

# NATION BUILDING IN MOZAM- BIQUE



---

Mr. Peter Spacek a journalist of the German Democratic Republic, has just returned from a trip inside Mozambique with FRELIMO. Here are his impressions of the country's liberated areas, as printed in the Standard, Dar es Salaam.

---

I did not feel like a hero when we crossed into Mozambique.

My first thought was what would happen if Portuguese aircraft attacked us? I kept this to myself but my companions of FRELIMO must have been mind readers. "We never march at night", one freedom fighter told me. "We are the masters here, not the Portuguese. At night we sleep."

I knew that FRELIMO holds liberated areas. But I had not imagined what that actually meant. Is it deserted bush, not worthwhile for the colonialists to defend? Is there anything like "normal village life" – not only freedom fighters with a gun, but also people working on their

shambas, and children playing around? If there are any villagers – do they live in permanent fear?

Already, the very first miles inside gave an astonishing answer. I witnessed the strangest foreign trade I ever came across. The people of the liberated areas are hard workers and rapidly learning to master their environment. The free areas have developed the land and are producing important cash crops, mainly cashew nuts and agricultural products. Within one hour I met more than a hundred people carrying heavy bags on their heads over distances of dozens of miles. They exchange these goods for other essentials of life, textiles, shoes, soap, salt, batteries and pens. Other goods are stored which are used as barter for other requirements within the liberated areas. Not only essential goods, someone told me proudly. If people have brought their cashew nuts, and they wish some luxury for it, just for the sake of having it, FRELIMO provides even that. "Why not? They have worked for it, and we have to respect their wishes."

By chance I met the man who is responsible in FRELIMO for gardening. He showed me 5,000 pineapple plants and boxes of tins with mango seedlings which he had brought from inside Mozambique to plant them around a FRELIMO training camp in order to make it self-reliant in fruits. Certainly



Harvest in liberated territory

nothing very important for the liberation struggle. But it shows how everything is organized, to the smallest detail.

There are no passable roads in the liberated areas. Those which existed have been blocked to prevent the Portuguese troops from moving. When the armed struggle started in 1964, people living nearby had made them unpassable by cutting trees. They are now partly mined and nearly swallowed again by the bush. The only means of communication are narrow bush paths, covered against planes by trees and branches. On these paths the whole traffic goes on: the transport of goods which I mentioned above, the supplies for the front, the carrying of the wounded, the movements of the liberation army.

## Marching Five Miles an Hour

During the first days I was more dead than alive. Commanders who had been abroad for military training told me that the usual army speed in other countries rarely exceeds three miles. But guerrilla warfare cannot be measured in the usual way. FRELIMO depends on marching. Speed and stamina are questions of life and death.

The northern part of Mozambique is traditionally less populated than Tanzania. Besides, many thousands have fled across the Ruvuma River to escape from the Portuguese bomb attacks. But we never marched more than half an hour without meeting people: Militia posts for controlling the traffic and as a warning system for surprise attacks, columns of carriers, and frequently peasant families living in huts. The first village we passed – about twelve huts – looked rather deserted. Later I saw why: nearly all the inhabitants worked on their shamba. It was a field of at least four acres – which I thought unbelievable for guerrilla war conditions. Rice, maize and cassava, mostly planted together. I have seen many fields like this one on our way. Because they are in the open, they are the most sensitive points in the liberated areas. During the dry season Portuguese planes drop napalm bombs to destroy the crops.

Most of the fields belong to co-operatives, some are individually owned. Nobody is forced into co-operatives. FRELIMO leaders are very careful on such questions. But also those who still work individually cannot but co-operate. When a peasant is on the way to carry goods, which happens very often – for himself, for the village or for the liberation army – the others work on his shamba. When we passed a large rice field with about 50 women working on it, I asked the soldiers marching with me for a rest to take pictures, they immediately took the hoe to join the villagers. I first supposed they just wanted to pose for my camera. But I was convinced that this kind of work was not unusual for them.

I found generally an atmosphere of understanding and mutual trust between freedom fighters and civilian population (if one can draw a difference at all).

## Life with FRELIMO

The area I visited is Makonde area. I did not find many people doing wood carvings which this tribe is famous for. Only in one village I observed some men at this skilful art. Besides them their guns leaned against a tree indicating that they also have some other job to do. Most people I met – altogether several thousand – had the typical Makonde tattooing on their faces. Many women had small round disks grown into their upper lips, like little wheels of toy railways.

I mention these facts since there have been reports in Western papers that most of the Makonde fled together with their tribal chief Kavandame to the Portuguese. Concerning Kavandame, I recorded the sarcastic comment of the Makonde people on tape: one of their songs is a satirical one: "Kavandame has run away". The second verse with the same words, by the way, is about the former FRELIMO vice-president Simango, and it says "FRELIMO is able to swallow a lot".

But the Kavandame story has an important aspect of principle. Like other liberation movements, FRELIMO started on a more or less purely nationalist basis. During the struggle a process of differentiation developed, intensified by the needs of construction in the liberated areas which already now raise the question how the future Mozambique should look. Kavandame, representing conservative-nationalist tendencies, intended to keep the old social structure created by colonialism – only without the Portuguese.

As administrative secretary of Cabo Delgado Province, he sabotaged the formation of people's administrative committees until he was suspended from his post and took refuge in a Portuguese base.

# The People Decide

When I met Samora Machel, the army chief, and now FRELIMO'S President, in one of the FRELIMO camps inside Mozambique, I asked him to explain the ideological conception of the liberation struggle. "We lead our struggle not only against colonialism, but also against the system behind it - capitalism. We had exploiters in our own ranks: Kavan-dame, Simango. They tried to tell us that we do not need any ideology. They thought it was only necessary to bring together all nationalist forces. But how can we fight for independence without saying which kind of independence we want? We did not liberate ourselves from parasites to create new parasites".

"We are not so keen on theoretical definitions", he continued. "We decide by actions. And it is the people who decide. We just give the orientation. But I think the decision is not so difficult. Each of us has his own experience with capitalism. And each of us know what we have achieved together - the new ways of production, our schools, our hospitals, our life in the liberated zones."

I found ample proof for these words. About two hours marching from the main training camp in Cabo Delgado Province - FRELIMO calls it "Beira" base - is the administrative centre of that area. Dozens of huts with all the activities of village life. Some hundred yards away is the "boarding school", several huts specially built for those children whose parents are fighting at the front. The class rooms consist of open huts with grass roofs, some are just a piece of open space where the pupils sit on trees. It was in the late afternoon, but each class room was overcrowded. Children of all ages, adult classes as well, sometimes even mixed.

I witnessed lessons in reading and writing, mathematics and geography. Everyone will understand how deeply moved I was when I saw that the exercise books the children were writing in had been solidarity gifts from my country, the German Democratic Republic. Previously, a teacher told me,

they had used dried cassava roots and carbonized pieces of wood as substitutes for chalk and blackboard.

Mozambique has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in Africa - about 98 per cent, I was told. Now where FRELIMO rules, each child has the possibility to go to school. Even one of the Portuguese prisoners was taught how to read and write when he was kept eight months in the liberated areas, before being sent to Algeria.

Another unforgettable experience was my visit to one of the bush hospitals, several huts, widely dispersed to protect them from air attacks. FRELIMO has no trained doctors, only medical assistants who remove bullets or bomb splinters, treat the civilian population or perform even complicated operations. And they do it with nearly nothing. All the Medicines and instruments I found in that hospital could be stored in two shoe boxes. What is especially needed are antibiotics and small surgical instruments.

Under Portuguese rule there was no medical service at all in rural areas. And even with the present limited possibilities FRELIMO was able to vaccinate more than 200,000 people against smallpox in Cabo Delgado Province alone.

It was peaceful in the area I visited. Were it not for the guns many people carry with them - even the medical assistants in the bush hospital and the students in the adult classes - one could easily forget they were living under war conditions. But there is a tough war on as I was soon to learn.

## Mozambique War

It happened during the very first days after we crossed the border; we had marched for three hours when we suddenly heard machine gun shots from a distance. Then a messenger reached us with the order to stay where we were and take cover. Some time later I heard the explosions of bombs. I saw a helicopter, a French "Alouette", and a one-engined plane, a West German Dornier DO 27.

The same evening I learned what had happened: A company

A pause in a long day





A school in Niassa Province

of Portuguese soldiers, coming from the next military base, had tried to attack the FRELIMO camp we were marching to. It was the first attempt in five or six months, I was told. Maybe a specially arranged welcome for me. But FRELIMO seems to be well prepared for such occasions.

Villagers or militia posts inform the liberation army about all movements of the enemy – at least ten to 15 miles before they reach the area. On that day FRELIMO laid an ambush: two small detachments right and left of the Portuguese. The enemy marched straight into the fire of a machine gun and mortar a few hundred yards further away. When they retreated, the left detachment opened fire first. Trying to escape to the opposite side, the enemy got shot from there. An hour later a helicopter came to collect the dead and the wounded. The DO 27 gave cover and dropped bombs around the landing site to prevent FRELIMO attacking.

I inspected the place where the helicopter had landed, the slope of a romantic valley near a small lake covered by water plants. I saw blood stains on the ground and felled trees for transporting the wounded. As souvenirs I collected wrapping paper of Portuguese army bandages, also empty tins of emergency rations with an instruction leaflet in Portuguese how and when it should be used, and – printed in heavy type – that the remains are to be buried carefully. There was probably not time enough on this occasion.

I asked the combatants about the Portuguese losses. No one could give me an exact number. They reported that nearly all of the platoon in front of the company collapsed under machine gun and mortar fire, while the rest were hit by the detachments on either side. The FRELIMO losses I saw for myself: one freedom fighter was limping. He had dropped a mortar grenade on his leg.

"Just wait", one commander told me "tomorrow Portuguese planes will come to strafe our area. They do that when they fall into an ambush." He proved to be right. It was a DO 27 again. I counted eleven explosions. Since everything was covered by bush, they dropped their bombs at random. When I visited the FRELIMO hospital nearby, I saw two

wounded women. One hit by a bomb splinter in the head, the other in the shoulder. By bombs from West German NATO planes!

## Nato Weapons

In the main training camp I found even more evidence of NATO support. A company of soldiers was lined up and the commander asked those who carried captured weapons – about one third – to step forward and to lay them down for inspection. Some were old acquaintances from the last war: German rifles "Karabiner 98" and machine guns "MG 42". I found also more modern arms: French mortars and hand grenades, and English rocket launcher "M 20" 8.6 inch. But most of them were automatic G-3 guns, manufactured under West German licence in the West German built arms factory of Braco da Prata, which now form the standard equipment of the Portuguese colonial troops. "Those weapons are now used against the enemy", the commander told me. "But they have killed our comrades and innocent civilians. When will the NATO countries stop their support for Portugal?" A question I could not answer.

When we marched back, I discovered big holes in the ground, partly covered by branches and leaves. "Air shelters for the villagers", I was told. I had not noticed them before as they were well camouflaged. They have to be. Life in the liberated areas is not as peaceful as appeared to me at first. The Portuguese bases scattered in the liberated zones are completely isolated and they have access by air only. But they still endanger the lives of people living there. The distance I marched together with FRELIMO does not look very impressive on the map. The liberated area in the North covers about one fifth of Mozambique. One of the many songs of the liberation army refers to the Maputo, the southern river. "When we have reached Maputo, Mozambique will be free". Many sacrifices have to be made. Many years of hard struggle lay ahead.