actions: the burning, on the very eve of one province’s marketing season, of a garage containing a fleet of trucks, relatively few in number but painstakingly readied for the purpose; the lightning attack on a sugar factory which permitted destruction of precisely those machine parts that would prove the most difficult to replace; and, the identification and calculated murder, in innumerable villages, of the few people (generally speaking, all those with modern skills) linked to the central structures of party and state. But perhaps Samora Machel’s words, presented as part of the explanation for Mozambique’s signing of the Mkomati Accord in 1984, best capture the overall impact of South Africa’s war of destabilization on Mozambique’s domestic development efforts:

Our people had their property looted, their houses destroyed, their granaries looted, their crops pillaged and flattened, their cattle stolen and killed, their tools burnt and destroyed. The communal villages and cooperatives, the schools and clinics, the wells and dams built by the people with so much effort and sacrifice became targets for the enemy’s criminal fury. The systematic destruction of economic infrastructure, bridges and roads, shops and warehouses, sawmills, plantations, agricultural and industrial machinery, electricity supply lines, fuel tanks, lorries and buses, locomotives and carriages has prevented the implementation of economic development projects of the utmost importance for the well being of the Mozambican people.

840 schools have been destroyed or closed, affecting more than 150,000 schoolchildren. Twelve health centres, 24 maternity clinics, 174 health posts and two centres for the physically handicapped have been sacked and destroyed. 900 shops have been destroyed, hampering marketing and supplies for about four and a half million citizens.

The bandits have murdered and kidnapped peasants and members of cooperatives, parliamentary deputies and Party militants, teachers and students, nurses, lorry drivers, engine drivers, agricultural, construction and
commercial workers, technicians in various sectors, nuns, priests, private shopkeepers, journalists and civil servants... This is the enemy's cruel nature—kill everything, steal everything, burn everything.²²

Yet even the above quotation does not quite capture the extent to which South Africa's war of aggression has been waged not merely against party and governmental structures, but against the Mozambican populace itself (the peasantry in particular). Here, too, the shift to South African sponsorship appears to have been of some importance. Thus, in its early days, the MNR had made some small attempt to legitimate its activities in the eyes of local populations—albeit by appealing, first and foremost, to tribal and sub-tribal resentments and to quasi-traditional superstitions and fetishisms. Under South African tutelage, these latter methods did not disappear altogether. Nor did the occasional effort to airbrush MNR activities with a patina of anti-communist and—laying doubtful claim to the mantle of Eduardo Mondlane—anti-Machelist rhetoric. Yet, as hinted earlier, what has been most marked about MNR activities is just how limited have been its attempts to create, in the classic guerilla manner, a popularly-rooted counter-hegemony. Indeed, virtually all observers agree that the basic MNR approach has been one of intimidation and brutalization of local populations, an approach carried out with almost unimaginable brutality and at incalculable cost to Mozambique's future. Elsewhere in the speech quoted above, Samora Machel speaks of the "severe wounds" thus inflicted:

Only future generations will show the precise extent of the social trauma caused by the horrors and barbarity of the armed gangs. The children who witnessed atrocities and repugnant acts of violence and destruction will grow up with the nightmare of their tragic memories. Men and women have been permanently mutilated and maimed, both physically and psychologically. They will be living evidence of the cruelty of the war waged against us.²³

The MNR's reluctance to tackle FRELIMO head-on in political terms may seem a bit surprising, especially given the difficult times through which Mozambique has been passing. After all, FRELIMO's own policy failures have made some contribution to the situation in which the regime finds itself. Thus, in the economic realm, it seems clear that by concentrating on big projects, state farms and the like, the FRELIMO government did far too little to service and activate the peasant economy. Moreover, without being notably repressive, FRE-
LIMO's political structures, particularly at the base, were less liberating and less apt to release popular energies than might have been anticipated in light of the movement's formative experience of "people's war" against the Portuguese. No doubt these realities helped to eclipse some of the popular enthusiasm which had accompanied the movement into power.

Yet, despite its difficulties, the FRELIMO government has been anything but venal and could not easily be made to seem illegitimate. In consequence the MNR and its sponsors accepted that, under the circumstances, the most they could hope for would be to further demobilize the population—economically, as we have seen, but also in terms of that population's confidence in the ability of the FRELIMO government to act effectively in its defence. Then, even if no alternative project to that offered by FRELIMO were to be established, this particularly gross and cynical form of destabilization could become a check against FRELIMO recovering its equilibrium. What was the result of South Africa's success in this regard? It created a downward spiral of economic decay and social distemper in Mozambique, which has profoundly shaken the FRELIMO government's fragile structures and unleashed anarchic forces of truly disturbing proportions. As the aforementioned Dean Guldenhuys could write coolly in the immediate aftermath of the signing of the Nkomati Accord, "SA's hawkish strategy towards its neighbours has had the intended effect of producing or aggravating domestic instability in target states."24

This is probably one reason why the war remained relatively invisible for an extended period: the key to success for the South Africans was less a question of dramatic military gains of their own than the slow attrition—and the gradually compounded vulnerability—of the Mozambican state itself. It is true that many young Mozambicans have been recruited to swell the initial core group of the MNR described above. Interviews with captured MNR members and defectors from the organization indicate that this recruitment is often carried out by kidnapping villagers and involving them in terrorist acts, thus giving them little possibility to retreat from bandit life. Others were recruited in Swaziland or South Africa where they had sought work (and often after their initial arrest, at which point the choice offered them was jail or the MNR).
With the downward spiral of the Mozambican economy, the counter-revolutionary-cum-bandit life may also have begun to seem like a "job-option" for some young Mozambicans; the MNR thus feeding on the results of its own destructiveness. Occasionally, too, specific actions taken by FRELIMO may have helped produce some recruits. This has been said, for example, of 1983's "Operation Production" which deported "surplus populations" from Maputo's urban areas to remote Niassa Province, and also of the policy of villagization in some parts of Nampula Province around the same period. Nonetheless, it seems highly unlikely that the MNR would have grown or sustained itself without South Africa's continuing stewardship. And, to repeat, the relative absence of a project of popular mobilization remains a marked feature of the MNR noted by almost all observers.

The signing of the Nkomati Accord bound South Africa, in principle, to wind down its support for the MNR. It is now clear that this was not done. For one thing, South Africa had actually set itself the task of beefing up the MNR in the period immediately prior to the signing—sending fresh men across into Mozambique along with some six months supply of ammunition and material. Far from MNR activity slowing down, it actually began to intensify, most notably in Maputo, the closest province to South Africa of Mozambique's ten provinces. True, with the coming into effect of the Accord, the South Africans did take some actions, such as shutting down the MNR transmitter in the Transvaal. But from very early on, Mozambique complained that on the bilateral Joint Security Commission formed to monitor implementation of the Accord, South Africa was tlightlipped about what was being done about the "armed bandits" still garrisoned in their territory. Soon, too, it was evident that fresh men and material were entering Mozambique from South Africa. Small wonder that before the year was out, Samora Machel could accuse the South Africans in no uncertain terms of ignoring the Accord: "We are not fooled. The key to the problem of terrorism lies with South Africa. That is why we signed the Nkomati Accord with them." The South African government, he said, continued to "sustain, develop, equip, infiltrate (into Mozambican territory) and supply" the rebels. Needless to say, South Africa rejected such charges and attempted to cover its tracks. But
into 1985 “armed banditry” continued to spread to virtually every province, maintaining most of its by now familiar shape and substance: economic disruption and rural terror. It seems probable, too, that in some areas the wasting effects of the war began to have greater impact on popular loyalties, not so much in earning the MNR a popular base as in helping to neutralize into a kind of political limbo at least some members of a tired and drained citizenry. To the extent that this is the case, one important goal of the enemies of the Mozambican revolution has begun to be realized.

Soon fresh evidence was to document graphically the continuing centrality of South Africa to the MNR’s activities—in spite of the signing of the Nkomati Accord. The evidence came with the fall of Casa Banana, a huge MNR base in the Gorongosa Mountains, in 1985. Of course, as stated, South Africa’s continuing entanglements with the MNR had all along been an open secret, given the men and arms which continued to flow into Mozambique, the extensive violations of Mozambican air-space, which was monitored, and the exposés of such practices as police press-ganging Mozambicans into the MNR inside South Africa. But documents captured at Casa Banana showed an even more broad-gauged pattern of post-Nkomati support than perhaps had been suspected. They provided substantial further evidence of the actions taken by South Africa to beef up the MNR inside Mozambique just prior to the signing, and evidence as well that South African arms supplies saved the MNR from almost certain defeat in the second half of 1984.

Confronted with this evidence, Pik Botha, South Africa’s Foreign Minister, had no alternative but to admit before a press conference to most of the charges arising from the documents: that South Africa had been supplying the MNR (though most often, he claimed, with “humanitarian” materials); had built an airstrip for the movement inside Mozambique; had transported MNR chiefs in and out of Mozambique by submarine; had maintained regular radio contact between the MNR and the South African army; and, had even arranged a series of visits to Gorongosa by senior South African military officers and by Louis Nel, South Africa’s Deputy Foreign Minister. Grotesquely enough, after such admissions, he claimed such violations of Nkomati to be merely “technical”. Many
observers of the Mozambican scene had warned at the time of Nkomati that even if South Africa were to lift its support of the MNR, disruption might have continued for some time because of the conditions of social anarchy South Africa had seen fit to create in many parts of the country, and because of the widespread distribution of arms that had occurred. Many of the "bandits" might have been expected to carry on with their banditry even if they were no longer coordinated as a counter-revolutionary force. But it was now more apparent than ever that the South Africans had little intention of withdrawing their support. If anything, Mozambique, citing fresh evidence of airspace violations and a stepping up of MNR incursions via Malawi, now charges that South Africa is increasing the pressure. Small wonder that FRELIMO leaders now speak of a possible "new phase of regional aggression", and see signs too of a return in South Africa to the "total onslaught" rhetoric of the pre-Nkomati days. Not surprisingly, this parallels a deteriorating situation for the apartheid regime inside South Africa itself, and no doubt represents yet another attempt on the part of South Africa to blur, for western consumption, the real nature of the confrontation in that country. Futile enough perhaps, but it may well presage even more assertive destabilization efforts against Mozambique in the near future.

5. Other Actors Mention of Malawi should remind us that mobilizing other protagonists in support of the MNR has been one specific way in which South Africa has sought to cover its own tracks. By the very nature of the case, the chain of evidence which could establish such linkages definitively must remain elusive. It was, for example, after Nkomati that it became ever more apparent that Malawi was providing an important rear-base for MNR activity in northern Mozambique—in spite of the costs to Malawi in terms of disrupted rail-links to the sea. As a partial explanation, some have suggested that President Banda continues to harbour territorial ambitions—his concept of a greater Malawi, including an outlet to the ocean through the incorporation of northern Mozambique. Moreover, Jorge Jardim and others—Portuguese and Africans with strong Malawi connections—have had a substantial presence there over the years, and there are also strong
suspicions that Israelis have been involved in training the MNR units operating from that country.

The strong economic links of Malawi to South Africa, as well as links via the police and the army, would seem to be the crucial factor in explaining Malawi's support of the MNR. The same is no doubt true for the Comoros, which has apparently become an important entrepôt for supplying the MNR with arms. There are signs that, in turn, the Comoros tie into a network of support based in counter-revolutionary circles in the Middle East and Morocco. Nonetheless, the Comoros' government is in power thanks to a South African-backed coup, and the South African connection has been kept alive by frequent visits in recent years, including, for example, by Foreign Minister Pik Botha. In late 1984/early 1985, there was even some speculation that, via Malawi and the Comoros, South Africa was laying the groundwork for a two-pronged strategy. Was Pretoria perhaps planning to wind down the war in the south, the better to firm up a "neo-colonial solution" there, while at the same time by indirection fanning the flames in the north, and thereby keeping the FRELIMO government sufficiently off balance to weaken its bargaining power? In the event, South Africa chose to continue to apply the pressure of destabilization in the south as well.

There has been no need to mobilize "the Portuguese connection" of course. We have seen how, from the outset, this strand of the MNR reality was interwoven first with Rhodesian primacy, and later with South African. These relationships have not been entirely free of tension. Thus in April 1983, Cristina himself was assassinated under most mysterious circumstances at the MNR's South African base at Walmerstad. Factionalism within the MNR was almost certainly at play, although there is also a distinct possibility that South Africa itself played some role. As Constantino Reis saw the situation at first hand, "in 1982, Cristina was under great pressure from the South Africans to find Mozambican exiles to form a political wing for the MNR because when the bandits arrived from Smith's Rhodesia they had no political identity." Reis felt the South Africans wanted "to establish a political body that could take part in any future negotiations. Up to that point the MNR had nobody, it was just a wing of the South African army." This sentiment in turn led to the creation of a 12-
man MNR National Council, which first met at Walmerstad in May 1982, and twice subsequently in West Germany prior to Cristina's death. Apparently in this process Cristina was being sidelined, with South Africa dealing ever more directly with Dhlakama himself—while also seeking to recycle within the MNR such figures from the distant past as Gideon Fanuel Mahluza, a renegade who split from FRELIMO in the early 1960s.

Yet the Portuguese connection to the MNR had not been limited to Cristina's role, and indeed has continued to be a prominent one. Particularly striking is the on-going role within the organization of the Beira "mafia" despite Jorge Jardim's death. Portuguese sources identify Manuel Bulhosa as Jardim's successor as patron-in-chief of the Portuguese connection; Bulhosa, a leading Portuguese capitalist, once had large holdings in Mozambique, notably in the petroleum industry. A glance at the career of Evo Fernandes, Cristina's successor as secretary-general of the MNR, can help us grasp some of the relevant connections. Of Goan extraction and Portuguese citizenship, by 1974 Fernandes had moved from the role of police inspector to that of managing editor of Jardim's newspaper, Noticias de Beira. Leaving Mozambique at independence, he became the chief spokesman for the MNR in Portugal, where he also worked for Bertrand publishers and a Sintra-based agricultural enterprise—both owned by Bulhosa. (When he left to take up his new role in South Africa, Fernandes' successor as Lisbon spokesman for the MNR was Jorge Correia, another Portuguese.) The chain leads further, certainly into overtly right-wing Portuguese political circles like the MINR of Kaulza da Arriaga (at one time Portugal's chief military commander in Mozambique), with this party, for example, serving as a major source for the recent recruitment of mercenaries by the MNR. But there are also clear indications of lines into more centrist parties, in particular the Social-Democrats (PSD). Inevitably, this Portuguese connection does have a certain weight of its own within the MNR, leading Fernandes, for example, into occasional denunciation of South Africa for beginning to compromise the struggle against FRELIMO and for possibly planning to dump the MNR. Perhaps such outbursts are merely exercises in disinformation. Still, they have led some observers to speculate as to the existence
of a possible contradiction between the attachment of certain Portuguese interests to the goal of reconquest of Mozambique, and South African willingness merely to settle for neo-colonization. The fact is that there is some room for speculation regarding what, precisely, South Africa’s “war aims” are. It is true, nonetheless, that in the event of a showdown, the South Africans have many more trumps to play in defining the future role of the MNR than do the Portuguese.

And what of the American connection? It is clear that South Africa’s backers in the United States were pleased with the South African strategy and tactics that produced Nkomati. How else can we explain the calculated cynicism of the Reagan administration’s approach to South Africa’s war of aggression in Mozambique: Chester Crocker, Reagan’s chief Africa aide, proudly claiming the “peace” between Mozambique and South Africa as a victory for the US policy of “constructive engagement” and “peaceful change” while ignoring the fact that this so-called peace was inflicted on Mozambique by South Africa out of the barrel of a gun. In fact, the Deputy US Ambassador to the United Nations, Charles Lichtenstein, was only being a little more forthright about US means and ends when he stated, in late 1983, that “destabilization will remain in force until Angola and Mozambique do not permit their territory to be used by terrorists to attack South Africa.”30 This statement managed both to overstate the extent of Mozambican support for the ANC even prior to Nkomati and, more outrageously, to present the ANC’s legitimate struggle to transform South Africa as being somehow more unacceptable than South Africa’s use of state terror to defend apartheid. Equally importantly, it hinted at what many analysts have felt confident to assert: that links did exist between US and South African decision-makers in pressing forward with the regional strategy of destabilization. Indeed, even as late as mid-1985, and despite the opening up of some flow of American aid to Mozambique in the wake of the Nkomati Accord, senior Mozambicans were still very outspoken privately about the very dirty “double game” they felt the US to be playing. Thus a report in the Toronto Globe and Mail at the time dramatized this point as follows: “And the US connection? A senior Mozambican official was asked who could be clever enough to guide the MNR’s campaign of terror and sabotage. ‘I’ll never say this into your tape recorder,’ he said. ‘The Americans.””31
6. Mozambique Fights Back

Faced with an escalating state of siege, the Mozambican government has sought to rally on two fronts, the domestic and the international, the international strategy being most clearly exemplified in the Nkomati Accord itself. This “non-aggression pact” was signed, amidst much fanfare, by South Africa and Mozambique in March 1984. It is indicative of how easily South Africa has been able to get away, internationally, with its policy of naked aggression against its neighbours that the first time many North Americans knew there was a war going on was when peace was declared. On the positive side, South Africa was now, for the first time (and even then, tacitly) to acknowledge its responsibility for the MNR’s activities. FRELIMO leaders even claimed the Accord as a victory because the South Africans had failed to overthrow their regime.

But the policy of regional destabilization did not have the desired effect. South Africa did not achieve the political objectives for which it launched the war... It has failed to achieve armed victory... With the signing of the Accord of Nkomati, the main project, the destruction of our state, failed. In signing the Accord of Nkomati was guaranteed the objective of our fight—peace.52

Victory? Pretoria did seem to agree to call off its “dogs of war”. It is also true that when peace talks began in late 1982, South Africa wanted far more substantial concessions from Mozambique than were eventually included in the treaty. On the other hand, Mozambique was left with little alternative but to constrain severely the activities of the ANC on its soil (activities which, however, had never included the presence of military bases). Mozambique also appeared ready to open itself up to further economic integration with South Africa. Given these latter conditions it was difficult, even for many sympathizers, not to feel that FRELIMO would have been far better advised to refrain from claiming victory at Nkomati, and to adopt instead the tone of Julius Nyerere:

We think [the Nkomati Accord] is a humiliation. We don’t want any more Nkomatis. It is the success of the South African policy of destabilising the front-line states and it is assisted in this by the USA. And it is proper that we should view it completely frankly. It is a defeat on our part.
We understand why Mozambique had to look for some accommodation at Nkomati—but they haven't even got the minimum they thought they would get out of it. But we understand why they did it, because there was a promise that South Africa might stop supporting the MNR and Mozambique decided they needed peace to start new development in their country.53

Certainly such a tone might have been more comprehensible to Mozambique's supporters abroad—and less likely to raise false hopes at home. Moreover, some senior FRELIMO leaders do admit privately that there was certain amount of pride involved in the way they chose to present things. But they also argue that the pomp, ceremony and publicity that made so many outsiders uneasy about Nkomati at the time, served another purpose by making the war visible, and by so attaching South Africa to the "peace" that the Accord could serve as some established point of reference against which to further expose South African aggression. Indeed the Mozambicans go further, stating, with some justification, that they had good reason to fear South Africa intensifying its aggression, possibly to the point of intervening directly by air and on the ground in Mozambique, as it had in Angola. Nkomati, they suggest, made it far more difficult for the South Africans to be seen to do so.

These latter points make sense, of course, although many will feel we are not talking "victory" here, but rather survival strategy.34 Moreover, the underlying logic of this survival strategy lay even deeper, suggesting that central to the calculations of the Mozambican leadership was the premise—the gamble—that South Africa (and the western capitalist camp more generally) was not necessarily bent on the total overthrow of the FRELIMO government. Perhaps, it was argued, South Africa merely sought to weaken Mozambique sufficiently, economically and politically, to place it in a weaker bargaining position vis-à-vis international capital and the South African state. With scant room to manoeuvre, the Mozambicans felt they had little alternative but to structure their tactics on the very knife-edge of the ambiguities they thought might exist within South Africa's destabilization project. A recent issue of Southern Africa Report summarized FRELIMO's consequent approach:

In the absence of alternative sources of support, whether in the Eastern bloc or elsewhere, FRELIMO has felt compelled to play a complicated game
Critics have tended to caricature this strategic departure on Mozambique's part as being either hopelessly naive or a complete sellout. In contrast, my own discussions with senior Mozambicans have revealed a sophistication of analysis regarding their attempts to manoeuvre for breathing space on the international plane which might surprise many of these critics. Certainly the leaders I talked with (including President Machel) on two visits in the first half of 1985 presented a pretty full catalogue of the possible forces ranged against them, while also weighing quite coolly the odds for and against their complicated strategy of trying to play off neo-colonizers against militarists in the South African (and broader imperial) camp. Opinions will differ as to the basis for South Africa's decision not to shift definitively from stick to carrot in its handling of Mozambique, of course. As one example, South Africa's Financial Mail notes: "It has been suggested that SA’s security agencies perceived far greater long-term gains in maintaining proxy pressure on Maputo to get rid of its pro-Soviet hardliners than the doubtful short-run economic advantages that would flow from Nkomati."36

There was even some initial evidence (notably certain of the exchanges between South African military personnel and the MNR recorded in the Casa Banana documents) to suggest that military defiance of civilian instructions regarding an easing-up on the MNR project might have had some role to play. And this was an explanation Pretoria itself sought, from time to time, to imply when its abuses of the Accord became too flagrant to deny outright. It is far more likely that South Africa's decision-makers—as has also been the case on a number of domestic fronts—had an occasional difficulty in making
up their minds as to just which strategy to follow, tending, in consequence, to oscillate somewhat between options.

In truth, however—and, once again, as on the domestic front—there remained a very strong pull towards use of the stick. No doubt, as hinted earlier, Pretoria has been reluctant (with reason) to trust that FRELIMO has abandoned once and for all its socialist project and was thus ready for cooptation—even if it was forced to admit that Mozambique has scrupulously honoured its side of the Nkomati bargain regarding the ANC. FRELIMO was soon to realize in any case, that South Africa would not rest content with its gains at Nkomati and would continue to press for more concessions; thus at the time of the signing of the Pretoria Declaration of October 1984, when FRELIMO accepted South Africa's request to offer an amnesty to the MNR, South Africa tried to transform this (in the words of one FRELIMO leader) “into negotiations between the Mozambican government and the bandits.” And, as seen, there does remain the stark fact of continuing aggression.

Part of Mozambique's strategy has been, in turn, the attempt to go over the heads of the South Africans to the Americans and other western countries. In fact, the US establishment has itself seemed uncertain about how to deal with Mozambique. On the one hand, the MNR has begun to emerge as one more darling of the international right-wing, its representatives received with open arms at such conferences as the San Diego meeting of the World Anti-Communist League (September 1984) and the second meeting of the International Conference for Resistance in Occupied Countries held in Paris (November 1984). And a conservative think-tank could note that:

In 1984 the United States designed an economic assistance program for Mozambique that will supplement existing food assistance for this drought-stricken nation. In general, a coordinated approach is underway by Western nations and South Africa to wean the Mozambique government away from its Marxist heritage. It appears that President Samora Machel may be willing to abandon gradually much of his Marxist dogma and compromise with his political opponents. The US should encourage this process.

One of the principal reasons Machel may be willing to change is due to pressure against his regime by the Movement of National Resistance (MNR) in Mozambique. If, by early 1984, Machel is not decisively moving away from Marxism, then a clear alternative exists through support for the MNR by the United States.
Almost simultaneously, however, the voice of a more liberal capitalist approach could be heard from no less a figure than Melvin Laird, a former US Secretary of Defence. Bucking the neo-conservative offensive, he penned an op-ed piece on the subject for the *Washington Post*, in which he called for an even more active "opening to Mozambique", a "balanced relationship that includes diplomatic contacts, private investment, trade, economic and humanitarian assistance and a modest military training and assistance program." As Laird elaborated the point:

I recognize there are those who argue the United States should have nothing to do with a self-styled Marxist state. I disagree. The only way we can advance US strategic goals in the Third World is if we compete in relevant ways—on the ground, through our programs, our presence, our diplomacy. The United States should be ready to respond constructively to openings that advance our interests whenever they occur.

It is less clear just where the Reagan administration stands with respect to this policy divide over imperial strategy towards Mozambique. Some aid did come, albeit aid carefully crafted along lines that paralleled the suggestions of the Heritage Foundation. Yet who was to say which other US agencies might be involved in more shadowy undertakings; certainly the Mozambicans, as cited earlier, have had their suspicions. Yet when Samora Machel met with Ronald Reagan in Washington, and with businessmen in Texas, in September 1985, it was a delicate game attempting to tilt the American government in the direction of Laird's "liberal-imperialist" option that Machel came to play. Machel brought with him strong evidence "including the Casa Banana materials) of South Africa's continuing complicity with the MNR—despite the signing of the Nkomati Accord and Mozambique's subsequent compliance with the Accord's main terms. Here was proof, he said, that South Africa "have continued to recruit, train, organize, finance, equip and give logistical support to the armed bandits in my country." There were polite noises heard from the Reagan team on these matters—though there were also hostile anti-Mozambique newspaper advertisements in Washington papers and some pugnacious statements from various right-wing Congressmen. But at least Reagan and his advisors seemed prepared, for the moment, to grant Mozambique a much lower place on its international "hit list" than, say, Angola. In the
longer run, just what type of response Mozambique can expect to get, from the United States government is a more open question.

There is an attendant question. Suppose, for the moment, that all these tactical adjustments to the realities of global and regional power were to "work" as part of a strategy to safeguard the FRELIMO government's survival. What, if anything, could that government then hope to salvage of its original socialist project? It is, of course, the case that Mozambique had already begun to adjust its policies towards a greater reliance on the marketplace, world-wide and local, well in advance of the Nkomati Accord. While one may legitimately wonder whether Mozambique would have felt compelled to move so strongly in this direction if its economy had not been so badly battered by South African-cum-imperialist assault, strong positive arguments were also put forward for such a Mozambique-style "New Economic Policy", notably at FRELIMO's Fourth Congress in 1983. In part a response to the severe limitations FRELIMO had found in Eastern-bloc economic assistance, this policy also sprang from a self-criticism of some of the party's own policies in the first post-independence years. The decision to make more use of the market internally was seen not so much as a retreat as a step towards a more "feasible socialism"—a step towards providing, insofar as the war situation allowed, fresh incentives with which to engage the peasantry more actively in economic development. In addition, the pressing need for foreign exchange, investment, and know-how to help trigger production, especially in the industrial sphere, reinforced the idea of a controlled entry of capitalist actors into the economy.

Mozambican leaders know that "liberal-capitalists" whether from South Africa or from further afield—insofar as they are prepared to accept the renewed post-Nkomati invitation to come into Mozambique—would do so only because they were confident of their own long-run capacity to hollow out from within any continuing commitment to socialist goals which the leaders may be seeking to retain. Perhaps FRELIMO underestimates the difficulties of controlling the socio-economic forces released by such "concessions" (i.e., the long-term impact of domestic class formation in the private sector, the possible suborning of a potential "state-class" in-the-making, and deep-
ening international entanglements”. A look at the World Bank’s private projections of future policies they would like to see Mozambique adopt makes chilling reading, for example, and some have also wondered aloud how much of Mozambique’s substantial progressive advances in fields such as education and health will be left standing when the IMF returns to negotiate on a second and third occasion. It is no doubt some solace that FRELIMO leaders can speak frankly about such dangers to Mozambique’s socialist project. Thus one Minister, discussing the emphasis presently placed upon “privados” (private farmers) in state planning, and aware as well of the way in which US agricultural assistance has been tied to facilitating only the private sector, stressed bluntly the eventual necessity of hastening the pace of peasant cooperativization in order to counter any consolidation of new and privileged classes in the rural areas. Most dramatic, perhaps, was the way another Minister put the point to me when he admitted that there does exist, inherent in FRELIMO’s present approach, the distinct danger of FRELIMO waking up one day only to discover that “nos nao somos nos” (we are no longer ourselves)!

Of course, qualifying all such speculation is the fact that the war continues—rendering problematic even most of the immediate advantages that short-term “policy adjustments” in favour of capital were thought to promise. But if there are indeed few signs of an economic turnaround at present, recent visits to Mozambique have suggested other indications of a salutory sobriety in the economic calculations of many of the country’s economic planners. These calculations are now made within the framework of a new overall policy guideline, that of the Economia da Guerra (War Economy). Needless to say, this guideline is very far removed from the high hopes for a renovated economic strategy which marked FRELIMO’s Fourth Congress in 1983. Even if the apparent imperatives of pragmatism and survival economics did sometimes seem to threaten a blurring of the socialist vision, it was apparent that the current crisis had also served to bring Mozambican planning ever more firmly down to earth, to a confrontation with the real possibilities of production at the district and provincial levels under the very hard conditions, economic and logistical, which exist. While obviously focused upon the immediate need to underwrite the war effort, such a trend also may have the
Studies in Political Economy

long-term effect of helping to make planning for economic development a less abstract and far more effective exercise in Mozambique than it has sometimes been in the past.

It should be borne in mind, finally, that FRELIMO's "NEP", as anticipated at the Fourth Congress, was part and parcel of a renewed emphasis on popular participation and popular power more broadly defined. For all its achievements over the years in these latter spheres, Mozambique continually has had to face the challenge of renewing the popular term in its revolutionary equation, setting it against the dangers of hyper-centralization, formalism, and even authoritarianism which are always implicit in a vanguard structure. One would be hard pressed to say that FRELIMO has been entirely successful in this regard. Moreover, the state of siege in which FRELIMO has found itself has not proven to be a situation well suited to drawing out the potential for further democratization present in the movement's past practice and current ideology. Yet the nation-wide debate leading up to the congress, represented promising countervailing tendencies. And, paradoxically, the war has also produced some such tendencies of its own.

These were seen most clearly in the manner in which, in some parts of the country, FRELIMO has begun to work towards a more effective, popularly-based military strategy. After all, as Mozambican Minister Jacinto Veloso said in late 1984: "These negotiations with the South African government are not at all the principal factor in stopping violence and creating peace and stability. I think there is no doubt that the main factor that will lead to the normalisation of the life of our people is the military action on the ground by the Mozambican armed forces." Yet, in part because it anticipated not the rise of the counter-revolutionary guerilla, but instead a rather more conventional form of military attack from Rhodesia and South Africa, Mozambique had moved away, in the first post-independence years, from its successful "people's army" format of the days of armed struggle against the Portuguese. More recently, the key to such success as FRELIMO has been able to achieve militarily has lain precisely in its finding a contemporary equivalent of that earlier rooting of the war effort in the exertions of the local populations themselves. Thus in several of the central provinces, the grouping of such populations in defensible villages and their organiza-
tion into effective militias seems to be advancing. Even more innovative has been the development of military units intermediate between local militias and the army per se. These units are made up of local people who are given a higher degree of military training than mere militia members. They are returned to their localities after training, where they have a particularly clear familial and economic stake in the war effort. There, these citizen soldiers continue to operate under army discipline, available for offensive action against the armed bandits. These are important steps, self-evidently, despite the hard reality that every kind of military effort continues to be constrained by the severe economic limits within which the FRELIMO government operates.

The regular army is badly crippled by lack of the wherewithal to fight—not just arms and transport but boots, uniforms, canteens, and food. Clearly, a vicious circle is in place here. Without economic advance, dramatic military consolidation is extremely difficult; but without the latter, it is difficult to achieve economic advance. Eastern-bloc assistance has been important, but unfortunately (and ironically, given the fetishization by conservative opinion in the United States of the “Soviet menace” in Mozambique) such assistance has been far from adequate; indeed, it has proven to be no more of a key to breaking the foreign exchange and other road-blocks to military success than it has been in other spheres. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Mozambique has found its best friends closer to home. Thus it has been the Zimbabwean army which has been of the most direct assistance—in the struggles which have surged around Casa Banana in recent years, and in safeguarding the “Beira corridor” for example. Witness, too, the tone set by Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere.

Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere has said Tanzania would provide the rear base for a fresh war to liberate Mozambique and South Africa if the Pretoria manoeuvres to overthrow the FRELIMO government in Maputo succeeded. The government owned Daily News reported in a front page story that the Tanzanian leader told party officials at the party ideological college in Dar es Salaam that Tanzania would not sit back and watch South Africa topple the Mozambican government.

“Mozambique President Samora Machel will return to Nachingwea (in Southern Tanzania) and the liberation war will start afresh,” the President declared. He said this time the onslaught would thoroughly involve FRELIMO and the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa and sweep right through to Capetown. “We want our enemies, especially apartheid South Africa to understand this: We won’t allow the FRELIMO government to be overthrown,” Nyerere said.
This probably overstates the degree of desperation of Mozambique's current situation somewhat—albeit for legitimate dramatic effect. Mozambicans are continuing to struggle gamely on their own home ground to see that things do not deteriorate quite so far. But they are watching too, with eager, if sober, anticipation, the efforts of the South African people to drag down the apartheid monster from within. For it is only then that Mozambique would really be freed from what we have seen in this essay to be the most serious obstacle to realization of its national aspirations.

7. After Machel As I concluded this paper, word came that President Samora Machel had been killed in a plane crash in South Africa under the most suspicious of circumstances. Perhaps we will never know the truth about those circumstances. Accidents do happen, after all. Yet the fact that so many observers could immediately suspect the South Africans of having helped to engineer this accident is itself no accident. Such an act would be perfectly consistent with South Africa's brutal record of aggression, assassination and destabilization, as traced above. What is true, moreover, is that Machel would not even have been in Zambia, the country from which he was returning on the night of the fatal crash, if it were not to help rally once again the frontline states of southern Africa against South Africa's latest threats. In any case, so much Mozambican blood is visible on South Africa's hands that the point is almost academic.

The death of Machel, an extraordinary man by any standard, represents a grievous loss, certainly. However, what has been most remarkable about the post-assassination period in Mozambique is the manner in which the FRELIMO leadership team has stood firm, and the smoothness with which the transition to Joaquim Alberto Chissano's presidency has been realized. What is less encouraging is that precisely the same intractable problems confront the new President as faced his predecessor. A Canadian fact-finding team, including in its numbers Tory MP Walter McLean, NDP strategist Gerry Caplan, singer Pauline Julien, and others from the media, CIDA, and the NGO community, confirmed the grisly balance sheet on Mozambique's first independent decade, sketched above:
We found a situation in which almost four of the fourteen million children and women and men populating Mozambique are in imminent danger of starvation—a tragedy of Ethiopian proportions. We found more than 42% of the population on the move, forced to abandon fields and homes by the massive bandit activities throughout the rural areas. In every province, the provincial and district capitals were swollen with refugees. More than 250,000 have fled to neighbouring countries. The under five mortality rate which had decreased by 20% between 1975 and 1980, thanks to the solid health programmes of the new FRELIMO government, has actually increased from 270 per thousand in 1980 to 375 per thousand in 1987. One in every three children now dies before the age of five.

The team confirmed, too, the explanation we have given: “apartheid as the principal factor in Mozambique’s present emergency”.

Whether through direct military involvement, through its surrogate, the MNR, through economic destabilization, or through disinformation campaigns, South Africa is systematically engaged in a wrecking operation in Mozambique. Whatever the impact of historic under-development, drought, the international economic crisis or policy errors in causing this situation, all these pale into insignificance against the systematic destruction and terror being perpetrated by the MNR.47

Viewed in more general terms, the Mozambican case suggests just how well the tactic of the counter-revolutionary guerilla can be made to work, and just how likely it is that we will see similar scenarios being played out by imperial planners against other Third World attempts at socialist creativity in future. As for Mozambique itself, a luta continua (the struggle continues)—FRELIMO’s watchword, a phrase worn somewhat thin through repetition but still true. Thus Chissano, the new president, has embraced unequivocally the unwelcome necessity, in his words, to “continue with war in order to finish with war;” to struggle for “the complete elimination of banditry,” fully aware that Renamo’s “banditry is an integral part of the regional destabilization carried out by the South African apartheid regime.” The challenge? Even as FRELIMO works “to restore peace and tranquillity to all citizens,” it will “proceed with the recovery of our economy,” linking the needs of the country’s defence and the economy “so that the economy may support the war against the bandit gangs, and so that the defence effort may create the necessary security for economic activity.” By this route too, he emphasized, “we will reach socialism because all our people want socialism”!48 A luta continua? Indeed.
Notes
3. Mozambique Information Agency (MIO), "President Machel Addresses the People's Assembly," News Review (London), 27 April 1984. Interestingly, even a source like Time Magazine, which might otherwise have been expected to find the key to Mozambique's difficulties in that country's "misguided" Marxist development strategy, has felt compelled by the blatant facts of the matter to echo Machel's interpretation—that drought and "guerilla insurgency" are the key problems. Nor does Time find much that is ambiguous regarding the source of such "insurgency": "Though a senior Administration official in Washington describes the MNR as "basically an organization without political ideology", it has since 1980 been provided with weaponry, logistical support and manpower from inside South Africa."
6. See the analysis in Sara Miles, "The Real War: Low Intensity Conflict in Central America," Nacla Report on the Americas XX:2 (April-May 1986). Miles summarizes the possible bottomline of such activities succinctly: "The war in Central America . . . already may have progressed so far that it is too late for the United States to roll back the challenge of revolutionary nationalism. If that point has been reached, Washington may be capable of no more than inflicting pain—which, given the available options, may in itself become a goal of low-intensity strategy. Along with its redefinition of battle-fields, the innovation of low-intensity doctrine has been its redefinition of victory. Even if the United States is unable to win outright, it can cause enough physical destruction and political damage over a long period to guarantee that the revolutionaries will not truly "win" either. It can settle for weakening its opponents to such a point that their political goals become unattainable. If their experiments can be aborted, the United States will be able to claim at least partial victory" (p. 45). On these general and comparative points see also my paper "Killing The Dream: The Role of the counter-revolutionary Guerilla in the Militarization of the Third World", presented to the Queen's Conference on "Militarisation in the Third World: the Caribbean Basis and Southern Africa," 15-17 January 1987.
10. Thus Fauvet and Gomes write that "Jardim had organized elite military units to fight against FRELIMO, units consisting mainly of black troops, better paid than the regular colonial army, and soon gaining an unenviable reputation for brutality and atrocities." Unfortunately their "brutality and atrocities" were to continue under first Rhodesian, then South African, auspices. See Paul Fauvet and Alves Gomes, "The 'Mozambique National Resistance'," in Supplement to AIM Bulletin No. 69.
12. See Gordon Winter, _Inside Boss_ (Harmondsworth).
13. Quoted in Alves Gomes, "Operacoes Especiais," p. 33. (See n. 9, above.)
15. Quoted in Hanlon, Mozambique, p. 224. (See n. 11, above.)
16. Quoted in Jenkins, _Destabilization_, p. 19. (See n. 14, above.)
17. Ibid.
20. Fauvet and Gomes, _National Resistance_, p. 8. (See n. 10, above.)
21. Mozambique Information Agency (AIM), "The MNR From Within," _Supplement to AIM Bulletin No. 102_.
23. Ibid.
27. See _News Review_ 62 (27 April 1984), "Special Issue: Dossier: South African Violation of Nkomati Accord."
28. As quoted in AIM, "The MNR From Within," (see n. 21, above).
29. For further details see Fernando Semede and Joao Paulo Guerra, _Operacao Africa: A Conspiracao Antiafricana em Portugal_ (Lisboa, 1984).
32. Samora Machel, "Accord of Nkomati..." pp. 6, 7, 8. (See n. 22, above.)
34. It is worth noting that some Mozambican leaders at the time of Nkomati did come close to viewing things in this latter light, even publicly. Witness then Foreign Minister Joaquim Chissano who criticized the "ultra-left myopic revolutionaries" who objected to the agreement. "They don't hesitate in asking us to die so that they can applaud us as heroes," he remarked caustically. Mozambique did not mind this when the sacrifice was useful, as it had been during the independence war, "but we ought to tell them that our people don't die just to win applause. They don't die so that statues can be built to them." Mr. Chissano warned that, in itself, the agreement "will not bring us happiness. It is not the Nkomati Accord that will eliminate hunger, or provide us with clothing". "What the Accord did was 'create conditions for our efforts in production to give better results.' In MIO, "People's Assembly Ratifies Nkomati Accord," _News Review_ 62 (18 October 1985).
37. See, for example, the article "Southern Africa is Extreme Right's Target," in _Indian Ocean Newsletter_ 12 June 1985.
Studies in Political Economy


40. See, for example, the useful article by Victoria Brittain entitled “Mozambique feels the pain of war,” The Guardian 1 August 1986, where she notes that “donors now frequently use their aid to try to enforce policy changes, say officials. The US for instance, has put a small amount of high profile aid behind successful large private farmers—a symbolic contradiction of FRELIMO’s commitment to poor peasants.”

41. Cynics will scoff at such a question, but no one at all informed about Mozambique can afford to do so; see, however, a stunningly puerile paper by Heribert Adam and Stanley Uys which states, inter alia, that “[recent developments] reduced FRELIMO’s ... versions of freedom ideology to rhetorical socialism. With an undereducated, underfed and disillusioned constituency, socialist slogans are banded by the urban elite but do not strike an accord with underprivileged peasants. The rhetoric placates sponsors and creates an international progressive image but is hardly taken seriously by its proponents themselves. In a crunch, the elite therefore adjusts ideological interpretations as arbitrarily as they adopted them. No conversion is involved, as is frequently assumed, because a collective ideological commitment hardly existed in the first place.” Heribert Adam and Stanley Uys, “From Destabilization to Neo-Colonial Control: South Africa’s Post-Nkomati Regional Environment,” (paper presented at the South-South Conference, McGill University, Montreal, 17 May 1985).

42. On this subject see also John S. Saul, ed., A Difficult Road, chapter 3, especially the subsection entitled “The Economic Sphere,” p. 103ff. (See n. 2, above.)

43. On this subject see ibid., chapter 3, especially the subsection entitled “The Politics of Socialism,” p. 77ff.

44. For a recent critique of the politics underlying Mozambique’s war effort, in particular FRELIMO’s policies as regards both the dissemination of information and political mobilization, and comparisons with the situation in Nicaragua, see Judith Marshall, “Mozambique and Nicaragua: The Politics of Survival,” Southern Africa Report 2:1 (1986).


