

POLICY MISTAKES



AFTER INDEPENDENCE, the FRELIMO Government made enormous progress in health and education. They also instituted systems of popular justice and local government by democratically elected people's assemblies. Their approaches to agriculture and to defence have, however, been less successful.

They failed to restructure the colonial system of large farms, and their emphasis on big development projects left the small farmer virtually unsupported. Former colonial estates became big state farms, which sucked up resources, squandering precious foreign exchange on often inappropriate imported inputs like fuel, machinery and fertilisers. Many state farms proved inefficient, and small farmers had few incentives to produce surplus food for the market.

With Soviet help FRELIMO transformed its guerilla force into a conventional army for defence against external threats. But an army of conscripts, poor discipline and low morale were ineffective against the MNR's internal guerilla threat. Conscription, and poor military conditions, have had a colossal impact on Mozambican life, leaving many young people in dread of the call-up.

Official policies were enforced, like the setting up of communal villages in parts of the country where FRELIMO had few roots, and this heavy-handedness fuelled peasant discontent. Communal villagisation and the evacuation of the unemployed from the cities — 'Operation Production' — at times involved forced removals and often caused great distress and suffering. In areas of Tete and Zambezia, people came to fear soldiers, rebels and bandits alike, and the MNR swept along their trail of destruction virtually unopposed.

At the 1983 4th Congress, the government recognised these mistakes as contributors to the state of poverty, insecurity and hunger, and resolved to re-direct the economy towards family and co-operative farming, and to restructure the army.

The Mozambican Government has been criticised for its record on human rights, including indefinite detentions, public flogging and the death penalty. These have been primarily directed at the MNR and it is worth adding that after the Nkomati Accord the government announced a policy of clemency and reintegration for any rebels who surrendered voluntarily.

Petty corruption and abuse of power amongst the police, army and militia have also been a problem, although the government continues to campaign against it. The real difficulties have been the over-zealous interpretation of centralist policies and plans by inexperienced local officials.



Mozambican timber being exported to South Africa.

A REGIONAL CRISIS

Mozambique and Sanctions against South Africa

MOZAMBIQUE strongly favours the application of effective measures — including economic sanctions — against South Africa, to hasten the end of apartheid rule. It is a country which understands only too well the damaging effect economic sanctions can have on neighbouring states; Mozambique's own economy was seriously damaged by its principled stance during international sanctions against Rhodesia. In its current precarious state, Mozambique is extremely vulnerable to the loss of income and to retaliatory actions by South Africa should sanctions be adopted. The international community would have a moral obligation to cushion Mozambique and its neighbouring states from the worst of the 'knock on' effects of economic sanctions against South Africa.

AS PRESSURE MOUNTS to end apartheid in South Africa, a devastating yet undeclared war is threatening the southern African region. Mozambique, as the gateway to the coast for its neighbouring states, is a key piece in the regional jigsaw of power. Events in the Frontline States may seem a side-show to the upheaval within South Africa, but Mozambique's poverty and human suffering are at least as severe.

The southward tide of majority rule has ensured that South Africa is no longer surrounded by a ring of friendly buffer states; sources of cheap labour and export markets. South Africa's survival strategy was to bind its neighbours into dependence on South African imports, investment and transport, harbouring a dream of a regional 'constellation of states', centring on Pretoria.

But in 1980, after Zimbabwe's independence, southern Africa's black states united in an effort to overcome dependence on South Africa and build regional cooperation through SADCC, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference.

Central to SADCC's strategy are major transport rehabilitation schemes allowing the region's import-export trade to take the most direct routes to the sea. As it is, much of SADCC's goods must make the long journey through South Africa, earning considerable profits for South Africa while allowing it to turn the taps of regional trade off and on at will. High on the SADCC agenda is the Beira corridor road, rail and pipeline rehabilitation project — Zimbabwe's lifeline to the sea.

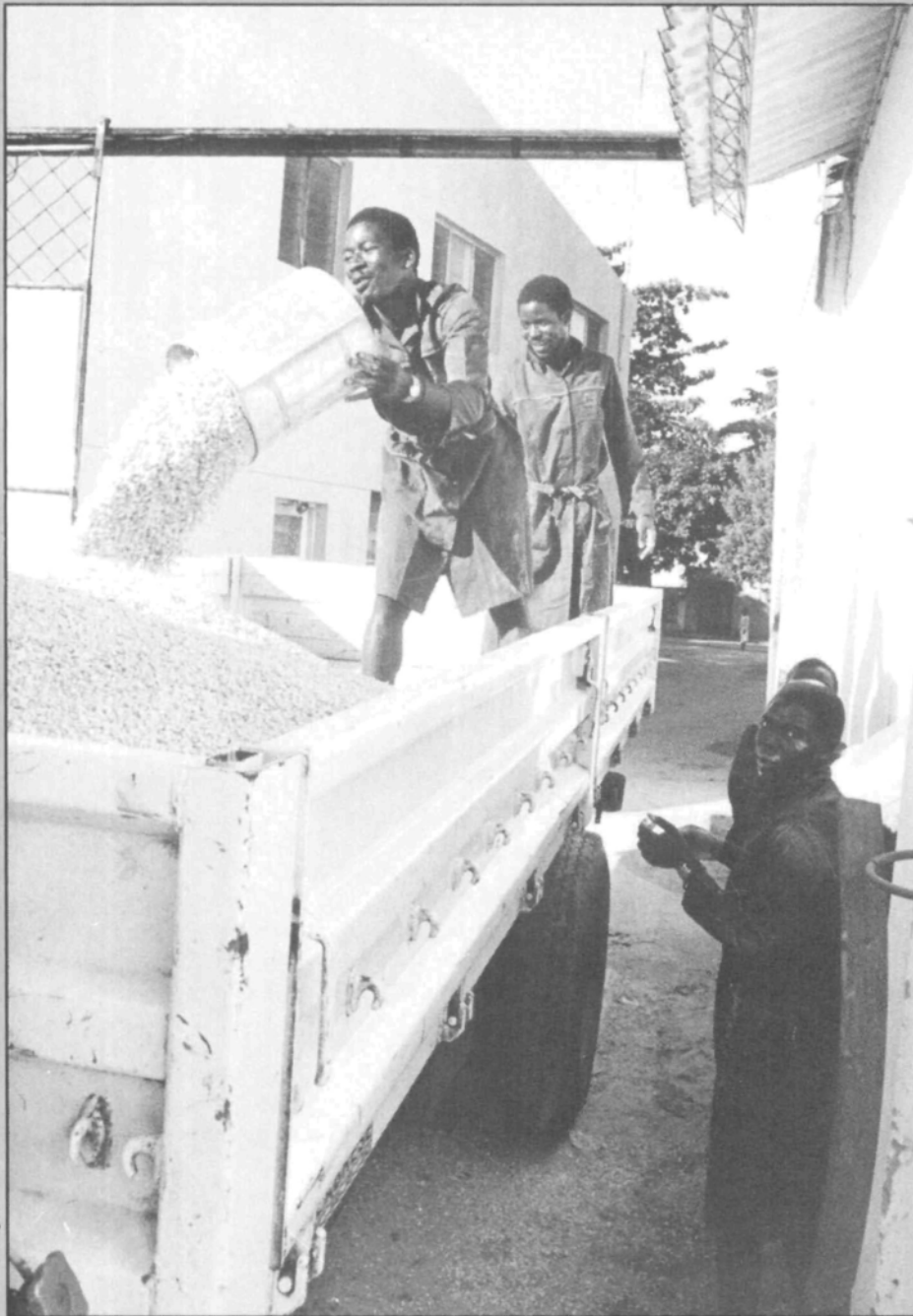
For any economic measures against South Africa to be effective, Mozambique's railways must be made to work and defended against attack, so that the Frontline States do not themselves suffer from sanctions. South Africa's backing for the MNR could be interpreted as being part of an aggressive anti-sanctions campaign.

Mozambique's regional importance means that the neighbouring states are being increasingly drawn into the war. Zimbabwe has recently stepped up its commitments to 12,000 troops deployed in defence of the Beira corridor and Malawi's vital southern road link through Tete Province. Tanzania and Malawi have also committed troops and Zambia and other African states may do the same.

South Africa's other purpose in attacking its neighbours has been to strike at the ANC who are using neighbouring territories as bases for guerilla action. But the Nkomati Accord convinced the world at large of the sincerity of Mozambique's non-alignment and wish for regional peace, and was followed by an instant clampdown on ANC activities.

However, Mozambique maintained its socialist standpoint and outspoken opposition to apartheid, and relations with South Africa continued to deteriorate, souring definitively after Samora Machel's death.

The sustained military pressure on Mozambique appears to be intended to force the government into further compromise. However, this strategy risks a massive military escalation and an unprecedented level of bloodshed and destruction. The losers in this grim scenario are the Mozambican people, already suffering famine, destitution and trauma from the continuing war.



Much of Mozambique is still critically dependent on food aid.

Julian Quan

The British Connection

BRITAIN maintains good relations with Mozambique and increased its development aid sixfold between 1982 and 1986. Since the Mozambican Government introduced its economic reform programme in early 1987 Britain's development aid to it has increased even more dramatically. Aid pledges for 1987 total £20 million, £15 million for short-term balance of payments support and £5 million for longer-term capital support.

Most of the bilateral aid is to help with imports (tied to British goods and services) for the rehabilitation of agriculture and light industry, but it also includes assistance in the transport sector, and scholarships for Mozambican students. In addition, through SADCC, Britain is contributing to the rehabilitation of Mozambique's railway lines — particularly the Limpopo line in the south — and providing technical assistance for the port at Maputo.

Small-scale military aid has also been quietly stepped up, including non-lethal equipment (boots, uniforms) and officer training in Zimbabwe and at Sandhurst. A private British company is now training a Mozambican defence force for the northern Nacala railway line, and providing a £1.6 million equipment package.

As well as development aid Britain provides substantial emergency assistance — approximately £14 million in 1987 — through non-governmental and international organisations.

The British Government's obvious support for the Marxist FRELIMO Government may seem surprising. To some extent it marks an acknowledgement of the practical and pragmatic steps taken by the Mozambican Government to address its chronic economic problems. But some have also described the British aid programme to Mozambique as a bargaining counter for Britain in the Commonwealth debate on economic sanctions against South Africa. On the one hand, Mozambique undoubtedly benefits; but only peace in the region can ultimately allow it the space to develop. In the meantime, the irony is that some of the aid will almost certainly be destroyed by the MNR.

The help that Britain provides to Mozambique is invaluable, but a more consistent policy is also required. A policy which recognises South Africa's central role in Mozambique's crisis and backs SADCC with firm action to promote peace in the region.

THE IMPACT OF AID

IT IS REALLY ONLY SINCE the severe 1983 famine that the majority of Western donors have come forward. Major TV coverage of suffering Mozambican people in late 1983 stimulated a flurry of interest amongst foreign governments and international agencies. The hundreds of thousands of people displaced by MNR activity in northern Mozambique in late 1986 led to further media coverage of the crisis.

Donors responded positively, pledging \$204 million towards a \$244 million emergency aid programme presented by the UN Secretary General and the Mozambican Government in March 1987.

The country still has not recovered from chronic food shortages since the famine in 1983-84. It is critically dependent on food aid for its urban population and for the enormous number of rural people displaced from their farms by MNR attacks.

There are major logistical problems involved in distributing aid, but official relief efforts are impressive. The Government's national disaster office, the DPCCN, has developed considerable expertise since its establishment in 1983, and hired the American agency CARE to provide technical support in coordination and transport of emergency aid. The long-term shifting pattern of MNR attacks make planning difficult, and the insecurity prevents many donor agencies placing staff in the more remote needy areas. Cooperation and coordination amongst the scores of aid agencies currently operating in Mozambique is vital.

Up to a quarter of Mozambique's population now needs some form of emergency aid. But the government is acutely conscious of the interlocking causes of this emergency, especially those of war and long-term economic decline. The emergency bears on all sectors; industry, transport and agriculture, as well as health, education and social services. A powerful inter-ministerial committee has been set up to coordinate the government's response.

The government is well aware of the risk that national development policies and national structures may be seriously weakened by the massive influx of foreign aid. It is important to reconcile urgent short-term needs with what is in the best long-term interests of the country and its economy. Wherever possible, donors are encouraged to build up existing national structures for the distribution of aid, rather than setting up parallel organisations.

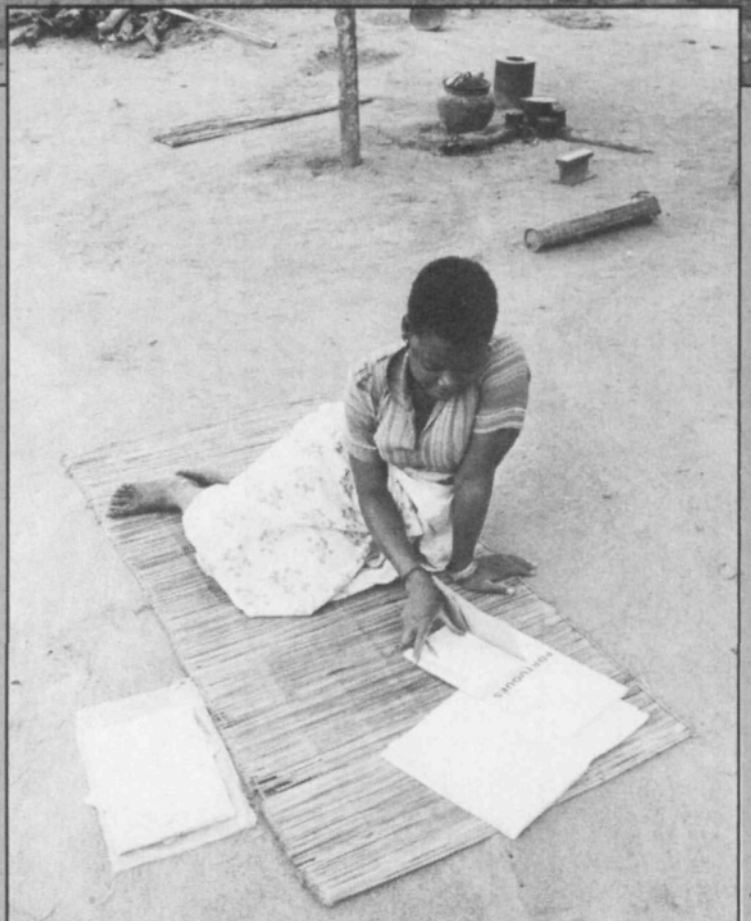
Practical examples of this include donors paying for Ministry of Health nutritionists to travel to outlying areas to assess nutritional and health needs, rather than depending solely on expatriate health staff. Donors are also encouraged to use Mozambican air or sea freight services instead of chartering foreign companies for the internal distribution of aid. Mozambican industry can be stimulated by investment in local production of emergency goods, such as soap and cloth, rather than relying only on imported foreign goods.

When Mozambique becomes yesterday's tragedy, the hope at least is that better equipped and better trained Mozambican services will be left behind to cope with the long-term problems. Cooperation between the donor community and the government in the sensible implementation of these policies may help to prevent a downward spiral of increasing dependence on aid.



Ian Bray

Building in Chicualacuala pock-marked with shell-holes. War has had a devastating effect throughout the country.



Ian Bray

Peace and stability are vital to the success of Mozambique's progressive health and education policies.

CONCLUSION

MOZAMBICANS are among the poorest people in the world. They inherited from the Portuguese a weak economy, with a pitifully small number of trained or even literate people to plan and manage new strategies for economic recovery and development. But above all, Mozambique's geographical position on the 'frontline' of struggles for independent majority rule in Rhodesia and now South Africa, has made it prey to an externally supported war that is crippling the country. One third of Mozambicans are now displaced or made destitute by widespread fighting. The war adds incalculable mental as well as physical suffering to an already poor and often uneducated people. The economy has been reduced to near chaos.

The scenario for Mozambique over the next few years is grim. Substantial international aid can, and will, help to alleviate some of the suffering. If sensitively administered, aid can also strengthen the government's ability to pursue many of the progressive policies in areas like education and health, which it started in the early years of independence. Mozambique is making serious attempts at economic recovery, but these cannot be successful until the fighting is ended. This in turn depends almost exclusively on the regional situation, and specifically on developments within South Africa.

The people of Mozambique remain hostages to a regional, political, and increasingly military crisis over which they can have little control. Long after the news coverage moves on, Mozambique will continue to need our active support to achieve the peace and stability vital to the country's development.