MOZAMBIQUE: stages in the struggle

Area: 297,731 sq. mi.
Population: 7.3 million
I. Stages of the Struggle: "Our People said 'Enough'... and started fighting for their freedom."

The war in Mozambique is now six years old. But the "division of labor" arrangement by which the United States has left to its European allies the primary responsibility for maintaining "stability" in Africa has resulted in a low level of consciousness among Americans about the liberation struggles in Mozambique and the rest of Southern Africa. To understand the struggle in Mozambique today it is necessary to know how it has grown. For Mozambicans, June 16, 1960, September 25, 1964, and February 3, 1969 are dates which stand out and sum up where they have been and where they are going.

June 16, 1960: The Massacre of Mueda

Life under Portuguese rule never encouraged the idea that political change might come by peaceful means. Portugal operated on the assumption that the 'colonies' were not really colonies, but only 'provinces' of Portugal. Talk of independence was therefore treason and not allowed. Even peaceful protests and African political associations were illegal. But it was the massacre at Mueda, in 1960, that brought the harsh truth that armed struggle was both necessary and inevitable.

Alberto Joaquim Chipande, now Deputy Chief-Commander of the Mozambique People's Armed Forces, was there. Describing what happened, he tells (Mozambique Revolution April-June, 1970) how a delegation of peasants and their leaders, inspired by Tanyanika's approaching independence, sought a meeting with Portuguese officials. The Cabo Delgado provincial Governor met with two of the leaders.

Then they emerged from the offices and the Governor told the people: "I was talking to Kibiriti and Vanomba, and was informed on what you want. Is there anyone who wants to come here and repeat the demand made by those two?" Immediately hundreds of us stood up—but the Governor selected only 10 who were allowed to enter the building. Some policemen approached and put handcuffs on Kibiriti and Vanomba. Other policemen were ordered to beat the 10 Mozambicans. All this was done before the eyes of the assembled crowd. When they saw this, the people reacted. When those who had been arrested were taken to the Jeep, the people advanced. Armed policemen placed themselves in front, forming a barrier. They had guns with fixed bayonets. The people did not care and continued to move forward, some towards the Jeep that was supposed to take the arrested people away, and others towards the Governor himself. Afraid, the Governor tried to run away, but was caught by us. We started beating him up. At that moment the police fired on us. They did not shoot into the air—but directly on us. I saw my comrades falling down at my side. The people started retreating and running away. The firing did not stop, on the contrary, it increased. The policemen shot the people who were running away. At that moment troops arrived, who had come from Porto Amelia escorting the Governor. They took positions on the northwest side of the administration building and also started shooting. We were caught between two lines of fire, hundreds of people fell, I don't know exactly how many. I escaped by pure chance. I saw myself running over dead bodies until I arrived near a grave about 50 metres away from the administration. It was the grave of a Major who was killed in Negomano in the Second World War. I camouflaged behind it and looked at what was going on. I could see the whole scene. The shooting lasted for about five minutes. I saw things I shall never be able to forget. For example, under the Jeep there were some people who had taken refuge there. I saw the Portuguese police putting their guns under the vehicle and shoot and kill them all—one by one. Also, I saw the troops throwing grenades into the middle of the crowd.

Only when all Mozambicans had either fallen or run away out of sight did the shooting stop.

The 16th of June, Chipande, "ceased to be a day when the dead of Mueda are mourned—to become instead a day when opposition and fight without truce against the system that killed them is reaffirmed."

September 25, 1964: The Armed Struggle Begins

As a result of Portuguese restrictions, the first open organization of Mozambican nationalist movements took place among Mozambicans in exile. In 1962, three movements came together in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, forming the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). Under the leadership of FRELIMO, diplomatic moves were initiated in African and United Nations circles, education was begun among Mozambicans in exile, and the necessary preparation was made for the armed struggle—clandestine organization within Mozambique, training of the initial group of 250 guerrilla fighters. On September 25, 1964, the initial attacks were launched and FRELIMO proclaimed "the general armed insurrection of the Mozambican people against Portuguese colonialism for the attainment of the complete independence of Mozambique."

Reflecting on that day, an editorial in Mozambique Revolution June—September, 1968, pointed out that "the myth of the invincibility of the white man, built through centuries by the colonialists, was shattered. Our people said 'Enough!' to their masters, and started fighting for their freedom." The four years from 1964 to 1968 has resulted in the liberation of substantial areas in northern Mozambique, in the provinces of Cabo Delgado and Niassa. In these areas, FRELIMO, while continuing attacks on isolated Portuguese bases and defending their territory against Portuguese air power, began a program of national reconstruction, expanding the production of food crops by agricultural cooperatives, establishing rudimentary medical services and primary schools, organizing administrative services for the civilian population. In 1968 the armed struggle was extended to Tete province, and the second full congress of FRELIMO held, this time inside Mozambique.

FRELIMO had thus established a strong base within the country, an area in which the relationship of people and guerrilla forces could solidify. New recruits came from the local populations, and the bulk of military training came to be carried on inside the country. A force of some 10,000 Mozambican guerrillas now confronted 50,000 Portuguese troops. But it soon became clear to all, that the struggle would be a long one, in which Portugal, fortified by the military and economic support of South Africa and her NATO allies, would not easily succumb. The geography of Mozambique, over 1000 miles from North to South, imposed obstacles difficult to overcome.

Some Mozambicans, impatient, thought of independence for northern Mozambique alone, either by compromise

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with the Portuguese or by concentrating all FRELIMO forces in one area alone. Others, unable to break away from a mentality built from living as exiles and refugees, preferred to wait and go back after someone else had won independence for them. And in this atmosphere the Portuguese secret police (PIDE), together with other interested foreign agents, intensified their efforts.

February 3, 1969: President Mondlane Assassinated

The climax of this "secret warfare" came with the bomb assassination of Eduardo Mondlane, first President of FRELIMO.

What Mondlane had meant to FRELIMO was described in a FRELIMO statement following his assassination (Mozambique Revolution January-February, 1969):

We remember him, and that memory comforts us in our grief, because he helped us reach unity that we all longed for. Out of many groups he led one united front; out of many tribes he was able to foresee one nation. Never did he identify himself with one group or one tribe; never did he fail to perform his duty as a man of the nation, a Mozambican. From him we learned to judge a man on the basis of his abilities and not his origins... In his bold laughter spoke the pride of asserting himself as a new man of a new country, as a Mozambican. In his straightforward friendliness spoke the reliance on a reality which we were creating together. We remember him for having helped us in so many ways to recognize

And we honour him because he taught us to hate, for he taught us whom to hate and why to hate. Son of a freedom fighter, descendant of freedom fighters and leader of freedom fighters, he knew the importance of the right target for hatred, what a formidable weapon it could be if directed correctly: 'Yes, a man must kill... but not fight against the colour of the enemy, fight against the things he fights for, systems of economic and social control...'. All his efforts to provide all possible support to the armed struggle reflected a bitter and serious understanding of the power of the enemy, a clear understanding of who the enemy is. We now add to all this our knowledge of the brutal way in which he was murdered...

It was a vain hope that they (the enemies of the Mozambican people) nourished if they thought to discourage us by this barbarous elimination of one man even if a great man. In this they showed their weakness, their ignorance of the Revolution which has taught us through the toughest experience how to make of every apparent setback a new point of attack, how to use every momentary retreat as an opportunity for a run and a leap forward, how to find in defeat the means for victory.

The assassination of Mondlane was followed by difficulties, as anticipated, but by difficulties which led to a clarification of the struggle, rather than the chaotic collapse hoped for by the Portuguese. The reactionary line of those within the party opposed to Mondlane was more clearly exposed. (That line had included the creation of a group of intellectuals who would be exempt from the struggle, but be leaders afterwards.)

This reactionary line had its own strategic conception: according to them, we should bring all our forces who were fighting in the different provinces, concentrate them in one province, and expel all Portuguese from that province. They proposed that we start with Cabo Delgado, alleging that that was the province where the war was most developed, but the real reason being that that was the province where economic activities were under Lazaro's (one of such leaders, who later deserted to the Portuguese) administration. Our forces would then advance to another province—and thus successively gain our end. Analyzing the real intentions of the group that defended that strategy—which is absolutely incorrect given the conditions of our struggle—we see that they did not conform with the perspective of a protracted war, but wanted to reap immediately the fruits of the revolution through full exploitation, without difficulties deriving from the war. The revolutionary line opposed strongly that orientation, clearly defining the aims of our revolution: achievement of national independence, destruction of the colonial system, and establishment of a regime based on the
people, for the people. The principal means of combat used by the revolutionary comrades was the action of mobilization and explanation (sic) of the people. The people learned how to know clearly who their enemy was—the enemy being defined as whoever in a certain moment practises the exploitation of man by man and whatever the methods and forms that exploitation takes. (Mozamique Revolution, April-June, 1970)

In the aftermath of the assassination, some who had represented this line deserted to the Portuguese, such as Lazaro Kavandame. One of the members of the three-man Presidential Council, Uria Simango, who had linked himself to Kavandame and others of similar tendencies, denounced the party, and was expelled. In May, 1970, Samora Maciel, Commander of FRELIMO's military forces, was elected acting President, and Marcelino dos Santos, acting Vice-President, until the next Congress.

The armed struggle, meanwhile, continued, and continues—with fighting in Niassa and Cabo Delgado, and a special intensification of activities in Tete, where Portugal, with massive South African and European aid, plans to build the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric project. Accompanying the struggle, new schools have been opened in Tete, and more advanced primary schools in Cabo Delgado and Niassa. A new FRELIMO hospital has been opened at Mitwara, in southern Tanzania. Most important in the perspective of a prolonged revolution, according to the FRELIMO Communiques, has been the "elevation of the consciousness of our people," which made it possible to draw "more tightly the harmonious relations between the people and the guerrillas, and, in the military structure, between the Commanders and the rank and file." A LUTA CONTINUA.

II, Internationalization of the Struggle: "We must increase the isolation of the Portuguese colonialists by exposing the massive support they receive from the NATO Alliance in general and in particular from the United States, West Germany, Great Britain, and France..."

The revolutionary consciousness emerging from the struggle of the Mozambican people is primarily a national consciousness, of their own reality, their own immediate enemy, the Portuguese colonialist, and the strategy that they themselves must follow to gain eventual victory. But it is impossible for them to ignore that Portugal has powerful friends, whose interests are intertwined with those of Portuguese colonialism. Mozambique is only one of the countries in Southern Africa still under white rule. And, together with Angola and Zimbabwe, it now provides a northern buffer to the white rulers of the Republic of South Africa, the kingpin of white supremacy. South African ties to the Portuguese are consequently substantial, and increasing. Military cooperation involves already day-to-day coordination and consultation, as well as South African troops stationed in Tete province. Of even greater importance is South African economic penetration in Mozambique. South African capital has taken a leading role in the Cabora Bassa project. Add this investment commitment along with that of dozens of other South African firms in agriculture, mining, transport, and secondary industry together with the seventy year old history of exploitation of 100,000 or more Mozambican men in South Africa's mines, and it is clear that South Africa has a vested interest in a "stable" Mozambique. When the armed struggle expands significantly to the south in Mozambique, it is almost certain that South Africa will play an even more important role in the Portuguese counter-insurgency operations.

South African military expansion already touches Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Malawi. Threats against Zambia and Tanzania are constant, and Portuguese raids across the border are not infrequent. South Africa has plans, moreover, for economic integration of Southern Africa, and expansion of economic ties farther north, to secure pliable and dependent buffer states as well as to reap the profits. The Malagasy Republic has responded eagerly, and other states, such as Kenya, are tempted. As in Asia one must think of an Indochina war rather than just a Vietnam war, so in Africa the Mozambican Revolution, the Angolan Revolution, and the struggles of the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa, must be seen as part of one growing Southern African revolutionary struggle.

But Portugal has other friends as well, allies in NATO. That Portugal would be severely handicapped without military aid from these allies is well-known. Particularly in the air war of counter-insurgency, which requires aircraft bombs, and napalm, Portugal has no possibilities of supplying her own needs. But perhaps of greater long-range significance is the increased investment drive following 1965, when Portugal, to attract foreign capital, loosened up government restrictions. The exploration of Angola and Mozambique for mineral resources has barely begun, and companies beyond the African continent from Western Europe, Japan, and the United States, are eager to get in, and naturally, to defend the "stability" which will enable them to profit from what they discover. Gulf Oil Company, which began in 1969 the export of oil from Cabinda in Angola, is only one of the lucrative ones among a growing number of companies.

"Cabora Bassa is a Crime" The key to Portugal's imperialist strategy in Mozambique and the focal point of massive foreign investment is the Cabora Bassa dam and the
Zambesi Valley Development Project. The Portuguese have three objectives that are served by Cabora Bassa: 1) to link Mozambique's economy more closely with that of racist South Africa 2) to associate European and American economic interests with the maintenance of Portuguese domination of Mozambique 3) to settle one million white immigrants in Mozambique as a further step in maintaining control. If it is ever completed, the dam will be one of the largest in the world, larger than Aswan, with a lake 150 miles long and a generating capacity of 3,600 mega-watts.

FRELIMO pinpointed Cabora Bassa in an address to an ad hoc group of the UN Committee on Decolonization, declaring that,

The construction of the Cabora Bassa dam is the most eloquent expression of the colonialist and imperialist attitude. Cabora Bassa is a crime. It is a crime not only against the Mozambican people but also the entire people of southern Africa and Africa as a whole. The complicity of the western powers in the realization of $432 million. Banks reportedly involved include Banque de Paris et de Pays Bas, Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau, and Barclays DCO. Reports that Bank of America is involved have been denied by them and the US government. Portuguese sources are raising about 20% of the cost, while South Africa has raised $115 million from the government and its extensions, the Industrial Development Corporation and the Electricity Supply Commission. French, West German, and South African sources are supplying the export credits.

The contractor for Cabora Bassa is ZAMCO, a consortium led by South Africa's Anglo-American Corporation and reported including 17 South African, West German, and French companies. One early victory for FRELIMO has been that public pressure forced a large Swedish firm out of the consortium and President Kaunda of Zambia was successful in getting the Italian government to withdraw export credit and a subcontractor to pull out. Siemens, a West German corporation, has been forced to hire a special p.r. man to ward off protests of their involvement in Cabora Bassa.

Cabora Bassa cannot succeed alone; it depends on the Zambesi Valley Development Project, which involves opening up the area to vast foreign investment to exploit the valuable mineral and agricultural resources there. Already the Portuguese are trying to improve the road and rail access. What is obvious is that just as Portugal could never support the 150,000 man military forces now fighting in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau without the bolstering of NATO arms and aid, so Cabora Bassa would be an impossibility without the economic and political support of western governments and corporations for the continuation of Portuguese domination of Mozambique.

The U.S. Has a Stake

There are a number of U.S. oil companies now functioning in Mozambique, tied to the predicted expansion in foreign investment called for by the Portuguese strategy for defeating the liberation struggles...
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and holding on to the colonies. A consortium of Clark, Skeely, and Sunray began drilling off-shore this year. Gulf and Pan American oil have been in Mozambique since 1958, have renewed a contract worth $9.25 million through 1970, and have discovered natural gas off Beira. Hunt International (a subsidiary of Placid Oil) and Texaco have concessions in the north, near FRELIMO controlled areas, and part of Texaco's concessions are in Cabo Delgado Province which is essentially under FRELIMO control. Other U.S. companies are prospecting for minerals, including the Continental Ore Company in Tete Province near Cabora Bassa.

American subsidiaries in South Africa are moving into Mozambique too. Kaiser Jeep of South Africa (subsidiary of Kaiser Jeep International, now owned by American Motors) sells jeeps to the Portuguese army in Mozambique, while the South African subsidiaries of GE and Ingersoll Rand are involved in the electric cable schemes in connection with Cabora Bassa. In addition, U.S. distributorships in Mozambique include Caltex, Singer (sewing machine), and Standard Electric (owned by I.T.T.). The U.S. also buys shelled cashews from Mozambique worth almost $10 million per year. By 1968, U.S. companies accounted for 11% of Mozambique foreign trade.

With U.S. investment increasingly moving into Mozambique, helping Portugal pay the bills for her military operations against FRELIMO, it is no wonder that on the diplomatic front the U.S. is calling for "stability" in southern Africa. Nixon, in his foreign policy statement to Congress in February, 1970 said that the U.S. "cannot agree that progressive change in southern Africa is furthered by force." State Department Publication 8074 (October, 1968) states that "the United States recognizes the contribution made in Africa by Portugal, and believes it is important that Portugal continue to contribute to the stability and progress in that continent." And the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. speaking against a General Assembly condemnation of Portugal in December, 1969 said, "We find in Paragraph 5 a new concept...a condemnation of the 'colony war' which is allegedly being waged by Portugal against the people in its African territories. This kind of blanket condemnation is hardly likely to achieve a constructive dialogue with the Government of Portugal." In a policy statement signed by Secretary of State Rogers and President Nixon on March 28, 1970, the U.S. position was stated: "As for the Portuguese Territories, we shall continue to believe that their peoples should have the right of self-determination. We will encourage peaceful progress toward that goal. The declared Portuguese policy of racial tolerance is an important factor in this equation. We think this holds genuine hope for the future." The Johannesburg, South Africa newspaper The Star April 4, 1970, replied: President Nixon's declaration...of a pragmatic and peaceful American policy is, in particular, a diplomatic victory for Lisbon, which has for nine years been fighting not only African rebels in its three African territories but a torrent of international censure for holding onto these territories. While talking about "self-determination" and "dialogue," U.S. policy provides a legitimization for the continued domination of 6½ million Mozambicans by the 150,000 white population there and denies the existence of the liberation struggle.

Combine this political aid and comfort for Portugal with the economic and military factors cited earlier and the struggle in Mozambique can be seen in the wider context of the revolutionary liberation struggle in all of southern Africa. Victory for the Mozambicans and their allies in Angola, Zimbawe, Nambia, and South Africa will mean victory not only against Portugal, but also the powers which support Portugal, of which in many respects the largest and the most devious is the United States.

Because the liberation war being waged by FRELIMO, as well as the other struggles in Angola and Guinea-Bissau, exist in this international context, the International Conference for Solidarity with the Struggle Against Portuguese Colonialism held last June in Rome emphasized the importance of actions within the imperialist countries giving aid to Portugal. One of the declarations from the Rome conference was that "we must increase the isolation of the Portuguese colonialists by exposing the massive support they receive from the NATO alliance in general, and in particular from the United States, West Germany, Great Britain, and France."

The words of the Rome Conference can be focused by Americans on the U.S. corporations, on aiding FRELIMO, which has a New York office, and by working to spread the understanding of the Mozambican Revolution. Their struggle is ours.

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