
Section I

Regional constraints on development



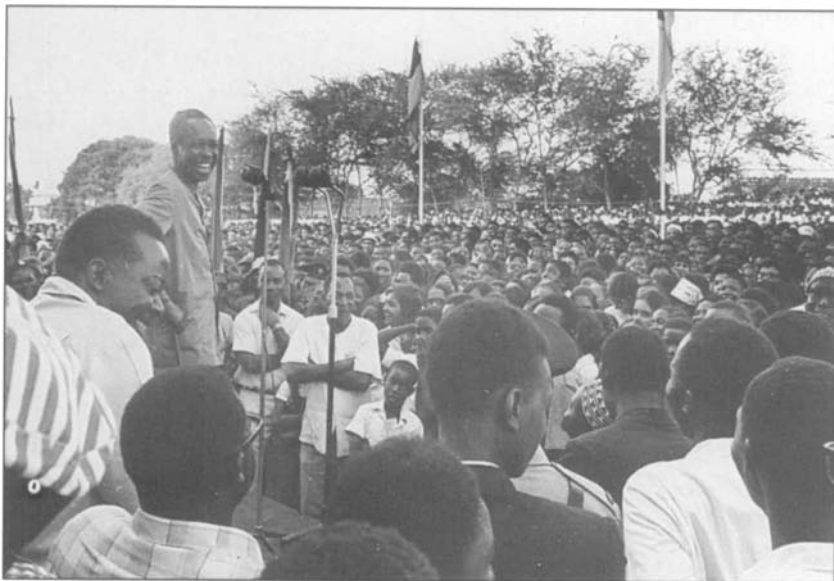
Background to South Africa's policy of regional destabilisation

Growth of nationalism in southern Africa, 1948-1975

From 1948 onwards (when the National Party first came to power in South Africa) apartheid, colonialism, and white-minority rule came into increasingly direct conflict with the political tenets of the mass nationalist movements emerging throughout Africa. Inside South Africa, throughout the region, and across the continent the nationalist cause was growing on a significant scale.

International opinion against South Africa was boosted by African leaders as independence came to the colonial territories of the continent. In March 1961, during the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, the *London Observer* published an article by Julius Nyerere in which he laid out the fundamental reasons why South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth was unacceptable to the people of Tanganyika, as mainland Tanzania was then called.

His article remains an eloquent statement of the moral and political issues at stake, and its timely publication was an early example of diplomatic pressure against South Africa. It is widely thought that the publication of his article strongly influenced the climate of opinion among the then Commonwealth heads of government. South Africa withdrew its application for re-admission, apparently preferring this course to facing almost certain rejection.



President Julius Nyerere in 1968, seven years after Tanzania's independence, addressing a rally in Dar es Salaam. (Camera Press)

The people of Tanganyika are working to build a non-racial democratic society ... what we want is a society where the individual matters, and not the colour of his skin, or the shape of his nose. Racial group privileges or discriminations are incompatible with this.

The policies of apartheid now being practised in the Union of South Africa are a daily affront to this belief in individual human dignity. They are, in addition, a constantly reiterated insult to our own dignity as Africans, about which we cannot be expected to remain indifferent, and which could inflame our own passions if not otherwise dealt with ... ¹

The southern African 'front line' — a metaphor often used to denote the (geographical and political) boundary between the independent, black-ruled states of the region and the colonial or minority-ruled ones — started with independent Tanzania's southern border and President Nyerere's uncompromising condemnation of apartheid. Today, the 'Front Line States' (FLS) is a political alliance comprising Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. Namibia is expected to join on independence.

Tanzania was the first of today's Front Line States to reach full independence, in 1961. The 'front line' moved southwards when Zambia (formerly Northern Rhodesia) came to independence in 1964, on the break-up of the settler-ruled Central African Federation which had been created by

Britain, the colonial power.

The other two states freed from the Federation, Southern Rhodesia and Malawi, took different political paths. The Smith regime in Southern Rhodesia, wanting to maintain the political supremacy of the white settlers, unilaterally declared independence from Britain in 1965, thus prolonging the Zimbabwean nationalist struggle for majority rule, and strengthening the country's links with South Africa. Independent Malawi established diplomatic relations with South Africa in 1967. To date, this is the only such link between South Africa and another African country. Malawi's particular relationship with South Africa means that it is not a member of the FLS alliance. However, it is a full member of the Southern Africa Development Coordination Conference (SADCC — a regional organisation formed in 1980 primarily to reduce economic dependence on South Africa).

Of the former British High Commission territories, Botswana and Lesotho came to independence in 1966, and Swaziland in 1968. In 1963, having failed to incorporate these territories with a view to including them in the 'homelands' design,² South Africa proposed instead to establish a southern African common market — a regional political and economic institution with South Africa as the dominant member. Although this proposal fell through, it was the early conceptual forebear of the Constellation of Southern African States (CONSAS), a South African regional policy objective relevant to the later destabilisation phase (see below).

Instead, once independent, these countries were incorporated into the Rand monetary area (from which Botswana subsequently withdrew), and the Southern African Customs Union, which ensured that South Africa had considerable economic leverage over them.

In 1969, independent Africa's opposition to apartheid and colonialism in southern Africa was formally coordinated in the form of the 'Lusaka Manifesto', a document on relations with Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa which remains the touchstone of the Front Line States political alliance. Led by Tanzania and Zambia, fourteen states from east and southern Africa signed it in April; it was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in September, and subsequently approved by the UN General Assembly. The document is very moderate in tone, advocating peaceful change to majority rule unless all such attempts fail. But it warns that without progress, "patience will be exhausted". The document rejects black as well as white racism, acknowledges that whites in southern Africa have strong ties to the land, as many of them have made their home there for generations, and notes that they are therefore entitled to be considered Africans, regardless of their skin colour. Thus, cooperation between all peoples of southern Africa

for the benefit of all was stated as the ultimate goal of the FLS alliance, with the warning that this cannot be achieved if the white Africans refuse to recognise the legitimate aspirations of black Africans.

Until the mid-1970s, however, South Africa was well insulated from proximity with its independent, anti-apartheid neighbours by a buffer zone of colonial territories. While this buffer zone was in place, South Africa's regional policy centred on efforts to reinforce the protective barrier by forming alliances with the colonial governments of these territories.

Increasing regional and international pressure, 1975-1978

The regional outlook changed dramatically from the mid-1970s onwards. Various factors combined to create a regional environment which became increasingly unfavourable to the South African government's interests, and which therefore led to a shift in its regional strategy.

South Africa's 'buffer zone' suddenly began to disintegrate when Angola and Mozambique became independent in 1975, following a coup in Portugal (led by disaffected army officers who had become politicised by their experience of Portugal's colonial wars in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau). Mozambique and Angola joined the FLS alliance. South Africa became militarily involved in Angola in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the pro-Soviet Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) from becoming the independent country's first government.

The fact that the Angolan and Mozambican nationalist movements had come to power, after long and bitter warfare, gave a boost to the mounting popular resistance within South Africa. The 1976 Soweto uprising, and the brutal state repression of the young people involved, refocused international criticism against South Africa, and further radicalised urban youth, many of whom had become politicised through the Black Consciousness Movement of the time. Hundreds of young people left South Africa in the aftermath of Soweto, and many joined the African National Congress (ANC) in exile. Others remained and became more politically active inside South Africa. The death of the young black activist Steve Biko while in detention in 1977 also heightened international censure and further catalysed internal opposition.

The southward march of national independence also helped the ANC, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO — fighting for the independence of Namibia from South Africa), and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). On joining the FLS alliance, Mozambique and Angola set about extending support to these liberation movements.



The Soweto Uprising, 1976 - a watershed event in the recent history of mass resistance against apartheid. 10,000 school pupils protesting against 'Bantu education', in particular the use of Afrikaans in schools, marched through Soweto. They were confronted by the police, who provoked violent clashes. The demonstrations spread to other townships, copying the pattern of attacks on police patrols and symbolic buildings. The official death toll was 575, with 2,389 wounded. Many politicised young people went into exile after 'Soweto', and many community organisations were subsequently formed inside South Africa. (IDAF)

Independent Angola offered refuge and military bases to the ANC and SWAPO. Luanda became the headquarters of SWAPO in exile, and SWAPO guerrillas were able to move more easily across Namibia's northern border, using Angolan territory as a rear base. Mozambique offered military rear-base support to ZANU, and hospitality to the ANC, although its headquarters remained in Lusaka.

The failure of various internationally sponsored efforts at mediation in Rhodesia during the mid-1970s meant that the war for independence continued, threatening what remained of South Africa's buffer zone. However, South African business interests profited from the situation because of the captive export market created by mandatory UN sanctions against Rhodesia.

South Africa's relations with the West deteriorated over the granting of 'independence' to the Transkei 'homeland' in 1976, and the impasse over Namibia's future after the UN Plan for its independence was agreed in 1978.

It was against this background of increasing internal, regional and international pressure on apartheid that South Africa shaped the regional strategy which it pursued for most of the 1980s. Its overriding preoccupation was with the defence and security of the apartheid state.

'Total onslaught' and the 'total strategy'

We are today involved in a war, whether we wish to accept it or not.

(South African White Paper on Defence, 1977)

Reflecting the growing involvement of the military in formulating both foreign and domestic policy in South Africa, the 1973 White Paper on Defence first introduced the concept of the 'total strategy', which was further elaborated in the succeeding White Papers on Defence of 1975 and 1977.

The government argued that South Africa faced a "total onslaught", the aim of which was "the overthrow of the present constitutional order and its replacement by a subject, communist-oriented, black government".³ Although the onslaught was described as "communist inspired", it was also seen to embrace a wide range of forces, including not only the FLS, the ANC and SWAPO, but also the UN, the OAU, and "the West". To counter the perceived threat of a concerted attack on South African society, the concept of the 'Total National Strategy' was developed, and was adopted as official policy in 1978 following P.W. Botha's rise from Defence Minister to Prime Minister, later to become State President.

In 1977, the 'total strategy' was officially defined as

the comprehensive plan to utilize all the means available to a state according to an integrated pattern in order to achieve the national aims within the framework of specific policies.⁴

In his preface to the 1977 White Paper on Defence, P.W. Botha — then Minister of Defence — explained why the new strategy had arisen:

During the past two years there have been far-reaching political, economic, and military developments in both the global and regional context, with direct implications for the Republic of South Africa. Marxist militarism is casting a shadow over Africa. Nevertheless the Western countries still take part in a senseless arms embargo against the RSA.

... the principle of the right of self-determination of the White nation must not be regarded as being negotiable.

Military strategy forms part of a broader national strategy to ensure this.

Regional cooperation — on whose terms?

South Africa's terms

In so far as regional policy is concerned, the aims of the 'total strategy' have been reformulated over time. In 1979, the idea of a regional constellation of states (CONSAS) was reintroduced, and its creation was a major policy objective. CONSAS members were to share economic, political, and defence interests, with South Africa as the key member determining the regional order.

CONSAS membership was intended to include as many independent states in the region as would join, together with Namibia and the 'independent' bantustans in South Africa, under a client grouping of minority parties. Since the notion of CONSAS was revamped in 1979, it has been adapted in the light of subsequent events. But some observers believe that it remained a background policy objective throughout the 1980s.

The Front Line States' terms

By 1979, the FLS had laid firm plans for their alternative regional economic cooperation body, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, widely known by its acronym SADCC. In direct contrast to CONSAS, SADCC was conceived as a vehicle for restructuring regional economic relations. Its primary aim was to reduce dependence on South Africa.



The first ZANU (PF) rally to be held in Rhodesia as the liberation war drew to a close, Salisbury, 1979. (Neil Libbert/Camera Press)

Both sides needed Zimbabwe to come to an internationally recognised independence suitable for their different purposes. Situated right in the centre of the region, straddling the major transport routes, with the most developed economy after South Africa's, an independent Zimbabwe was the missing part of the regional jigsaw necessary to fall into place before any regional economic grouping could be developed, CONSAS or SADCC.

South Africa hoped Zimbabwe would come to independence under the leadership of Bishop Muzorewa (then installed as the caretaker leader under the terms of the March 1978 internal settlement), while the FLS needed a victory by the Patriotic Front alliance (the tactical alliance between ZANU and ZAPU formed in October 1976).⁵

In the event, ZANU PF's landslide electoral victory in 1980 and Zimbabwe's immediate accession to the FLS alliance meant that SADCC was established within weeks, and plans for CONSAS were undermined. At its first full inaugural meeting, in Lusaka on 1 April 1980, SADCC defined four main strategic objectives. Firstly, the reduction of economic dependence, particularly, but not only, on the Republic of South Africa. Secondly, the forging of links to create genuine and equitable regional integration. Thirdly, the mobilisation of resources to promote the implementation of national, interstate, and regional policies. And fourthly, concerted action to secure international cooperation within the framework of a strategy for economic liberation.

The formation of SADCC represented a setback to the South African government's plans for the region on many different fronts. As regards membership, not only had the nine independent states of the region refused to join CONSAS, but they were also quick to join its political and economic rival — SADCC. As a result, CONSAS went ahead on a very limited scale which fell far short of South Africa's original plan for a regional organisation. An 'inner constellation' was formed, comprising South Africa and the four 'independent' bantustans (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei) with elaborate structures for cooperation.⁶ South Africa's plans to develop this 'inner constellation' into the originally envisaged 'wider constellation' were deferred to the future.

The establishment of SADCC revealed the Front Line States' open intention to transform the existing economic order, in defiance of South Africa's regional economic domination. SADCC's first priority was to reduce the region's transport dependency on South Africa by strengthening regional alternatives. The South African-backed conflicts in Mozambique and Angola have targetted the region's east-west trade corridors. This strategy increased regional dependence on South Africa's trade routes, thereby attacking the

political tenets of SADCC.

Thus, regional economic cooperation became a key factor as the South African government's regional behaviour grew distinctly more aggressive and coercive. Its plan to shape regional relations through CONSAS was blocked. Its buffer zone had been finally replaced by Front Line States (with the exception of Namibia). There was mounting internal pressure and resistance to apartheid, all of which stimulated international censure against South Africa. The destabilisation phase of South Africa's regional policy, which began with that country's invasion of Angola in 1975, intensified, until signs of a shift in strategy became apparent in 1988.

Internal developments, 1983 — 1987

During the 1980s, with the 'total national strategy' in place, the apartheid system of government was entering a decade of heightened crisis, one which led inexorably to what many observers now believe to be the early 'transition' phase towards the final end of apartheid. Key developments took place inside South Africa. These, together with South Africa's hostile actions in the region, focused renewed international condemnation of the South African government.



State repression of extra-parliamentary opposition in South Africa was stepped up following the imposition, in 1985, of the State of Emergency. During 1988, 32 anti-apartheid organisations were restricted from all political activities. (IDAF)

During 1983, there was a significant growth of anti-apartheid organisations within South Africa. The United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum (NF) were formed as umbrella organisations to link local and national groups; the trade union movement also began to develop umbrella organisational structures at this time. This was a key element behind the high-profile and well-rooted 'popular uprising' which surfaced in 1984.

From 1984 to 1986, popular resistance inside South Africa increased on an unprecedented scale. It was focused on education and housing; and on issues such as the deployment of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the townships, and forced removals of black people from their land; and on mass rejection of the state's 'reform and repress' strategy. In particular, resistance coalesced around the government's proposals to 'reform' apartheid by introducing a tricameral parliament, which excluded blacks, and gave severely limited powers to the 'Coloureds' and 'Asians' in their 'own' separate parliamentary chambers.

Illustrating the view that the apartheid system provokes a cyclical round of violence — one of black rebellion and state repression⁷ — the 1984 increase in popular resistance provoked a backlash, also on an unprecedented scale. In July 1985, the government declared a State of Emergency covering 36 magisterial districts. This was temporarily lifted in March 1986, but during those seven months it has been estimated that at least 853 people were killed in nationwide political violence, that 7,992 people were detained under Emergency regulations, and a further 4,152 under other laws.⁸

Another State of Emergency was declared in June 1986. This time it was nationwide, and it was annually renewed with increased restrictions in 1987, 1988, and 1989. Between September 1984 and December 1988, political violence cost over 4,000 lives (mostly black).⁹

Between 1986 and 1988, state repression continued. Thirty-two anti-apartheid organisations were restricted, effectively banned from all activities, during 1988. Detentions under Emergency regulations continued. In the first year of the total State of Emergency (as from June 1986), some 20,000 people were detained; in the second year, some 8,500; and estimates of the numbers held over the following year give a figure of 2,000.¹⁰ Yet organised resistance was not contained by the government actions, even though many organisations and activists in the resistance network had been affected by the repression. Work stayaways, rent, consumer and transport boycotts, and armed resistance continued.

Media restrictions

Increased controls on media reporting of all political conflict were introduced

THE

WEEKLY MAIL

Volume 2, Number 24, FRIDAY JUNE 20 to THURSDAY JUNE 26, 1986

THE PAPER FOR A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

PRICES: (ADVERTISING: 17% EXTRA) (STREET: R1.00 (plus 12c GST)) (AT HOME: R1.12 (plus 12c GST))

WE'RE BACK ON THE STREETS!

The paper that was seized last week will be on sale as usual from today

The EPG report: An extraordinary document made ordinary by our extraordinary times **8**

A leaf-munching plan to beat malnutrition **7**

FRONT PAGE COMMENT

Our lawyers tell us we can say almost nothing critical about the Emergency

But we'll try:

PIK BOTHA, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, told US television audiences this week that the South African press remained free.

We hope that [REDACTED] was listening.

They considered our publication subversive.

- If it is subversive to speak out against [REDACTED], we plead guilty.
- If it is subversive to express concern about [REDACTED], we plead guilty.
- If it is subversive to believe that there are better routes to peace than the [REDACTED], we plead guilty.

● To PAGE 2

RESTRICTED

No parts of these pages have been compared to comply with emergency regulation

The front page of the South African "Weekly Mail", announcing the government's sweeping media restrictions under the 1986 State of Emergency. International public opinion was numbed when the images of resistance disappeared from regular TV coverage. Free association and a free press are key prerequisites for negotiations.

in December 1986, and further restrictions followed.¹¹ The effects of these restrictions have been far-reaching. In particular the restricted TV coverage largely succeeded in reducing international public awareness of the struggle in South Africa.

The 1986 White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply explained the powerful Defence Department's analysis of the role of the foreign media under the heading 'Propaganda Onslaught'. Having attacked the 'negative' radio broadcasts about South Africa emanating from various African countries, the paper went on to state:

The transmissions from Western transmitters such as the Voice of America, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Deutsche Welle, France and the Netherlands were more subtle, and a higher degree of hostility towards the present dispensation was at times noticed.

In support of some local media, foreign media attempt to create a climate for negotiation with the ANC ... The SA Defence Force was one of the main targets of this (foreign) radio propaganda. Broadcasts focused especially on accusations of so-called aggression against neighbouring states, so-called destabilisation and so-called support to resistance movements. The role of the SA Defence Force in containing internal unrest also figured strongly in recent broadcasts, and a smear campaign is being conducted concerning alleged atrocities against the local population.¹²

By 1986, the network of resistance organisations had sustained serious setbacks due to the repression unleashed against them. There are numerous records detailing state repression.¹³

Oxfam's experience

During the 1980s, Oxfam's programme of support in South Africa has had to respond to the great tidal waves of internal developments, and in particular to the cyclical pattern of resistance and repression.

The growth of internal anti-apartheid organisations generated a pressing need for financial support to a wide range of newly formed groups active on social issues. Once launched, these organisations were to face the effects of severe repression. As Oxfam field workers have been stressing since the early 1980s, working in South Africa during a time of increasing state repression has been especially difficult. In this respect, Oxfam and other foreign non-governmental agencies have experienced how state repression has affected people's organisations and everyday life.

Direct effects of state repression

Organisations have been shut down or severely restricted, and key people have been detained or have gone into hiding to avoid detention. Many

organisations supported by Oxfam have been affected in this way — including Trade Unions, Advice Centres, paralegal organisations, organisations resisting removals, education organisations, community newspapers, crisis, welfare, and emergency relief organisations, and rural communities, especially those in the 'homelands'.

In February 1988, The Detainees' Parents Support Committee, a key organisation which campaigned against detentions, was restricted, effectively banned. For a while afterwards, independently-assessed, up-to-date information on Emergency detentions was harder to obtain. However, as has happened with so many popular organisations, soon after one was restricted, another was formed to take over its role. The Human Rights Commission, under the South African Council of Churches and the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, is now a key source of reliable information.

Another example is the Chesterville Residents Association in Durban. The

Abraham Maja, a church worker in the Transvaal, was detained for eight months without trial under Emergency regulations. He helps to run advice centres which support people who face the many legal, economic, and employment problems created by apartheid. This work was seriously disrupted by his arbitrary detention.

(Rona Alexander)



membership of its Executive Committee had to change composition four times in two years, due to detentions of its workers under emergency regulations which severely hampered working links with the community, and the continuity of work.

For Abraham Maja, who worked with the Northern Transvaal Council of Churches, arrest came completely out of the blue. Part of his work was to support Oxfam-funded community advisers. He was arrested on 13 June 1986, on the day the State of Emergency was announced. He was eventually released on bail in February 1987, and all charges against him were later dropped. He explained to an Oxfam fieldworker the effects of his arrest and that of a colleague, and the impact of a police raid on their office: "With the detention of the fieldworker, only two new staff remained. They were intimidated by the police attention, and quickly resigned. The office came to a standstill. This was the situation I found on my release eight months later."¹⁴

Indirect effects of state repression

Because of the way in which community organisations have been targeted — restricted by the state, and attacked by right-wing vigilante organisations — many community structures have been severely disrupted. This means that the work of their local community service organisations (advice centres, for example) is hampered. This has happened in two related ways. Firstly, because a repressive crackdown often creates a sharp upturn in the need for help — perhaps legal advice, medical assistance, or help with a housing crisis — which stretches the capacity of the service organisation. And secondly, because community service organisations have to operate within a framework of community representation on their management committees. So when the community leadership has been detained or is in hiding, it is frequently impossible for working links of this sort to be maintained.

An example is the advice centre in the semi-rural area of Inchanga, a quiet spot in Natal. Large areas of Natal are dominated by conflict between Inkatha (the quasi-cultural movement, based only in Natal, led by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi) and members of the United Democratic Front (the UDF) and the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).¹⁵ The peace of Inchanga was shattered in early 1988 when a number of youths fled there, followed by Inkatha, police and defence forces. Suddenly, Inchanga became a hot-spot. The advice centre (based in a mission) found itself surrounded by conflict — with troops all around, and helicopters hovering overhead. The Chairperson of the Centre was arrested, and the relationships which had grown up between the Centre and the community were badly affected. People became afraid and suspicious, and the Centre's management were

unable to meet for nine months because of tensions in the community. They were scared to meet in case Inkatha vigilantes decided the Centre was a UDF or COSATU organisation, which could have sparked off a chain of tit-for-tat funeral killings.

Another example is the Durban Crisis Network, a service organisation which does relief work, helping people with such things as legal aid and urgent cash needs. It is linked with some 40 different community organisations. The disruption of the grass-roots community organisations meant that the services of the Crisis Network were severely curtailed.

Effects on development workers

A typical case is that of Alex Mbatha, a South African development fieldworker supported by Oxfam and working with the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. In 1981 he was detained during an early morning police raid on his Soweto home. His wife Khosi and their two-year-old daughter Dudu were also arrested. They were held for seven months without trial, and no charges were ever brought against them. During this time they were tortured. Following his release, Alex recounted his experiences while in detention, which have been so typical of others. He said,

On 22 October 1981, the police came into my house, smashed open my door with a crowbar, and rushed in as if there was a criminal in the house. They woke us up. They threw suitcases all over our bed and we were rushed out of



Vigil for Alex and Khosi Mbatha, held outside the South African Embassy in London during their 7 months' detention without trial in 1981/2. Alex was a development worker in South Africa for the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference and Oxfam. The Mbathas fled into exile on their release. (Oxfam)

the house in only a few minutes. I shall never forget how we were rushed out of the house, as if it was on fire. They had me by the scruff of my neck, and I had Dudu, our baby, in my hands. We were pushed into a car. Little did I know that I would never see my home again. [The family fled into exile on their release.]

On 19 November they started taking me to the torture chamber ... They started on me by putting a hood over my head when I was naked. They would beat the daylight out of me, pouring water over the hood at the same time. Later they used electric gadgets on my private parts, and over my whole body.

They would come into my cell at any time, preferably at night, and just kick me and say I am still stubborn.

I pitied them because I could see they were part of a machine, part of a system that is so inflexible and not prepared to listen, part of a system that smashes black families.¹⁶

Conclusion

All these internal developments were reflected in South Africa's regional policy. Having stimulated conflict, tension, and military expenditure both inside South Africa and within the wider region, the state's 'total onslaught' analysis easily perpetuated itself. In 1986, for example, just a month before the South African air raids on Gaborone, Harare, and Lusaka which were especially timed to undermine the Commonwealth Eminent Persons' mission, the South African Minister of Defence argued that the SADF and Armscor (the parastatal armaments industry established because of the UN arms embargo) needed increased resources, because "... the internal security situation has worsened; the conventional arms build-up in neighbouring countries continues; and the SA Defence Force must adapt its posture within the new dispensation." He continued:

It is not only in the interests of the RSA, but undoubtedly also of our neighbouring states and the subcontinent, that the excessive build-up of forces and the escalation of terrorist activity be stopped. It is of the greatest importance for the well-being and security of all the Southern African countries that all parties strive towards actively establishing a common interstate forum where matters of common security and welfare may be dealt with to the benefit of all. The SA Defence Force is prepared to participate in the activities of such a forum at any time and place.¹⁷

However, developments from 1983 onwards caused the tide to turn slowly against South Africa. The government began the 1980s with the hawkish view that apartheid could be defended intact by external aggression and internal 'reform and repression'. But by the end of the decade, mounting pressures on apartheid were to lead to a change of strategy.



The ‘destabilisation’ phase of South Africa’s regional policy

In its dealings with the surrounding states, the South African government has wielded the stick of military and economic sanctions to bend neighbouring nations to its will.

This, the external face of apartheid, is of importance in defending the system and in holding at bay pressure from the international community for ending it.¹

(Excerpt from the report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, following their mission to South and southern Africa in May 1986.)

The external face of apartheid: destabilisation

During the 1980s, South Africa’s foreign policy towards its neighbours became widely known as ‘destabilisation’. It was a policy of aggressive military and economic interventions (both direct and indirect) in the region.

Destabilisation is a deliberate policy which has clear, political objectives. As one leading South African academic and policy analyst has stated,

The (political) objective of destabilisation is to effect profound political changes in the ‘target state’. These may or may not involve structural change — which means dislodging the regime in power — but certainly involve major changes in the target state’s behaviour, specifically towards the ‘destabiliser’.²

South Africa’s regional policy uses a mix of military, economic, political and diplomatic elements, combining coercive with persuasive tactics (the ‘carrot and stick’ approach). These have been used in different combinations at different times, and have played on the different characteristics and



Mozambican mother and child on the move — arriving at a settlement for displaced people at Alto Moloque in Zambezia Province after MNR attacks on their home area.

(Jenny Matthews / Oxfam)

vulnerabilities of the countries in the region.

From 1989 onwards, with a new configuration of international and internal pressure on apartheid, it is widely believed that South Africa's regional policy is adapting to meet new circumstances. Most observers believe there is a shift away from predominant military aggression towards a largely economic and diplomatic offensive.³

Because the situation is now more fluid than it has been for years, the pace of change is difficult to predict. As one leading member of the United Democratic Front (UDF) explained, "Experience shows that the South African government only moves when pressure is applied. Although we have paid a very high price for the pressure we have put on the government, it is more needed now than ever."⁴

Defending the system — foreign policy begins at home

Like any government's foreign policy, South Africa's overall aim is to further its view of the 'national interest'. In this case, it is clear that the survival of an embattled system of white supremacy was the foremost element of 'national interest' during the 1980s. Until apartheid is ended, this will remain the overall aim, although strategy will alter to meet new developments. The specific objectives of South Africa's regional policy can be divided into three main categories — security, economic considerations, and political factors.

As far as security is concerned, South Africa's pressure throughout the 1980s on neighbouring states ensured a geographical barrier to protect against infiltration from guerrillas loyal to the African National Congress (ANC). Reportedly, no nearby state now accords the ANC military training bases. The Nkomati Accord of 1984 provided for the withdrawal of Mozambican support for the ANC, apart from a small diplomatic presence. A similar non-aggression treaty is reported to have been reached with Swaziland. ANC personnel were expelled from Lesotho, following the South African-backed coup in January 1986. Some reports in August 1989 stated that Zambia had insisted on a scaled-down ANC presence, although these were later denied. As part of the bargaining process involved in the tripartite peace agreement on Angola and Namibia in 1988, Angola agreed to withdraw its ANC military training facilities. (It has since been reported that the ANC military personnel who have had to leave Angola have been accommodated instead in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Tanzania.)

Economic considerations have been central to South Africa's relationship with the wider region, for two main reasons. Firstly, a constant element of South Africa's regional policy over the years has been to ensure that its poorer neighbours continue to serve its domestic economic requirements. The region is important for South Africa's economy — providing markets for its exports, some imports (mostly primary produce), transport revenue, and labour. South Africa's determination to form and dominate a regional organisation for economic cooperation (as well as cooperation in other fields) has been a key element of its regional policy.

Secondly, South Africa has aimed to foster the region's economic dependence on its own economy, as a bargaining counter against increased international sanctions. For example, in March 1989 Foreign Minister Pik Botha warned against the European Community's proposals for extended coal sanctions against South Africa (principally opposed by West Germany) by saying that if South African coal mines were closed as a result, "Hundreds of

thousands of black Africans, even from neighbouring countries, would lose their jobs and will be sent home.”⁶

President Chissano of Mozambique replied by saying that his people were already suffering from sanctions imposed by South Africa, and that the repatriation of the small proportion of Mozambican migrant workers employed in the coal mines should be seen in the context of the 62,000 people who had then been recently released from territory held inside Mozambique by guerrillas of the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR, or RENAMO) and who were being assisted by the government. He said, “The social burden of Mozambican miners sent back from South Africa will not be unbearable. They are welcome.”⁷

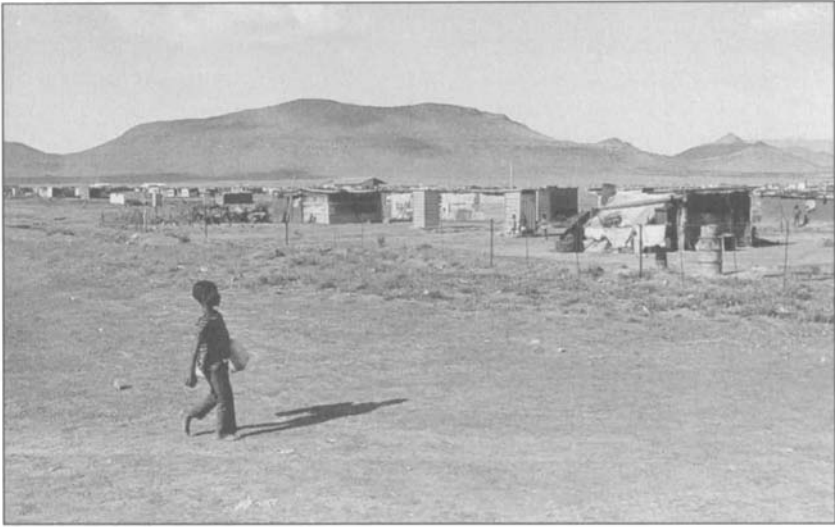
Taking up the point, official British statements have constantly stressed the harm which increased sanctions against South Africa would do to the rest of the region as one reason for not applying them. Sanctions, as an official Foreign Office policy statement on South Africa puts it, “... would also damage our own economy to no avail, and those of the neighbouring states”.

The paper goes on to say that the other southern Africa states “could lose from a weakened South African economy and certainly would lose if South Africa retaliated against them for measures imposed by them or by others. The losses inflicted on them would far exceed the capacity of outsiders to help.”⁸

On the economic front, South Africa’s policy has also experienced failures. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) has had a considerable measure of success, especially in opening up transport routes, and in the diplomatic sphere. The business lobby within South Africa has pointed out that destabilised states cannot provide buoyant export markets, and destabilisation has further tarnished South Africa’s international image, creating increased pressure for sanctions, and exacerbating foreign investors’ and lenders’ lack of confidence.

Political considerations have also been important in the shaping of South Africa’s regional policy. The economic and political difficulties faced by other African countries, in particular the destabilised countries, have often been invoked to justify postponement of the central political issue in South Africa — universal adult suffrage in a unitary state without special privileges based on race. Problems beyond South Africa’s borders (regardless of their causes and in spite of the poverty, violence, and economic decline within South Africa) are used to ‘demonstrate’ that, as far as Africa is concerned, majority rule is undesirable.

For example, a 1987 pamphlet distributed by the South African Embassy in London claimed,



Child in Onvervacht, in the Orange Free State white farmlands, a 'dumping ground' for black people who have been removed from their former homes.

(Nancy Durrell-McKenna / Oxfam)

South Africa has rejected the one man, one vote constitutional models that have plunged Africa into so much misery and chaos ... Given the disastrous consequences of one man, one vote in Africa - of which South Africa is an integral part, sharing the continent's manifold socio-economic headaches - such a political dispensation is not feasible for South Africa in the foreseeable future.⁹

The National Party's view that majority rule has brought disaster to the rest of Africa is important to their domestic political platform, because it relates closely to their vision of the future constitutional shape of South Africa (outlined in the Party's Five Year Plan of 1989 — see Appendix I). In February 1989, while leader of the National Party and before becoming State President, F.W. de Klerk told reporters, "Typical one-man-one-vote leads to majority rule ... That would be catastrophic for South Africa."¹⁰ On the same day, in his speech to parliament (from which blacks are excluded), he characteristically described what would be called full constitutional democracy anywhere else as 'domination':

Is there anyone in this chamber in favour of black domination? I doubt it ... To the white voters I today give this assurance: in building a new dispensation, which offers full and equal rights to all, the National Party will jealously watch over your security and interests, and those of minority groups ... Our strong emphasis on group rights ... is based on the reality of South Africa and not on an ideological obsession or racial prejudice.¹¹

At the end of 1989, the National Party remained wedded to some form of 'group rights',¹² in direct contrast to the ANC's position, which holds that 'group rights' is the central tenet of apartheid. ('Group' in this context means racial group, and 'group rights' is a National Party shorthand term taken to mean that minority groups, as defined by the Population Registration Act, would be able to hold political and economic power in measures disproportionate to their numbers.) In an October 1989 address, Thabo Mbeki, head of the ANC's Department of International Affairs, explained the implications of this policy:

De Klerk and the National Party went to the September elections on an apartheid platform, clearly and consistently stated as 'Group Rights'. It runs through their Five Year Plan. When de Klerk says the issue of universal franchise is no longer in dispute, he means it within the context of apartheid.¹³

Policy formulation

South Africa's policy towards the region is a synthesis created by different, often competing, interest groups within the ruling elite. The relative powers of the competing elements are also affected by changing pressures and developments.

The military has played a key role, but many observers now believe that, as far as regional policy is concerned, the influence of the 'verligte' (Afrikaans for 'enlightened') outlook is becoming increasingly important. This is mainly because the power held by the 'securocrats' (the hawkish elements normally associated with the military) was probably tempered by the SADF's defeat at Cuito Cunavale in southern Angola in 1988, and by President Botha's resignation from office in August 1989.¹⁴ (The former Minister of Defence, and the person held most responsible for what one British government Minister has called the "infuriating" lack of progress,¹⁵ he is widely regarded as the patron of the securocrats' political ascendance.)

Throughout the 1980s, South Africa remained a highly militarised state, with a powerful security apparatus controlling all levels of civilian society. This 'National Security Management System'¹⁶ was designed to implement the defence of apartheid. A key issue for the coming period is how far the power of this apparatus and the 'securocrat' political interests vested in it will diminish. President de Klerk announced his intention to dismantle the NSMS in November 1989.¹⁷

Furthermore, although the role of parliamentary democracy in South Africa has been eroded by the militarisation of the State, nevertheless the results of the September 1989 'general' election clearly demonstrated that the white electorate wanted change.

The main elements of South Africa's regional strategy

The key aspects of South Africa's regional strategy during the 1980s were economic and military. Diplomacy re-emerged towards the end of the 1980s, most markedly during F.W. de Klerk's pre-election trips (as President-Elect) to Zambia, Zaire, Mozambique, and Lesotho in July and August 1989.

South Africa's regional strategy has also employed a combination of 'carrot and stick' tactics. In part, this is thought to reflect the fact that there are competing interests within the ruling elite,¹⁸ as well as reflecting a deliberate strategy. In June 1987, Chester Crocker, then the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, explained,

The South African government appears to be following a two-track policy, and the two tracks complement each other rather than contradict each other. By maintaining its links with and support for RENAMO, the South African Government controls an instrument with which to pressure the Government of Mozambique. At the same time, the South African Government provides positive incentives, such as economic incentives, to the Government of Mozambique. The South African Government's objective is to create negative and positive incentives to influence Mozambican behaviour in directions favourable to South African interests.¹⁹



A 1985 funeral procession at Guguletu in South Africa. Under Emergency Regulations which banned mass opposition gatherings, the funerals of those killed by political conflict became the focus for popular demonstrations. (Dave Hartman / Afrapix)

At the end of the 1980s, in keeping with the shift in its regional strategy, South Africa was reviewing the balance between carrot and stick. Many believe that the 'carrot' will predominate. Even so, South Africa's regional behaviour will continue to be rooted in the government's perceived domestic interests, and, as the Commonwealth Heads of State put it in 1985,

... only the eradication of apartheid and the establishment of majority rule on the basis of free and fair exercise of universal adult suffrage by all the people in a united and non-fragmented South Africa can lead to a just and lasting solution of the explosive situation prevailing in southern Africa.²⁰

Economic elements of South Africa's regional strategy

The punitive economic pressures used as part of South Africa's regional policy have created widespread hardship. Nobody knows what the long-term damage of these massive costs to the economic fabric of the region will be.

A key economic lever has been the concerted attempt — mostly through proxy military support — to sabotage the four east/west transport corridors (three in Mozambique and one in Angola) which carry the trade of the landlocked SADCC states. The aim of this was to increase economic dependence on South Africa (by increasing reliance on the trade routes running through South Africa), and thereby to sabotage the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC).

But, alongside its punitive military and economic tactics, and in keeping with its objective of remaining the dominant regional economic power, the South Africa government has also sought positive economic links. These fall into three main categories: trade and trade credit, funding for economic cooperation projects, and aid.

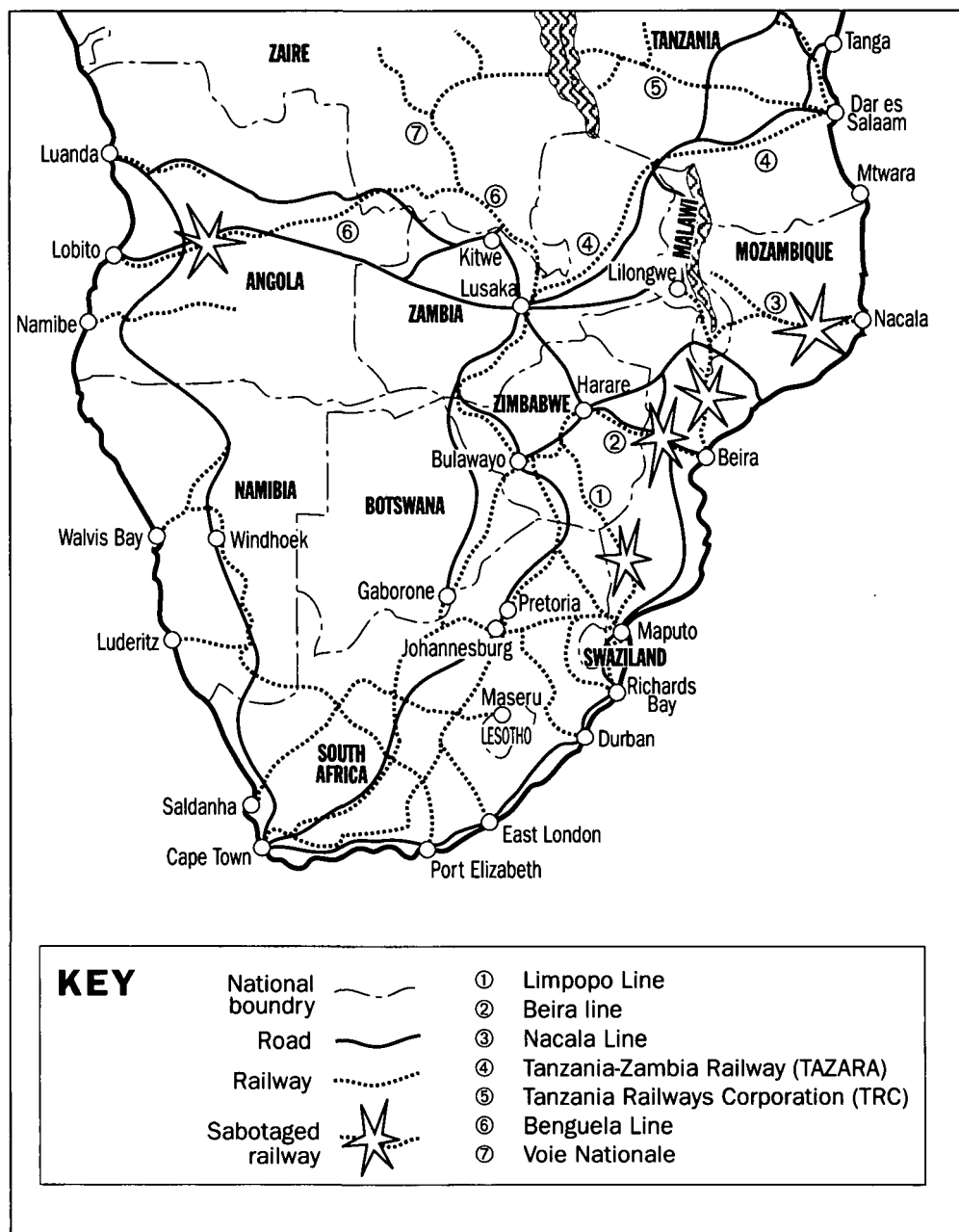
Trade credit

Trade credit has been an effective way of at least maintaining (and at best increasing) trading links with the region. Trade credit is a much-valued incentive in countries acutely short of foreign exchange, and has been extended by the South African government, which allows export credit guarantee cover to South African firms doing business in the region. Zambia, for example, has found that South African firms are the only ones in a position to offer this incentive.²¹ For some years, Zambia's economic crisis has meant that its export credit guarantee cover rating among other trading partner nations has been negligible.

Economic cooperation projects

There are three main projects involving cooperation between South Africa and the region.²² In addition to the direct economic benefits of each project, they also have important advantages for South African business interests and the government's international standing. In particular, the international

Transport routes in southern Africa



cooperation these projects entail breaks down the 'isolation' factor — which has been such a key preoccupation of recent South African foreign policy.²³

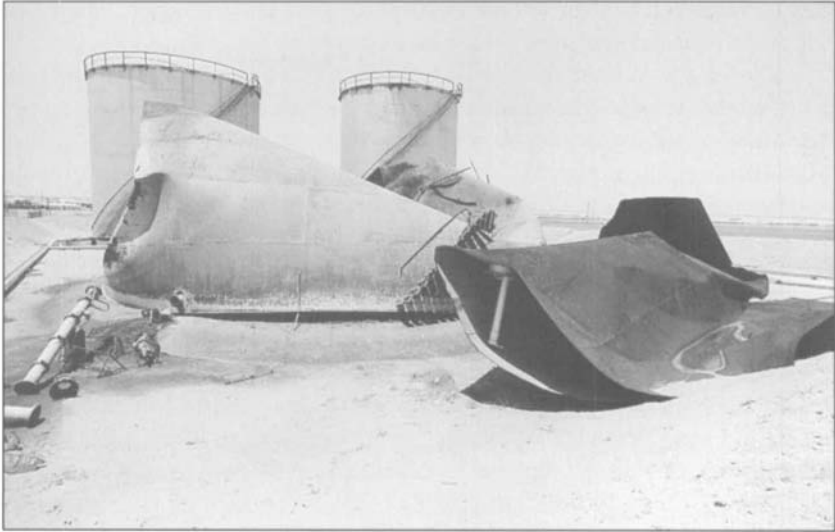
In Lesotho, the Highlands Water Scheme is a large project to dam, channel and tunnel river pathways so that Lesotho can generate its own electricity and so that water — one of the few natural resources South Africa is short of — can be sold to South Africa. Money for the scheme has been raised from a diverse range of sources, including the World Bank. Although the scheme will benefit Lesotho's fragile and dependent economy, it is also bringing South Africa more than assured water supplies. Firstly, South African firms stand in a good position to tender for the internationally financed construction contracts. And secondly, both the bilateral accord with Lesotho and South Africa's involvement in the international cooperation for financing the scheme²⁴ help to break South Africa's isolation.

The Cabora Bassa Dam in Mozambique is the largest hydro-electric complex in Africa. It is capable of providing Mozambique and South Africa with cheap electricity, were it not for the guerrilla forces of the Mozambican National Resistance (the MNR), which regularly sabotage the transmission lines to South Africa. (This has meant that Mozambique has had to spend precious foreign exchange on repairing the lines, and importing electricity from South Africa.) Under a new agreement to reopen the project, the South African government is to make credits available to a South African construction company for the rebuilding of pylons. South Africa joins with Italy and Portugal in financing the project. In giving Mozambique 'non-lethal' military aid to defend the line, South Africa finds itself protecting its investments against a force it is responsible for having built up.²⁵

The third example of economic cooperation is the Sua Pan project in Botswana, which will provide the South African market with around 300,000 tonnes of soda ash a year.²⁶

Aid

Mozambique and Malawi have both received South African economic assistance. The new capital city of Malawi, for instance, was built with South African finance. When State President Botha visited Mozambique in September 1988, he announced a gift of 'non-lethal' military aid, worth \$4.5 million. Speaking at the handover ceremony a couple of months later, South Africa's Deputy Defence Minister used the opportunity to portray Pretoria as a regional benefactor. He said, "South Africa is the stabiliser of the region. The constant accusation that the SADF is destabilising Southern Africa is therefore untrue."²⁷



Oil storage tanks destroyed by SADF sabotage, Namibe, Angola. Angola depends on its oil industry for almost all its foreign exchange earnings.

(Keith Bernstein / Oxfam)

Military elements of South Africa's regional strategy

The most dramatic form of destabilisation has been the military dimension, as reflected in the massive suffering, displacement, and economic disruption it has caused. South Africa has used both direct and indirect military strategies to destabilise its neighbours.

As far as direct military aggression is concerned, conventional South African forces occupied southern Angola intermittently from 1975 until implementation of the tripartite peace agreement of December 1988. The testimony of one South African conscript gives a clear account of his duties when he was deployed in Angola between 1983 and 1984.

Then our unit was sent into Angola. We went straight to Chiede, 20 km over the border (with Namibia). We were doing a lot of vehicle patrols because you don't walk once you're in Angola. We spent two or three days at Ngiva taking a lot of things out. We blew the runway, and we blew a lot of ammunition up and we bashed the buildings down, we exploded a lot of things all over the place.²⁸

The SADF has launched commando raids into Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe, and has mounted air strikes into Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. According to press reports collated over the period December 1981 to April 1988, the SADF has acknowledged 11 raids into neighbouring states,

excluding its military operations in Angola. One of these raids, where two South African soldiers were killed in Zimbabwe, was officially said to be 'unauthorised'. At least 144 people have been killed and 233 injured in these acknowledged raids. However, over the same period, there were at least 11 unacknowledged attacks on neighbouring states in which at least 20 people were killed, and five injured, according to press reports. Moreover, over the same period, a total of 46 assassination attempts on ANC members living outside South Africa were reported in the South African press. This figure does not include the acknowledged SADF raids into neighbouring states. At least 42 ANC members are reported to have been killed and at least 13 injured in these events.²⁹ In addition, at least ten people have been forcibly abducted from neighbouring states to South Africa over the same period.³⁰

The only southern African countries which have escaped direct military aggression from South Africa to date are Tanzania and Malawi. (As the only African country with full diplomatic relations with South Africa, it is unlikely that Malawi would be attacked directly.) However, both of these countries are indirectly affected by South Africa's military destabilisation of their neighbours. Both countries host refugees from Mozambique, and have committed troops to fight there. And Malawi suffers severe economic problems as a result of MNR sabotage of its trade routes through Mozambique.

But it has been South Africa's indirect (proxy) military destabilisation, its support for rebel movements especially in Mozambique and Angola,³¹ which has caused far more suffering and destruction than its direct military aggression. Before the December 1988 'Southwestern Africa tripartite peace agreement', South Africa was openly supporting the Angolan rebel movement, UNITA.³² But there has been controversy over the issue of South African support for the Mozambican National Resistance (MNR, or RENAMO, known throughout Mozambique as the "bandidos armados" — the armed terrorists).

South African support for the MNR, 1984 — early 1989

In March 1984, the South African government scored a key success in terms of the security objectives of its regional policy when the Nkomati Accord was signed. (This was a bilateral non-aggression treaty between Mozambique and South Africa, signed at the point when Mozambique had been brought to its knees by drought and war.) The evidence suggests that between the signing of the treaty and early 1989, South Africa did not keep to its side of the bargain, and continued to support the MNR covertly.³³ Not surprisingly, given the high-profile nature of the Nkomati Accord, the South African government consistently denied that it was supporting the MNR, acknowledging only a



Working closely with the Mozambican government's disaster relief agency, Oxfam has distributed cloth, blankets, clothing, seed, and tools to people displaced by MNR attacks.
(Jenny Matthews / Oxfam)

'technical' violation in 1985.³⁴

For example, in July 1987, following a BBC1 interview with one of Oxfam's emergencies officers about Oxfam's work in Mozambique and the causes of the crisis, Oxfam received a letter from an official in the South African Embassy in London which stated, "I must take strong exception to (Oxfam's) statement ... The accusation of supporting RENAMO is consistently used in this country as a handy anti-South African tool. The South African government has consistently denied assistance to RENAMO ..."³⁵

Only a month earlier, however, Chester Crocker, then US Assistant Secretary of State, had given evidence to a Congressional hearing on Mozambique. He said,

South Africa took over responsibility for training and arming RENAMO, a Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation creation, in 1980 following Zimbabwe's independence. South African officials made little effort to disguise their country's actions as part of an effort to put pressure on the Mozambican government. The US continues to collect and analyse information on RENAMO's relationship with South Africa from all available sources, including sensitive intelligence sources. The evidence clearly indicates a continuing relationship of communication with and support for RENAMO from the Government of South Africa.³⁶

More recently, during his visit to Mozambique in September 1988,³⁷ P.W. Botha — then State President — announced that South Africa was to change its policy. In addition to announcing 'non-lethal' military aid to Mozambique (primarily to protect the Cabora Bassa electric power lines supplying South Africa), State President Botha was reported to have promised that South Africa would cease assistance to the MNR. President Chissano said of their meeting, "South Africa gave us guarantees that they are not going to help RENAMO."³⁸

However, reports over the following months indicated that, at best, support was still coming from South Africa which the government was not taking adequate steps to prevent, or at worst, that it was coming from official sources. In March 1989, six months after President Botha's statement, the US State Department issued a communique confirming its belief that the South African government continued to support the MNR.³⁹ Also in March 1989, it is reported that the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Anatoly Adamashin, provided proof of continued support from South Africa when he met South Africa's Foreign Minister Pik Botha.⁴⁰ Following this, in April 1989, it was reported that eyewitnesses of an MNR attack on the border town of Ressano Garcia said that South African military vehicles assisted the MNR guerrillas.⁴¹

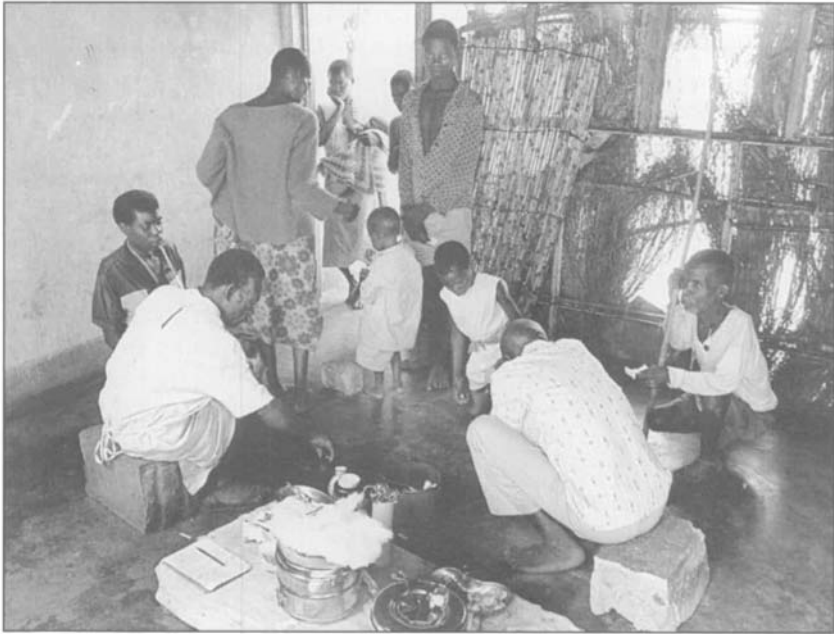
Changing strategy towards Mozambique

The evidence suggests that South African support for the MNR continued after the 1984 Nkomati Accord, but probably at a reduced level. Thereafter, as the MNR grew into a force which could increasingly maintain itself from other foreign sources as well as from captured material and forced cooperation from the civilian population, official South African support probably fell away (although private sources in South Africa continue their support).

The probable reasons behind South Africa's changing strategy towards Mozambique are four-fold.

Firstly, South Africa has been under diplomatic pressure to adhere to the terms of the Nkomati Accord. Britain has played a key role in this respect (see Chapter 10). Secondly, the devastating 'success' of South Africa's destabilisation of Mozambique has meant that most of its original objectives have been achieved. Mozambique has been brought to its knees, and has had no option other than to adapt its stance towards South Africa.

The Mozambique government has kept to its side of the Nkomati Accord in restricting the ANC's presence. Mozambique has become markedly less vociferous on the issue of sanctions. Economic cooperation, on South Africa's terms, is now well under way — South African trade and investment prospects are being assisted by the opening of a South African Trade Mission



Even though it has been partly destroyed by the MNR, this clinic at Marrambula in Zambezia Province still functions.

(Keith Bernstein / Oxfam)

in Maputo; and Mozambique has entered into economic cooperation projects with South Africa.

Thirdly, having built up the MNR to the point where it is probably able to sustain itself from other sources for the time being, the hawks in the South African ruling elite can be sure that it will continue to wreak havoc. And fourthly, for the time being at least, the apparently prevalent view of the National Party is that positive regional political and economic cooperation, wherever possible, is desirable. During this critical period of flux, it is in the National Party's interests to woo its international allies and attempt to heal rifts in the region. This will help to give it maximum leverage during the coming tussle over the future shape of South Africa.

However, this period of flux and opportunity also contains real risks. In spite of the widespread optimism, the situation inside South Africa remains inflammable. Although both state and opposition showed in the peaceful mass demonstrations at the end of 1989 that restraint is possible, nevertheless the deep feelings of alienation among the black majority and the highly militarised state structures of repression remain.

And as the last decade has shown, the region is acutely vulnerable to the

consequences of South Africa's internal instability. As Chris Patten, then the British Minister for Overseas Aid, put it in 1987, "The southern African region is overshadowed by crisis. A crisis brought about by the effects throughout the region of the iniquitous system in South Africa."⁴³

After his visit to southern Africa in May 1989, US Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen said,

Unfortunately we continue to see evidence that a certain amount of assistance is coming into Mozambique from South Africa. Now whether this is being done by elements of the SA military or by the private sector is very difficult for us to tell. But we continue to pressurise the SA government to shut off this aid.⁴³

In July 1989, shortly before F.W. de Klerk was to arrive for a pre-election visit to Mozambique, President Chissano said that his government no longer believed Pretoria supported the MNR. He added, "We are prepared to believe that the South African armed forces, as such, are not in support" of the MNR. But that "... everything indicates (that some) elements inside South Africa support them."⁴⁴

Since then, attention has focused on what steps Pretoria is taking to prevent such support. Reports of August 1989 indicated that the South African government was preparing legislation to outlaw assistance to the MNR.⁴⁵

The MNR is reported also to receive support (channelled through South Africa) from other, private, sources in, for example, Portugal, the USA, West Germany, and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁶ In view of the diverse nature of the support base they have been able to build up, it is clear that a coordinated international effort is needed to stem the flow of resources.

What is the nature of the MNR?

The controversy surrounding the nature of alleged South African support for the MNR is likely to continue,⁴⁷ in spite of the probable shift in emphasis in South Africa's regional policy. But the enduring fact, regardless of dispute over 'smoking gun' evidence, is that South Africa built up the MNR (from the comparatively small and insignificant force they took over from Rhodesian control) into a force which has wrecked the country and is now feared by many to be beyond reining in — a sort of 'Frankenstein's monster'. Specialising in brutality against civilians and economic sabotage, the MNR and the banditry it has spawned have created the social and economic breakdown necessary for its continued survival.

Until more is known about the nature of the MNR, it is difficult to see exactly which solutions to the conflict would be lasting. Many of the MNR's most curious features derive from its origins as a purely military machine.



Augusto at school in Lichinga, his refuge since he saw his parents killed by the MNR. Every night at bed-time he wants to put his clothes close to hand under his pillow, in case the 'bandits' come.

(Keith Bernstein / Oxfam)

Numbering an estimated 15,000 men, it is well organised as a military movement, but not as a political one. Hence it is able to mount military actions in every province of the country, but it has not been able to produce a convincingly authentic political programme.⁴⁸ Although common sense indicates that the MNR must rely on widespread civilian support — whether voluntary or not (and the clearest evidence is that it is not⁴⁹) — it depends almost entirely on forced recruitment for its fighting ranks.⁵⁰ Its central base is thought to be in the Shona-speaking Manica and Sofala Provinces of Mozambique, but it does not appear to have grown organically outwards from these areas, developing its following and ideology over time. Instead, not long after South Africa had taken over support, its military operations spread systematically throughout the country (especially where the transport corridors bisect the length of the country) as well as across borders into neighbouring states.

There are still disputes about the nature of the MNR and the factors affecting its development.⁵¹ As one writer on Mozambique has put it, "It is in the nature of a covert war, particularly one carried out in a large country with numerous impediments to good communication, that many aspects remain obscure."⁵²

There is contention over the extent to which FRELIMO actually created support for the MNR with its early agrarian transformation programme (in particular the scheme to create Communal Villages) and its early attempts to reduce the power held by traditional leaders. There is debate, too, about the quality of democracy in a one-party state, and differences of opinion over the level of popular support during FRELIMO's struggle for independence, and over the extent to which the MNR leadership is composed of disaffected FRELIMO cadres. The extent of random individualistic banditry alongside MNR sabotage remains unclear, as does the question of whether this pre-existed the MNR's military campaign.

Notwithstanding these factors, what is abundantly clear from Oxfam's experience is the extreme brutality against civilians, and the senseless destruction for which the MNR is responsible.

South African involvement in the conflict in Angola

Although South Africa has been deeply involved in conflict in both Mozambique and Angola, it is nonetheless important to note the significant differences between the two situations. For example, whereas the MNR was created by a foreign power (Rhodesia), UNITA is a genuinely indigenous rebel movement, even though its military and political power has been greatly boosted by external support. Whereas FRELIMO, the ruling party in Mozambique, can claim widespread popular support throughout the country,



An adult literacy class in Luanda, organised by OMA, the national organisation of Angolan women.

(Jenny Matthews / Oxfam)

Conflict is responsible for much of the suffering in Angola. Here Selmira Salala (12 years old) learns to walk again. She stepped on a UNITA landmine during an attack on her village.

(Akwe Amosu / Oxfam)



history shows that Angola's ruling party — the MPLA (PT) (the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, Workers' Party) — assumed power in 1975 on a relatively narrow support base, centred on an influential stratum of educated people⁵³ in Luanda, the capital city.⁵⁴

There have been two broad, linked dimensions to conflict in Angola, which have developed over the years since independence. South Africa has been embroiled in both.⁵⁵ First, between 1975 and the implementation of the December 1988 peace agreement, the SADF repeatedly invaded Angola over the border from occupied Namibia. And second, Angolan government forces have been at war with UNITA since 1975, when the 'Alvor Accord' (a flimsy tripartite transitional coalition comprising the three main liberation movements of the time) disintegrated into bitter civil conflict. The roots of this conflict date back to the 1960s, to the struggle for independence. What began as a civil war quickly escalated into an international flashpoint involving South Africa, the USA, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Zaire, as each of the rival parties turned to foreign governments for military support and

hardware.

In mid-1975 South Africa intervened in the chaos which had broken out by sending in an invading force in an attempt to install its preferred party (the rump of UNITA which had sought refuge in south-east Angola after its military defeat) into power. It failed, largely because of the last-minute arrival of Cuban troops, who came to support the MPLA, and the (temporary) withdrawal of US support to the other liberation movements.⁵⁶ What began as a 'one-off' South African invasion was to develop into a series of sustained air and ground incursions into southern Angola as the MPLA assumed power, and set about extending hospitality and military support to SWAPO and the ANC.

Alongside its own incursions, South Africa was helping to resuscitate UNITA, and by mid-1986 was reported to have spent some US\$1 bn. on training and equipping the rebel forces.⁵⁷



The human dimensions of conflict

DATE 27.7.87.

TO: OXFAM, OXFORD.

FROM: OXFAM, MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE.

RE. HOMOINE MASSACRE ON SATURDAY 18.7. WE NOW HAVE MORE INFORMATION. BY FAR THE MOST KILLED WERE WOMEN + CHILDREN. HOSPITAL WORST HIT. ALL EXPECTANT MOTHERS KILLED BAR 2 ESCAPEES. WOMEN WORKERS KILLED TOGETHER WITH KIDS ON THEIR BACKS. MOST WERE SHOT, A FEW WERE HACKED OR BAYONETTED. APART FROM HOSPITAL, MOST WERE SHOT IN THEIR HOMES. FOOD + CLOTHING ROBBED. HOSPITAL LOST ALL BEDCLOTHES, MEDICINES, EQUIPMENT, DOMESTIC UTENSILS, COMPLETE SETS OF EQUIPMENT FOR 2 HEALTH POSTS, ETC. ETC. GOVERNMENT DISASTER RELIEF AGENCY NEED FUNDS TO BUY URGENT NECESSITIES FOR HOMOINE. CAN WE MAKE GRANTS FOR THIS EMERGENCY?

(An Oxfam telex from Mozambique. 380 people were killed by the MNR — the rebel movement in Mozambique — in the Homoine massacre, 49 were seriously injured, and many were kidnapped.)

The scale of suffering

The casualties of conflict in southern Africa divide into three categories: those directly killed in violent incidents, those who have died as a result of war-related famine, and the babies and children who would otherwise have

lived if they had had enough to eat and adequate access to health services.¹

Some 325,000 Mozambicans and Angolans are estimated to have been direct casualties of conflict between 1980 and 1988.² Many of the Mozambican casualties have been young children, deliberately killed and often mutilated first, in order to cause anguish to their parents.³

Another 200,000 people are estimated to have died as a result of war-related famine.⁴ But perhaps the worst effects are those on children's health. Hundreds of thousands of children have died because war has destroyed their chances of survival. According to UNICEF,

Infant and child mortality rates in Angola and Mozambique are now estimated to be the highest in the world. The underlying cause is underdevelopment compounded by war and economic destabilisation, and the resulting set-backs and dislocations. The tragic consequence is that, every four minutes, a small child who would have lived if these set-backs had not occurred is dying in Angola and Mozambique.⁵

All economically underdeveloped countries experience the chronic problem of preventable child deaths, resulting from malnutrition and inadequate health services. In Mozambique and Angola the problem is made acute by conflict — conflict in which peasant agriculture and basic public services are the rebel guerrillas' targets.

Orphaned children

In these war-stressed countries, the killing of adults leads to especially vulnerable children, many of whom are suffering from serious emotional trauma as they struggle with the memory of brutal attack.

In Mozambique, an estimated 250,000 children have been orphaned or separated from their parents as a direct result of war,⁶ while in Angola the number is conservatively estimated at 300,000.⁷ Accurate estimates are hard to come by, because unknown numbers of orphaned children will have been taken in by family or friends, while others will be among the Angolan refugees in the neighbouring countries of Zaire, Zambia, and Namibia. However, orphanages have become increasingly necessary because the stresses of life in a ruined economy, together with the massive population upheavals caused as people flee from areas of conflict, have broken down social cohesion and the capacity of many extended families to take responsibility for orphans.

Social workers in Angola readily admit that they cannot cope with the large numbers of war orphans. There are registered war orphans in each of the country's provinces. By mid-1988, 2,344 were being cared for in permanent state-run centres, while 26,091 were in temporary homes or



Orphaned by MNR killings, these children have been temporarily resettled in shelters close to the garrison town of Espungabera in western Mozambique. (Chris Johnson / Oxfam)

centres for want of more places in the established children's homes.⁸

'Lar Essanjo' is a state-run orphanage in Huambo, Angola, which cares for over 130 babies and children. The children come to the centre in many different ways. Some have been found wounded with their parents and taken, along with other casualties, to hospital. If the children survive and their parents do not, they are brought from the hospital to the centre. Government troops often find children alone in the ruins of their village after a UNITA attack, and bring them into care. Sometimes the children are brought by friends of the deceased family. By whatever route they come, these children are especially vulnerable. Usually frightened and disorientated, they are often also suffering from poor health. Dominga Cesar, the centre's Director, gave an example.

A little girl arrived today. She has oedema of the legs and her hair has turned yellow — clear signs of malnutrition. She must see the doctor and be put on a special diet. We have special foods for these cases. But she also needs lots of love and attention, and with so many children here, it's hard to give them as much as they need.⁹

Many of the children who arrive are not yet old enough to speak. If nothing is known about them, they are named anew and the orphanage staff guess at their age and give them a birthday.

The children sleep in large dormitories, but the building is old and the roof leaks. Some parts of the upstairs rooms are unusable in the rainy season

because of damp. The home has a small vegetable garden at the back. The produce from it not only helps to feed the children, but is also bartered for essential items such as rice, baby milk, and porridge when supplies run out.

Dominga Cesar and her colleagues achieve much in difficult conditions. They lack the resources they would like to have, yet they know that the children in their centre are receiving better care than the many thousands of war orphans who are living in temporary homes for lack of social service resources.

War-disabled people

Accurate assessments of the total number of war-wounded in Angola and Mozambique are unavailable, because war conditions and under-resourced government services prevent any systematic census. In Angola alone, the International Committee of the Red Cross estimates the numbers at between 20,000 and 40,000.¹⁰ This means that Angola has the highest proportion of limbless citizens in the world.¹¹

Not surprisingly, civilians are often caught in the cross-fire between UNITA and government troops. However, the great majority of the war-disabled civilians have been the victims of anti-personnel mines. People have triggered these off as they go about their everyday lives — while working in their fields, for instance, or while walking to and from their homes, or perhaps while riding in a lorry on their way to market in a neighbouring town. As the UN Africa Emergency Task Force reported, “It is calculated that 85 per cent of this number (i.e. war-disabled) suffer from leg handicaps, because most of the accidents are caused by anti-personnel mines.”¹²

In Angola, the use of mines in civilian areas, homes, and places of work is widespread because of the nature of the war between UNITA and the MPLA government. UNITA has reportedly pursued a two-fold military strategy. Firstly, it aims to undermine the government through economic sabotage at all levels. And secondly, in creating widespread rural insecurity — by wrecking people’s access to a stable livelihood, to basic services such as schools and health facilities, and to assured protection — UNITA aims to make people feel vulnerable, and therefore alienated from the government. Thus, the gruesome logic of UNITA’s focus on economic and political destabilisation by military force, in a country where the majority of people make a living from peasant agriculture and animal husbandry, has meant that rural communities have been a principal target. The widespread and unpredictable nature of UNITA’s raids on rural civilians has meant that the government is indeed unable to protect civilians adequately.

Government forces have also been known to use land mines, particularly

in defence of strategically important installations like airstrips and garrison towns, but also indiscriminately in some UNITA-held areas.¹³ There can be no doubt that civilian casualties have resulted from both sides' use of mines.

The war-disabled have created a serious additional strain on the country's deteriorating health and rehabilitation services. As the UN Emergency Task Force for Africa reported in 1988,

Large-scale sabotage and destruction of health facilities, creches, orphanages, social welfare centres, and existing rural and urban health posts have been registered. The remaining operational facilities are heavily taxed by the constantly expanding numbers of traumatized, mutilated, and seriously ill persons, including numerous orphans or abandoned children ...¹⁴

Rehabilitation of the war-disabled in Angola

Twelve-year-old Selmira Salala is one of UNITA's landmine victims. Her village was attacked in 1985. As she fled the fighting, she stepped on a mine laid to maim those trying to escape. After hospital treatment she survived, but one leg had to be amputated. She was brought to the special prosthesis centre in Huambo, called Bomba Alta, where she has been fitted with an artificial limb. A worker at the centre explained, "Because she is still a child,



Laurinda Chinginila learning to walk again after losing both legs when she stepped on a UNITA landmine. Few war-disabled people in Angola are able to benefit from such rehabilitation services.

(Akwe Amosu)

growing perhaps 3-4 cm a year, we have made her artificial leg slightly too long. As she grows and starts to feel it has become too short, she will know that it is time to make her way back here and have it adjusted. She will probably need a new limb every two to three years until she is 18, when she can have an adult-sized one."¹⁵ All this depends on whether Selmira can keep returning to the centre.

Besides a new rehabilitation centre in Luanda, Bomba Alta is the only established centre catering for civilians in Angola. It can manufacture and fit up to 100 artificial limbs a month, but clearly this capacity falls far short of the needs. Anyone coming to Bomba Alta in need of treatment is accepted and treated free of charge, but shortages of transport and supplies create problems.

Although successful treatment at Bomba Alta enables patients to be mobile, many of the most badly wounded will not be able to undertake hard physical work again, and this creates more anxiety for people with no other means of earning a living.

Laurinda Chinginila, 25 years old and a mother of two children, is a case in point. She explained, "I will be able to get about, but I will never be able to work in my fields again." Laurinda was one of the centre's most badly wounded patients. Early in 1987, she stepped on a mine as she was walking home from her fields near Longonjo, 87 km from Huambo, with her baby on her back and her older child walking a few paces in front. Miraculously, her children were unhurt, but she lost both legs. She was taken to the provincial hospital and then brought to Bomba Alta. By April 1988, she was walking on her two new limbs. Staff at the centre said she had learned to do so exceptionally quickly: it had taken her only eight months to become proficient, rather than the usual 12 months or more.

Run by the Ministry of Health and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the centre itself has been attacked by UNITA. In 1983, guerrillas destroyed workshops and vehicles belonging to the centre. In 1984, the centre's night-duty security guards were killed, a stores warehouse was burnt down, and some local people living nearby were attacked.¹⁶

The long-term consequences of war disability in Angola are also shocking. The ICRC estimates that rehabilitation centres for the victims of anti-personnel mines will still be needed thirty years from now. This assessment is based not only on the future needs of the children and young people who have already been wounded and will need help for decades to come, but also on the grim awareness that Angola's countryside is littered with undetonated mines, buried, and (in the case of plastic mines) undetectable.

Refugees and displaced people — flight and impoverishment

The large and growing numbers of displaced people, refugees, and those made destitute by war are a clear indicator of the sheer scale of suffering. South Africa's regional policy has been a key factor behind the suffering of well over 12 million Mozambicans and Angolans.¹⁷ These people have either been forced to leave their homes, or they have managed to remain in their home areas but have been reduced to extreme poverty by the economic destruction which war has brought.¹⁸

Of these 12 million people, 8 million have had to leave their homes. They include an estimated 6.1 million displaced within their own countries, and some 1.89 million people who have had to flee as refugees to neighbouring states. In addition, some 4 million urban people are affected by the economic breakdown which war brings.

These statistics demonstrate that the human consequences of war reached crisis proportions by 1989. Over half of Mozambique's total population and over a third of Angola's total population were directly affected by conflict.¹⁹

The available statistics on displacement indicate orders of magnitude only. More accurate assessments of the numbers of people whom the war has displaced are hard to come by. It is difficult to count people on the move in a zone of conflict, or to judge whether people are fleeing attacks or leaving their homes to look for better economic prospects.

The sheer numbers of internally displaced people create serious problems for the local communities and state-run services looking after them. In the war-torn countries, the massive relief operations needed to help the displaced and destitute are fraught with problems. In the neighbouring countries hosting refugees, there are enormous strains on local resources and services. In Malawi, for example, there is a national average of one Mozambican refugee for every 10 Malawians.²⁰ And, because the refugees are concentrated in Malawi's most populous southern region, the local proportions are even higher. A proportionately equivalent number of refugees in the UK would be about 5 million, or more than the total population of greater Manchester.

One family's story

In the course of a few weeks, Merriam Kaumphawi — the matron of Nsanje District Hospital in southern Malawi, in the heart of the area with the largest concentration of Mozambican refugees — was 'adopted' by a family of three Mozambican orphans. Merriam recounted their story:



Merriam Kaumphawi with Domingo, Milia, and Rosa, the three Mozambican orphans who have adopted her, standing by her house at dusk.

(Susanna Smith / Oxfam)

I call them my children now and I feel very lucky to have them, even though I know that one day they will return to their home.

The children fled over the border in September 1986. They had lost their parents before their village was attacked, and were living with another family. They tagged along when the survivors of the attack fled, and they walked through the bush for three days and two nights to get to the border. The two older ones took turns carrying Rosa, the baby.

A few weeks after they arrived at the refugee settlement, Rosa was admitted to our hospital for care and special feeding; she had very severe malnutrition. On my rounds, I noticed that Rosa was not being properly washed and cared for. In our country, it is the relatives attending patients who are responsible for their everyday care. Then I found out that Rosa's nine-year-old sister, Milia, was the one staying with her and doing her best to look after her, but she didn't know about baby care. So I taught Milia how to wash Rosa, how to do her hair, keep her clothes clean, and feed her. And I asked her to let me know how Rosa was getting on and if there were any problems. After that, Milia would often come to find me for a chat and to report on Rosa's progress. She looked after her sister beautifully, and Rosa made a good recovery.

And, as Rosa got better, Milia started spending more and more time at my house, which is in the hospital grounds. Then their older brother, Domingo,

Angola and Mozambique many of those registered as displaced have had to move a number of times, either to avoid direct attack or to escape the collapsed rural economy. Changing military events mean that the fighting and insecurity have constantly shifted from one area to another.

As far as Angola is concerned, an Economist Intelligence Unit report of 1987 — at the time when the South African Defence Force was occupying large tracts of territory in southern Angola — stated that up to nine tenths of the country were considered unsafe. “This does not mean that UNITA is solidly implanted over nine tenths of the country ... it is doubtful whether more than 250,000 people in the country as a whole (well under 5 per cent of the total population) are under UNITA ‘administration’ in any permanent or even semi-permanent sense. However, most of the rural population is not really administered by the Luanda government either. The key point is that most of Angola is insecure.”²²

Widespread social dislocation has been created. The sheer numbers of people who, whether voluntarily or not, have left their homes hint at the extent of social breakdown. But a mere headcount cannot describe the enduring effects of displacement.

Refugees’ experiences

Many relief workers, in settlements for internally displaced people and for refugees alike, have noticed the vital importance of community cohesion for those surviving an attack. Tribal, village, and family networks often serve to rescue and sustain the survivors of attack.

One typical example is a group of Angolan refugees living in the remote village of Kayombo in north-western Zambia, just a few kilometres from the Angolan border. They fled to Zambia after a UNITA attack in November 1985. These people came from a closely knit group of small village settlements, which came under the traditional leadership of Chief Chipawa, who fled with his people. On arrival in Kayombo, they were granted land and hospitality by the traditional leader on the Zambian side, who is tribally related to them and therefore obliged to offer them refuge. Chief Chipawa explained how they came to be in Kayombo.

We were attacked at eight in the evening when it was dark. There was no time for us to collect our things, we just had to run. But we knew where to come, because we have our relations here.

Everything was destroyed in our place. They burnt our houses and our crops; all our animals were lost. We ran to save our lives. This was the second time that UNITA attacked us. The first time, there were some government troops there to defend our village. But when the second attack came, the soldiers had gone and we were alone. UNITA attacked with guns. It was too

confusing to know how many attackers there were.

When the attack came, we all scattered into the bush, and we made our way here in different groups. The group I was with took five days to get here. We walked through the bush and didn't meet any UNITA on the way, so we were able to walk during the day. But some of our people took ten days to reach us here. By the time everyone had arrived, we saw that nobody had been lost, but we came here with nothing.

On the way here, we lived on wild honey, bush fruits, and roots. We carried honey with us as we were walking, because it was a good thing to feed to our children.

We were very happy where we lived. We had everything we needed, plenty of maize, beans, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, banana and orange trees. When we hear the war is finished, then we will go back. For now, we want to stay in Kayombo because we have been helped here by the people. The chief has given us two limas of land (i.e. half a hectare) for each family, and the local mission has given us seeds and tools. The people in the village helped us with many things, and we are allowed to use the clinic and send our children to the school.

We feel peaceful here, we know that there is no need to fear. We can live together with our families here, and grow our food as we've always done.²³

Most victims of attack, however, are not so lucky. For example, a whole village in the area bordering Kwanza Sul and Huambo Provinces in Angola fled from a UNITA attack. They had no better option than to walk 180 km to reach the refuge of an official resettlement scheme, a journey which took them weeks. As a result of this ordeal, the people who eventually arrived were all young adult men and women. The children and old people had not been able to withstand the journey.²⁴

Many rural farming families, dependent on their crops and animals, are reluctant to move away from their villages. Maria Chingossi came from a village in Angola which had already moved once. She eventually fled with the rest of the village to a resettlement centre in 1985. After the fourth assault, the villagers agreed with the army that they would not survive renewed attack and, under the leadership of their chief and the school teacher, 84 people set out in the direction of Waco Kungo, a military garrison town.²⁵ Maria described the journey:

After the attack, we spent a week in the bush, sleeping out in the heavy rains. It was cold. We couldn't get back to the village because they were there destroying our huts and goods. After that, the army told us we could go back to our village, but we only stayed there for four days, because the bandits came back again. So the army decided that the people should leave because of the continuous killing.

That's the reason that brought me here. On the way here, we faced a lot of

suffering in the rain, feeling hunger. Sometimes we had to push the children because they couldn't go on. There was no transport. It was only walking and suffering to save our lives.²⁶

The constant threat of attack creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity throughout the conflict-ridden areas. One international aid worker reported that in the eastern part of Angola's Moxico Province, for example, people move in and out of the towns according to their perceptions of the risk of UNITA attack.

Some people will choose to leave the town at night and sleep out in the bush, feeling that this is when UNITA is most likely to attack government offices in the town, while others will choose to stay in the town at night because they think this is more secure. They are afraid of being attacked in the bush - either by UNITA or by thieves, or by government troops mistaking them for UNITA in the dark. Much depends on the latest attack, or the latest rumour.²⁷

Mr Ferreira is one of the community leaders of Muloza refugee camp in southern Malawi, just over the border from the Mozambican town of Milanje. He helps to organise the distribution of relief supplies among the camp's



Mr Ferreira (second from left), a community leader at the Muloza settlement for Mozambican refugees in Malawi, where he helps to organise relief distribution. In Mozambique he was a Customs official.

(Susanna Smith / Oxfam)

9,800²⁸ people, but he is also concerned about their psychological needs.

We need things to do to keep our spirits up — we need to carry on with life. But there's very little land for us to work, and no employment for us in this area. We're hoping for permission to start up a school for the children.²⁹

Case-study: Mozambican refugees in South Africa

In 1986 and 1987, in an attempt to seal the border with southern Mozambique, the South African authorities electrified long sections of the border fence near the town of Komatipoort. Part of this fence has two settings — lethal and non-lethal. There are warning notices posted along the fence, but many of the refugees trying to cross are illiterate.

Some 40-50 Mozambicans, desperate to escape the fighting in their home areas, are estimated to have been killed by the fence.³⁰ Others have managed to reach the other side by putting tree trunks across the fence, or shorting the current. The fence is just one of the many frightening obstacles the refugees have to negotiate as they try to find refuge in South Africa. Other impediments include minefields, armed border guards, and the wild animals in the Kruger National Park which runs along long stretches of the border.³¹

In August 1989, it was reported that in order to avert certain disaster, South African officials had to dismantle part of the fence temporarily. An



The South African authorities have built an electrified fence along stretches of the border with Mozambique. Part of the fence has two voltage settings: lethal and non-lethal.

(Jenny Rossiter)

The South African "Homelands" hosting Mozambican refugees



estimated 2,200 refugees, fleeing yet another MNR attack on the Mozambican border town of Ressano Garcia, were allowed through to Komatipoort.³²

Refugee rights denied

Refugees from Mozambique have been crossing into South Africa since 1983, to escape the combined effects of war, economic breakdown, and periodic drought and flood.³³ Nobody is sure about the numbers, partly because Mozambican work-seekers have been crossing into South Africa for the last 100 years, many of them without official permission to work. By November 1989, Oxfam estimated there to be between 150,000 and 200,000 Mozambican refugees in South Africa,³⁴ with some 1,500 — 2,000 new arrivals coming over the border each month.³⁵ In addition to the refugee population, official statistics of the numbers of economic migrants from Mozambique estimate that there are 80,000 legal workers and 150,000 illegal workers.³⁶

Once in South Africa, the refugees are subject to what one Oxfam fieldworker called 'transferred apartheid'. The South African government does not permit the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to operate fully in the country, so refugees from Mozambique are not entitled to the basic protections normally provided for in refugee law. The most important right denied to them is the right to stay in the country of refuge until conditions permit fully voluntary repatriation — in technical jargon the right to 'non-refoulement'.

With no internationally protected rights, any refugees found in 'white' South Africa are considered to be 'illegal aliens', and repatriated forthwith.³⁷ The refugees are only allowed to stay in some of the 'homelands'. Oxfam fieldworkers reported that some 3,000 Mozambicans per month were repatriated from 'white' South Africa during 1988. In February 1989 an overloaded lorry, packed with refugees being sent back over the border, overturned, injuring several people and killing one woman.

Once they have been sent back over the border, many of the returnees find it impossible to travel back to their home areas. So they live in limbo in the border towns until they can travel back home. Elias Macundla was stranded in the Mozambican border town of Ressano Garcia for two years after he was forcibly repatriated from South Africa in 1985.

We fled across the South African border when the 'bandidos' (MNR) attacked. Then we were arrested by the South African police and repatriated back here. But I can't get back to my home in Magude District because of the fighting, so I have to stay here and make a living doing odd jobs as best I can.³⁸

Filipe Baloi from Chicualacuala also explained how he came to be living

in limbo in Ressano Garcia:

There are about 200 of us here from Gaza. We live here out in the open. I fled Chicualacuala with my family four weeks ago. The 'bandidos' robbed us of everything, including our five head of cattle. So we fled to South Africa, where we were captured by the police and put in prison for two weeks. Then we were repatriated.³⁹

Although banned from 'white' South Africa, those refugees who manage to evade capture are permitted temporary residential rights and access to relief assistance in some of the 'homelands' nearest the border where many have family links. Consequently, Mozambican refugees are to be found in the 'homelands' of Lebowa, Kangwane, Gazankulu, and Kwazulu.

Much of the relief assistance is provided by the churches and charities, including Oxfam, which supports two kindergartens for refugee children in Kangwane and Gazankulu. Although refugees also use the local 'homeland' services (funded by Pretoria), this indirect contribution is thought to be all that the South African government provides for the refugees.

In accordance with the 'grand apartheid' structure they have fled to, the refugees are allowed to stay in the 'homelands' on condition they hold special permits,⁴⁰ and do not trespass into 'white' South Africa. The 'homeland' authorities had to seek special permission from Pretoria to allow refugees even this limited amount of protection.⁴¹

Sadly, South Africa is not the only country where Mozambican refugees have experienced the infringement of their rights. In Zimbabwe, where there are an estimated 175,000 Mozambican refugees,⁴² and despite the close ties that exist between the Mozambican and Zimbabwean governments, an estimated 10,000 refugees were forced to return back over the border in 1987.⁴³ Twelve to fifteen refugees were reported to have been killed in the process.⁴⁴

This 'refoulement' occurred as a result of heightened security tensions in eastern Zimbabwe, an area which has been seriously affected by MNR cross-border attacks from mid-1987 onwards. Further security-related restriction measures were imposed on Zimbabwean citizens in the area, which included the prohibition of cross-border trade, and the insistence that all border crossings took place at the official border posts.

In November 1987, the Zimbabwean government recognised the remaining Mozambicans as refugees entitled to protection under the relevant instruments of the UN and Organisation of African Unity (OAU).⁴⁵ Although a welcome move, it also meant that tens of thousands of long-settled Mozambican economic migrants could be required to live in the designated refugee camps, which were already greatly overcrowded.⁴⁶

During the early months of 1988, however, further forced repatriations occurred (although they were much smaller in scale), and it is thought that some border actions aimed at MNR guerrillas had the effect of restricting new arrivals of Mozambicans.⁴⁷ Since then, the Zimbabwean government has told UNHCR that it does not condone further refoulement, and plans are under way to open up new refugee camps to relieve overcrowding in the four existing camps.⁴⁸

Economic insecurity

Unemployment and the resulting poverty are already endemic problems in South Africa's 'homelands', and the arrival of thousands of Mozambican refugees only makes things worse. The refugees have almost no opportunity to earn a living there. Consequently, many have deliberately crossed into 'white' South Africa seeking work — often on the white farms of the Transvaal.⁴⁹

In July 1989, local relief workers reported a recent case of gross exploitation. A white farmer had hired 30 Mozambican refugees staying in Gazankulu to work for him for three weeks. They agreed to labour on his farm for R3 (69 pence) per 12-hour day, payable weekly. After the first week, he paid them their wages. They received no money at the end of the second week. At the end of the third week, instead of paying them, the farmer reported them to the SADF as illegal aliens, whereupon they were directly deported back to Mozambique.

Economic insecurity is also a great problem for Mozambican refugees in Zimbabwe and Malawi, where land shortage and unemployment have meant there is little scope for the refugees to earn a living locally. In these countries, however, the governments have taken a much more responsible role in providing for the refugees they host.

Government responsibilities towards refugees

The plight of the Mozambican refugees in South Africa highlights two key issues. Firstly, there is an urgent need for proper international protection to be accorded to the refugees in South Africa.⁵⁰ And secondly, the refugees badly need better economic prospects, towards which the South African government should contribute.

Given the heavy burden of responsibility which the South African government bears for conflict in Mozambique, and given that an end to the war still appears remote, the South African government's treatment of the Mozambican refugees is all the more callous.

Food shortages and hunger

In Mozambique and Angola, serious food shortages, sometimes reaching famine proportions, have been caused and worsened by war. All aspects of food production, storage, marketing, and relief distribution have been adversely affected. Food imports to Mozambique and Angola are massive. For example, in 1989 the UN estimated that Mozambique needed US \$237 m. worth of food aid for the following year.⁵¹

Food security⁵² at national, regional, and household levels has been undermined, with devastating human consequences. For instance, in Mozambique a survey conducted among peasant farmers in four rural districts in early 1987 showed that some 60 per cent of households had no food stocks at all, and that only about 9 per cent had enough food to last until the next harvest. At national level, food security has closely mirrored the country's fortunes. Marketed food production rose steadily from independence in 1975 until 1982, when it began to collapse, due to drought and the disruption of the peasant agricultural economy by a number of other factors, including the government's damaging rural development policy. Production rose slightly with better rains, but recovery was reversed by war. During 1985/86 production collapsed, as conflict spread across large areas of the countryside. A modest increase in production in 1987 resulted from a rise in producer prices, and determined efforts by the government to redress previous policy errors by giving greater priority to the peasant production sector. Greatly intensified warfare in 1986/87 and erratic rains continued to disrupt food production, which rose in 1988/89 as a result of improved security.

In early 1989, war-related famine was experienced once again in Mozambique.⁵³ At least 3,500 people died of starvation in a coastal district of the northern Nampula Province, where drought had affected the harvest and MNR attacks had made it impossible to assess local relief needs. In addition, it was reported that 1,000 people a week were dying of hunger in the remote Gile and Ile districts of Zambezia Province. Most of them were people who had already been displaced by MNR attacks⁵⁴ and were living in relief camps whose supply routes had been cut off by the MNR. Oxfam field reports from Zambezia Province detail how MNR attacks frustrated the relief effort which had been mounted to reach the famine victims in Ile and Gile. One reported,

The convoy which was carrying relief supplies to Ile was attacked just outside Namacurra, where it had stayed overnight. Sixteen trucks were burnt, and many goods lost. Seven of the trucks belonged to the government relief organisation. So no supplies have been getting through to Mocuba, let alone Ile. Then the train was attacked in early May, and since then there have been two more derailments. So next to nothing has been received in Mocuba for a month.⁵⁵

Another read,

This week, all of us involved in the Zambezia emergency are feeling frustration, anger, and hopelessness at the increasingly grave situation. The horrific MNR attack on Inhassunge, made international by the barbaric killing of three Italian priests (the autopsies confirmed that they were bayoneted to death), and the disappearance of a fourth, is only part of the story.

Gile is in a pitiful state, with 87,000 displaced people who are sick and starving. A small plane airlift may begin in a week's time, but we have reports that 140 people are dying every day, and at least 750 tons of food a month are required. That would need 42 trips a day in the TTA Islander (the only plane available)! How can this District be supplied?⁵⁶

Reliable and comprehensive statistics on the nutritional status of people in the war-torn areas are hard to come by. Oxfam, UNICEF, and other relief organisations have, however, confirmed that there are serious problems in Angola and Mozambique.⁵⁷

People who have been displaced by conflict are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and ill health. Having had to flee their own land, even those who are fortunate enough to have reached the safety of an official settlement find that it takes some time to re-establish food production. Relief rations are often inadequate or erratically delivered. For example, the nutritional status of the Mozambican refugees in Malawi was found to be declining in 1989, because of inadequate food rations, distribution problems, and the very limited economic options open to refugees outside the official settlements.⁵⁸

The marketing and distribution of what food is grown is also hampered by war. Ricardo Joao is a local director for AGRICOM, the state-run agricultural production and marketing agency, in Mozambique's Zambezia Province. He explained,

Reaching the outlying districts is very difficult. The roads have been cut, which means we can't transport produce. Very often, we manage to buy and store produce only to find that the 'bandidos' (MNR guerrillas) then burn it.

AGRICOM is a target because we are responsible for marketing food in the rural areas. Our transport fleet has suffered great damage. About 30 vehicles have been destroyed, and we are left with only nine.

Even in the accessible areas, drought has reduced production. We have also had problems with the lack of goods like cloth, salt, sugar, and soap, things which people can't produce themselves and want to buy. Unless these things are in the rural shops, the peasant producers will not accept cash for their produce. At the moment we have these commodities, but we can't transport them out to the rural areas.⁵⁹

An account of the statistics of human suffering runs the risk of dehumanising the reality of people's lives. Many Oxfam field workers agree

that it has been their personal experiences which have really made an impression. One Oxfam worker in Malawi wrote,

June marks the beginning of the cold season in Mankhokwe, the largest of the camps for Mozambican refugees in Malawi. Thousands and thousands of people were crowded together in the light drizzle on the flat land alongside the Shire river. Suddenly, someone called out. I turned round and, a few yards away, I saw an elderly woman beckoning me over. She was huddled over a small fire made within a circle of stones. When I reached her, she held out her hand to help me crouch down next to her, which meant she then had to rearrange the torn piece of sacking which she had drawn round her. It was her only piece of clothing, and most probably her only possession because, as I later learned, she had just arrived at the camp after fleeing an MNR attack on her village.

We had no common language, but through the international medium of gestures and emphasised speech she described the attack, the chaos, the fear, and how she had fled into the bush, bent over to avoid being seen. She was



Down but not out, a newly-arrived refugee at Mankhokwe settlement in southern Malawi.

(Oxfam)

intent on telling her story. I think it was a way of exorcising the trauma. The thing which most struck me was her anger and defiance. She had an unmistakable proud and dignified feeling about herself. She left me in no doubt that she was down, but by no means out. When she had finished, she gestured that I should take her photograph as if to seal her meaning.⁶⁰

Victims of brutality

Systematic brutality against civilians has been a hallmark of the conflicts in Mozambique, Angola, and Namibia.⁶¹

Mozambique

In Mozambique, besides attacking economic infrastructure and government services (agricultural support schemes, and health, education, and food relief services), the MNR deliberately target civilians, often using mass terror as their instrument. Their apparent objectives are to frighten the population into submission and, having caused widespread breakdown in commerce and civil administration, to ensure that large areas of the country remain ungovernable.

Villages, food stores, health centres and staff, hospitals, schools and teachers, agricultural training centres, roads and railways, government vehicles, power lines — in short, anything of any use to anyone — have all been systematically attacked and destroyed.

Although much remains to be documented about the nature of the MNR (see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion), their calculated brutality has been recorded in detail. A 1988 US State Department research mission interviewed 200 Mozambican refugees in depth about their experiences of conflict. Interviews were conducted in 42 different locations in five countries. The final report concludes,

First, the level of violence reported to be conducted by RENAMO (MNR) against the civilian population of rural Mozambique is extraordinarily high ... it is conservatively estimated that 100,000 civilians may have been murdered by RENAMO ...

... refugees report ... systematic forced portering, beatings, rape, looting, burning of villages, abductions, and mutilations.

Second, the relationship between RENAMO and the civilian population, according to refugee accounts, revolves almost exclusively around a harsh extraction of labour and food. If these reports are accurate, it appears that the only reciprocity provided by RENAMO for the efforts of the civilians is the possibility of remaining alive ... The refugees report virtually no effort by RENAMO to explain to civilians the purpose of the insurgency, its proposed program or its aspirations ...

Third, there were serious complaints about abuses by some FRELIMO

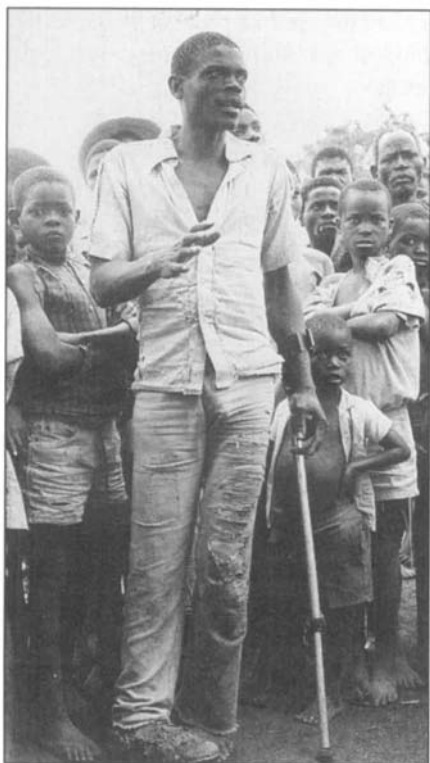
Government soldiers. But ... only three to four per cent of the complaints were attributed to FRELIMO soldiers. They tended to be isolated reports, often from the areas of the country most remote from Maputo.

Fourth, the refugees and most independent sources rejected the assertion that much of the violence in Mozambique is attributable to neither FRELIMO or RENAMO but instead to armed bandits affiliated with neither side. It appears ... that violence by 'freelance bandits' does not account for more than the occasional, isolated instances of the high level of reported violence.⁶²

Mr Sandufombe is a Mozambican refugee living in Kuniyinda settlement for Mozambican refugees in south-western Malawi. He was captured by the MNR and forced to be a porter and labourer.

I was taken during the attack on our Chief's village,⁶³ and we were made to walk and carry goods to Gorongosa in Sofala Province. We walked day and night. You can see that I have a false leg, so it was very difficult for me.

When we got to their place, I was made to farm. We were kept as prisoners, split into groups and guarded while we worked. All the food we grew was for RENAMO. They gave us rations so that we could work.⁶⁴



Mr Sandufombe was captured by the MNR and forced to work as a porter and then as an agricultural labourer in Mozambique's Sofala Province.

(John Clark / Oxfam)

Nene Bonjes, 7 years old, was kidnapped by the MNR in August 1986, and was not reunited with his family until four months later. The day he was captured, his mother had left their hut to go and draw water. She heard gunshot sounds, and ran back to find the child gone. "He was very thin when I got him back," she recalled.⁶⁵



Nene Bonjes (centre foreground) and his mother, with a younger child. He was captured during an MNR raid on their village, and held for four months.

(Susanna Smith / Oxfam)

Angola

In Angola, the effects of conflict on the population have not been so well documented as they have been in Mozambique. Nevertheless, it is clear that UNITA has captured and mistreated civilians. At Becon settlement for displaced people in central Angola, Francisco M'Bule, a traditional leader, told his story.

UNITA attacked Cabolo where I used to live, and we were taken to the bush. They didn't take us far — just to the mountains some kilometres from the village. They took about half of us, some 210 people.

We had no clothing, no salt, and very little to eat. It was misery. We were naked as if we were animals. They stole our cattle, and they ate our pigs. We lived like this for five months.

Our work was to transport stolen food from nearby villages to support UNITA's operation. During that five months, many of us were wounded. We weren't at a military base, that was far away. It was just a small group of UNITA guarded by ten armed men.

These UNITA people took us to a meeting where the leaders claimed they were governing the country and that in the very near future they would give us cars, good condition houses, clothes, and food. By the end of five months, we hadn't seen any of these things.

I got away by running, even though there was heavy gunfire from UNITA ... the soldiers had intimidated us so that we wouldn't try, all the paths were mined. This is why we stayed for so long.⁶⁶

Luisa Vita Saluta, a woman who escaped UNITA at the same time, recalled the situation of women in the UNITA-held area where she lived.

For us married women there was no problem except that we had to give 'fuba' (maize flour), bananas, sweet potatoes, anything we had to feed UNITA 'visitors', whom we never saw. But we had to make our single girls run away and hide because if we didn't they would be taken.⁶⁷



Luisa Vita Saluta, who escaped UNITA captivity, seen here singing and dancing to welcome visitors to the resettlement camp for displaced people at Waco Kungo.

(Akwe Amosu)

In Waco Kungo transit centre for newly arrived displaced people, more people reported on their experiences. Adolfo Cupessala was held for one and a half years by UNITA at a base near Kassongue. He said,

We were treated badly by UNITA. We had to work like slaves. They gave us no soap, no clothes, and no salt. UNITA told us that everyone who lives in an MPLA area (i.e. in an area controlled by the government) was a slave to the Cubans and Soviets. They told us we would only have to work for three years and that Angola would be independent, then everybody would dress well and have everything ... On the other hand, they threatened that if we didn't work well we would get beaten. I saw some people who didn't obey and they got 150 lashes. Some were tied to trees and shot for trying to escape, or refusing to work.⁶⁸

Fernanda Shopeto was pregnant when she was captured, and she had her baby at a UNITA base. She later reported,

Women who got separated from their own men were forced to join men there. If they didn't, UNITA would say they were trying to escape.⁶⁹

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the conflict in Mozambique is also causing serious problems for the people living along the eastern border. Since mid-1987, MNR cross-border attacks have increased, causing widespread fear, and over 300 deaths.

An elderly man who lives in an area of Zimbabwe near to the border with Mozambique told Oxfam about the day when MNR guerrillas murdered his wife, his two daughters, and his granddaughter. The child was strapped to his wife's back when the MNR came. They threw the baby into the cooking fire, where she was burnt to death. Her grandmother had to watch her die, before they killed her too. He said,

It is something which I cannot forget — the brutality and the callousness. It is one thing when you hear about MNR atrocities far away in the next District. But when it happens to you, in your own home and to your own wife and children, then it is something different.⁷⁰

MNR attacks in eastern Zimbabwe follow a similar pattern to those in Mozambique. The attacks appear intended to instil fear and uncertainty into the local population. The guerrillas generally come into villages at night. In many of the affected areas, the villages are widely dispersed: the neighbouring village may be a kilometre away. The 'bandits' often attack people with machetes and knives; it is thought that this is done to save scarce ammunition, and in order not to raise the alarm or alert the army. They often also loot the village or homestead, and carry away any food and clothing they need. A villager in Chipinge District described the situation in his area:

Over the last year, we know of 26 people who have been killed in this area, and more than 500 cattle have been stolen.

The last murders around here were just a few weeks ago, on 6 August (1988), when six people were hacked to death in a nearby village. We all sleep in the bush now, but spend the days at our homes. Although the army is around this area, they cannot be present in every home at night, so it is necessary to sleep out. In the morning, many families have found their homes ransacked.⁷¹

As more army troops have been posted to the border regions, so more MNR guerrillas are reported to have been captured. However, since most of the areas which have been attacked are within 20 km of the border, the guerrillas are easily able to escape after an attack.

Case-study: The effects of war in Namibia

Namibia has been a key part of South Africa's regional policy ever since it was first entrusted, in 1920 under a League of Nations mandate, to be administered by the government of the Union of South Africa on behalf of the 'British Crown'. However, as a colony, Namibia was not technically an object of South African destabilisation, as it had no independent government of its own to be destabilised. Nevertheless, the people of Namibia have known the worst excesses of South African domination for over 70 years, and the SADF occupied the country from 1966 until the peace agreement of December 1988 was implemented. Throughout this time, the whole of northern Namibia, the most populous part of the country, was living under military rule as the conventional forces of the SADF waged war against SWAPO guerrillas. In a country with a population of only 1.7 million,⁷² the numbers of occupying troops reached 100,000 in the mid-1980s.⁷³ All along, it was clearly a war which needed a political solution, not a military one. Yet the South African government's intransigence on the question of independence prolonged the suffering and destruction.⁷⁴

One of the principal strategies of the occupying forces was to prevent civilian assistance to SWAPO guerrillas by using harsh 'counter-insurgency' tactics. The police and the regular armed forces were greatly feared by civilians, but the notorious special forces known as 'Koevoet' (Afrikaans for 'crowbar') were the most feared of all. Oxfam partners have been among many Namibians harassed by the security forces. Although the overwhelming majority of human rights abuses were committed by South African forces, it must also be noted that SWAPO tortured some of the people it had detained in its camps in exile; others are still unaccounted for.⁷⁵

The effects of war on Namibia's people have been complex and various. As Namibia's first decade of independence begins in 1990, it is important to acknowledge the high price which people have paid, and to bear in mind the enduring effects of 22 years of war.

The impact on families

Numerous Oxfam field reports have stressed the far-reaching effects of this war on family life. Families were divided as their young people left the country to join SWAPO in exile, or as they were recruited and conscripted into the South African security and military forces. At least 10,000 people lost their lives between 1966 and 1989.⁷⁶ Most families have grieved over the loss of relatives killed in the fighting. Many have been killed indiscriminately, as in the case of two-year-old Marcelina Kamulungu, who was crushed to death in 1987 by a South African armoured vehicle which drove through her family's hut.⁷⁷ Mourning became an everyday occurrence, and many of Oxfam's partners suffered personally. In a 1988 field report from northern Namibia following a bomb blast, an Oxfam worker wrote,

It was heartbreaking to be shown two rings, a watch, and a piece of material — all that was left of Matron Shangala of Oshakati hospital and the wife of the pastor who took me to Okahao on my last trip.

Brutality, intimidation and repression

The occupying forces' brutal treatment of civilians became a hallmark of the war, and has been documented by a number of independent sources.⁷⁸ Oxfam support for a church-run Namibian human rights organisation brought us into contact with many everyday cases of abuse by the security forces against civilians. For example, in 1988 Oxfam supported the establishment of a branch in Ongwediva, in the heart of the occupied 'war zone', because of the growing number of civilian complaints. As one complainant explained,

We need a human rights centre here because we can't take our complaints to the police. After all, you don't ask the snake which has bitten you for help.⁷⁹

The Ongwediva centre took up the case of Mrs Nafine, whose story was typical. In September 1988 Mrs Nafine was assaulted by eight SADF soldiers. She alleged,

They slapped me in the face, beat me with fists, kicking me in the ribs, both right and left with their boots, and one hit me hard with a rifle butt in the chest.

According to Mrs Nafine, the soldiers demanded that she submit to them sexually, but she told them to

... kill me rather than rape me. Then they said they were the people who hurt the civilians, and that they can do anything they want to me because I don't know them.

They took some money from her and left.⁸⁰

Displacement and upheaval

In addition to the people (approximately 50,000⁸¹) who left the country to

become refugees, insecurity and forced relocations meant that 300,000⁸² people in the 'war zone' were displaced over the years. It has been estimated that close to 250,000 people (nearly 15 per cent of Namibia's total population, including those who were in exile) in the Ovamboland region of northern Namibia left their villages, either because of the insecurity or because they were forced to leave as the security forces created 'clear-fire zones' (where guerrillas could be 'hunted' without heed to the danger of civilians being caught in the crossfire). Most of them moved to a triangular section of land, some 30 km long and 20 km wide between Ondangua and Oshakati, which became a sprawling and squalid shanty settlement.⁸³

Effects on health, education, and small-scale agriculture

The real blocks to establishing appropriate health, education, and agricultural support services for the black majority during South Africa's illegal occupation were political.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, conflict made things significantly worse for the people living in the war zone. Patients' access to hospitals and clinics was severely limited by the war-zone curfew, as well as by the everyday risks of travel: land mines and arbitrary harassment by the security forces were the main problems. Outreach health services, offering preventive health care, were also badly affected. An estimated 70,000 children and adults died from preventable causes, attributable to malnutrition and inadequate health services.⁸⁵

Children's schooling was also affected by the war. Not only was the everyday journey to school risky, but according to reports from Oxfam partners, the security forces regularly harassed schoolchildren and teachers, and sometimes attacked school premises.⁸⁶

A deeply resented element of South Africa's political strategy to win the 'hearts and minds' of the civilian population in the war zone was that of placing military health and education personnel in local hospitals and schools, to reinforce a crude propaganda drive to influence local people, and particularly children, against SWAPO.⁸⁷

Small-scale peasant agriculture was also seriously undermined by the war. One reason was the population upheavals: significant numbers of people in the north were driven from their land and their farms into the no-hope existence of impoverished urban shanties, and thousands of men left the 'homeland' areas to join either SWAPO or the security forces. A second reason was that the standing crops of those who stayed on in the rural areas were frequently destroyed by the army as their armoured trucks were driven across crops, and often through homesteads.

It is impossible to list exhaustively all the human costs of conflict and

occupation in Namibia, not only because the war became a way of life for a whole generation, but also because many of the costs remain to be counted. For example, the role which the military occupation played in erosion of the !Kung people's culture cannot be quantified,⁸⁸ and the environmental damage caused by the security forces' deforestation and land clearance tactics remains to be assessed.

Perhaps the most critical issue concerns the children and young people of Namibia. The future of the newly independent country rests on them, yet the only life they know has been under apartheid or in exile.

Oxfam's work

Oxfam's work in southern Africa has developed a great deal since it started in the early 1960s, and has spanned a significant period in the history of the region. Having started with one field worker, Oxfam now has six local offices in southern Africa, and an annual grants expenditure of £4.9 million, which represents 20.6 per cent of the total worldwide grants spending.⁸⁹

The diversion of resources from development to relief

Oxfam's work during the 1980s has been greatly affected by the devastating impact of conflict. Responding to the enormous humanitarian needs has not only stretched our resources, our staff, and volunteers, but it has grown to the point where emergency relief now accounts for 56 per cent of our total grant expenditure in the region,⁹⁰ and 20.6 per cent of our emergency relief grants worldwide. Even though it is more needed than ever before, we have had to rein in expansion of our development work in southern Africa in order to meet urgent relief needs.

The growing proportion of funds diverted to relief work from development is especially evident in Mozambique and Malawi. In Malawi, 57 per cent of Oxfam's 1988/89 grants expenditure went on the relief needs of the Mozambican refugees.⁹¹ In Mozambique, Oxfam spent £9.6 million on relief work between 1986 and 1989,⁹² and although we are not normally an agency that sends personnel into the field, we have had to recruit 30 staff to work on the emergency programme over the last five years.

Oxfam has been able to maintain a small-scale development programme in the northern Mozambican Province of Cabo Delgado. It was designed with a number of components: research into how best to support local cooperative groups of rural artisans; the provision of two trucks to service the area's need for basic supplies; the training of health workers; and several adult literacy projects. It was only possible to establish this work in the first place because the area had not been affected by conflict. However, in late 1988, the MNR

moved into some of the districts where Oxfam was working, with the result that our work has had to be curtailed. Staff are not permitted to travel freely, so some training follow-up and supervisory visits have had to be called off. Security fears also hamper local meetings and the movement of supplies.⁹³ The health training work has been the most affected, and has been considerably reorganised as a result of the continuing fear of attack.

As war grinds on, so the human needs continue to mount, in spite of the high level of international aid which is poured into the region. In Mozambique, Oxfam's relief work has concentrated on supplying seeds, tools, clothing, blankets, and, in some cases, foodstuffs. To help overcome a major constraint facing relief work in the country, we have also assisted with transport — providing trucks and maintenance and repair facilities. Where necessary, we have also mounted airlifts to areas isolated by the MNR.⁹⁴

Special needs

As Oxfam's relief programme continues, we have learned more about the human needs which the brutality of war in the region has created. The widespread emotional trauma suffered by so many survivors of attack deserves special attention. UNICEF reports:

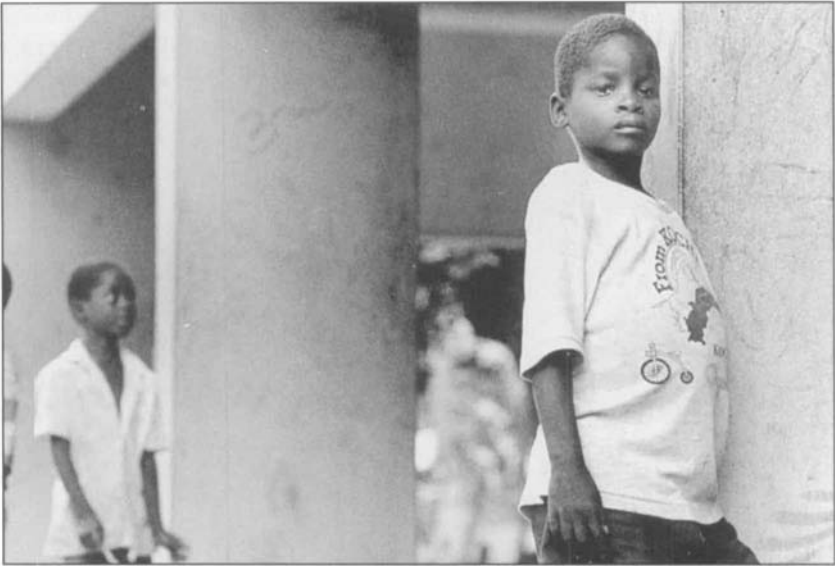
Trauma among children is widespread, although very incompletely documented and even less generally treated. In Mozambique, estimates of children traumatised, orphaned or abandoned run from 250,000 to 500,000, or up to 10 per cent of the age-group. Work in a Mozambican refugee camp in Zambia suggests a still higher percentage among refugees. For Angola, no firm estimates exist, but 250,000 would seem plausible ... Most of these children have seen relatives and friends butchered as well as their homes destroyed.⁹⁵

While Oxfam's relief assistance has focused on physical necessities, it has become increasingly clear that the victims of terror attacks also need help to overcome emotional brutalisation. Government relief officials have stressed these special needs, particularly among children.

In the provincial Angolan town of Huambo there is a children's centre which cares for war orphans, many of whom arrived there in a deeply traumatised condition. The Director of the Centre described the case of a small boy in her care.

This little boy arrived a few days ago. He has kwashiorkor, which is easily treated in comparison to his other problem, emotional trauma. Our children often cry in their sleep, but this little one also bursts out crying when he's awake. He hasn't talked yet. We think he's re-living the experience of seeing his parents killed.

We have all the children's histories, as far as they are known, which helps us.



Francesco Mangane Sigao, who saw his family hacked to death by the MNR, has withdrawn into complete silence. He lives in a government-run centre which specialises in rehabilitating traumatised children.

(Keith Bernstein / Oxfam)

We talk to the children and we try to take away their timidity. At first, they don't speak. It can take a very long time before they begin to talk back to us.⁹⁶

The scale of this problem is daunting. As one of Oxfam's emergency officers explained,

There is no doubt that long-term facilities for counselling and special care are needed. Obviously, material emergency assistance which Oxfam and other international agencies normally provide in disaster situations cannot deal with psychological damage. But even in the provision of material goods, there are small things we can do. For example, we have deliberately included clothing and blankets amongst the emergency relief goods going to the Mozambican refugees and displaced people.

Some people have criticised us for this, arguing that these items are not strictly essential for survival. But from talking with refugee representatives and local relief workers, we've come to learn that there are many dimensions to immediate human need. People who've survived vicious attack, who are in deep shock and distress, need and deserve the comfort of something to wrap round themselves and their children at the very least. But of course, it's no answer to their situation, it's just relief in its simplest form.



Mozambican relief workers unloading food for displaced people at Inhassunge, Zambezia Province, in February 1987.

(Keith Bernstein / Oxfam)

Relief aid under fire

But even this simplest of humanitarian gestures is affected by conflict. The logistics of moving emergency supplies to war-torn rural areas are fraught with difficulty. As outlined above, in Mozambique, shortages of fuel, vehicles, and spare parts make it difficult to move goods to isolated rural areas. Humanitarian work is attacked and deliberately disrupted by the MNR. The numerous attacks on relief warehouses and convoys, on settlements for displaced people and refugees, and on expatriate aid workers, prove that even emergency aid is considered a legitimate target.

For example, Oxfam's programme during 1987-88, to airlift seeds, agricultural tools, clothing, blankets, and other essential supplies to people in three Districts of Niassa Province in northern Mozambique, was dogged by MNR attacks. Oxfam was flying relief supplies to these areas because, as explained in an Oxfam UK telex to sister agencies,

*Unloading relief supplies
from an Oxfam airlift in
Mozambique's Niassa
Province, one of the many
areas isolated by war.*

(Frances Rubin / Oxfam)



THERE ARE NUMEROUS DISPLACED PEOPLE IN THESE AREAS. ADDED DIFFICULTY IS THAT SOME AREAS CAN ONLY BE REACHED BY LIGHT AIRCRAFT. RAILWAY TO COAST IS CUT (i.e. the Nacala line) WITH RESULT THAT LARGEST TOWN, LICHINGA, ALMOST WITHOUT FUEL. HENCE ONWARD DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD TO REMOTER AREAS, EVEN VIA THE FEW PASSABLE ROADS, IS VERY SLOW.⁹⁷

As the Oxfam worker responsible for organising these airlifts explained, We are flying supplies into Niassa Province because the MNR, the 'bandits' as everyone here calls them, deliberately attack road and rail traffic. Of course, air transport is the most expensive way of moving goods, but it was a question of necessity because drought had ruined two successive harvests and people had nothing left to plant for the following season.

Even so, on several occasions after we've flown a consignment of clothing and blankets to one of the distribution points, groups of MNR guerrillas have come soon afterwards. They scare away all the people who have gathered to



Mozambican children with their home-made toy models of Oxfam's relief planes.

(Lars Gronseth / Oxfam)

come soon afterwards. They scare away all the people who have gathered to receive our goods, and then they take things for themselves. What they don't want, they pile up and burn. That is typical of what the people here have to live with, destruction and more destruction until there is an end to the war.

We have thought deeply about this problem of attacks, and asked ourselves whether our airlifts are not just attracting more problems for the people we want to help. But it's the people themselves who say they really want us to continue, and that they don't want the MNR attacks to succeed in isolating their communities during this time of need.

It's not just that people want the relief goods, of course they do. But the thing which has struck me, which people have stressed over and over again, is that our airlifts also boost morale. To understand this, you have to imagine what it's like to live in the war-torn areas. Not only is fear of attack an everyday stress, but also war has sealed people off from the rest of the country, from normal traffic and trade. And so the arrival of the old DC3 airlift planes is a welcome break from the tedium of isolation. You only have to see the perfectly detailed little wire and wooden DC3 models the local children have made, complete with moving propellers, and the way they charge along holding them up in the air as our planes come in, to understand what I mean.

In April 1988 a fuel tanker purchased by Oxfam to help ease the transport bottlenecks which constantly hamper the distribution of relief goods in Mozambique was destroyed when MNR guerrillas ambushed an emergency relief convoy. The tanker cost £30,000, as much as a typical Oxfam shop raises in one year. The incident was reported in a telex from Oxfam Maputo to Oxfam headquarters,

28 April 1988:

ON 20 APRIL, MANDIMBA CONVOY ATTACKED. 7 VEHICLES IN CONVOY WITH MILITARY ESCORT. ATTACKED 45 KM FROM LICHINGA. WHEN AMBUSH TOOK PLACE DRIVER OF IVECO TRUCK WAS SHOT THROUGH FLOOR BUT KEPT GOING AND MADE IT TO LICHINGA.

FURTHER BACK IN THE CONVOY A GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURE DEPT VEHICLE TRIED TO TURN ROUND BUT WAS SHOT AT. DRIVER LOST FINGERS OF RIGHT HAND SO UNABLE DRIVE AND TRUCK STUCK ACROSS ROAD.

THE TRUCKS BEHIND HIM TURNED AND ESCAPED BUT FUEL TANKERS AND NISSAN WERE TRAPPED BETWEEN MNR AND AGRICULTURE TRUCK. THE SECOND OXFAM FUEL TANKER WAS DESTROYED ON ITS MAIDEN VOYAGE PLUS ANOTHER LEYLAND TRUCK CARRYING PETROL.

THE NISSAN TRUCK WAS CARRYING OXFAM COOKING OIL AND RICE. IT WAS HIT BUT NOT DESTROYED. OXFAM OIL AND RICE STOLEN BY MNR. THE DRIVER OF FUEL TANKER ESCAPED, OTHER 2 DRIVERS STILL MISSING. NOT SURE IF KILLED OR KIDNAPPED.

MNR attacks have also destroyed Oxfam emergency supplies in warehouses. For example, in July 1987 Oxfam staff in Mozambique telexed Oxfam's headquarters with the following news:

COASTAL TOWN OF MABALA ATTACKED ON 17 JULY. WAREHOUSE, CONTAINING GOODS EN ROUTE TO DISTRIBUTION CENTRE, WAS DESTROYED. GOODS LOST WERE:

1 TONNE SOAP (SCF - Save the Children Fund)

47 TONNES BEANS

56 BOXES DOMESTIC UTENSILS (SCF)

10 BOXES OXFAM CLOTHES

226 BOXES COOKING OIL (OXFAM)

SEEMS DELIBERATE STRATEGY TO ATTACK WAREHOUSES CONTAINING RELIEF GOODS.⁹⁸

Relief from relief?

As war drags on, so the need for war-related emergency relief continues. The fieldworker in charge of organising Oxfam's relief distribution programme in Mozambique's Zambezia Province says,

We are really beginning to wonder whether the outside world hasn't just got used to Mozambique's disaster - whether there is any point in hoping for international action to bring an end to this horrible war. In my job, I have to face the senselessness and misery of this war every day. The random brutality of MNR attacks makes relief work a very uncertain business. Just when you think the crisis in one area has been sorted out another one blows up, and more people are suddenly made destitute.

This year, we are asking Oxfam's fundraisers to find over £800,000 for our relief work in Zambezia Province alone. Just imagine what that amount of money could do if it were invested in a peaceful Mozambique.⁹⁹