The Mozambican
Struggle
"A mango does not become a great tree in the first day, but like a growing mango tree we are deeply rooted in the soil that is our people, and the masses are now tasting the first fruits.

—Samora Machel, President of FRELIMO, Sept. 25, 1970

Samora Machel’s statement was delivered on the sixth anniversary of the armed struggle against the Portuguese colonists inside Mozambique; a struggle that has reclaimed the northern quarter of the country where there are now over one million people living and building a life free of the Portuguese. While subject to colonial rule, the Mozambicans were used as a cheap labor pool and lived in conditions of extreme poverty, illiteracy and disease. In the liberated areas, there are now more than 20,000 Mozambicans learning and teaching in their own schools, more than 11 district hospitals and 56 mobile first-aid centers, where there were none before.

Most of us are unaware of this struggle: unaware that we are supporting wars (by means of U.S. dollars, bombs, guns, herbicides, napalm, etc. paid for through taxation) in all of Southern Africa. The U.S. government is participating in these wars in order to protect the economic interest of its own ruling corporations in these countries and to insure the profit climate for the future. We are unaware because we are actively being kept misinformed and uninformed. This in turn guarantees that the U.S. can continue its foreign policy, a policy it would never be able to justify to the American public. The Nixon Administration has been carrying out its support for the colonial power, Portugal, and economically is collaborating with the minority supported white-racist governments of Rhodesia and South Africa: support that has repeatedly broken United Nations sanctions.

Furthermore, because the news that we do hear about Southern Africa and United States policy is released by the State Department or its network of information channels, we are obligated to inform ourselves of this government’s commitments with our money in Southern Africa and to join with those who are seeking an end to this oppressive situation. As the U.S. ruling class’s entanglements are choking this area of the world at an accelerated rate, we must prevent the United States from creating another situation comparable to the war in southeast Asia.
Although the Portuguese have claimed Mozambique for 450 years, it wasn’t until 1898 that the war against Gaza, the last of the traditional Mozambican empires was ended, and the Portuguese established a ruling system for the entire country. However, all of the armed resistance wasn’t stopped until the nineteen-twenties. In 1926, Salazar became the dictator of Portugal and the few African organizations that had been formed in the early nineteen-twenties for social reform, were made illegal and disbanded. By meeting secretly, there were in the late nineteen-fourties, three groups of active Africans organized against the Portuguese. But it wasn’t until the early nineteen-sixties that the resistance underwent a major change; this turning point was the massacre at Mueda. In his book, *The Struggle for Mozambique*, the former President of FRELIMO, quotes the account by a Mozambican who was at the Mueda massacre.

“Certain leaders worked among us. Some of them were taken by the Portuguese—Tiango Muller, Faustino Vanomba, Kiberti Diwane—in the massacre at Mueda on June 16, 1960. How did it happen? Well, some of these men had made contact with the authorities and asked for more liberty and more pay...After a while, when the people were giving support to these leaders, the Portuguese sent police through the villages inviting the people to a meeting at Mueda. Several thousand people came to hear what the Portuguese had to say. As it turned out, the administrator had asked the governor of Delgado Province to come from Porto Amelia and to bring a company of troops. But these were hidden when they got to Mueda. We didn’t see them at first.

Then the governor asked our leaders into the administrators office. I was waiting outside. They were in there for four hours. When they came out on the veranda, the governor asked the crowd who wanted to speak and the governor told them all to stand to one side.

Then without another word he told the police to bind the hands of those who had stood on one side, and the police began beating them. I was close by, I saw it all. When the people saw what was happening, they began demonstrating against the Portuguese, and the Portuguese simply ordered the police trucks to come and collect these arrested persons. So there were more demonstrations against this. At that moment, the troops were still hidden, and the people went up close to the police to stop the arrested persons from being taken away. So the governor called the troops, and when they appeared he told them to open fire. They killed about 600 people. Now the Portuguese say they have punished that governor, but of course they have only sent him somewhere else. I myself escaped because I was close to a graveyard where I could take cover, and then I ran away.

—Alberto Joaquim Chipande, a leader in Cabo Delgado.
After Mueda, it became apparent throughout Mozambique that peaceful resistance to the Portuguese was impossible. With a great deal of hard work, a united party, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), was formed in 1962. The party recognized armed struggle as the only realistic means to independence. For the previous forty years, Mozambicans had exhausted all peaceful means to freedom, now it was FRELIMO’s task to prepare for war.

“By 1962, two conclusions were obvious. Portugal would not admit the principle of self-determination and independence, or allow for any extension of democracy under her own rule, although by then it was clear that her own ‘Portuguese’ solutions to our oppressed conditions, such as assimilation by multi-racial colonatos, multi-racial schools, local elections, had proven to be a meaningless fraud. Secondly, moderate political action such as strikes demonstrations and petitions would only result in the destruction of those who took part in them. We were, therefore, left with these alternatives: to continue indefinitely under a repressive imperial rule; or to find a means of using force against Portugal which would be effective enough to hurt Portugal without resulting in our own ruin. This is why, to FRELIMO leaders, armed action appeared to be the only method.”

—Mondlane The Struggle for Mozambique

The conditions created by the Portuguese in which the Mozambican people were living were such that all FRELIMO needed to do was to provide the people with the organization and understanding necessary to defeat the Portuguese. Side by side, fighting and educating, liberating and rebuilding, a new society is being molded. Territories have been captured from the Portuguese only if it has been possible to maintain them. This has meant training in farming, economics, defense, co-operative working, politics, etc. Schools have been built where children are raised and educated collectively. If parents are killed or transferred to another area of fighting, children are cared for in these schools.

One aspect of the Mozambican tradition that rendered them relatively ineffective against the Portuguese was tribalism, or tribal nationalism. In combating this, FRELIMO decided to elect a national language for all the Mozambican people. Portuguese was the language they chose. This was not only because under their colonial condition Portuguese was the very language that touched all of the various tribes and therefore was a constant reminder of their fight, but also it was a means of better understanding the enemy.
Recently two Afro-Americans were invited by FRELIMO to visit liberated Mozambique where they traveled with a FRELIMO army group for six weeks. One of them, Robert Van Lierop provides us with some interesting comments. This is approximately what he said:

Imagine the surprise of the Portuguese soldier who is captured by FRELIMO. He certainly never expected well-trained, disciplined soldiers in the first place; he is shocked to be taken to where he is clothed, fed, and if needed, medically treated by people who teach him how to read and write in his own tongue! He may even be released to wherever he wants to go. No wonder the numerous reports of Portuguese troop desertions; or patrols firing into the bush in order to make noise, then returning with stories of encounters with FRELIMO in which they killed large numbers.

FRELIMO soldiers and the Mozamican people realize that these soldiers came from the poorest country in Europe. For the most part they are illiterate and because of military conscription laws are forced to join the army.

"Because of the repressive nature of Portuguese rule, Portugal has always been a nation of emigrants. The variations in the rate and direction are naturally ruled by international factors and foreign demand. In the past decade, for instance, the common market countries have replaced Brazil, Venezuela, and other Latin American countries as the main importers of Portuguese labor. But the alarming increase in emigration over the last ten years is also related to the colonial wars in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique; at ten per cent of the emigrants are young men evading military conscription. It is revealing, that whereas in the period 1956-60, the annual rate of emigration averaged 44,000, in the period 1961-70 it averaged more than 100,000...It is estimated that the average rate of refractarios -draft dodgers- is now running at an annual rate of 10,000 a year and that it reached 14,000 in 1970."


Within Portugal itself, the ARA (Armed Revolutionary Action), an underground resistance movement has been very active. Last year, the ARA blew up seventeen planes and four ships that were meant as military equipment for Africa.

The major role that the FRELIMO army fulfills is: to capture new territories. Once FRELIMO controls an area, the militia is designated to take the major part of the responsibility for defending it. As can be seen in this quote from Mozambique Revolution, Fall, 1970, the army is unusually well-integrated into the society:
"We saw many examples of complete unison between the army and the civilian peasant farmers. At one of their meetings, for instance, an army commander asked the Youth League to assign some of its members for a patrol, as the army was occupied elsewhere. This they did—and the group included both boys and girls. On another occasion, in one of the camps, the peasants arrested two soldiers who had left the camp without permission. Civilians actually arrested the military! Their subsequent treatment was extremely interesting. For they were not punished but given an ideological lecture before the whole camp, including reprimands by the local people. The commander invited general opinion and everyone was allowed to speak. Some months earlier three Portuguese deserters were found wandering in the bush by some peasants who immediately brought them to the army."

Another progressive aspect of the struggle being waged in Mozambique is the relationship of women to the new society that is being built. As early as 1966, the Central Committee made it clear that they felt the Mozambican women needed to take a more active part at all levels of the struggle. Early in 1967, a group of women began political and military training. Josina Machel was a political commissar in the women's detachment and a head in the section on social affairs. She died of illness on April 7, 1971, at the age of 25 years. In an article entitled, "The role of women in the revolution" which appeared in Mozambique Revolution, 1970, she wrote:

(Women) "Although highly effective in the field of combat, their contribution has been less noticeable (just because of their relative small numbers compared with the men) than their activities in the political field, where their impact has been far out of proportion to their numbers. Since 1967, the women have demonstrated that they have a key role in the mobilization and political education of both the people and the soldiers themselves. In this work, we explain to the people the need to fight, what kind of struggle we are waging, with whom we fight and against whom, what are the reasons for our struggle, what are our aims, and why we chose an armed struggle as the only means to independence. We explain how we are dependent to a certain extent on foreign aid, and which countries and organizations are helping us, and that, despite this help, we must be as self-reliant as possible."

In order to give a rough idea of the extent of the obstacles that FRELIMO faces in a military battle, we must add the presence of South Africa and Rhodesia, who have already made troop commitments in Mozambique. Since the early sixties, Portugal has reversed its policy and invited foreign investment in its colonies. This was due to the tremendous cost of fighting, and Portugal needed sources of revenue and military help. One incentive, to help it gain commitments, has been the Cobora Basa dam, a proposed hydroelectric dam that would be the largest hydroelectric dam in the world. It would not only sup-
ply the Portuguese in Mozambique, for which there is limited use, but also its supply would be diverted to serve South Africa and Rhodesia. Originally, the plans called for completion of the project by 1974, but even with the presence of 20,000 South African troops around Cabora Basa, all attempts at establishing the pilings have been sabotaged. The Portuguese even tried to move one-million Portuguese families into the area, relocating all the Africans living there, but have been unable to recruit people to move there. Instead of the buffer zone that Portugal hoped to create, its citizens are in no hurry to move to a war zone where they know that Portugal is losing.

The Portuguese colonies are very important to South Africa and Rhodesia for reasons other than the dam. When Portugal is driven out of Angola and Mozambique, there will be roughly 1000 miles of liberated border facing South Africa and 500 miles of liberated border facing Rhodesia. Because armed insurrection has already begun against these illegal governments, this is terribly threatening to them. These struggles are being waged by the revolutionary allies of the liberation armies in the Portuguese colonies: ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa, SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) in Namibia, ZAPU (Zambabwe African People's Union) in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). At present, the Caprivi strip (see map) is the scene of much fighting in the wake of the strike taking place in Namibia against the contract labor system of slavery. Although they make one-tenth to one-fourteenth of what the whites make, it is illegal for non-whites to form labor unions or strike.

In order to continue its colonial wars in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, it is estimated that Portugal must spend one million dollars a day. In all of these wars it is losing; MPLA, the liberation front in Angola has liberated over one-third of the country, and PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau now controls all the countryside.

Repeatedly, the United Nations has called for an end to Portuguese colonization. Portugal has responded by changing the status of its colonies to "overseas provinces" and by means of military supplies donated through NATO continues its wars. Recently Nixon went to the Azores where he met with Portuguese dictator Caetano and agreed to give Portugal $436.5 million. Nixon also broke United Nations sanctions in the past few months against Ian Smith's illegal racist Rhodesian government by agreeing to buy chrome from there.
The 436.5 million dollar loan includes $400 million in the form of an Export-Import Bank loan. Interestingly, the total amount of Export-Import Bank loans to the entire continent of Africa for the period 1946 to 1970 was less than $350 million and for the same period to all of Europe $754 million. Portugal is to receive the entire Export-Import Bank Loan in the next two year period. Some $15 million of the total amount of the agreement is to be aid in the PL480 program, a program that is supposed to provide other countries with surplus grain, powdered milk, and some meat. A senate investigation of the program some six months ago revealed that the money that went into the program was being used to buy guns from this country.

The pattern of U.S. involvement is throughout Mozambique and all of Southern Africa. Yet in spite of the lies and the vacuum of information that surrounds its involvement, there is literature available and research being done. Some of the literature that you may want to consult for further information about Mozambique is:

Mozambiques' FRELIMO: BUILDING FREEDOM
history and progress of the liberation movement in Mozambique by Africa Research Group (ARB).

The Struggle for Mozambique by the late Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, founder of the Mozambique Liberation Front, FRELIMO.

Mozambique Revolution—periodical of FRELIMO
Interview with Marcelino Dos Santos—FRELIMO
vice-president of the Liberation Support Movement (LSM)

Chicago Committee for the Liberation of Angola, Mozambique and Guine-Bissau. For further information, literature, to donate materials, and to donate material support to these liberation struggles, contact them at 2546 N. Halsted—the New World Resource Center—(Open Tues through Sat. from 2-8 p.m. Closed Sunday and Monday.)